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Community



Cracking the secret code

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DIVULGING personal secrets can be a difficult thing to do and can bring shame, but also relief.

This month, South Perth performance artist James Berlyn wants people to not only reveal their deepest secret, but also share it with the world behind a veil of anonymity.

Berlyn is the man behind Tawdry Heartburn's Manic Cures, a free one-on-one interactive performance, installation and web-work collaboration that has been developed as part of the Beck's Music Box series.

As part of the performance, Tawdry paints and polishes audience members' nails before inviting subjects to divulge a secret via a collection of what he calls "gossip machines".

These anonymous secrets are then placed in a box and added to the ever-expanding "wall of secrets" for passers-by to read.

They later are added to aworldofsecrets.com, a website documenting secrets disclosed at past performances.

"This idea stemmed from three specific experiences beginning with me being a freelance artist and having done a Certificate II in Nail Technology as a way of paying bills, but hating working in a salon," Berlyn said.

"Secondly, this idea stemmed from a symposium run two years ago by Perth's own PVI Collective about hybridity in arts and being inspired to make performing arts with more digital content.

"Finally, I had a friend show me the work of American community artist Frank Warren, whose books of his project Post Secret were wonderful, however it left me questioning if I could do something like that as a live performance."

Berlyn said the the concept of sharing secrets was an opportunity to engage with his audiences.

"I do think that the truth, however painful, sets a person free," Berlyn said.

"While I don't wish to know who the authors are of the secrets, I want them to feel better for having tried to put into words for themselves something that may have been painful or elusive. Also it is fascinating to read a wall covered in secrets and to realise how many of them cover topics or experience that are relevant to your own life."

Tawdry Heartburn's Manic Cures will take place on February 14, 19, 20, 21, 26, 27, 28.

Manic Cures is free by appointment on the night.

Visit www.aworldofsecrets.com, www.performinglineswa.org.au and www.perthfestival.com.au.