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Time-based art receives a shot in the arm

BY JOHN BENTLEY MAYS
 The Globe and Mail

AND NOW FOR something different: a lineup of new artists' video, film and performance that treats it all like, well, art and not just a one-shot, ad hoc special event. YYZ's plans for this year's showcasing of time-based art (as video, film and performance are sometimes called) include slots in a year-long schedule; a setup in a room of its own, at

the parallel gallery's new headquarters at 1087 Queen St. W., where the tapes can be checked out and screened; serious promotion, and the same basic hospitality routinely given to painting, sculpture and installation.

It's all good news for local producers of time-based work, who've been complaining for years about the scarcity of outlets for what they do, and the nonchalance of art galleries about it. It's about time galleries started welcoming these artists back into the art world, which many simply gave up on during the painting and sculpture revival of the early eighties.

To kick off its 1987-88 series — which will also feature tapes by Andrew James Paterson and Michael Balsler, and a new film by Anna Gronau — YYZ presents *Work*, a 35-minute color tape by Toronto artists **Paulette Phillips** and **Geoffrey Shea**. The premiere screening will take place at 8 p.m. Sunday at YYZ, and the videotape will be available for screening

ON SHOW

thereafter until Nov. 14. The tape tells one story — about being out of work in Toronto — but tells it twice, in twin versions of the same numbing, isolating reality.

The first story features Alex (John Porter), who's down on his luck and not as young as he used to be. He shuffles onto the street each morning in his slippers to get the papers, shuffles back to his bare walk-up flat, and starts checking out the want ads. You immediately recognize the various depressing situations Alex passes through — the boring wait for a job interview, the exchanges with buddies who've got jobs, the smarmy sweet-talking of a rather predatory black preacher, who finds Alex at the back of the streetcar and tries to convince him it's Jesus, not a job, that he really wants. As the preacher talks, Phillips and Shea show us Alex's inner

fantasy of heaven on earth: a job as a construction worker.

Slow-moving, washed out, looking as though he could stand a good shot of iron and maybe some chicken soup, Porter delivers a competent Alex. Other actors in this sequence are not as effective, the script is cast in pseudo-working-class lingo, and most speakers seem to read their lines off a teleprompter. It's all beginning to look like every other social-realist exercise by artists — earnest, dull, a tiny bit campy — when suddenly the second story of unemployment kicks in.

We are immediately in the world of Alex's next-door neighbors, a writer named Gloria (**Paulette Phillips**) and her psychotic kid brother Graham (Greg Woodbury). Alex's counterpart in this second story is Graham, who's outside the same world Alex wants into, only more so: Graham's terrors and gulls are the roadblocks across his way back to the world of work.

The producers of this tape explicitly intend that the two narratives

be "parallel," and equivalent as "sympathetic conditions." Their hopes don't come entirely true, and the tape looks like two tapes that have been glued together but just keep coming unstuck. The script for the Gloria-Graham section is better, punchier, more poignant and much more involving than the stagey Alex episodes. But maybe the biggest problem this tape has got is Greg Woodbury.

A recent graduate of the Ontario College of Art and a video artist in his own right, Woodbury is marvelous as the tormented, mercurial boy. Woodbury is intelligently remote from the part, arch about it (as video actors, as opposed to film actors, usually are), and utterly engaged with his work in every frame. Woodbury, along with Margaret Dragu, Robert Stewart, Randi and Benicci and a couple of others, is that rare thing: a video art star. And, of course, the trouble in mixing stars with lesser mortals is that they can lift an eyebrow and knock everybody else off stage.

Independent Movie Guide

(F) Family (R) Restricted (to persons 18 yrs. and over) (PG) Parental Guidance Suggested (AA) Adult Accompaniment (required under age of 14)

