

Slater Bradley, "Charlatan"

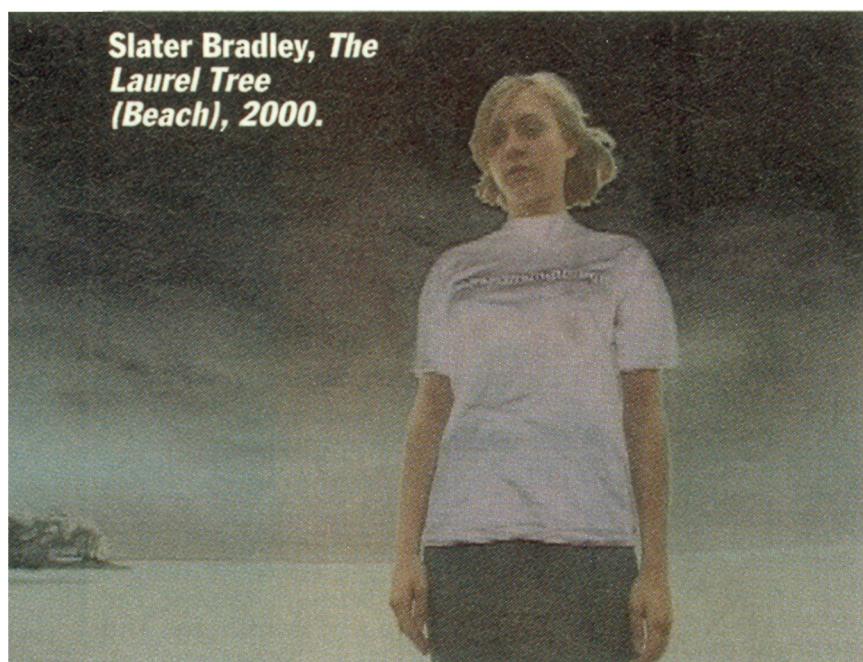
Team Gallery, through Oct 7

(see Chelsea).

Slater Bradley shows a real flair for capturing emotional moments in three short videos now at Team Gallery. For example, in *Female Gargoyle*, a startling real-life view of a suicidal woman perched on the cornice of a building, his camera moves adeptly from dramatic distant shots to painful close-ups that reveal the woman's true state of crisis. In *JFK Jr.*, Bradley spies on a teenage mourner in front of the Tribeca loft of the deceased Kennedy, peeking over her shoulder, reading her card and appraising the roses she wishes to leave. When the girl notices his camera, she stares back, hurt and maybe even embarrassed. Both videos are effective as Bradley pulls viewers in, then makes them realize how easily curiosity turns into voyeurism.

The standout here, though, is *The Laurel Tree (Beach)*, which features

Slater Bradley, *The Laurel Tree (Beach)*, 2000.



the slyly sexy it girl, Chloë Sevigny. The actress is seen standing on a remote, stormy beach while reciting from "Tonio Kroger," Thomas Mann's 1903 short story about dilettantism. In this particular passage, the narrator, who is at a dinner party, witnesses a lieutenant reading some poems which are as "deeply felt as they [are] inept." When politely and falsely praised, the officer suffers "embarrassment for the mistake of thinking that one may pluck a single leaf from the laurel tree of art without paying for it with his life." The narrator, who obviously believes in suffering for art, openly disdains the soldier.

Accompanying Sevigny's reading of this favorite fin de siècle theme is an excerpt from the musical score of Godard's *Contempt*. The music imbues the visuals with a sense of overwhelming tragedy: Nothing is worse than mere talent wasting itself on art, it suggests, and the camera seems to move worried-

ly over Sevigny's face, hands and T-shirt (POWER THROUGH JOY, it reads) with a judicious parent's concern for an artsy child. The contrast between seriousness and carefree youth is especially keen as the music swells at one point while Sevigny giggles with shoulder-shaking girlishness, oblivious to the black clouds building up behind her. It's a wonderful moment in this fine show.

—Robert Mahoney