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All-purpose art Greylock Arts features attractive, wearable technology

By CATHERINE FAHY
Article Launched: 09/20/2007 09:00:42 AM EDT

Thursday, September 20

ADAMS - Diamonds are so passe.

If you want something that really catches the light, try on the solar jewelry by Alice Planas and Leif Krinkle at Greylock Arts. Made of small photovoltaic cells and surface-mount electronics on custom-designed circuit boards, the pins and pendants look like intricate, geometric indigenous jewelry from just a few steps away, but - exposed to a bright light source like the sun for any period of time - transform stored energy into glittering LEDs when light levels drop.

Planas and Krinkle said their new line of jewelry, called Starlights, meld designs, electrical components and sustainable energy in stylish accessories.

"We pushed design possibilities in order to create aesthetically pleasing wearable technology that charges in the light and electrifies in the dark," they wrote in their artists' statement.

The solar jewelry is part of Sustainable Energy Art, a group exhibit of alternative energy art and installations by students from New York University's Interactive Telecommunications Program.

Matthew Belanger, a graduate of the program with his partner, Marianne Petit, who is a professor there, bought a three-story

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building on Summer Street in Adams a year ago and opened Greylock Arts earlier this summer. Sustainable Energy Art is their second exhibit.

Solar jewelry isn't the exhibit's only wearable technology.

As long as you don't want to get wet, Andrew Schneider's solar-powered

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bikini is the perfect beach accoutrement. This piece of wearable solar-powered technology, displayed alluringly in Greylock's window, functions instead to charge your iPod so even if you can't cool off, you can stay entertained.

Another piece, "Wallflowers" by Megan MacMurray and Angela Pablo, matches aesthetics with social consciousness in strings of bright flowers. Easily the exhibit's most traditionally decorative piece, the flowers are made of discarded plastic grocery bags - the kind you see snagged on branches or rolling like tumbleweeds down city streets.

"It's about energy consumption (and) waste as a result of our over-use of plastic bags," Belanger said. "These bags end up in landfills more often than not and this piece transforms them into something less easy to discard or forget."

The exhibit also features Rory Nugent's Solar-Powered Xylophone, which Belanger said emits an unpredictable string of notes when the afternoon sun slants through the gallery window.

"There's this whole movement in sound art of autonomous instruments and this is just the latest step," Belanger said.

The largest piece in the exhibit is Krinkle's Krinkle-O-Tron, a human-powered carousel that, when turned counter-clockwise by four people pushing scooters, plays the soundtrack to Stanley Kubrick's 1971 film "A Clockwork Orange."

"That piece is sort of creepy and carousel-like," Belanger said of the music, demonstrating the Krinkle-O-Tron this week.

The faster the carousel goes, the faster the music plays, which was a big hit at last weekend's opening reception.

Belanger said at one point, a woman in her 90s, a man in his 30s and his 3-year-old son were pushing the carousel together.

"That was a really magical moment and that's what we want to do, appeal to a wide audience," he said.

The offbeat, intriguing, innovative and sustainably-powered functional pieces in Greylock Arts' current exhibit encapsulate the gallery's mission to promote interactive technical arts, Belanger said.

"We hope to keep showing unconventional art you don't see in conventional galleries either because it's deemed difficult to sell and it's not worth the risk or because it's one of a kind and the artist is not interested in selling it," he said.

After nine years of living in Boston and New York, Belanger, a Web site developer, said he and Petit are thrilled to have found an area that seems to combine the best of many worlds, including beautiful natural surroundings that remind Belanger of his Arkansas roots.

"I'm kind of burnt out on city life," he said with a wry smile, "but we didn't want to move to an area that's so remote we can't be part of an artistic community. This is central to Boston and New York but we couldn't do this in New York, or Boston for that matter. I really think this place has so many qualities."

Sustainable Energy Art will be on display through Oct. 28 at Greylock Arts, 93 Summer St. in Adams. The gallery will be open most Friday and Saturday afternoons from 1-4 p.m. or by appointment. Works in the storefront are visible at all times. Info: 413-241-8692 or greylockarts.net/

sustainable-energy-art.

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