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## Painting the Town Blue in Clinton Hill

### Jazz-inspired art exhibit comes to Brooklyn gallery

By JEFFREY HARMATZ

Since its development in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century, jazz music and modern art have been intertwined, and the latest manifestation of this long-standing relationship can be found at the Clinton Hill Art Gallery. A new exhibit, "Jazz: Portraits in Blue," not only features work inspired by the much-loved music, but is one part of the larger JVC Jazz Festival, one of the city's most prestigious musical events.

The exhibit, which has been an annual event for the last eight years, has been open in Harlem for several months, but is finishing its run in Clinton Hill. This is the first time that the festival's visual portion has had a presence in Brooklyn.

"We wanted to bring artists whose work is based on jazz music to the forefront," said Gwendolyn Black, curator and producer of the show. "There are so many similarities between jazz and the visual arts. They both use the same artistic vocab-

ulary, like space, harmony, texture, and rhythm."

The artists included in the gallery exhibit are from a variety of ages and backgrounds, linked only by their common subject matter. Otto Neals, Ernani Silva, and Betty Blayton Taylor are a few of the better known artists included in the exhibit. Haile Rubie, an 18 year-old girl who suffers from Down Syndrome, is another featured artist who is attracting buzz in the art world. There are more than 30 artists with work in the exhibit.

"The hardest part was limiting the amount of artists we could include," said Black, who eventually decided to focus on New York area artists, with only a few contributors from out of state.

The work ranges from photo-realistic portraits of legendary jazz musicians to expressionist interpretations of the music itself, and the variety helps to form a cohesive visual representation of the musical art form that



continues to define American culture. But despite the diversity of the works on display, one thing links the majority of the art: the color blue.

"This year, our theme is portraits in blue," said Black. "I didn't think that everybody would come through with the same color,

but when I looked around, even though these portraits are in a variety of styles and mediums, you just feel the blues."

"I like to think that we're giving back to the community," said L.B. Brown, who owns Clinton Hill Art Gallery. "And I think this artwork literally speaks for

itself."

Every piece included in the exhibition is for sale, with prices ranging from the low hundreds to \$15,000 for a large portrait of Ella Fitzgerald. Other musicians featured in the artwork are Miles Davis, Jellyroll Morton, Billie Holiday, and