

The World's Only Global Musical Instrument Museum

Press Release

MIM to Host Special Exhibition *Dragons and Vines: Inlaid Guitar Masterpieces* Opening Nov. 5 *Museum Welcomes Unique Instruments from Master Inlay Artists and Manufacturers*

PHOENIX (Aug. 30 2016) – This November the [Musical Instrument Museum](#) (MIM) celebrates the unparalleled combination of imagination and artistry in inlaid guitars. Guitars are an iconic part of music history and will make their mark again with this never-before-seen special exhibition that showcases more than thirty exquisite instruments. MIM is the only location in the world hosting this exhibition.

Opening November 5, 2016, [Dragons and Vines: Inlaid Guitar Masterpieces](#) presents a collection of instruments featuring stunning inlay design created by the greatest contemporary North American inlay artists and luthiers. The exhibition is presented in partnership with the Maryland-based inlay company [Pearl Works](#), with the majority of the pieces coming from the private collection of Larry Sifel (1948—2006), the company's founder.

Each of the instruments vividly illustrates the transformation of bold imagination into reality, from snarling dragons to delicate floral patterns as well as re-creations of historic artwork and hot-rod automobiles. Some of the instruments go beyond sheer refinement of the artwork and actually tell the stories of the artists. All of the instruments displayed are of limited edition or one-of-a-kind creations, many of which have never before been on public display.

This special exhibition consists of guitars, banjos, and one ukulele, featuring inlaid artwork created from materials including abalone shell, mother-of-pearl, gold, copper, wood, and others. These materials are manually fitted onto the instruments with diligent precision, transforming each one into a unique masterpiece. Highlights of the exhibition include:

- **“Dragon 2002” Electric Guitar, 2002, Pearl Works, Paul Reed Smith (PRS) Guitars** – Designed by Jeff Easley, an independent designer, this guitar depicts a close-up view of a dragon's head covering almost 90 percent of the body. The materials used include shells, mammoth ivory, and other exotic elements. Once the design was installed on the guitar, the surface was airbrushed by Paul Boyd, a longtime PRS employee.
- **“Martin D-50 Koa Deluxe” Acoustic Guitar, 2003, Pearl Works, C. F. Martin & Co.** – This instrument's inlaid work depicts Martin's traditional “Tree of Life” design. The vine patterns are cut from dark-heart abalone shell and are outlined in mother-of-pearl. Prior to Sifel's involvement, the Martin guitar company was unable to expand any “standard” production models with this level of decoration because it could not effectively be duplicated beyond the one-off examples.
- **“Night Dive” OM Guitar, 2004, Pearl Works, C. F. Martin & Co.** – This instrument illustrates the process of collecting shells for inlay. The center of the fretboard depicts divers collecting abalone shells, rendered as if seen through rippling water. Chuck Erikson, known as the “Duke of Pearl,” holds a lantern that lights the scene and gathers the shells that the divers collect. Sifel is depicted with his power saw inside a boat, and Grit Laskin, an inlay artisan, is peering into the scene from behind the boat. The materials for this piece include reconstituted stone and Corian.

“MIM's newest special exhibition is a superlative example of what can be achieved with strong partners who share our vision of showing how we innovate, adapt, and learn from each other through music,” said April

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Salomon, MIM's executive director. "Guests will be astonished by this remarkable collection of inlaid instruments that, at once, reflect an uncompromising dedication to guitar craftsmanship and extraordinary artistic innovation."

Similar to other displays in MIM's permanent galleries, *Dragons and Vines: Inlaid Guitar Masterpieces* will include high-quality audio and video content, such as interviews with people who have helped make guitar inlay the incredible art form it is today. Interviewees include a distributor of raw natural shells, representatives from major guitar manufacturers, musicians who have played these special instruments, and the inlay artists who created these works of art.

"The video will work together with the instruments to help museum guests appreciate not only how these masterpieces are made but also who the artists are that make them and how each of their unique personalities is expressed in their inlay art," said Colin Pearson, cocurator of the exhibition.

The exhibition will be on display in MIM's Target Gallery from November 5, 2016, through September 4, 2017. Information about supplemental programming will be announced in the coming months.

Admission

\$10 for *Dragons and Vines: Inlaid Guitar Masterpieces* exhibition only
\$7 when purchased with general museum admission

The Musical Instrument Museum is located at 4725 E. Mayo Boulevard in Phoenix (corner of Tatum and Mayo Boulevards, just south of Loop 101). For general museum information and a full schedule of events, visit MIM.org or call 480.478.6000.

About MIM

The Musical Instrument Museum (MIM) enriches our world by collecting, preserving, and making accessible an astonishing variety of musical instruments and performance videos from every country in the world. MIM offers guests a welcoming and fun experience, incomparable interactive technology, dynamic programming, and exceptional musical performances. MIM fosters appreciation of the world's diverse cultures by showing how we innovate, adapt, and learn from each other to create music—the language of the soul.

Find MIM on Facebook: [Facebook.com/MIMphx](https://www.facebook.com/MIMphx); Twitter and Instagram: [@MIMphx](https://twitter.com/MIMphx), [#ScalesandStrings](https://www.instagram.com/MIMphx)

About Pearl Works

Pearl Works has distinguished itself as a leading pioneer and provider of inlay design and production services to major guitar manufacturers and independent luthiers. Founded by Larry and Jean Sifel, Pearl Works now operates an impressive facility capable of handling both large and small custom orders with uncompromising quality and precision.

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