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Greylock Arts gallery hits the lights

By *Bonnie Obremski, North Adams Transcript*

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Tuesday, November 13

ADAMS — Lights most people don't see — or at least don't appreciate — are designed to dazzle in an exhibition opening at the new Greylock Arts gallery on Summer Street this Friday from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m.

"They're everywhere, but we don't think about them when we're sitting at a traffic light or plugging in an electronic device," shaggy-haired curator Matthew Belanger said on Monday about light-emitting diodes, more commonly known as LEDs.

One reason LEDs are difficult to recognize is because most of the bulbs are filtered, such as in a traffic light, through a layer of plastic, Belanger said.

"They're a clear symbol of the electronic world we live in," he said of the mid-1920s invention, which grew popular in the 1960s.

As Belanger spoke, he leaned on the most popular piece in the gallery's previous exhibit — a kind of carousel in which participants push themselves on Razor scooters around a hub that lights up when the riders charge enough electricity.

Behind him, artist Miriam Songster of New York City prepared for the new exhibit. She chained cable ties into a chandelier in the storefront window that will light up with more



than 100 tiny, unfiltered LED bulbs.

Songster is one of seven artists who will present their work on Friday. The carousel will be gone by then, and so will the solar-

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paneled bikini that powered an iPod (sold to Sports Illustrated), but some new pieces will also be interactive.

Artist John Schimmel, for example, will allow people to tap on jars filled with electronic "fireflies," which are different-colored LEDs. The jars are networked, so if a person taps one of the jars, lights will pulse in the others.



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"People seem to be getting excited by what we're doing," Belanger said, smiling.

Songster, a Web site producer by day, got to know Belanger and his partner, Marianne Petit, through shared interests in computer technology, she said. She customized two chandeliers to fit into the gallery's front windows and hopes to return to Adams in the future with artwork customized to the entire community living in the former mill town. Until then, she is inviting viewers to question the value of her plastic light fixtures.


"I think chandeliers are a symbol of luxury and wealth," the petite artist said, yanking the ties into small loops. "But here, I've made them out of cable ties, which are inexpensive and don't get respect from anybody."

Belanger, who opened Greylock Arts in July, said he enjoys living in Adams after bouncing between a few large cities. He has been especially pleased when schoolchildren visit, he said — one class liked riding the scooter carousel so much, it was difficult to get them to leave.

"We're really building, and it's beginning to snowball," he said. "We're really looking forward to 2008."

The "LEDs Are Pretty" exhibit will run through Dec. 28. for more information, visit www.greylockarts.net or call 413-241-8692.

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