MT. PLEASANT	
Below Eglinton	489-8484
ROXANNE 7:15 (PG)	THE BIG EASY 9:05 (AA)
Fri. & Sat. ROXANNE 8:30 & 10:05 BIG EASY 8:25 ADULTS \$4 FOR DOUBLE FEATURE	
BLOOR CINEMA	
506 Bloor St. West	532-6677
BENEFIT FOR AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL	
THE OFFICIAL STORY 7 (AA)	SALVADOR 9:15 (R)
TICKETS: Members \$3, non-members \$5.50	
FOX	
2236 Queen St. East	691-7330
BEDROOM WINDOW 7 (R)	LAST TANGO IN PARIS 9 (R)
KINGSWAY THEATRE	
1030 Bloor St. West	236-1411
MARIANNE & JULIANE 7 (AA)	FANNY & ALEXANDER 9:15 (AA)
REVUE CINEMA	
400 Roncesvalles Ave.	531-9959
Tim Hunter's RIVER'S EDGE 7 (R)	Paul Morrissey's MIXED BLOOD 9:15 (R)
PALM	
309 Lakeshore Rd. E., Oakville	844-2435
SURRENDER	
7 & 9 (PG)	
ONTARIO SCIENCE CENTRE	
770 Don Mills Rd. 429-0454	
Oct. 22 West Germany YEARS OF HUNGER 7 pm	Oct. 23 James Burke NEWTON REVISED Theatre B Cary Grant I'M NO ANGEL Theatre A/Both at 7 pm
Oct. 26 West Germany BERLIN CHAMISSON-PLATZ 7 pm	
HARBOURFRONT-STUDIO THEATRE	
York Quay Centre 869-8412	
DIRECT FROM JAPAN III: TICKETS \$4	
Oct. 23 THE FUNERAL 7 pm A PROMISE 9 pm	Oct. 24 PIGS & BATTLESHIPS 7 pm THE PORNOGRAPHER 9 pm
Oct. 25 THE SEVEN SAMURAI 1 pm TYHOON CLUB 7 pm GOOD MORNING 9 pm	

Alamo film accused of insulting Hispanics

BY JAVIER RODRIGUEZ
 Reulor

SAN ANTONIO, Texas

A NEW FILM intended to show tourists a simple history of the Alamo is igniting anew the kind of passion that once bloodied the famous battlefield in Texas's fight for independence. To some critics the short film, *Alamo*... The Price of Freedom, insults Hispanics and falters on key historical points about the 1836 battle.

"It concerns me what kinds of messages and images people will get when they see this movie," said Walter Martinez, a San Antonio city councillor. Martinez said he believes the movie portrays Mexicans as cowardly and immoral compared to their Anglo counterparts.

But producers of the 40-minute, \$2.8-million U.S. movie insist the film will be the first to show fairly the contributions of a handful of Mexican defenders at the Alamo.

The fall of the Alamo, a graceful Catholic stone mission in the heart of San Antonio, marked an emotional turning point in the Texas struggle for independence from Mexico.

Although 189 defenders of the Alamo were slaughtered, "Remember the Alamo" quickly became a rallying cry that won Texas the right to exist as an independent nation until it chose to join the United States in 1845.

Today the Alamo is one of Texas's most popular tourist attractions. Among the visitors last month were Pope John Paul II and King Juan Carlos of Spain.

Doug Beach, a managing partner in River Theatre Associates, which is financing the film, said care has been taken to address Hispanic concerns.

Beginning March 6, 1988, on the anniversary of the battle, the film will be shown to thousands of tourists in a special wide-screen theatre 200 feet outside the Alamo grounds.

"This movie is only 40 minutes in length," Beach said. "To even tell about the battle, let alone the surrounding events, is a major challenge."

Two of the six main characters in the movie are Hispanic — Santa Ana, the Mexican dictator who attacked the Alamo, and Juan Seguin, a prominent Texas captain who escaped death when he was dispatched from the fort as a messenger before the final attack.

But Martinez says the original shooting script included several scenes depicting Mexicans as subservient and of dubious moral character.

For example, one planned scene showed a tryst between a Tennessee volunteer soldier and a 17-year-old Mexican girl in a church.

