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**Linetec’s finishes match color and performance for the**

**National Aquarium’s iconic skylight renovation by Super Sky**

Wausau, Wisconsin (July 2024) – The National Aquarium in Baltimore renovated its iconic pyramid-shaped skylight that caps its “Upland Tropical Rain Forest” immersive exhibit on Pier 3 of the Inner Harbor. The project was completed in partnership with architectural firm Design Collective, general contractor Plano-Coudon and Super Sky Products Enterprises. According to the Aquarium, this critical improvement ensures the future of the glass pyramid for the next half-century.

To refresh its appearance and update its performance, Super Sky teamed with Skylight Partners of America to repair and replace the existing skylight. Where necessary, Super Sky manufactured and installed new aluminum framing systems. Along with bird-friendly glass, the updated skylight features aluminum framing finished by Linetec to meet coastal conditions and to preserve the existing exterior and interior color palette.

Super Sky’s renovation manager, Todd Wilde, enthusiastically shared his compliments saying, “This very high-profile, monumental project turned out looking great and was a very successful project. There is great satisfaction in seeing your repair concept come to fruition, get completed without too many issues, look like a brand-new product once completed and know that you helped the owner improve the aesthetics and performance of the buildings – all while minimizing the impact to the occupants.”

***Finding an ideal (color) match***

For many years and many high-profile projects, Super Sky has relied on Linetec as its single solution for architectural finishing. To help ensure color consistency with the critical appearance, Linetec paint technicians examine a finished part from the existing building to create the closest match possible. Even if the precise details from the original finish are known, adjustments can be made so the newly finished material aligns with the correct vintage of color currently on the building.

“For existing buildings in need of color matching, our unparalleled expertise ensures near-perfect results,” said Tammy Schroeder, director of marketing for Linetec. “We use the latest technologies to analyze and formulate thousands of color variations, ensuring creation of the exact color specified. With our in-house experts and computerized blending capabilities, we’ve applied more than 65,000 unique colors.”

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For Super Sky’s aluminum-framed skylight system on the National Aquarium, the design team specified Quaker Bronze as the color. Different paint coating manufacturers each have their own special shades of Quaker Bronze. To ensure the correct match, the design team references the unique Linetec color code, which is LT602. This is one of 20 standard in-house colors offered by Linetec. Standard colors generally provide the most economical choice for architectural coatings, while still delivering the highest performance painted finish.

***Ensuring durable finishes for coastal environments***

In addition to matching the aesthetic requirements for finishing Super Sky’s aluminum-framed skylight system on the National Aquarium, Linetec also meets the high-performance requirements for the project. The design team specified a 70% fluoropolymer resin-based coating that meets AAMA 2605. Published by the Fenestration and Glazing Industry Alliance (FGIA), this is the most stringent industry standard for painted coatings available for aluminum-framed skylights and other architectural aluminum building products.

For the National Aquarium, Linetec applied a PPG Duranar® two-coat architectural liquid paint to Super Sky’s extruded aluminum framing members under factory quality-controlled conditions. Standard color two-coat systems consist of a primer and color coat. The Duranar coating’s fluoropolymer formulation includes 70% polyvinylidene fluoride (PVDF) resin.

Considering Baltimore’s hot summers, cold winters and proximity to the coast, fluoropolymer coatings with 70% PVDF resin offer the ultimate protection in building performance. In compliance with AAMA 2605, these finishes exhibit outstanding resistance to humidity, color change, chalking, gloss loss, chemicals and salt spray. Linetec ensures a long-lasting, durable finish, typically supported with a 10-year warranty. No other coating system can withstand the rigors of nature and time like those based on 70% PVDF resin coatings.

***Respecting the environment – inside and out***

As an environmentally responsible finisher, Linetec safely captures and destroys volatile organic compounds (VOCs) associated with liquid coatings during its paint application process and repurposes the heat produced from their reclamation. This means that when the finished products from Linetec are installed on a building project, such as the National Aquarium, there are no adverse effects from “off gassing” on the building’s indoor air quality or on its human and animal occupants.

The renovated skylight also helps protect the birds outside the National Aquarium. The glass panes had not been replaced since the National Aquarium opened 41 years ago and were due for an upgrade. Design Collective selected an opaque glass with an acid-etched pattern that deters bird collisions.

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The new glass and the skylight’s surrounding LEDs minimize light pollution, creating an ambient nighttime glow from the outside. On the inside, the glass provides a diffused light and its low-e coating helps maintain the required climate, offering a comfortable experience for both animals and guests. Visitors can see a variety of colorful tropical birds, two-toed sloths, blue poison dart frogs, yellow-footed tortoises and golden lion tamarins, along with 160 species of continuously growing plants from South America that feed and shelter the animals.

***Overcoming challenges for a successful completion***

Replacement and installation on the Aquarium skylight’s 679 glazing units began in March 2022 and progressed as planned through completion in September. To replace the pyramid’s glazing, the team needed to work at 96-foot heights on a sloped surface.

“There are not many subcontractors in the country qualified to do this kind of work,” said Plano-Coudon’s vice president, Cliff Milstead, LEED AP. “They did a really great job figuring out some challenging logistics.”

At the November 2022 reopening celebration event, National Aquarium’s president and CEO John Racanelli said, “Though many of the changes… may not be noticeable to the eye, they have greatly improved the environment for the animals and plants, as well as made it safer for our staff.”

Recognizing the thoughtful and successful renovation, the National Aquarium and its project team have received several accolades. At the Associated Builders and Contractors of Greater Baltimore’s 2023 Excellence in Construction Awards, the project was recognized as a Gold Winner. The Metropolitan Baltimore’s Building Congress & Exchange also honored the project with multiple 2023 Craftsmanship Awards including for the skylight renovation and for the overall building.

**The National Aquarium; “Upland Tropical Rain Forest” exhibit, 501 E. Pratt St., Baltimore, MD 21202; https://aqua.org/explore/exhibits/upland-tropical-rain-forest**

* Architect: Design Collective; Baltimore; https://www.designcollective.com
* General contractor: Plano-Coudon, LLC; Baltimore; https://plano-coudon.com
* Façade/glazing contractor and skylight manufacturer: Super Sky Products Enterprises, LLC.; Milwaukee; https://www.supersky.com
* Glass replacement contractor: Skylight Consultants of America, Inc.; Indianapolis
* Aluminum framing finishing service provider: Linetec, a brand of Apogee Enterprises, Inc.; Wausau, Wisconsin; https://linetec.com
* Photography: Prime Meridian Photo, courtesy Super Sky Products Enterprises
* Installation videos – Skylight Consultants of America: https://www.youtube.com/@nationalaquariumskylightre6958/videos

To learn more about Linetec finishing and value-added services for aluminum, please call 888-717-1472, email sales@linetec.com or visit [https://linetec.com.](https://linetec.com/specialty-finishes/copper-anodize/)

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