

22 WEST 19TH STREET, 10TH FL
NEW YORK, NY 10011-4204
T 212.807.0011
F 212.807.0870
WWW.CARBONESMOLAN.COM

PRESSRELEASE

Carbone Smolan Agency Designs Wayfinding and Signage System for the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles

A refreshed signage system provides a bridge for the museum's period of restoration into the future

NEW YORK, October 13, 2010 – The Carbone Smolan Agency (CSA) has developed a wayfinding and signage program for the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles (NHM LA) that celebrates the collection with dynamic photographic imagery on an architectural scale. The museum, operating since 1913, is in the midst of an extensive five-year architectural expansion plan that includes installation of new exhibits and renovation of its historic buildings. The ambitious plan will culminate in 2013 for the Museum's centennial celebration.

The challenge for CSA was to design a wayfinding and graphics system that would guide visitors through the museum—both during construction and after—while complementing the diverse architectural conditions. In addition to helping visitors navigate the complex and expanding space, CSA was asked to create a system that could be easily modified to accommodate new exhibitions and make it accessible during the period of renovation.

CSA is working in collaboration with NHM's Creative Services department and Kim Baer Design Associates, Los Angeles, the Museum's consultant for branding to bring the graphic personality of the museum to the third dimension. NHM LA's signage and wayfinding needs are complex and challenging. "The success of a visitor's experience is directly linked to his or her ability to enjoy the wonders of the museum's collection without obstacles, especially during this exciting period of transition," says, Cynthia Wornham, NHM's Director of Marketing. "The goal for the collaboration was to communicate NHM's mission: to inspire wonder, discovery, and responsibility for our natural and cultural worlds under one holistic brand image," she adds.

PRESS CONTACT

JUDY KALVIN
KALVIN PUBLIC RELATIONS

114 OGDEN AVENUE, 2ND FL
DOBBS FERRY, NY 10522
T 914.693.0123
F 914.693.5111
JKALVIN@KALVINPR.COM



CSA's overall strategy was built upon six principles to help guide visitors through the museum: clarity through contrast, consistent typefaces/colors, collection-based imagery, enhanced lighting, economical and sustainable materials, and digital media. Together, this provides a visual vocabulary that establishes a reassuring sense of consistency to enhance the visitor experience. The scope of the project includes recommendations for facade banners, main entrance admissions desk, digital displays, hall and corridor identification and directionals, wayfinding maps, poster displays, donor recognition signs, code required signs, and interior and exterior construction signage across all of the museum's buildings.

The visual vocabulary of the program allows visitors to enjoy the museum unencumbered. Vibrant large-scale signage with easily updated fabrication techniques is designed to expand with the museum as it evolves. To further the museum's accessibility for a wider audience, CSA created bi-lingual messages to serve Spanish-speaking visitors supplemented by pictograms at key locations. The museum can rely on these principles to inform additional applications that might be necessary as NHM continues to evolve.

"The banners and signage provide an ideal backdrop for branding, messaging and exhibit promotion. With large type and stunning photographs--taken from the museum's collection--these signs create a 'landmark'-like effect at key entrances," says Ken Carbone, chief creative director, CSA. "The scale of the project is a testament to how an historical institution can reinvigorate its cultural experience without spending a fortune."

The result is a system that meets short-term needs while preparing for the museum's long-term development. Visitors can enjoy the best of NHM while staying up to date on coming enhancements and ensuring design flexibility for future growth.

Credits

Principal: Ken Carbone

Project Manager: Joseph Eicher

Senior Designer: Bob Callahan

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About the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles:

The Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County is a crown jewel of Los Angeles' museums. A national leader in exhibitions, education and research, the Museum is L.A.'s second oldest cultural institution, opening its doors in 1913. It is the largest natural and historical museum in the Western United States, safe guarding more than 35 million spectacular, diverse specimens and artifacts.

About Carbone Smolan Agency

The Carbone Smolan Agency is a design and branding company based in New York City. For over three decades, CSA has integrated content, strategy and art to create comprehensive 2D, 3D and digital design solutions for an impressive roster of brands. The agency's client list includes: W Hotels, Morgan Stanley, Taubman Centers, Mandarin Oriental Hotels, Canon, Carnegie Textiles, The Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Corbis Images, Architectural Record Magazine and the Musee de Louvre. Their work has been recognized for design excellence and published internationally.