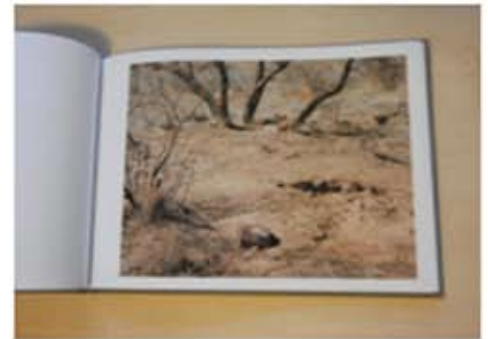


COLLECTOR DAILY

Ron Jude, *Other Nature*

By Loring Knoblauch / In [Photobooks](#) / July 16, 2013

JTF (just the facts): Published in 2008 by The Ice Plant ([here](#)). Hardcover, 80 pages, with 39 color images. Aside from a short Kafka quote, there are no essays or texts. (Spread shots below.)



Comments/Context: There is something truly wondrous about picking up an unknown photobook and having it grab you. Unlike gallery and museum shows which relentlessly come and go with the changing seasons, a photobook is permanent, an artifact to be unearthed at any time in the future and enjoyed by its future discoverer. Some of you (especially the photobook crazed among you) will wonder why I would review Ron Jude's *Other Nature* some five years after its publication, but the truth of the matter is that I just found it. While I had tangentially heard about Jude's work, I hadn't ever seen any of his prints in person, nor had I

taken the time to track down one of his books. So for me, seeing this book was entirely fresh and new, an introduction to a photographer I had meant to investigate.

A first flip through the pages comes off a bit dull and boring: medium range scraggly landscapes interspersed with nondescript hotel room details, all offered in deadpan color clarity. But with longer looking, both sets of pictures start to reveal themselves as quite a bit more thoughtful. Jude's landscapes have compositional echoes of early 1980s Lewis Baltz (San Quentin Point) and Robert Adams (Los Angeles basin), but without the same suburbanization/ecological point of view. In fact, they have no point of view at all; there is no obvious sense of location, no potential narrative, nothing but an interrupted, blocked view of the land, often decorated with the lazy detritus of human involvement. Overgrown greenery, thick evergreen hedges, dry scrubland decorated with rusty oil drums, sandy desolation with the twist of a garden hose, every image is a reductive smack in the face, the opposite of what we think a landscape should be.

Jude's interior still lifes are equally familiar yet unknowable. Doors and windows are closed, and artificial surfaces and textures stand in for reality. Fake wood paneling, vegetal vine patterns in drab carpeting, the synthetic stickiness of an extra blanket in the closet, the shiny plastic of an empty pastry rack, they all try to give us a clue to a larger story, but ultimately fail. When interleaved with the outdoor landscapes, a rhythm is created, moving back and forth between outside and inside with a frustration that borders on subtle tweaking comedy. There is no way into this body of work, and that, in a certain way, is the insightful point.

So what Jude has done is actually made a book of landscapes that aren't landscapes, in the sense that they don't function in the way that normal landscapes do. His project is more of a conceptual deconstruction of the genre, breaking each image down until it stands right on the knife edge of narrative plausibility, teasing us with our preconceptions but ultimately running off laughing. The hotel interiors provide the palate cleanser between courses of thwarted intention, where clean geometries balance the unruly wildness of the natural world. Seen together and in careful sequence, the images upend our sense of how a photograph is supposed to operate. That deliberate removal of narrative is a powerful concept, one that left me impressed with just how smart this book is.

Collector's POV: Ron Jude is represented by Gallery Luisotti in Santa Monica, CA ([here](#)). Jude's work has little or no secondary market history, so gallery retail is likely the best/only option for those collectors interested in following up.