



Product

Planar MPG Series

Location

Somerville, Massachusetts

Industry

Corporate

Application

Digital Art

Partner

SOSO

Leggat McCall Properties

Immersive Digital Art Installation Reflects the Scientific Methods of Observation

Observer Effect at Boynton Yards

In Somerville, Massachusetts, Boynton Yards is a life science and innovation community near Cambridge's Kendall Square and a hub where science and culture mix. The first purpose-built lab building in the mixed-use development is a 289,000-square-foot, nine-story facility developed by Leggat McCall Properties that features state-of-the-art research and development lab space, offices and amenities.

In the elevator lobby of the building, a digital art installation combining physical and digital media invites tenants and visitors to explore a series of ever-changing animations representing various patterns found in nature. Created by experiential design firm SOSO, the multimedia piece—named “Observer Effect”—was constructed using five vertically-mounted Planar[®] MPG Series LED video walls (1.5mm pixel pitch) with custom fabricated acrylic lenses positioned over parts of the displays. As viewers move and look at the artwork from different angles, the lenses work to amplify, distort and deconstruct the visuals.



According to SOSO, the acrylic lenses are meant to resemble the optical instruments that scientists use to observe the natural world and the artwork itself is a reflection of the act of scientific observation. The piece also thematically ties in with the work occurring in the building, said SOSO Founding Partner John Rothenberg. “These are scientists who look closely at small things and make observations that lead to all kinds of exciting discoveries,” he said. “But then they’re zooming out and seeing how it affects things at a more global scale. We took that as a metaphor and dived into the process of ‘observing the act of observing.’ The underlying theme of the artwork is a simulation of natural phenomena discovered through close observation.”

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— John Rothenberg, Founding Partner, SOSO

Reaction Diffusion

The artwork’s animation is driven by a simulation algorithm called reaction diffusion—a mathematical model corresponding to a wide variety of patterns that occur in the natural world. “It’s a well-published algorithm that can be used to mimic patterns like you would see with sand dunes, cuttle fish skin, sea coral or zebra stripes,” Rothenberg explained.

By its own nature, the algorithm is also unpredictable, said SOSO Designer and Creative Technologist Dalma Földesi. “We designed around that uncertainty to create these sequences of animation at multiple scales that look different at any moment.”



A Playful Approach

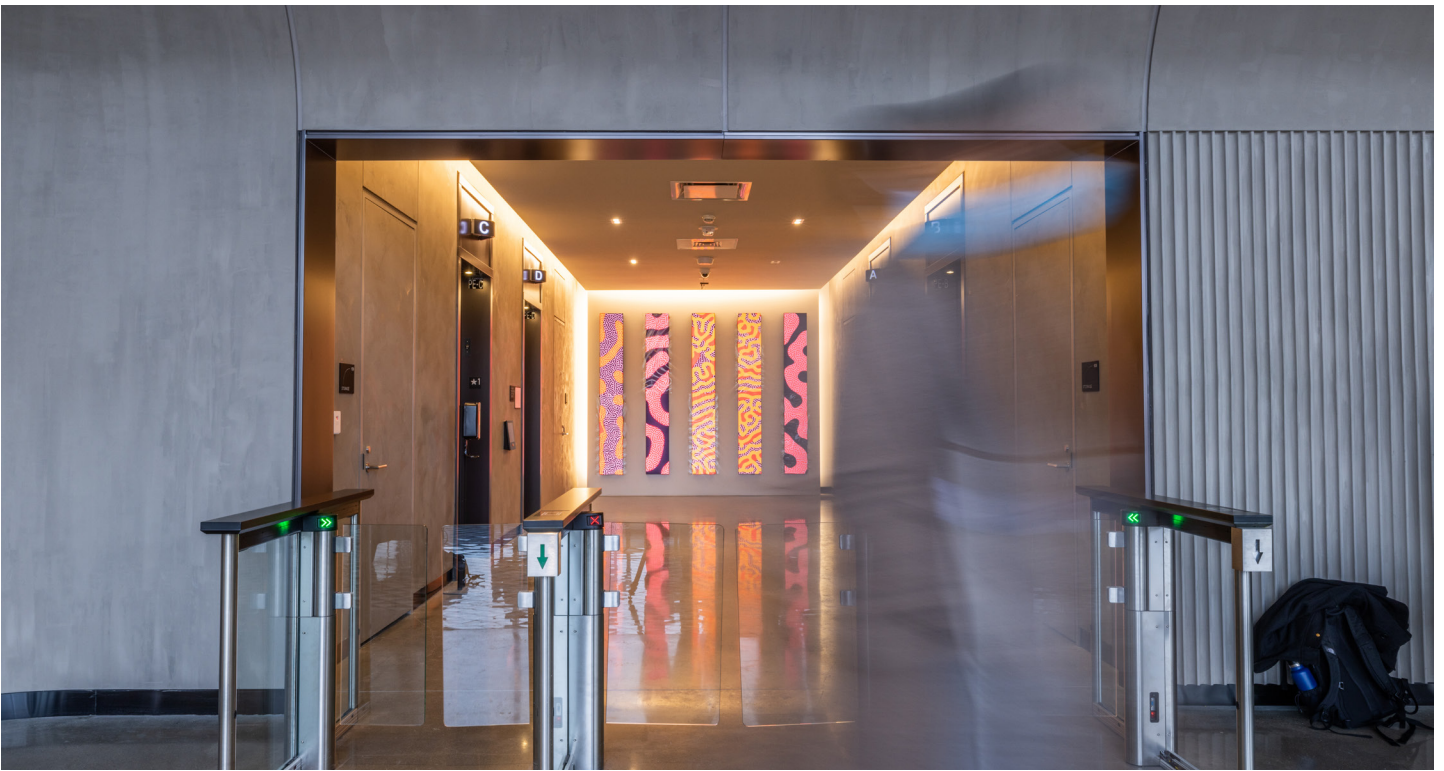
Contrary to most LED display applications where the intent is to minimize pixelation, SOSO designed the artwork to embrace the materiality of the display. “In our case, we wanted to play with the pixelation as part of the layers of observation,” Földesi said. “That was our playful approach with the displays and the use of the lenses—as you look at the artwork from different angles, you can see the pixels split into their individual components.”

Rothenberg noted that the lensing is very kinetic and responsive to human movement.

“Even subtle shifts in your position, like a tilt of the head, will produce a dramatic ripple with what you see in the graphics,” he said.

Planar MGP Series LED displays were very effective for SOSO’s purposes and offered the perfect scale for the vertical columns they used.

“We had unique mounting requirements for this project—instead of a sixteen by nine screen, we wanted thin bands, high resolution, great visual characteristics and also a reasonable price,” John Rothenberg said. “The Planar MGP Series was great on all those fronts. It made for a really fun canvas for artwork, especially when you get to play with it outside of the typical form factor.”



Leggat McCall Project Manager Rola Idris said, “We wanted to create an experience that inspires and energizes our tenants who pass through the lobby every day. The artwork is never the same at any two moments. The patterns and colors of the piece perpetually change and recombine to make new visuals.”

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*— Dalma Földesi,
Designer and Creative Technologist, SOSO*

About the Planar MGP Series

Planar MGP Series LED video walls provide organizations with a seamless, fine pixel pitch and high-resolution display at a similar value to tiled LCD video wall options. With 16:9 aspect ratio cabinets, each Planar MGP Series pixel pitch can achieve popular resolutions including Full HD and 4K. The displays can be configured to form video walls of other shapes for a wider range of applications and the 27-inch cabinets feature front installation and serviceability, enabling users to mount them directly to walls.