

Mystic Aquarium and Institute for Exploration

Location	Mystic, Connecticut
Total Area	115,000 square feet
Date of Completion	1999
Client	Sea Research Foundation, Inc.

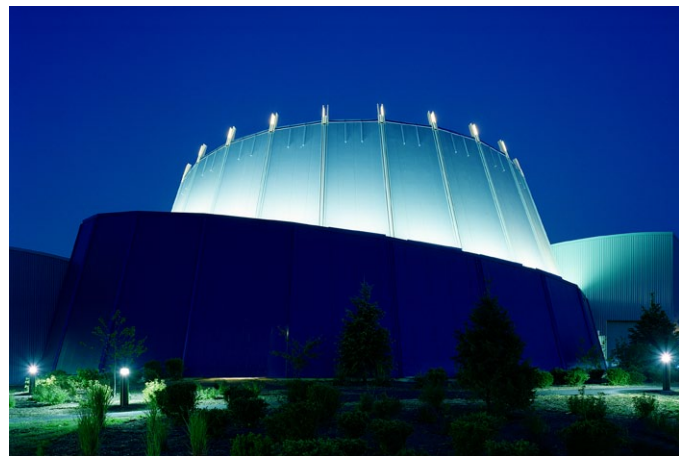
Mystic Aquarium and Institute for Exploration, opened in 1973, is a leader in oceanographic and deep sea archeology, and home to New England's only beluga whale exhibit. In 1995, Pelli Clarke Pelli Architects was selected to design the expansion and renovation of the facility. The \$52 million project added showcase exhibit and research spaces and improved amenities for a better visitor experience.

The project includes 7,000 square meters (75,000 square feet) of new construction, the renovation of 3,700 square meters (40,000 square feet) and 2,800 square meters (30,000 square feet) of new interior and exterior exhibits. Additions include a building for the Institute for Exploration, which contains exhibits based on the research of Dr. Robert Ballard, and a 10,000-square-foot outdoor Alaskan Coast exhibit. An inviting new entry pavilion and covered walkways orient and organize the entire complex.

The design of the aquarium assembled individual forms into a single, cohesive grouping, similar to a collage. The forms are distinctive and exciting. The entry pavilion, with its sweeping, umbrella-like form, is reminiscent of early 20th-century garden pavilions. The blue cone shape of the Institute for Exploration is a counterpoint to the pavilion. The Institute building is focused inward, invoking the mystery of the depths of the ocean.

The visitor encounters the Alaskan coast exhibit as an explorer. The covered wood walkways are detailed to evoke a maritime waterfront. Just beyond is a coastal realm of rocky outcroppings and secret caves with windows on to underwater life. The Arctic coast exhibit is home to beluga whales and Steller sea lions in three pools of 3 million liters (800,000 gallons). Visitors can view the exhibit from above or below, where three 20-foot-wide (6-meter) acrylic windows let visitors get close up to the whales.

The new parking areas are laid out behind a landscaped berm that surrounds the entire complex. Driveways and parking lots were softened and made more pleasant through the addition of trees and landscaping. Permeable paving surfaces were used where possible to decrease the total rainwater runoff.



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