

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

April 28, 2011

Alden B. Dow Museum of Science and Art presents:

**What: The Curious World of Patent Models**

**When: April 30 – June 18, 2011**

**Where: Galleries, Alden B. Dow Museum of Science and Art, Midland Center for the Arts, 1801 W. St. Andrews Rd., Midland, MI 48640**

**Cost: \$8 Adults | \$5 Children | FREE to Museum members**

**Information:** Call Ticket Office at (989) 631-8250 or (800) 523-7649 or [www.mcfta.org](http://www.mcfta.org)

**Find this on our website:** <http://www.mcfta.org/ExhibitionsABDM.html#patents>

MIDLAND - The Patent Act of 1790 required patent applicants to submit a model of their invention. The model requirement was abolished in 1880, but many of these charming curiosities survive. On loan from the Rothschild Petersen Patent Model Museum, are approximately 60 beautiful, one-of-a-kind artifacts in **The Curious World of Patent Models**, on display April 30 – June 18, 2011, in the galleries of the Alden B. Dow Museum of Science & Art. Museum admission is \$8 Adults | \$5 Children | FREE to ABDM members. Check [mcfta.org](http://mcfta.org) for current Museum hours.

### **THE ROTHSCHILD PATENT MODEL COLLECTION**

The Rothschild Patent Model Collection is the largest private collection of viewable U.S. patent models in the world, representing the work of many women, foreign and famous inventors. With over 4,000 patent models and related documents, the collection contains precious historic artifacts that depict America's heritage of inventiveness, and exemplify the spirit upon which our country was founded: "Yankee ingenuity." They showcase the innovation of the nation's past and serve to foster a new generation of American inventive spirit. <http://www.patentmodel.org/>

### **A SHORT HISTORY OF PATENT MODELS**

Patent models were to be no more than 12 inches square, with paperwork and diagrams explaining the item's purpose, construction and operation. More than 200,000 models were submitted under the Patent Act of 1790. The patent model requirement lasted until the end of the Industrial Revolution in the late 1880s, when it was deemed unnecessary primarily due to space considerations.

Many of the models look like collectible miniatures. A majority were made by model-making shops for which patent work became a cottage industry. Some models can be perceived as not only artifacts from the history of technology, but also as finely wrought examples of folk art. Most models are a fraction of the invention's actual size. With all patent models, the patent number and description is noted on a tag, attached to the model with a piece of red twill tape, giving rise to the expression "government red tape."

Fires at the Patent Office in 1836 and 1877 destroyed tens of thousands of the models. Eventually, the agency was strapped for space and Congress ordered the patent models to be sold in 1925. The Smithsonian Institution acquired some of the models. Others were returned to the inventors' families or destroyed. The remaining lot was sold to collectors.

Today, there are more than 7,600,000 U.S. patents, but applicants now submit only written specifications and diagrams of their inventions, not the actual patent model.

The Alden B. Dow Museum of Science and Art (ABDM) provides a forum to engage the people of mid-Michigan in the constructive and creative expressions found in science and in art. Exhibitions in the Museum, classes at the Museum School, multiple outreach programs, a permanent collection and various special events are all components in the ABDM programming.

Midland Center for the Arts, Inc. is a non-profit, tax-exempt corporation formed under the laws of the State of Michigan incorporating six groups: Alden B. Dow Museum of Science and Art, Center Stage Theatre, MATRIX:MIDLAND, Midland County Historical Society, Midland Symphony Orchestra, and Music Society – Choral. Activities at Midland Center for the Arts are supported in part by the Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs, a partner agency of the National Endowment for the Arts. For the latest Center news, visit our web site at [www.mcfta.org](http://www.mcfta.org).

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