

The Seeing City

The Seeing City is a site-specific, permanent artistic installation designed for the top two floors of the Préfecture de Paris on Boulevard Morland as part of the larger Morland Mixité Capitale Project. The work comprises a mirror ceiling on the 15th floor and a kaleidoscopic ceiling that fades into the sky on the 16th floor. The two levels are transformed into an immersive optical apparatus that transports Parisian street life to the rooftop and its interior spaces, while reflecting the activity in those spaces back down to the city below.

As visitors move through the 15th floor, its mirror ceiling, which extends from the exterior into the interior, appears to dematerialise the space. The Seine the streets of Paris float above them as an inverted city in motion. Visual qualities change with the outdoor light and weather conditions, with the flow of the river and traffic below, and with the visitors' movements and shifting perspectives as they navigate the space. The reflective ceiling also gives onlookers from the street and surrounding buildings a glimpse of the 15th floor that would otherwise be opaque. In this way, the work blurs the boundary between inside and outside, creating a transition from the interior space of the building into the dynamic city beyond.

On two opposing sides of the 16th floor, rows of kaleidoscope boxes line the glass facades. The Quai Saint-Bernard side faces the Seine, and the Boulevard Morland side looks out onto the cityscape. Each kaleidoscope box is composed of four glass mirror panels. The sides are reflective at the top and transparent at the bottom, featuring a custom faded pattern that creates a seamless transition between the reflective and transparent surfaces. The boxes are topped with clear glass domes and are open at the bottom, drawing the sky above into the interior.

The overall fade effect of the artwork smoothly blends the panoramic view of the city with the kaleidoscopic sky extended by the mirrors. Interior and exterior are fragmented and reconfigured into an assemblage of seemingly infinite permutations. The effect continues on the exterior surface of the glass and is visible from the surrounding streets. Viewed from the city below, the work disappears into the sky when the weather is calm, and stands out in stark contrast when the reflection differs from the surrounding sky, as at sunrise and sunset. Recognisable while harmonising with the existing cityscape, the work creates a delicate beacon atop the building by subtly amplifying the atmosphere and surroundings.

The Seeing City speaks from its immaterial qualities, which are inspired by the desire to optically interpret the existing building rather than replacing the original structure with something

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entirely new. The intention is to connect people to the everyday context that they inhabit in a way that is surprising and dynamic, whether they are floating above or looking up from the boulevard.