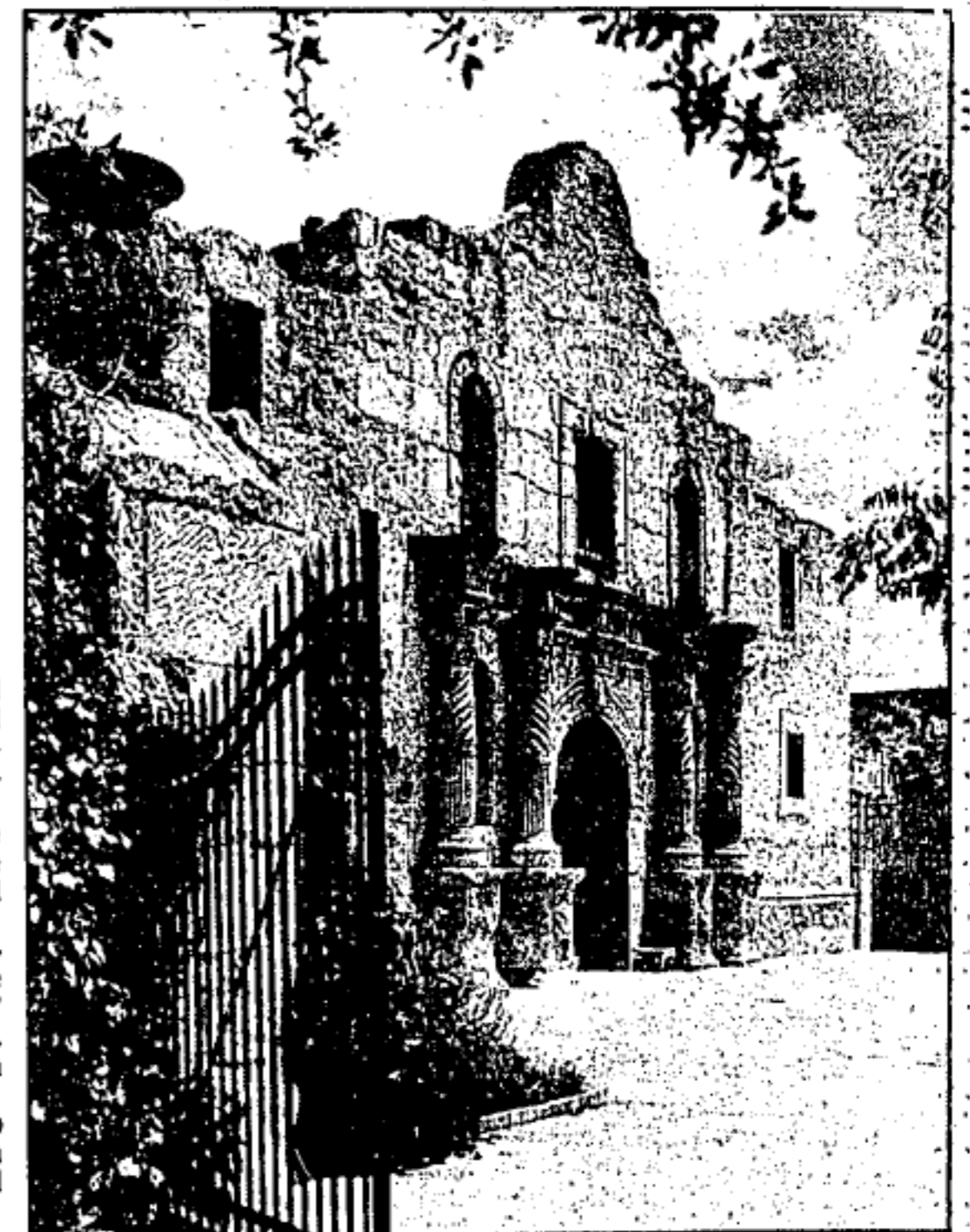
"Even a hard, seasoned prostitute would not engage in sex on the belfry of the local Catholic church," Martinez said. "That's ridiculous. It's uncalled for. There's no reason for that in such a movie."

Historian Richard Santos, who was asked to examine the film script, found more than 50 historical inaccuracies.

Santos said that the script shows Davy Crockett, one of the heroes of the Alamo, dying in the heat of battle much like actor John Wayne once portrayed Crockett in a Hollywood version. Most Texas history scholars have long believed that Crockett was actually captured alive and executed on orders from Santa Ana.

Ironically, the author of the book which was used as the basis for the short film says he never claimed to have penned a definitive account of the historical battle.

