

Reviews

Slater Bradley



Still from *The Abandonments*

★★★★★

Team Gallery, through Dec 23 (see Soho)

All but one of the six videos in Slater Bradley's new show feature his longtime muse and doppelgänger, actor Ben Brock. Carefully staged moments are combined with audiotaped fragments of serendipitously overheard conversations, evocative music and appropriated texts. The surprisingly moving results are brief dramas that illuminate slippages between the real and the counterfeit.

For *Intermission*, Brock transformed himself into Michael Jackson by means of a surgical mask and climbed a snow-covered tree overlooking a deserted lake. Silent-movie-style intertitles spell out lyrics from Jackson's song "Childhood," accompanied by a soundtrack combining Berlioz's "Dies Irae" with snippets of parents and children talking about nature (given the video's

subject, their mention of vultures inevitably conjures pedophilia). Summoning up both innocence and loss, the video is like a Joseph Cornell box tinged with contemporary bile. In *The Abandonments*, Brock tap-dances with an umbrella under a digitally rendered thunderstorm to "Singing in the Rain," a cross between Gene Kelly and a renegade from an insane asylum, dressed in top hat, goggles and tails.

Dark Night of the Soul sends Brock on a tour through the Museum of Natural History wearing a NASA space suit. Accompanied by Beethoven's "Moonlight Sonata," he begins in the butterfly habitat, then proceeds past a dinosaur skeleton, dioramas of wildlife and a model of the moon. As a music box tinkles "Strangers in the Night," the camera zooms in on Brock's youthful face, alone in the empty planetarium at the end of a journey from ephemeral life to prehistoric death that winds up in outer space.—*Elisabeth Kley*