

Mohegan Sun's Design Elements Bring Mohegan Legends to Life

Three legendary firms join forces to create a triumph of design

Mohegan Sun has evolved into one of the largest, most distinctive entertainment, gaming, shopping and meeting destinations in the United States. Its design elements also serve as a testament to the Mohegan Tribe. At Mohegan Sun, Tribal lore, the cosmos and nature's elements – Earth, wind, fire and rain – are transformed into awe-inspiring designs and environments throughout the complex. Those who sojourn there will discover a world unto itself – one that is both architecturally beautiful and culturally meaningful.

The inspired design of Mohegan Sun's multi-dimensional destination is the result of a unique collaborative effort by several of the world's most renowned architectural and design firms. Kohn Pedersen Fox Architects designed Mohegan Sun's dramatic, yet understated exterior and hotel tower, while Rockwell Group has advanced its original Mohegan-inspired designs created for Mohegan Sun's Casino of the Earth by transforming stories of the cosmos into unique environments for the gaming space, retail and restaurant pavilion and hotel lobby. Hirsch Bedner Associates designed the plush 1,200-room, 34-story luxury hotel interiors and vast meeting spaces.

Hotel Tower

The 34-story hotel at Mohegan Sun, one of the tallest buildings in Connecticut, reflects the Mohegan Tribe's sensitivity to the natural landscape and pays homage to the geological and natural forms present on the property's riverfront site. Its three-winged structure features a crystalline-like exterior that was inspired by the rock and smoky quartz crystal the Mohegans used to fashion arrowheads and ceremonial objects. These were used to honor the good spirits.

Natural design themes blend with the landscape in the tree-inspired, winged porte cochere, which marks the entry to Casino of the Sky. The second porte cochere, set within a glade of trees, marks the hotel's entrance. Trees, rocks and water are also present in the hotel interior to create landscapes that represent the surrounding woodlands.

A glass curtain-wall system around the hotel's exterior gently reflects the surrounding area, and the geometry of the hotel and large windows provide panoramic views of the Thames River and surrounding New England landscape. In addition, the faceted tower form and reflectivity of the exterior glass follow the orientation of the sun throughout the day and reflect the changes in seasons.

A cedar forest inspired the 35,000 square-foot hotel lobby. Ten trees made of natural cedar connected by antique copper joints are plumed with sparkling beaded canopies to represent the sacred red cedars. These opulent structures surround a reflecting pool lined with glass mosaic geode tiles arranged to symbolize the layers of Mohegan culture past, present and future.

Casino of the Sky

The Mohegans have long believed that the past, present and future are inexorably linked, and that one cannot exist without the others. This philosophy permeates everything the Mohegans have ever done as a people and is represented by the **Tree of Life**. According to legend:

A tree grew in the middle of the Earth after it was created. The tree's root yielded a sprout where the first man grew. Then the tree bent over, touched the Earth, and formed another root, which produced an additional sprout where the first woman grew.

At Mohegan Sun, the abstract Tree of Life begins the Trail of Life pathway from old to new, providing a tangible and narrative link between Casinos of the Earth and Sky. Trees represent the creation of the Mohegan Tribe with roots symbolizing Tribal elders, while their branches reach to the sky, expanding outward to support exquisite, back-lit canopies of hand-strung beads.

The Tree of Life, waterfalls, crystal formation and pools form The Shops at Mohegan Sun, and are found along the Trail of Life. The Trail of Life incorporates the suntrails, or curved life paths walked in traditional Mohegan life. Also sometimes called the Path of the Sun, this symbolic trail is often represented with dots, colors and rising and falling curving lines.

Standing at the center of Casino of the Sky is **Wombi Rock**, an amazing three-story crystal mountain built inside the casino and crafted from more than 12,000 individual plates of hand-selected onyx from quarries in Iran, Pakistan and Mexico. The slabs were then transported to Carrera, Italy where they were fused to glass.

“Wombi” comes from the Mohegan word “wambiyo” meaning “white.” White rocks made of milky quartz hold a central place in Mohegan tradition and have long been used by the Tribe in ceremonies to solicit good spirits. In Mohegan tradition, rocks are not merely inanimate objects. They may carry the spirit of those who have shaped them, the power of a specific event, the ability to transform, protective or destructive energies and the life force of beings. Mohegan Tribal Council meetings of long ago took place at Cohegun Rock, the largest freestanding boulder in New England. The old Mohegan expression “Ne mowe sunsmo?” literally means “Are you coming to the rock?”

