

Press release

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The Steve Jobs Theater at Apple Park

The recently opened Steve Jobs Theater embodies the extraordinary eight-year collaboration between Apple and Foster + Partners at Apple Park.

Sir Jonathan Ive, Chief Design Officer at Apple, said: “The Steve Jobs Theater is a place for us to gather. It provides an opportunity for our friends and visitors to experience Apple Park and, from time to time, share in the excitement of our new products. We worked incredibly hard to create a uniquely simple and beautiful environment.”

Positioned atop a small hill, some way into the park, the Theater is reached via a gentle, winding walk through verdant parkland. This offers an opportunity to slow down before you begin a carefully choreographed sequence of architectural experiences.

Norman Foster, Founder and Executive Chairman, Foster + Partners, recounted: “Right at the outset, Steve stressed that Apple Park should have its own theater for 1,000 people. He set in place the sequence of spaces – lobby, theater, and hands-on space – that define the building. He wanted just the lobby to be visible and for it to be discovered like a “jewel” in the park. To achieve this, we submerged the rest of the structure, creating a delicate relationship between the lobby and landscape with a deliberate element of surprise within.”

To create the jewel, a lens-shaped roof rests gently on a transparent 22-foot- (6.6-meter-)

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tall and 135-foot- (41.1-meter-) diameter glass cylinder. While appearing to float effortlessly, it is in fact the largest carbon-fiber roof in the world, weighing 80.7 tons (73.2 metric tons). Pushing the limits of materiality even further, just four layers of glass form the structural support. The glass is all that holds up the roof – there is not a single column. It is the largest all-glass-supported structure in the world.

The thin roof disc comprises 44 identical radial panels, which were assembled on-site and carefully craned into position onto the completed glass cylinder in a single lift. All its services, such as electric conduits and sprinkler pipes, are invisibly integrated within the thin silicone joints between the curved glass panels.

Stefan Behling, Senior Executive Partner, Foster + Partners, commented: “The idea is very simple: a delicate hovering roof providing shelter in the middle of a beautiful Californian landscape. Making it feel effortless was among the hardest technical and engineering challenges we’ve ever had to solve.”

The purity of the lobby finds resonance in the ambitious custom glass elevator. In a world-first, it uses helical guide rails to rotate the car 171 degrees between levels.

Two sculpted-stone stairways provide a slower descent into the belly of the Theater. The stairways culminate in a tight, compressed space, surrounded by three stone walls and a stainless-steel drum made of sliding panels – the contraction before the release.

The 1,000-seater auditorium brings people together to share in a collective experience. Great care was given to the geometry and seating arrangement to ensure the closest relationship between presenter and audience. It can comfortably host small internal gatherings and large events.

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After an event, the rear wall re-opens, returning guests to the third major space in the sequence. A seemingly permanent stainless-steel drum disappears to reveal a flexible sun-lit gathering space.

Carbon fiber roof:

- The Theater lobby roof is the largest self-supporting fully carbon fiber roof in the world.
- The roof has a 155-foot (47-meters) diameter and spans 135 feet (41.1 meters) between the glass walls.
- The roof weighs 80.7 tons (73.2 metric tons), and is large enough to completely cover a Boeing 757 airplane.
- With each section averaging 70 feet (21.3 meters) long and 11 feet (3.3 meters) wide, the entire roof assembly can be compared to a network of 44 yachts arranged in a circle.
- On-site, the roof panels were re-assembled in a staging area adjacent to the lobby structure and lifted onto the glass all at once.

Lobby glass:

- The Theater lobby draws inspiration from the technology of glass stairs and glass facades developed for Apple retail stores and takes it to a new level.
- It is the largest glass-supported structure in the world.
- Each 9.8-foot (3-meter) by 22-foot (6.7-meter) glass panel is a four-ply laminate and two inches thick.

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- Sprinkler pipes, power, data, audio, and security run through conduits concealed in the 44 silicon joints between glass panels.
- The glazing features the first curved, laminated glass fittings in the world.
- The facade and roof are base-isolated from the ground and designed to withstand up to magnitude eight earthquakes.

Glass elevator:

- The Steve Jobs Theater's glass elevator stands at 42 feet (12.8 meters) high.
- The elevator uses three helical guide rails to rotate the elevator car 171 degrees, moving it from one level to the next.
- It is the first passenger elevator in the world to rotate on helical guides and is believed to be the tallest free-standing, glass elevator in the world.
- The elevator uses extremely strong, chemically-tempered glass from Italy.
- Almost all the internal structure for the elevator cab was milled from solid aluminum, with all components arranged and tuned to create an ideal strength to weight ratio.
- The elevator was designed, engineered and fabricated by seven companies, with the help of California State Elevator Board, over two and a half years.

Stone stairways and stone wall:

- Originating from Bari in the south of Italy, the Serpeggiante Castagna limestone in the Theater was specifically selected and sourced for Apple Park.
- Cutting-edge modeling and advanced five-axis milling machines were used under the watchful eyes of Italian craftspeople. Each piece was hand sanded, finished, and

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sandblasted before being mounted to check for alignment.

- For the complex pieces at the top and bottom of the stairway, the artisans had to take over, manually sculpting the handrail termination and making sure of precise alignments with their machined counterparts.
- The stone wall takes only 11 seconds to open completely.
- When completely open, the entrance to the underground theater is 50 feet (15.2 meters) wide.

Auditorium:

- The fan-shaped plan of the auditorium and the curving rows of seats were designed to create a feeling of intimate proximity with the person on stage as well as between members of the audience.
- Milled from solid domestic white oak, the wooden fins that line the auditorium's interior help to dissipate sound and also contribute to the warmer interior characteristic of the auditorium. The intermittent fabric panels between each fin absorb amplified sound, limiting reflections back into the audience. They also conceal a network of more than 40 wall-speakers.
- The custom-designed leather seating was hand-made by Italian artisans at Poltrona Frau.
- Over two years and many mock-ups, the design team developed a unique process of curving the wood flooring planks and grain to match the arc of the seating rows. Straight domestic white oak boards are divided equally into five strips, and glued into the desired radius, resulting in a unique visual connection between floor and seating.

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Lower lobby:

- 20-foot- (6.1-meter-) high movable wall panels that conceal the space upon entry are retracted to dramatically reveal the space. Each weigh 2,000lbs (one metric ton) and are clad in stainless steel from Japan.

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