



ART REVIEW

The Oil Stain Is Not Part Of the Exhibit

By BENJAMIN GENOCCHIO

IN Jersey City Heights, where Margaret Murphy lives, the nearest art institution is the Jersey City Museum, on the other side of town. Galleries are few and far between in her neighborhood. Mostly, it's working class homes, dollar stores, pizza joints and Hispanic restaurants.

It seems fitting, sort of, that Ms. Murphy, an artist, should establish the neighborhood's first art gallery in a garage. She has spent her own money doing it up, helped by a grant from Pro Arts, a Jersey City arts group. The gallery, it goes without saying, is rough at the edges.

Ms. Murphy is not the first artist to start an art gallery in her home, studio or garage. It is actually something of an art world tradition, even a rite of passage for newcomers determined to find places to display their art. You can only admire the artists' grit and spirit.

The inaugural exhibition here at the Garage, as the gallery is known, is "Girl Talk," a five-woman show of artists from New York and New Jersey. It explores "the question of what artists who just happen to be girls talk about," according to the gallery's press release.

"The exhibition was really about getting together the work of a group of young women artists I thought was strong and interesting," Ms. Murphy said one recent afternoon in her newly refurbished gallery. Temperatures inside the garage that day were well below freezing.

Few of the artists make work specific to gender. Dahlia Elsayed, for instance, makes thoughtful, intensely personal diagram-like drawings of her thoughts and feelings, much of which has to do with her own relationship problems and personal anxieties.

Bethany Bristow creates blobby sculptures out of melted bottles, feathers and corn syrup, which she litters about the gallery floor like runny dog droppings or messy road kill. Formless and shallow, with a nail-polish gloss, they sort of attract and repulse you at the same time.

Lynn Mullins presents a three-minute video showing the artist sticking bits of cotton batting onto a painted blue backdrop and then bunching women's sports trophies in the foreground. The video baffles, taking you on a journey of sorts rather than delivering a message or meaning.

Diana Jensen loves portraiture. She has cut out, blown up and painted



Photographs by Jim Cummins for The New York Times

individual faces from group photographs, which are then rearranged. It is like looking at people in a crowd through a telescope.

Ms. Murphy plans to organize other group exhibitions of young and under-recognized artists. She is also accepting ideas from outside curators. So far she is only open weekends. But one thing, she says, is sure: "There will be no more shows in the dead of winter."

"Girl Talk" is at the Garage, 273 Hancock Avenue, Jersey City, through March 19. Gallery hours: Saturday and Sunday, 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. or by appointment. Information: (201) 993-9561.

Margaret Murphy recently opened an art gallery in Jersey City Heights. The five-woman show there, "Girl Talk," includes work by Dahlia Elsayed, top