



Slater Bradley: *Don't Let Me Disappear*, 2009-11, HD video projection, approx. 10½ minutes; at Team.

## SLATER BRADLEY TEAM

As Holden Caulfield walks the streets of New York City on his way to a nervous breakdown in J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*, he finds himself, each time he's about to step off a curb, beseeching his deceased little brother, "Allie, don't let me disappear." In his excellent video *Don't Let Me Disappear* (2009-11, 10½ minutes), the sole work in his recent show, Slater Bradley employs his long-time doppelgänger, the dreamy model/actor Benjamin Brock, to represent Caulfield, wandering modern-day Midtown Manhattan. In ways funny and ominous, sound and image come together to depict a young man on the edge.

For the first two minutes, one sees only the legs and feet of Brock and other pedestrians. As the camera rises, we are at 53rd Street and 5th Avenue (near the Museum of Modern Art). Brock listlessly peers into a chauffeured car; drifts by Versace, Cartier and Façonnable; and hesitates, again and again, at the sidewalk's edge, whispering, "Don't let me disappear." A ponderous electronic soundtrack contrasts almost comically with the non-events on-screen as it summons up the doppelgänger's state of mind. The camera studies Brock's face in such close-up that one gradually notices a scar on his upper lip.

As Brock lingers in front of a cathedral, churchy music swells. When he slides in slow motion down a handrail on the front steps, the viewer doesn't know what to feel, perhaps identifying with the character's muddle of emotions. Finally, Brock enters Central Park, muttering to himself: "Sometimes I feel like my whole life is behind me" and, under his breath to someone off-screen, "You look ridiculous in that makeup." In silhouette as he enters the darkness of a pedestrian underpass, he picks something up off the ground; when he emerges into the light at the other end, he sports a red hunting cap, complete with earflaps, of the sort Caulfield wears.

The work was projected on a large screen, and visitors watched from wooden risers; four large speakers on high stands created an immersive soundscape whose high sonic drama effectively matched the video's high-resolution visual punch. And the work is as plentiful in literary allusions as it is sensually rich. Bradley was inspired by E.B. White's essay "Here is New York," which highlights the importance to New York of the transplant from other places; a longtime New York resident, Bradley comes from San Francisco. The artist also draws on Walter Benjamin's take on

the flâneur; the German philosopher's city stroller remains alienated from his surroundings. Additionally, a voiceover occasionally mumbles lines from Russian writer Mark Levi's 1934 *Novel with Cocaine*, the story of a young man's descent into hedonism amid national strife in Russia from 1916 to 1919.

In past works, Bradley has deployed the doppelgänger to explore celebrity worship and identification, with Brock depicting Michael Jackson, Kurt Cobain and Joy Division singer Ian Curtis. Holden Caulfield is a perfect addition to this roster of tormented young men.

—Brian Boucher