

KENTUCKY KERNEL

Celebrating 39 years of independence

Exhibit opens door to students' unknowns

February 24, 2010 by [Katie Saltz](#)



Posters of submitted postcards hang in the Rasdall Gallery on Feb. 17. Photo by William Baldon | Staff

Frank Warren knows your secret.

He will share it with the world, but don't worry — no one will ever know it is you.

Warren spends his time reading 100 to 200 unsigned postcards a day as part of his brainchild, PostSecret, a project he hopes can give the world a sense of empathy and individuals a release from a hidden burden.

In November 2004, Warren printed up hundreds of self-addressed postcards and passed them out around D.C, inviting each stranger to share a secret with him. As his mailbox began to fill with the cards, Warren knew he had discovered something rare.

“I knew if I could earn the trust of strangers and they could really share an authentic secret with me, it could be very special for me,” Warren said. “I would understand how precious it was but I had no idea it would resonate with so many millions of people around the world.

From blaming God to admitting affairs, lamenting lost loves or revealing a fetish, people all over the world have entrusted a complete stranger with the very matter they bury deep in their hearts. Warren feels his project has a healing quality, and sometimes bearing your soul to a stranger may be the first step toward acceptance.

“I think (the postcards) can allow us to share a laugh with someone we’ll never meet. It can allow us to become more aware of self-accepting, of the deepest parts of who we are, and I think they can also allow us to develop empathy when we see a secret we might be keeping articulated on a stranger’s postcard,” he said.

The PostSecret phenomenon has made its way to campus with an exhibit in the Rasdall Gallery in the Student Center. UK students were invited to submit their own secrets to be posted in the exhibit along with other postcards Warren has received.

Civil engineering freshman Alexa Deep said she follows the PostSecret blog and thinks the UK exhibit can have a positive impact on campus.

“Everyone has secrets, and as human beings we’re always looking for a release and to feel some sense of closure in doing so,” she said. “Some people see sharing them with others as an outlet, while others benefit by knowing that they aren’t alone in feeling a certain way. I always read secrets and think to myself, ‘Wow, I thought I was the only one.’ It’s reassuring to know that other people in the world feel the same way you do.”

Warren’s blog and books contain secrets from people all over the world. But he finds a unique twist in the UK exhibit because it contains secrets from students, creating what he sees as an invisible support system across campus.

“... it’s one thing to visit the PostSecret Web site and know somebody some place is carrying that secret but when its on your on campus, I think there’s a real visceral connection and realization that the person walking by you in the quad or having coffee by themselves in the coffee shop or that guy or girl sitting on the other side of the lecture hall could be carrying that secret you read about,” he said

Deep said she thinks having students involved with the exhibit gives people the chance to relate with their peers by reading secrets of people they may encounter in daily life.

“Even if visiting art exhibits may not be your forte, you can still appreciate the work that others have put into it,” Deep said. “You never know, you may be able to sympathize with someone else’s secret.”

Warren said PostSecret turned his life upside down. He still can’t pinpoint the reason he started the project — but he imagines it was a battle of inner demons, and it looks as though the lighter side won.

“I feel as though I might have started the project in part because I was struggling from secrets I was keeping from myself,” he said. “And through this project I’ve been able to reconcile with secrets from my past, by being inspired by those who shared their secrets with me.”

The exhibit will remain in the Rasdall Gallery in the Student Center until March 11. The gallery is open Monday thru Friday 11 a.m. – 5 p.m.