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## Marianne Petit of Greylock Arts catalogues the stories of Adams in a moving way

By Elizabeth Murray  
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Transcript Intern

ADAMS -- The people of Adams love to talk and are great storytellers, according to Marianne Petit, co-owner of the local art gallery Greylock Arts.

Petit said she thought some of the stories she heard in the gallery and around Adams were so interesting she wanted to find a way to share them with everyone else.

To that end, she has created, "Recollecting Adams," a series of animated drawings that illustrate dialogues from Adams residents about their personal experiences or local history in general. Petit posts the videos on [www.turbulence.org](http://www.turbulence.org) every two weeks.

"They are mostly people I know," she said in an interview last week. "They are people who come to the gallery, walk down Summer Street or are very active in town. Sometimes it's people who just really like to talk. They are really good storytellers and are all people that I've thought at some point, 'Gosh, I really want to record this person talking.'"

Her project started in December and will last a year, eventually including 20 to 24 episodes when it is finished, she said

The first episode, "From Poland, to Slovakia, to Adams," was officially launched on Dec. 8. New episodes have been posted every two weeks, with the latest installment, featuring Mary-Ann Wojtaszek speaking about her childhood at St. Stanislas-Kostka church, going online on March 16.

Petit said each episode takes her from four days to a week to create.

"I have to work very

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quickly," she said. "For each person, I probably have anywhere between an hour and two hours of audio recorded, so there is a lot to listen to, and they have to be kind of short to be online. Some animations take longer because sometimes the technique I am using is much more time-consuming."

All of Petit's animations are different, and she illustrates the stories in a variety of ways. She uses her own drawings she has done on paper, scans watercolors into the computer, incorporates old pictures she borrows from the Adams Historical Society and gets help from the computer program Flash and the digital paint program.

"Basically, how the process works is, I find the story I want to work with and I edit that down, storyboard it out, and just start making the different scenes from there," Petit said. "I really didn't want them to be big animations. I wanted them to read more like a picture book and have the animations be secondary to the stories being told. I want the voices to be the dominant thing. It's the most important piece."

According to Petit, upcoming stories will become a little more historical and a little less personal than the first few episodes have been.

"We'll have people talk about how a church was built and what happened when the mills closed," she said. "I wanted to set everything up so you had a sense of who the different people are and whether they grew up in Adams or they came here and what their experiences were."

"Recollecting Adams," is the last work in the larger project, "Networked Realities: (Re)Connecting the Adamses. That project is a collaboration of Turbulence, Greylock Arts and MCLA Gallery 51 in North Adams. It has been made possible by funding from the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts.



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Petit and her partner, Matthew Belanger, have had a long history with Turbulence, an online art organization, and had done projects with it before opening Greylock Arts. When they opened their gallery in Adams, the people at Turbulence approached them and asked them if they would like to do a project both online and in their gallery.

"When they were driving around the area, they asked, 'What is the relationship between Adams and North Adams?' and Matthew said, 'Well, they were once a single settlement,'" Petit recalled. "That is how the idea of reconnecting the two towns came up."

Other commissions of "Networked Realities" have included "Lumens" by Matthew Belanger, Sean Riley and Ven Voisey; "Historical Essays" by Eugene Michalenko and Paul W. Marino; "Touching Gravity/2Tilt" by Caryn Heilman; and "Domain of Mount Greylock," a video portal by David Lachman.

Petit hopes the residents of Adams enjoy her work and find the local history as interesting as she has.

"I think we tend to sort of erase our tracks a lot," she said. "Some of the people I've talked to just lived really incredible lives. They really have these amazing stories to tell, and it's important to get these stories. We have the technology and resources to do that."

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