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Continued from September 2011 CTI Newsletter

Focus Lighting Dinosaur Exhibit at the Natural History Museum in Los Angeles

When Focus Lighting needed Custom Flocked Top Hats for metal halide and LED architectural fixtures for a Dinosaur Exhibit at the Natural History Museum in Los Angeles they came to City Theatrical.

Here's how they did it ...

CTI: What were the general parameters and design needs for the project?

Focus Lighting: The lighting design for the Natural History Museum in Los Angeles was part of a three year collaboration between [Focus Lighting](#) and exhibit designer – Evidence Design. The lighting was designed to support the museum's mission of inspiring interest in the mysteries behind dinosaurs. The museum aimed to create dynamic displays as opposed to simply providing "static information." Housing over 300 fossils and 20 complete mounts of dinosaurs and sea creatures, Natural History Museum's new addition rivals many of the world's leading dinosaur halls.

The lighting design sought to add a sense of clarity and definition to complement the Dinosaur Hall and create a lasting impression with the viewer. The intent is for each specimen to stand out on its own while contributing to the overall composition of the exhibit.

One of the main challenges in lighting the Dinosaur Hall was accentuating the fine details on the fossils – 85% of which are real, not replicas or casts. For example, we had to determine the optimal height and angle of the accents that wash across the fossilized footprints. In order to achieve this we coordinated with the museum curator and conducted multiple tests – at our office, at the museum exhibit fabrication shop, and at the museum during construction.

Using the bone and fossil replicas created in our office, we were able to not only test different lighting fixtures and angles, but we were also able to test different options in terms of background colors. We also examined the LED and metal halide fixtures for glare and distribution and then developed custom flocked snoots for all the track heads to reduce glare.

Since the project is located in Los Angeles, we had to keep in mind California's strict energy code – Title 24. The lighting design uses metal halide and LED for their low maintenance and low wattage. Ceiling tracks that used metal halide were placed above the platforms, and recessed underneath the platforms were a combination of metal halide and LEDs. These required an extensive amount of testing because the platforms were composed of multiple angular planes.

CTI: Why did you decide on using CTI ?

Focus Lighting: We knew we needed custom flocked snoots economically priced and fast. Who else would you call besides City Theatrical?"

CTI: Did you do any preliminary testing?

Focus Lighting: Yes. Focus Lighting made mock ups. CTI made prototypes and the first article was also tested.

Credits:

Natural History Museum of Los Angeles: Client
Jennifer Morgan – project manager

Dr. Jane Pisano – museum director

Evidence Design: Exhibit Designers
Jack Pascaros

Shari Berman

Lexington Design + Fabrication: Installer/fabricator Graphics on Dino Hall: KBDA - Kim Baer

Focus Lighting: Lighting Designers

- Paul Gregory – Principal Designer
- Juan Pablo Lira – Lighting Designer
- Stephanie Daigle – Assistant Lighting Designer
- Hilary Manners – Assistant Lighting Designer
- Kenny Schutz – Project Manager

Photographs by Juan Pablo Lira