"I use history as a carpenter uses



Filming The Battle of the Alamo was 'a major challenge.'

a saw, as a tool, and I chose the historical version that suits my writing style," said author George McAlister. "This is not a documentary, this is a docudrama. I don't claim to be a historian." McAlister says the promises of historical authenticity came from actors and movie production officials who probably were referring only to costumes and battle techniques.

Martinez, however, claims to have historical research on his side

and insists that his complaints are not an attempt to rewrite history to show Mexicans in a more favorable light.

"When you don't have the facts, you pound on the table. We have the facts and we want to hold them (movie producers) up to the standards they have set for themselves and not allow them to make another movie that's inaccurate," Martinez said.

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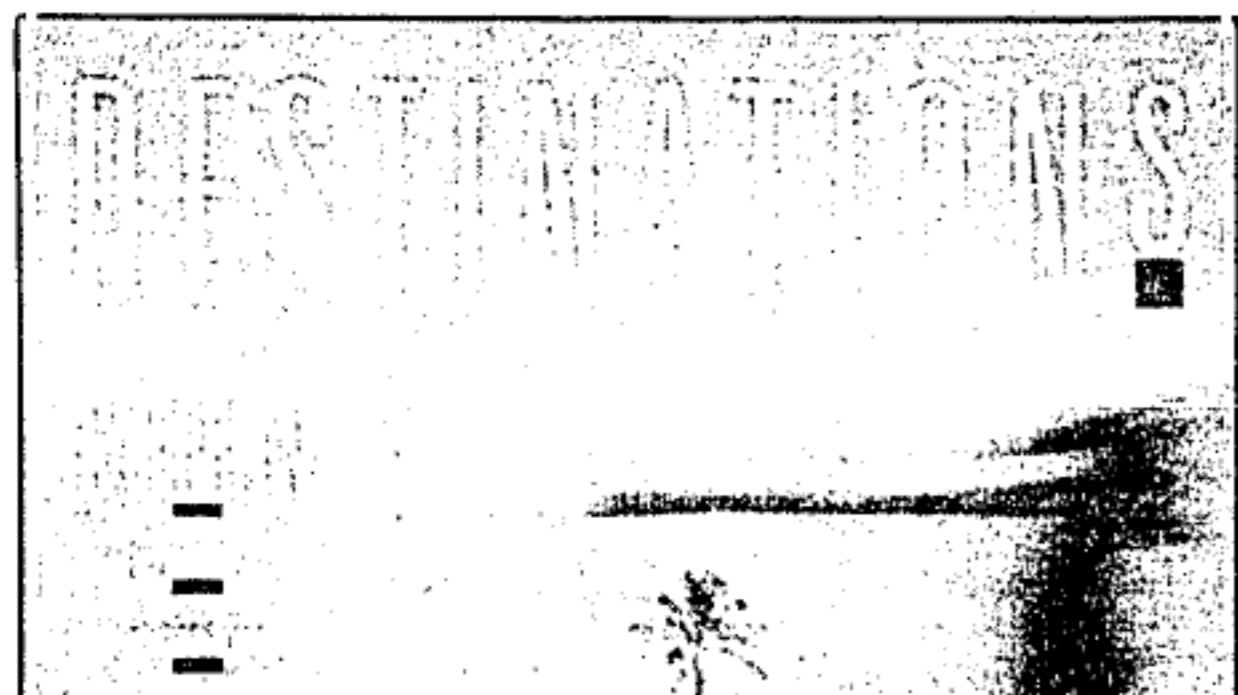
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THE PANEL:
 Glenna Cole-Slatery is the Chief Executive Officer on the Ontario Nurses Association. Mary Margaret Steekle, is an RN who is now a health care activist and representative of the Patients' Rights Association. Dr. Carolynne Bennett, is an active staff member of Women's College Hospital and a lecturer at the University of Toronto's Department of Family and Community Medicine. Clarke Mackey, is a Toronto-based filmmaker who acted as Executive Producer and Director of **TAKING CARE**.

Free tickets for the screening and panel can be reserved by calling: Harbourfront Box Office: 973-4000

When: Thursday, October 22nd Where: Harbourfront
 Time: Screening 7:30 PM Studio Theatre/York Quay Centre
 Panel to follow (west of Queens Quay Terminal)

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