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Reich&Petch completes SI's Hall of Fossils—Deep Time

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Reich&Petch is delighted to announce the completion of the David H. Koch Hall of Fossils—Deep Time gallery at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of Natural History!

Comprising over 31,000 sf of gallery space, the new Hall of Fossils is one of the Smithsonian's largest galleries. R&P designed the Hall, which takes visitors on a journey through 4.6 billion years of evolution and global change on Earth, to be lively and inspiring with the aspiration of bringing the history of Earth to life. As visitors journey through the hall, they see fossils posed as in life—a Tyrannosaurus Rex overpowering a Triceratops and a startled Pronghorn races from a pack of hungry wolves. As their backdrop, large oversized mural recreations beautifully depict the worlds from Earth's past in vivid detail accented by life-sized, hand-painted, contour-cut metal trees. Specimens appear to come to life as they seem to affect their displays—the floor under the Stegosaurus appears smashed with tiles uplifted and jumbled where its tail seems to have struck. The gallery is rich with such moments frozen in time for visitors to experience the essence of what life once was.

One of the key components of the gallery experience is wayfinding to help visitors navigate not only the expansive gallery but also through geological time. Using the concept of the "ribbon of time," introduced at both entrances through a sculpted geological ribbon spiraling open towards the visitor, R&P designed matching ribbon-like markers that identify each geological period. Each period has a color and icon identified on the markers, on wayfinding maps and on inforails located throughout the Hall.

In addition, to highlight the extremity of the three major extinction events in Earth's history, R&P introduced three matching abrasive black walls that make a bold statement by cutting through the circulation path where they are located in geological time. These visual strategies not only help visitors understand where they are in the gallery and in geological time, but also demonstrate how life can be impacted by outside forces.

Smithsonian's Hall of Fossils is a gallery without parallel. Reich&Petch's use of artistry and design to integrate complex messages and dense displays is deeply enriching, thought-provoking and beautiful.

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