

the village VOICE



Details

16 Acres

Directed by Richard Hankin

Tanexis Productions

Opens November 16, Quad Cinema

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By Nick Pinkerton Wednesday, Nov 14 2012

Watching *16 Acres* brings back a decade of *Daily News* headlines glanced while waiting at the bodega for your regular coffee—it's just that New York City. This is not to say it's a gushing love letter—thankfully, for it's dealing in a roundabout way with the events of September 11, 2001, events that don't need to be draped in further sententiousness or sentiment. The title refers to the cleared ground zero real estate, "perhaps the most valuable 16 acres on the face of the earth," per *Esquire* writer Scott Raab. Hankin has wrangled sit-downs with all of the movers and shakers who combined to retard that process: vilified twin towers leaseholder Larry Silverstein, given a sympathetic treatment here; ex-governor Pataki, who comes off as a putz; as well as the various architects and functionaries from the Port Authority and the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation and everyone who contributed to the Gordian knot of development that New Orleans mayor Ray Nagin famously called "a hole in the ground" in 2006. It's all here, from the design contests to the farcical series of ribbon-cuttings, including a photo op cornerstone-laying, to the stupid Jeff Koons balloon that recurs as an incidental sight gag. Rather than voice outrage, however, Hankin's film finally makes the indigenous variety of deadlock particular to New York politicians seem as quaintly comforting as a buttered bialy.