



Art Reviews

MARK PUSHES PARADOXES

Works destroy in order to transform the dull into the interesting

By FRAN SCHECHTER

 PRINT

KELLY MARK at Justina M. Barnicke Gallery (7 Hart House Circle), to October 28. 416-978-8398. Rating: **NNN**

Kelly Mark: Stupid Heaven is the first of the U of T gallery's planned mid-career surveys of local artists. The conceptual artist's early practice involved collecting, arranging or documenting prosaic found objects and completing seemingly pointless, depersonalized tasks like carrying an object for a year.

Pieces from the 90s include Defiled, a pair of metal files rubbed together until toothless, and drawings from the Until series of identical black circles that each totally used up a single pencil. She cleverly employs the object's function to destroy it and transform it into art.

Mark comments on the act of art-making itself in In And Out, a wall of weekly factory time cards that she punches to mark her studio work time, a project now in its 11th year and slated to continue until the now 40-year-old art worker turns 65.

Recently, she's turned to television in conceptual videos like 30 Minute Stare (just what it sounds like) and pieces like Kiss (two pulsating TVs arranged screen to screen) that focus on the set itself rather than what's on.

TV watchers may be too worn out by the new season to take in all of REM, Mark's new two-and-a-half-hour mashup of narratively related movie and TV scenes that plays in an installation of four living rooms equipped with comfy couches and stalled clocks. The boredom of channel surfing and the sameness of TV content aren't exactly new insights.

Mark makes provocative and sometimes humorous statements on how we structure culture, work and leisure.

But in a world where anything can be art, is it too much, or too late, to ask for art that speaks from and to the soul?