

# Art

## Reviews

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# “A Vernacular of Violence”

★★★★★

**Invisible Exports**, through Sun 20  
(see Lower East Side)

At Invisible Exports’s “A Vernacular of Violence,” a show addressing the pervasive and pernicious nature of violent images in contemporary society, Eric Baudelaire’s video *Sugar Water* is a standout. In it, a laborer dressed in blue coveralls is in a Paris subway station, efficiently installing a series of photographs in the space normally dedicated to large-scale ads. Over the course of the 72-minute piece, the worker mounts several different sequential still images of a car bomb exploding on a Paris street, while commuters go about their business. The worker’s impassive body, in addition to those of oblivious passersby, provides a stark contrast with the violence of the imagery. Their presence stands in for our own willingness to ignore disconcerting spectacles, whether it’s war depicted on the news or a homeless person begging on the curb. Baudelaire’s piece subtly transforms



Eric Baudelaire,  
*Sugar Water*

us from spectators to witnesses.

The other pieces here, however, aren’t nearly as effective. Rita Sobral Campos offers floating geometric forms, accompanied by excerpts from a sci-fi tale rife with rolling heads, while Walid Raad edits together clips of Souheil Bachar, the only Arab detained during the kidnapping of Westerners by Lebanese Islamic militants in the 1980s. In both, violence becomes a decorative element, spicing up a story line with a hint of danger. Though compelling, neither work pushes us to consider our own passivity in the face of horror, and our implied complicity in ignoring it.—*T.J. Carlin*