

When (home) life becomes artistic metaphor

By Deb Shapiro
CNC Arts Correspondent

When guests enter Tom Cole's gym he wants them to feel right at home. He wants them to feel as if they just intruded on his personal space and are witnessing his workout session.

GALLERY While this may seem a bit voyeuristic, it should. That's the way Cole and 17 other artists want guests who experience their new exhibit at the Boston Center for the Arts' Mills Gallery to feel.

"What I will do is not necessarily what I go home and do," says Cole. "But what I want to convey to the public is the feeling they would get if they did walk into my home and that's what I was doing."

The show, "Arranged Marriages, Family Rooms and Laundry Detergent," which runs through April 13, goes beyond the bounds of an average gallery experience of looking at pictures on a wall and draws visitors into a nine-room home filled with the activities that "normally" take place in such an environment. Cole and Shannon Curry Green will be working out in the home gym/surveillance room.

Other rooms include a master bedroom which was decorated by marriage partners Jim Fossett and Suzanne Stokes, who have never before worked together; a TV family room where Steven Davis and Elise Mannella examine the role of television; a kitchen where Michael Dwyer and Jeff Warmouth "feed each other morsels of

humor and philosophy" via their on-line counters; and an attic laden with memorabilia provided by Leigh Medeiros and Jeff Smith. And Beaver Country Day School participates in an installation in progress titled "The Generation 'Y' Tea Party."

"The whole thing is a strange house tour," says Jerry Beck. "A kind of zany apartment/dwelling."

Beck, artistic director of the Revolving Museum and one of the driving forces behind the project, says there are two reasons for presenting this show. The first is that the Revolving Museum, a nonprofit artist-run organization which is working with the BCA to present this exhibit, has been focused on the community and community-based work.

"When you're doing work inside a neighborhood you notice the changes that take place," Beck says. "And what better way to present the community than to present the heart of a community, a home."

"We wanted to look at the home as a metaphor," he adds. "This talks about the home as a private and public place ... This is a broad way of exploring these themes."

Beck also chose to make this a collaborative effort. He paired artists, all of whom are involved in the Revolving Museum as either studio artists or members of the advisory council, to showcase their talents in the house. Many of the artists had never even met before this project.

"This was to see the nature of collaboration and investigate what the positive and negative dynamics are," he explains. "They



"The Generation 'Y' Tea Party," an installation in progress involving students from Beaver Country Day School, is part of "Arranged Marriages, Family Rooms and Laundry Detergent."

were encouraged to communicate and discuss what the experience of the creative process is all about.

"That's the marriage part of the title," he adds. "It gets people thinking about and using collaboration as in a marriage."

Cole and Green had never met before being brought together for this show.

"It's two ideas brought together to form a third notion," Cole says of the collaborative effort. "It was a great experience and

a challenge." □

"Arranged Marriages, Family Rooms and Laundry Detergent" runs through April 13 at the Mills Gallery, Boston Center for the Arts. An open house featuring the artists is March 8 from 2-5 p.m. Admission to the gallery and open house is free. A Revolving Museum overnight benefit Pajama Party starts April 4 at 9 p.m. Admission is \$15. Call (617) 439-8617.