See it, feel it, enjoy it. Wonder about it. The arts scene in Portland is alive with sights and sounds that are inspiring. And awe striking. Arts Guide Portland is your passport to the galleries, artists, performers, concerts, plays, readings—all things expressive and artistic—in this, Maine’s largest city. Immerse your senses.

immerse
yourself.

2011

presented by the staff of maine. & MaineHome magazines.
Randy Regier

By Peter A. Smith | Photography by Scott Peterman | May 2010 Maine Magazine Archive

Artist, craftsman, sculptor, dreamer.

A sign outside says, "NuPenny" and "I Love You." Whoever put this toy store here is not making it obvious. Inside, a gray faceless clock ticks away. Shelves are lined with boxes and boxes of bright, shiny toys. A silver flying saucer towtruck! The chrome glimmers, like diamonds under a jeweler's case. Everything is rendered in photographic grayscale, except for a single brass penny on the floor.

The colorless store appears as if it were a dream—slightly odd, slightly off, yet entirely possible. On one shelf, a spaceman has locked himself out of his lunar lander. He's got his hands up to the window, shielding the glare, and is peering through the window. The television is on inside the lander and a beautiful woman is trying to reach the spaceman.

The center of Regier's covert artistic operation, the American Dream Technical Institute, is in the basement of a rental on Smith Street, in a studio packed with a bandsaw, belt sander, welder, cardboard boxes, and thousands of rivets and grommets in brown paper bags from Boeing and Raytheon and Cessna.

This workshop is where his dreams become a reality, where he fashions robot toys with such precision that almost anyone would believe NuPenny were really a toy manufacturer with a storefront.

Regier labors away on the miniature and the gigantic, ten hours a day. His hands have been falling asleep—all pins-and-needles numb—from the years of manual work and manual art. He regularly does pull-ups in his basement studio as a preventative against carpal tunnel. "It's an industrious practice," he says. "The work that I need to make most—my best intentions—are probably in front of me, but physically I'm twenty years behind. Had I been making art in my early twenties in the sense that I knew I was thinking of art, I would already have a twenty-five-year career behind me and maybe things would be different. The worst-case scenario is going back to the bodyshop. I think I'm finally past that, but it still gives me night sweats that somehow this won't work out."

Regier's dreams seem to be working their way out into the world—with three-dimensional toy stores, intricate toys steeped with longing and desire, and a totally handsawn, totally Space Age reality.

Randy Regier | 82 Parris St. | nupennytoystore.com

• Randy Regier stands inside NuPenny toy store when it was located in Waterville.