

Artist sends message in exhibit

Mailboxes become artwork, represent UNL student's life

By Josh Nichols

Staff writer

Often we take our mailboxes for granted.

We check them every day, and often-times, they contain bills and other statements we don't want to see.

But every once in a while, the little box holds something that can brighten our day.

Whether it be money from the parents, a birthday card from grandma or just a letter from a friend who you haven't spoken to since high school, mailboxes can present some unexpected surprises.

Kelly Diamond, a senior printmaking student at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, hasn't taken this form of communication for granted.

Her exhibit "Love Mail," on display in Gallery 9, 124 S. Ninth St., symbolizes her love for the relationships she has been able to hold with family members and pen pals by means of the U.S. Postal Service.

Her display contains an array of mailboxes she has decorated and personalized to represent the different people who are important in her life.

Some are colorful, some have words printed on them, and some just look normal.

But each contains pieces of writing, pictures and other precious items she has received from loved ones and that she associates with those people.

"The exhibit is based on a reflection of who I am," Diamond said. "The mailboxes symbolize the people in my life and the basic qualities they bring out in myself."

Most of the mailboxes represent people who she described as her pen pals from her hometown of Washington, Missouri.

In a time when many students have resorted to e-mail and the World Wide Web to maintain contact with their roots, Diamond has stuck to the traditional method.

It's the personal feel in mail that Diamond likes.

"I'm trying to preserve the art of letter writing because of a fear of e-mail," she said.

When one first approaches the exhibit, he or she encounters a desk that contains many of Diamond's personal items that she would have at the desk where she writes.

It has some of her favorite books on it and pictures hanging above it of people who are important to her.

One of the pictures is of her grandpa, who died two years ago.

She said a majority of her inspiration for this show was drawn from the feelings she held for her grandfather.

One bright red mailbox sits in the center of the exhibit.

It reads "Wild Bill Sass" on the side and represents her grandfather.

Birds and butterflies have also been incorporated into her exhibit, which she said also represent her grandfather and grandmother.

Encircling the Wild Bill mailbox in the center of the room are three walls of mailboxes representing the other significant people in Diamond's life.

One mailbox represents an older couple who travels the world and sends Diamond items from everywhere they go.

Cards from museums and galleries can be found in this mailbox along with postcards and mail from other countries.



Shawn Ballarin/DN

Because they take pride in acres and acres of gardens, the couple also sends her seeds for her garden, which also can be found in this mailbox.

Another mailbox on display contains holiday cards and a girl scout uniform.

This mailbox represents her aunt who sends her cards every holiday and encouraged her to be a girl scout and do "girl things" when she was a child.

One of the more common-looking mailboxes on display represents her parents, who Diamond said "would not have an out-of-control mailbox."

A Daily Nebraskan clipping about Tom Osborne's political aspirations can be found in her parent's box.

She did this because her father is an avid football fan.

Other mailboxes displayed in the exhibit

represent Diamond's friends, and one box represents herself.

Also, six of her paintings are on display. They represent a pool her grandfather had and filled with fish after the death of her grandmother.

Diamond said she has had the idea for this exhibit for about three years.

She said her original idea was to make a show of mailboxes with mail that she had made.

Each mailbox contains articles that can be rummaged through and looked at, and Diamond encourages visitors to do so.

Her artist statement, which is displayed on the wall, reads, "Please touch the art. This installation was designed for your interaction. So go ahead ... read my mail and enjoy. Affectionally yours, Kelly"

This is the first full exhibit that Diamond has had on display in Gallery 9.

She is a relatively new member who has only been there since August.

Carol Devall, another Gallery 9 member, described Diamond as a "fabulous new mem-

"I'm trying to preserve the art of letter writing ..."

Kelly Diamond
featured artist at Gallery 9

ber." "It is a unique exhibit like I haven't seen here before," she said.

She said the interactive aspect of it is what makes it unique.

"You can spend a lot of time with this exhibit," she said. "We strive to come up with something that you don't see everywhere else."

Having her work on display makes Diamond feel as if the time put in was well invested.

"I'm glad to see this idea happen after so many years of thinking about it," she said. "The time invested makes it worth it."

PREVIEW Love Mail

WHERE: Gallery 9
124 S. Ninth St.

WHEN: March 3-31

COST: free

THE SKINNY: Artist uses mailboxes to portray influences received through mail.