

MIT List Center

Anish Kapoor

Living and working in London since the 1970s, Mumbai-born Anish Kapoor is known for his deceptively simple, highly polished stainless steel sculptures. Titled Non-Object (Plane), the massive curved sheet of metal in the busy lobby of MIT's Stata Center provides the perfect counterpoint to the Frank Gehry-designed building. This 2010 commission was enabled by funds from the MIT Percent-for-Art, a program of the List Visual Arts Center. Begun at MIT in 1968, the initiative allocates a portion of the budget from each new building project or major renovation to the purchase or commission of art for public space.

Lisa Corrin, Director of the Block Museum, Northwestern University.

When you come through the door of the building, at first you don't notice the Anish Kapoor sculpture. You think you're standing opposite a large reflecting mirror. But what is so fascinating about this object is that unless you stand in a particular spot, you can't even see yourself. You see the reflections and refractions of Gehry's curving architecture, the rich pattern of surfaces of the materials that Gehry has used in contrast to the dynamic movement of the street outside. There's an incredible sense of interconnectedness between the sculpture, the building, and the entire landscape outside of it.

When you stand in exactly the right position, you begin to see parts of yourself, but you begin very quickly to dissolve. And you begin to question exactly what your perspective on the world really is.

The piece, notes Corrin, almost has the feel of a funfair mirror, animated by light from both the lobby's overhead skylight and clerestory window.

There's something about losing our identities in the play of light and movement, the shifting of the surfaces, that allows us to leave our bodies and enter a completely different space, a space that can be described as spiritual, the space of the unconscious.