

Stupid Heaven

By Jade Colbert

According to Barbara Fischer, curator at Barnicke, *Stupid Heaven* marks a new vision for the gallery by providing a comprehensive look at a Toronto artist's body of work, contextualizing it and thereby allowing for close analysis.

"One of the things we'd really like to do, because we're in a university, is to examine something in depth. There has been a lack in Toronto of institutions looking seriously at a body of work of an artist or a particular interest of what's happening in Toronto, of artists who live here. That's something we would like to do."

Walking through the exhibition with Fischer, you begin to see what she means. *Stupid Heaven* is a collection of works by Kelly Mark from the past dozen years. Mark, who studied at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, has lived in Toronto for over 15 years and has shown extensively, yet this is the first major survey of her

work, one that allows the viewer to appreciate how the artist has consistently grappled with questions on time—how we spend it, what we want from it, how we respond to it.

According to Fischer, the stupid heaven referenced in the title is the moment, the now that we spend doing something other than what we perhaps feel we should be doing. "In and Out" and "Broken Meters" also seem fairly clear-cut. In the former, several racks of time cards, each rack for a year, have been filled for every hour Mark has been at work as an artist (she keeps a punch clock in her studio). A work in progress, she plans to continue punching these cards until she retires in 2032. Possibly the most thought-provoking on display, though, are Mark's film works. Those viewers looking to these works for a commentary on television itself—on the news media or blockbuster films, say—might be disappointed.

Take, for instance, "A Man, A Woman...", a movie preview that never gets past its own beginning. For the next eight minutes the preview continues to name roles, ones generally not thought of as being as significant as the first two. By playing on this convention, "A Man, A Woman" shows just how accustomed we have come to reading (into) that convention. We don't have stock plots in which these characters can all be significant. Attempts to imagine such a plot breaks down into the absurd.

It's the same play on the movie-goers compulsion for narrative that is present in "REM", a feature-length "true story of assassination, apocalypse and apnea" edited from 170 movies that have been broadcast on television. Make time to see it: as part of the installation, four living rooms have been provided for your viewing pleasure.