

U of T Galleries: Some recognition for the previously un-Marked

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"Hold that thought" hovers above my head in white neon light at the Blackwood Gallery. The exhibit *Stupid Heaven* is, in a way, Toronto artist Kelly Mark's ode to the mundane. With minimalist tools such as stainless steel stopwatches, time cards, statues, mannequins, and other everyday objects, Mark has created a commentary on the



photo/Andrea Grassi

The performances are entertaining and passionate - the video featuring Reuben Henry is especially dedicated as he argues with a cool and collected early twentieth century man in bronze. With U of T an appropriate location for her works, Blackwood curator and director Séamus Kealy comments, "[Mark] has been an influential force for a younger generation of artists in Toronto".

Another video installation Kealy suggests students check out is "Hiccup," which plays on the other side of the centre wall. The piece documents Mark sitting on the steps of a building on five different occasions acting out the same gestures. Making herself the control, her environment changes in the experimentation of artistic observation.

"This work is whimsically meditative," says Kealy, "not with any nod at new age spiritualism, but as both a joke on time and our neglect of it... Can you imagine seeing a woman sitting at the same corner each morning, and slowly noticing that she's doing the same small gestures and movements for exactly the same time each day?"

Observing the altered environments of static objects is another technique that is basis for one of the pieces that pops off the contractor's white walls of the Blackwood - The Twelve Apostles. Hanging in a line are twelve portraits of

lost perceptions of the everyday with a sense of humour - her satire on heaven.

Currently, the Blackwood Gallery, in association with the Justina M. Barnicke Gallery at St. George, is showcasing Mark's work in an exhibit curated by Barbara Fischer. A formally-trained artist, Mark holds a Masters of Fine Arts from the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design as well as a Fine Art diploma from the Dundas Valley School of Art.

On her website, Mark releases a statement which expresses the motive of her art:

"[It is] an intense preoccupation with the differing shades of pathos and humour found in the repetitive mundane tasks, routines and rituals of everyday life. Hidden within these spans of time can be found startling moments of poetic individuation, and an imprint of the individual within the commonplace rituals of society." She explores this pathos through drawing, sculpture, photography, installation, sound, multiples, and public interventions; although as of late, video and television has been a major focus as well.

Within the Blackwood exhibit, eight televisions are set up on the central wall - all without sound. On one side, a three-video collection from 2003 and 2004 showcases three males having separate conversations with city statuary.

a mannequin face; a documentation of a store window mannequin's changing face over the course of a year. The photographs were taken from across the street, so you can see the reflection of the store window within the mannequin's face creating an image that looks superimposed.

A salt- and pepper-shaker chess set, a collection of Letraset drawings, and stainless steel stopwatches are among the artistic inventory displayed for observation. Other pieces in the exhibit are also being displayed at the J.M Barnicke gallery at St. George. The culmination of the exhibit is there in a four-room set up; a movie created from a mash-up of over 170 sources taken from her television entitled REM 2:16:13. Whimsical and time-busting, the patchwork movie, according to the website, aims to "wrest meaning out of the experience of channel surfing, including attention-span disorder which might be the same temporal condition of television watching."

For a fresh perception on the everyday, mark the unrecognized and unappreciated objects and actions of your life. *Stupid Heaven* runs until October 28 at the J.M Barnicke gallery, with a closing reception on the 21st at the Blackwood. All admission is free. Visit www.kellymark.com.