

CREATIVE CORE

It's often been said that necessity is the mother of invention, but Ty Marshal sees invention as the mother of civic pride. His latest project as artist-in-residence at the Tech Garden is titled *Patently Syracuse*, and it celebrates a long, rich and continuing history of creativity in our locality as reflected in the inventions that were thought up and brought to fruition here. It will be on view until April 19.

"Syracuse was very important in the history of manufacturing in this country," says Alan Rothschild of Cazenovia's Rothschild Petersen Patent Model Museum. He refers to the turn of the 20th century as a golden era for Syracuse in this regard. At the time, hundreds of patent applications were coming out of the area because of ramped-up industrial activity and a large, well-educated populace.

Rothschild was on hand for the opening of the show with 15 fragile patent models pertinent to the exhibit. Unfortunately, these one-of-a-kind items could not be safely displayed for the duration of the show. The Onondaga Historical Association has lent one patent model of a motorized theater chair, which remains on view. The 40 patents are arranged chronologically from those in the 1800s up to the mango slicer, which was filed in 2005.

The bulk of the show consists of pieces that are essentially colorized enlargements of the patent applications. These manipulations are viewed side-by-side with photocopies of the documents at their original size. Viewers can choose whether to stand at a distance and reflect on the artistic interpretation of the document or flip through and scrutinize stapled-together sheets of letter paper.

The beauty of these documents is in their specific and detailed nature: no-nonsense typewritten legalese, exacting drawings which diagram the mechanics down to each initialed moving part, spidery signatures of inventors, witnesses and attorneys. Each is a bare-bones outline of a dream, a window into an individual's imagination that also shines light on the time period and society in which they lived.

On display are copies of the patent applications for a few dozen gizmos from the esoteric to the quotidian. See the inner workings of the 24-second shot clock, which has been adding drama to basketball since the mid-1950s when it was invented by Danny Biasone. It's perhaps our most widely appreciated and recognized contribution to the general good, especially during the month of March.

Most inventions don't receive this level of acclaim, but still have enormous impact on our daily lives. Take, for example, the Brannock device, which can be seen on this show's promotional posters. Although this handy tool for getting an accurate shoe size measurement is immediately recognizable by virtually everyone in the country, few know the name of its inventor (Charles Brannock) or that he had a shoe store in downtown Syracuse.

"What surprised me most was the amount of inventions that have been conceived of, developed or manufactured in Central New York," says Marshal. "Few of us are aware that the serrated knife was invented here, or for that matter, the dental chair and the pneumatic tire."

The venue itself serves to make Marshal's point that Syracuse is still a place of vital creativity. With enthusiasm he pointed out that "when visitors enter the Tech Garden they are surrounded by high-tech businesses like Brand Yourself {a platform that allows you to control your own Google results} and MyMuzik {a digital music stand}, not to mention Ephesus, which recently developed a technology that will dramatically change the light bulb industry."

It adds to the experience to imagine that the person passing in the hall might become our next great inventor.

Patently Syracuse at The Gallery at The Tech Garden, 235 Harrison St., continues through April 19. The gallery is free and open weekdays, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. For more information, call 474-0910.





