

SEAN KELLY

Knoblauch, Loring. "Slater Bradley, A Point Beyond the Tree at Sean Kelly," *Collector Daily*, January 10, 2014.

**COLLECTOR
DAILY**

Slater Bradley, A Point Beyond the Tree @Sean Kelly

JTF (just the facts): A total of 7 large scale photographs, framed in white and unmatted, and hung against white walls in a single room gallery space and in one of the nearby offices. The works are either black and white fiber prints or digital c-prints mounted to Dibond and variously covered with gold/silver marker or gold/palladium leaf; one image without additional coverings is face mounted to Plexi. Physical sizes range from roughly 45×30 to 70×50 (or reverse) and all of the decorated works are unique; the image without surface additions is available in an edition of 3+2AP. The show also includes a two-channel synch video installation, shown in a darkened room on the lower level of the gallery. It runs 2 minutes 29 seconds, and is available in an edition of 3+2AP. (Installation shots below.)



Comments/Context: Slater Bradley's portraits of his one-time muse Alina are exercises in personal obsession, images that mix straight up beauty with a kind of visual enshrinement that focuses our attention on the object of his interest with amplified intensity. As photographs, Bradley's head shots and nudes of his lovely model are relatively straightforward: an innocent sleeping face resting against a blanket, a turned head holding a drink, an over the shoulder full body nude in the pure light of a window, a twist of hair pulled forward, or a dead-on look into the camera. What makes them different is Bradley's meticulous, hand crafted additions, and the painstaking, immersive care they imply.

Standing in front of one of these large works and getting up close to really look at the tiny paint marks in gold and silver, it becomes immediately obvious just how long it must have taken to add each gesture – days and days must have been filled with the endless precise movements of a monk illuminating a manuscript, all the while staring at the face of his adoration. The metallic markings and fields of gold/platinum leaf are like textural halos, obscuring the context of the surrounding image and drawing the eye to the central idealized subject, now isolated and put on display. Each work starts to feel like a bewitched totem, slowly infused with meaning by its maker. One finished work then roughly crumpled adds a further layer of boiled over frustration to the process, a reminder of distance and regret in addition to haunted longing.

Alina's face sandwiched with the tree rings of a sequoia in a multiple exposure work takes the show in an adjacent direction, connecting the decorated single images to the video on view. The short video brings together clips and still images of Alina on a boat, her hair flying around her face, with snippets from Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo* and Chris Marker's *La Jeteé*, both with scenes using tree rings to mark the passing and breadth of time. The video is both an reverential homage and an admitted fixation, a valentine to timelessness.

Having seen a number of Bradley's works at art fairs in the past few years, I always thought they were unabashedly beautiful in a time when we see the beauty in ugliness, the beauty in ruin, the beauty in randomness, but hardly ever the beauty in beauty anymore – it seems somehow too simple and antiquated an idea. But this show transformed my view of these works – yes, they are beautiful, but the obsessive physical additions to the photographic objects are more than blingy, eye catching embellishments. When seen in the context of an all-encompassing emotional attachment, they touch a much rawer nerve.

Collector's POV: The works in this show are priced as follows. The unique images with gold/silver additions range in price from \$25000 to \$45000 based on size; the image without additions is \$30000. The video installation is available for \$55000. Bradley's work has recently begun to enter the secondary markets with more regularity. Prices in the past few years have ranged between roughly \$2000 and \$20000.