The New York Times

Weekend FINE ARTS LEISURE

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 2000

Slater Bradley

'Charlatan'

Team Gallery
527 West 26th Street, Chelsea
Through Oct. 7

In his second solo show, Slater Bradley investigates the spatial and emotional possibilities of video, concocting moments of filmlike artifice, real-life documentary and 6-o'clock-news intrusiveness with unusual concision and impact. Different as they are, the four projected videos in this show, each about three minutes long, have a consistent sense of finality, specificity and revelation.

In "J. F. K. Jr." the camera closely observes an adolescent girl dressed in white in the crowd at the doorstep of the TriBeCa loft building of John F. and Carolyn Bessette Kennedy after their deaths — until she notices it. It's a moment of discreet voyeurism and unreciprocated intimacy that every city-dweller can identify with.

In "Female Gargoyle," prominently labeled "amateur video," the tension between public and private experience sharpens as Mr. Bradley tapes a handsome tattooed woman perched on the parapet of a tenement while police and firemen try to coax her down. They succeed, but Mr. Bradley has edited them and the street out of the tape. He focuses on this seemingly heroic figure — a combination of Valkyrie, Superwoman and circus performer — silhouetted against the sky, on her gradually growing anguish and finally on the embarrassed, helpless empathy she elicits in the viewer.

In "I Was Rooting for You (The Butterfly Catcher at Home)," the camera studies the home and person of a lepidopterist, wordlessly revealing the fullness of his obsession.

Most elaborate is "The Laurel Tree (Beach)," which features the actress Chloe Sevigny standing on a beach reciting a brief excerpt from Thomas Mann's 1903 short story "Tonio Kroger." The passage, which swiftly and eloquently contrasts the sacrifice of being an artist with the touching yet irritating presumptions of the dilettante, is written in an unmistakable 19th-century male voice. To hear it commandingly spoken by a woman against a lowering sky drained of color and accompanied by the romantic strains of Georges Delerue's score for Godard's "Contempt," is deeply affecting. It is a declaration of artistic intent that makes one eager to see what Mr. Bradley will do next.

ROBERTA SMITH