

SCIENCE LITERATURE MUSIC ART

Our Dinosaurs Visit Japan

By Kathryn M. Duda

Dinosaurs from The Carnegie Museum of Natural History are currently touring Japan. They are part of the *Dinosaurian Exposition*—a 20,000-square-foot exhibition that is traveling among stores in the large Mitsukoshi department store chain.

While it may be difficult for Americans to imagine going to a department store to see a major natural history, or art, exhibition, in Japan it is very much the norm. For various reasons, such as the concentration of collections in private and royal-family hands, Japan does not have a Western-style museum tradition. Department stores thus serve as cultural centers where people go not only to purchase merchandise, but to congregate, to learn, to be entertained.

Forming a major portion of the exhibition are items provided by The Carnegie: more than 30 actual specimens, such as fossilized dinosaur skin, eggs, teeth and bones; the skulls of *Edmontosaurus*, *Camarasaurus* and *Diplodocus* (whose value and delicate condition required that it be accompanied by museum staff on the trip to Japan); and a cast of the skeleton of a "teenage" *Camarasaurus* that was discovered virtually intact.

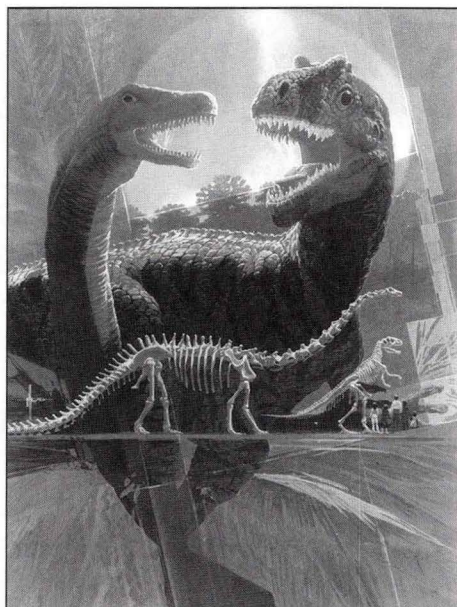
In addition to sending material from its own collections, The Carnegie Museum of Natural History assisted Mitsukoshi in gathering dinosaur casts from other sources, including Unique Artistic Services Studio in New York; Dinolab in Salt Lake City; and the Academy of Natural Sciences in Philadelphia. These casts, which reflect The Carnegie's collections, include the large and ferocious predator *Tyrannosaurus rex*; the first dinosaur discovered by The Carnegie's scientists and one of the longest-known dinosaurs, *Diplodocus*; the large carnivore *Allosaurus*; and the bony-plated vegetarian *Stegosaurus*. Alcazar Corporation in Albuquerque provided a fleshed-out model of *Allosaur*.

The *Dinosaurian Exposition* was shown in Mitsukoshi's flagship store in Nihombashi, Tokyo, from July 21 through August 9, and is now traveling among six other Mitsukoshi stores throughout Japan. In Nihombashi, attendance was anywhere from 10,000 to 22,000 per day—figures most American museums would consider phenomenal. Admission was \$6 for adults, a little less for children.

"Japanese children are as in love with dinosaurs as are American children," says Museum of Natural History Director James E. King, who traveled to Japan to participate in the exhibition's launch. He was particularly impressed by the skill and enthusiasm of Japanese children working with inter-active video displays, which compare the gaits of various dinosaurs and allow users to hear dinosaurs' "voices."

King also was surprised by the Japanese people's familiarity with the "Carnegie" name. He says they admire Andrew Carnegie because he rose from poverty to great wealth, and because he used that wealth to excavate the beloved dinosaurs and to otherwise benefit the public by building museums and libraries.

Before negotiations actually began for the *Dinosaurian Exposition* in early 1990, Mitsukoshi officials visited The Carnegie Museum of Natural



The exhibition poster used by the Mitsukoshi chain of department stores.

The largest department stores in Japan assume the role that museums and cultural centers have in the United States

Mitsukoshi's flagship store also has several restaurants; a music hall, which hosts concert and lecture series; a rooftop stage, featuring concerts by the store's own band; weather towers; exhibition galleries; a travel agency; an insurance agency; and a real estate agency. As Mitsukoshi President Yoshiaki Sakakura writes in the 1990 annual report, department stores "are looked upon as places to find new amusements unavailable in the home or workplace." Indeed, the company recently ran a newspaper ad with the headline, "Mitsukoshi Is Now A Museum." Sakakura explains: "This expression means that we want Mitsukoshi Department Store to be a place which provides pleasure and gives cultured and intellectual stimulation to our customers. Moreover . . . we are striving to present a dynamic store where people can enjoy a multitude of discoveries and create dreams for the future."

Naturally, sales also benefit from this approach: Mitsukoshi reported "unexpectedly high" sales figures in 1990, a year in which 19.5 million people visited its stores, buying over 6.7 billion-dollars-worth of merchandise.

The Mitsukoshi chain extends beyond its 21 Japanese stores. It also owns 27 stores, restaurants and offices in Europe and the U.S., as well as other projects, including a resort hotel and a private sports club.

In this era of globalization, Mitsukoshi is in the forefront. By participating in the *Dinosaurian Exposition*, The Carnegie, too, is reaching out beyond our national borders. Says King, "It's a wonderful chance for The Carnegie Museum of Natural History to share our collections with people who might never otherwise have an opportunity to see them. We're happy to be doing something for another part of the world." ■

Kathryn M. Duda is assistant editor of Carnegie Magazine.