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Lumens exhibit energizes Advocate assistant editor

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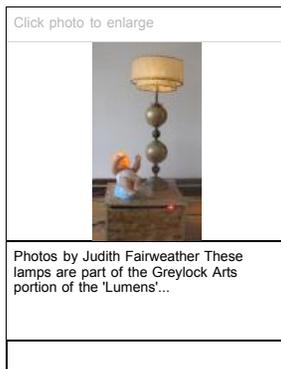
Thursday, September 18

Editor's Note: This is the final installment in a summer-long series in which Advocate Assistant Editor Judith Fairweather, a Berkshire County native, explores the county as a tourist would (no special media accommodations) and visits places she has never been. Read about her visits at blogtheberkshires.com.

As the summer hurries to a close, so does my Temporary Tourist column. In deciding where I would go for my last column (I may squeeze in one more; stay tuned for more details), I chose an entirely new approach. I wanted this column to be an investigative reporter piece.

And just what scandal is there for me to unearth in Berkshire County? The obvious answer for me was the "Lumens" exhibit, a project of Networked Realities: (Re)Connecting the Adamases, a collaboration between Greylock Arts, MCLA's Gallery 51 Annex and a Web site called turbulence (transition.turbulence.org /Works/newadams/lumens).

The basic premise of the exhibit is this: Lamps were gathered from residents of North Berkshire. Some were placed in the Greylock Arts gallery on Summer Street in Adams, while others were placed in the MCLA Gallery 51 Annex on Main Street in North Adams. They would be networked, so when a visitor stopped in front of a cluster of lamps in Adams, a corresponding cluster would illuminate in North Adams. Photos of all the lamps would also be posted online; when a viewer clicked on the image, the actual lamp would



briefly light up in its physical location.

"Impossible!" I said.

I envisioned people in both locations wearing black clothes and connected via cell phone standing in front of a panel filled with light switches. The conversation would go like this: "Adams to North Adams. Do you copy?"

"Ten-four Adams. North Adams here."

"We have a visitor. She's in front of cluster B."

"Copy that. Flipping switches for cluster B."

Well, you get the idea.

All summer, ever since the exhibit opened July 10, I have had this idea that I would investigate this crazy proposition. It would take three of us - one of us in the North Adams gallery, one in Adams and one online. We would have to be connected by phone, so we could see if this mind-boggling exhibit would function the way the artists claimed it would. Last Wednesday, I was finally able to proceed with my investigation.

Rebecca, my boss, would go to the North Adams gallery. I would stop at the Adams gallery on my way home. My colleague Kelly would be online. I would connect the three of us via a conference call on my cell phone.

There was a hiccup in our plan when I arrived in Adams to find the gallery apparently closed. Already on the phone with my fellow investigators, I wailed, "It can't be closed! The sign on the door says they're open from 12 to 5." I rattled the door handle again, thinking it might magically unlock itself.

My racket did, in fact, have an effect. Matt Belanger, artist and co-director of Greylock Arts, heard the commotion and came to the door. He explained the gallery was down for some maintenance. Still on the phone, I explained my mission, and that I had two other people involved. He graciously allowed me to enter, but cautioned that only one cluster of lights was up and functioning. No worries. All I really needed was one lamp for my test to proceed.

I entered the gallery to find lamps placed on both sides with a cleared aisle in the middle. As I walked up to cluster C, the proximity sensor there turned the cluster on. I eagerly asked Rebecca if lamps in North Adams had turned on as well. She couldn't really tell. Matt walked me to the back of the gallery, where he brought up the Web site that showed all the lamps.

The lamps on the Web are organized by cluster and location. I explained this to Kelly, the Web arm of our experiment. I told her to look for Adams cluster C, which she found. I directed her to click on the lamp with no shade. She did, and

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voila! The lamp in front of me turned on. The three of us were so excited, you would have thought we had just found the secret to spinning gold from straw. Now we had to figure out how to make it work between North Adams and Adams.

Going back to the site, I found the lamps that were in the North Adams cluster C group. I described them to Rebecca, so she could find them. Now we were set. I stepped back from my group so I wouldn't set the lamps off myself, and had her approach hers. Success. My lamps turned on. We cheered again.

My investigation had determined that, despite my disbelief, the lamps were indeed connected. The Web site does a far better job of explaining how it works than I ever could.

But perhaps you are more of a doubting Thomas than even I was. Maybe you think I am part of the conspiracy. You need to see it work for yourself. Here is the best way for you to have a successful experience. Go to the Web site first, with your two accomplices. Check out all of the lamps together. Decide which lamps, which clusters, you are going to scope out. Take note of what one of the lamps in the cluster looks like. For example, there is a really creepy baby doll in Adams cluster K. Find a lamp in North Adams cluster K online. Then, when the two of you get to your respective galleries, you will know you are standing in the right place. Proceed with your experiment.

The important thing to note is that the clusters are not labeled in the galleries, so unless you know what you are looking for, you might have trouble finding it. And speaking of having trouble finding it, the Adams gallery has no obvious sign, with the exception of some small lettering on the glass storefront. To find it, seek out the colorful Monarch Realty's butterfly sign. The gallery is right next door.

You have until Oct. 31 to accept this mission. I'm sure you'll be as excited to see the results as the three of us were. Happy investigating!

"Lumens" is on exhibit until Friday, Oct. 31. Greylock Arts is located at 93 Summer St. in Adams, next to Monarch Realty. It is open 12-5 p.m. Tuesday through Saturday. MCLA's Gallery51 Annex is located at 65 Main St. in North Adams. It is open from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Wednesday through Sunday. The lamps are connected through

transition.turbulence.org/Works/newadams/lumens. The exhibit is free.

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