Store causes people to stop, think
By MOLLY WALTER
The Hays Daily News
NuPenny’s Last Stand, a toy store-like installation, mysteriously showed up in the park on Main and 16th Street a few weeks ago, sitting quietly behind the Wild Bill Hickok statue. The doors are locked, and the lights are always on. All one can do is look in. And in a few weeks, it will disappear again.

The mysterious store is the work of Randy Regier. Regier can be described as a sculptor, graphic designer, toy-maker or simply an object-maker. But to Regier, he is just doing what he’s passionate about.

Regier was born in Nebraska but the majority of his life in Oregon. He graduated high school and went into the auto body business painting cars and was a freelance cartoonist on the side.

At age 34, Regier wanted to get out of the body shop. So he and his family moved to Kansas.

“We moved to Kansas because it seemed like a good place to start over. I really like Kansas,” he said.

At 35, Regier enrolled at Kansas State University and eventually declared a major in sculpture.

“I wanted to get a degree, any degree that would keep me from going back to the body shop, ” Regier said. “I stumbled into sculpture classes, and it was a perfect fit right from the start.”

After getting his bachelor’s degree, Regier went to the University of Southern Maine to get his master’s degree. He wanted to teach and learn more about the arts and spend more time understanding what his art was about.

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Taylor Dinkel, Hays, looks through the glass of Randy Regier’s NuPenny Last Stand sculptural installation set up in Union Pacific Park in late August.

STAND, FROM A1
Regier and his family eventually moved to Wichita, where they live.
Regier’s pieces often are labeled toys because that’s what they look like.

“I haven’t made one yet that’s about toys. Toys are not so much of interest to me as how they reveal things about culture,” he said.

“People pay a lot of attention to toys. They’ll walk by some really elegant, formal sculpture and stop at a toy. The kid in me says, ‘Well, if you want to get attention, there’s a model to do it right there.’”

This is the sixth time NuPenny has appeared in public. The first was in Waterville, Maine, in the entrance of a former power plant. It also has appeared in Portland and Sanford, Maine, Wichita, Art Miami in Miami and now Hays.

Each toy inside NuPenny is an interpretation of a poem, a song lyric or a literary work Regier cares for. And the store is done in gray scale. Regier said the hardest part of NuPenny was eliminating all semblance of color since even grays can be cool or warm.

No one ever has been inside NuPenny until the night of Ball Gallery Walk on Aug. 26. Regier was asked to hang around his piece for a while to answer any questions. During that time, Jason Hughes, a senior from Fort Hays State University, and his friend struck up a conversation with Regier. They were talking about the work, and Regier realized Hughes couldn’t be as engaged since he was blind. So Regier asked him if he’d like to go inside the store, to which Hughes accepted.

“I was honored that he was willing to go in there and touch the work and see it in his own way,” Regier said.

The point of the store is to show up and disappear without notice so the public doesn’t know when it gets there or why.

“That’s part of the mystery of it. The intentions have always been to create something that appears as if we’re experiencing a twilight zone in our midst, not through a television,” he said. “It’s the idea that a place we’re very comfortable and familiar with could change overnight. And that something new happens but more that something new could appear to have been there for 60 years and we’ve missed it all that time.”