Found directly underneath the planetarium dome, Wombi Rock is a meeting place, night club and bar, pulsating with lighting effects to complement the planetarium show.

High above the 115,000 square-foot Casino of the Sky and measuring 150 feet across, Mohegan Sun's planetarium dome, the world's largest, incorporates cutting-edge fiber optic technology to project displays of constellations, sun cycles and stirring clouds. Visitors can view the nighttime sky and constellations as they would appear on a late summer night, including Capricorn the goat, VYGNUS the swan, Orion the hunter and the Big Dipper.

In Mohegan tradition, stars are considered living beings that represent tales of long ago. Their movements guide traditional Mohegan ways of life, signaling when to gather herbs, when to plant crops and when to hunt and fish.

Taughannick Falls is a 55-foot high indoor waterfall flowing down to Chahnameed's Island, which is named after a historic Mohegan figure.

In Mohegan Tribal culture, Taughannick Falls represent a treacherous crossing point during the Tribe's migration. Emma Baker, the Mohegans' medicine woman from 1859 to 1917 and mentor of the Tribe's former medicine woman, Gladys Tantaquidgeon, used to go to the hill where Mohegan Church now stands. She would point to the west and say, "we came from upstate New York, through the hills of Taughannick," where there are waterfalls.

River Blue

Mohegan Sun commissioned a towering glass sculpture by world-renowned artist Dale Chihuly. Titled "River Blue," the 10,000-pound masterpiece was created by combining extraordinary artistry with architectural skill. Thousands of richly colored glass components, 2,500 in all, were hand-blown by a team of artisans in Seattle, then fully assembled on-site at Mohegan Sun. The distinctive cobalt blue, silver and clear colored glass sculpture, measuring fourteen feet in width, soars twenty-five feet above visitors, creating a spectacular centerpiece.

Kohn Pedersen Fox Associates

Kohn Pedersen Fox Associates (KPF) is the architectural firm responsible for Mohegan Sun's Project Sunburst expansion, which includes programming, master planning and the design of the magnificent exterior of Mohegan Sun. Kohn Pedersen Fox Associates is an award-winning, full-service architectural firm offering master planning, space planning, programming, building analysis and interior design services for a prestigious roster of international clients in both the public and private sectors. More information about Kohn Pedersen Fox Associates is available by visiting kpf.com.

Rockwell Group

Rockwell Group is responsible for Mohegan Sun's inspired interiors. Founded in 1994 by David Rockwell, Rockwell Group is a 90-person architecture, planning and design firm based in New York City. The firm is best known for creating highly dramatic spaces that combine cutting-edge technology, art, craftsmanship and design. David Rockwell's passion for new design challenges and creative collaborations has led the firm to design a broad array of spaces that include the Kodak Theatre (Los Angeles); Chambers (New York); W New York and W Union Square (New York); the Children's Hospital at Montefiore (Bronx); Cirque du Soleil (Orlando); Turner Stadium (Atlanta); Nobu (New York and Las Vegas); and Broadway set designs for "The Rocky Horror Picture Show" and "Hairspray." More info is available at rockwellgroup.com.

Hirsch Bedner Associates

Hirsch Bedner Associates, the foremost interior designer of luxury hotels, is responsible for the concept and design of the interiors of the luxury hotel at Mohegan Sun— its guest rooms and suites, corridors and elevator lobbies, as well as the complex's spa and meeting facilities. Founded in 1964 in Los Angeles, Hirsch Bedner quickly earned a reputation for excellent design. The firm has expanded into an international corporation with offices in Los Angeles, Hong Kong, Atlanta, London, Singapore, Milan, Dubai and San Francisco. The talents of its design staff, backed by the company's years of experience, have made Hirsch Bedner one of the most

influential design firms in the world. More information on Hirsch Bedner is available by visiting hbadesign.com.

Perini Building Company

The Perini Building Company was established in 1992, and is responsible for the project's massive 4.9 million square-foot construction. Perini expended over 5.6 million man hours to complete the construction in just twenty-one months and used enough concrete to build a sidewalk from Mohegan Sun to Pittsburgh, PA, 514 miles away. Perini is the largest builder of hotels and casinos in the country. Perini also constructed the Palms Casino Resort, Ritz Carlton and Caesars Palace expansions. More information on Perini Building Company is available by visiting perini.com.