Randy Regier's NuPenny Toy Store in Waterville, where the door is always locked but the view on his fantastic creations, like the one at right, is open 24/7.

"If I put anything in that space that says, 'This is artwork,' it lets people off the hook to think for themselves. I would rather have people wonder, 'Is it art? Is it a toy store?' I just feel it's not my place to tell people what it is or what to think about it." In an interview at his Portland home, Regier reveals a few secrets. He's using the toys as a medium for his dreams, and because his dreams feel tactile to him, he feels able to recreate them in these toy forms.

The toys also reflect literal and cultural references. Conceptually, each toy is his interpretation of a song lyric, poem or literary work that has affected him in some way. The influence of William Stafford, Charles Bukowski, Pablo Neruda, Rage Against the Machine and Al Pacino are all over these pieces. The only other thing he'll say about the NuPenny Toy Store is that he thinks it may be best viewed after hours. The nighttime aura adds to a sense of otherworldly mystery.

"I prefer it after dark," he says. "It's the difference between being in the movie theater with the lights on and the lights off."

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