

# Snap!

For tech company Snap, Studio Vincent Eschali r has created a Paris HQ that needs no filters.

Words:  
Harry McKinley

Photography:  
Jean-Pierre  
Vaillancourt and Snap



## Case Study

# F

or many, Snap, the US-founded tech company, is best known for Snapchat – the messaging and photo platform that has generated countless memes, driven in part by its tongue-in-cheek filters. Yet its successes extend far beyond its flagship app – a camera-first technology business spanning visionary augmented reality, software tools and lifestyle-centric hardware, including glasses that, in time, are intended to introduce an AR layer into everyday life. It's all bold and immersive stuff.

Considering Snap's raison d'être is fostering connection then, the exterior of its Paris HQ – one of over 25 global outposts – is remarkably discreet. Set in the smart 8th arrondissement, I was at first unaware I'd arrived, half expecting to deploy my rusty French in pursuit of directions when pressing the buzzer – beside two heavy and unbranded wooden doors. "We're not about bragging," laughs Gregory Gazagne, Snap France's MD, when we rendezvous at the ground floor café.

The building, which counts Hermès and Cartier among its neighbours, was, until 2019, the home of a prestigious wine body – with some elements said to pre-date the French Revolution. Though Paris is ripe with such anecdotes, there's even a suggestion Napoleon himself may have hotfooted along some of the tunnels that cluster below.

For Snap, it's the first time the French team have been pulled together into a single HQ – previously dispersed



across three locations throughout the city. But, as Gazagne attests, creating a single nucleus now allows the team to "better collaborate, be close to clients" and, especially important for younger members, "make use of a really comprehensive suite of amenities." Beyond facilities, this even includes an in-house pastry chef and a swish lunch served daily in the top floor canteen; which, in appearance, has more in common with a hip neighbourhood bistro.

Noted for its previous work with tech and media companies, Studio Vincent Eschaliér was recruited for the design – on a wide ranging brief to bring modernity to an historic building; use the interiors to cultivate culture; and engender a sense of place, lending a US business a discernibly French accent.

**Image on previous page:**  
Lobby area and ornate staircase

**Above:**  
The conservatory providing additional work and gathering space

## Case Study Snap, Paris

“The vision for us was clear,” explains Vincent Eschaliér, the studio’s lead. “We had to create a place that represents the brand while embracing the character of an 18th-century hôtel particulier. So our narrative was to let heritage and timeliness coexist; a Parisian flagship that feels both rooted in the city and aligned with Snap’s creative universe.”

Though a hôtel particulier traditionally suggests a grand private residence, for Snap inspiration has also been drawn from the public variety – Gazagne noting that the ground floor café and lounge evokes something of a boutique hotel lobby; with its easy comfort, book-lined walls and gentle approach to corporate branding. Though the yellow walls flanking the coffee bar and the digital screen in the form of Snap’s Ghost logo are unmistakably of the company, like the rest of the project, this isn’t simply a standard workplace wrapped in Snap packaging. In fact, beyond that initial arrival statement, there’s little by way of insignia throughout; even that emblematic sunshine hue employed sparingly and carefully by Eschaliér and his team.



The majority of the ground floor is designed for hosting – the café and lounge opening out onto a stately courtyard, surrounded by magnificently ornate façades. Across, an augmented reality lab not only showcases Snap’s creative work, but is intended to serve as a centre of AR excellence for Paris; indeed France as a whole. Here posters and weighty tomes highlight some of the most prominent cultural collaborations – AR experiences created with Daft Punk, The Louvre and The Design Museum among the greatest hits. Though the space reflects work completed, it also feels like something of a glimpse into tomorrow’s world – progressive iterations of Snap’s AR spectacles neatly set out, hinting at a technologically integrated future. There’s also a nod to the swanky retail stores that occupy nearby streets, with items artfully peppered for perusal.

Of course, more than a showroom or hosting point, the project spans some 2,900 sq m and was three years in the making – uniting elements developed across the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries into a contemporary whole that includes workspaces, meeting rooms, social spaces and an underground auditorium with seating for around 90. Move past the welcome spaces and the building is a warren.

“In fact, considering the building combines different eras and complex layouts, our first task was to bring coherence,” notes Eschaliér. Offices, on the upper floors, tend to be clustered around the central core, with amenities to either side. Tricky spaces have been intelligently repurposed: former stables now house a bicycle room, old laundries have become restrooms and small interior courtyards discreetly conceal technical equipment. Though there’s perhaps scope for new arrivals to disappear down the wrong hallway, after the first circumnavigation a clear layout logic unfolds.

“Snap also wanted authenticity and a strong sense of identity,” continues Eschaliér, “and we’ve preserved the building’s historical richness while making it fully functional – with fluid circulation, discreet integration of technology and warm, welcoming atmospheres for teams who often travel from abroad.”

Gazagne also notes that retaining the spirit of the building was a non-negotiable, quipping that Snap is the most ‘Parisian’ of American firms. In practice, that sees double-height spaces where the usual accoutrements of work (classic desks and task chairs) are cocooned by exquisitely restored wood panelling or set aside noble fireplaces; some rooms still host the kind of moulded 18th century ceilings that are usually the preserve of regal dining rooms or opulent hotels. Though Snap is a global brand, there’s rarely an inch of its Paris HQ that doesn’t speak to its home city in some manner.

**Below left:**  
Snap’s augmented reality studio

**Above left:**  
An outdoor area with yellow benches

**Right:**  
Conserved timber mouldings and original details



## Case Study

**Right:**  
The café area  
is lined with  
bar stools



### Flooring

Ad Lucem  
FAP Ceramiche

### Furniture

K2 Space  
MVE-Collection

### Lighting

Arkos  
Artémide  
Luxium  
Deltalight  
ONOK  
MVE  
Collection  
BEGA

### Other

Muuto  
Hay  
Vitra  
Kann Design  
Zannotta  
Sedus  
MVE-Collection  
Fermob  
Bassam Fellow  
Petite Friture  
&Tradition  
Ethino

### Logistics and assembly

Jan Krediet

Yet while the building clearly has good bones and gifted Studio Vincent Eschaliér remarkable original details, it was equally never intended to be a museum; a belief in preserving the past overriding the need to create a living hub fit for today, as well as the future needs of a growing organisation. And so, fundamentally, the interiors are a dialogue between both – Eschaliér describing the ways in which material choices or furnishing connects old and new, the green marble seen in the building echoed in a modern meeting room table, for example. “Bespoke furnishings were also central to the project,” he continues. “So the studio designed all of the integrated furniture, paying particular attention to

material selection: terrazzo and oak for workspaces, walnut for reception lounges; lime-based plaster and brushed stainless steel for a refined finish.”

Perhaps one of the most dramatic new interventions is the glass ‘greenhouse’-cum-sitting space that clutches one wall of the enclosed garden. Drawing inspiration from a traditional orangery, slender steel framing and expansive glazing blurs the boundary between outdoors and in. It is, in some ways, a shorthand for the project as a whole: the convergence of original details and, well, originality, as well as an expression of Snap’s ethos of constant and meaningful evolution.