

Museum at Prairiefire

Overland Park, Kansas

Role: Architect & Museum Planner for New Museum, led team of engineers and museum specialists

Client: Merrill Companies, LLC

Program: Changing exhibition gallery, children's discovery room, lobby, cafe, gift shop, function space, classrooms, exhibit support, and offices

Building Area: 41,000 sf

Status: 2014

LEED Silver

Description: The Museum at Prairiefire is designed as a regional civic hub bringing world-class educational traveling exhibits from the American Museum of Natural History to a community hungry to engage in broader cultural and scientific experiences. At the same time, the architecture of the museum creates an identity for the community by celebrating the rich story of the region.

For this new museum, the goal is to inspire excitement and discovery. The architectural vehicle to do this is drawn from local inspirations. The design concept evokes the imagery of one of the most unique aspects of the Kansas tallgrass prairie: the prairie fire burns.

Rolling stone forms are the backdrop for vibrant 'lines of fire'. Materials dynamically shifting in color and reflection bring these fires to life: multi-colored iridescent stainless steel panels mixed with an innovative use of dichroic glass.

Whereas the stone volumes are backdrop, the fire elements physically engage visitors. The playful, sculptural and colorful design creates an excitement that draws the visitor in.

The interior invitingly opens through from street to wetlands. Within the Great Hall the fire shapes form unique volumetric spaces and shifts in scale, creating countless moments for





discovery.

To evoke the ephemeralness of flames, the walls of the 'lines of fire' are designed as thin as possible. Narrow tube columns are spaced 25" apart, encouraging people to stand between them. The lack of apparent structure makes the Great Hall volume float, expand around corners, and dynamically engulf the visitor.