

Case Study · University Wayfinding Signage

Liverpool School of Architecture

Sector

Education & Research

Discipline

Wayfinding & Interior
Signage

Materials

Stainless Steel ·
Aluminium · Acrylic · Vinyl

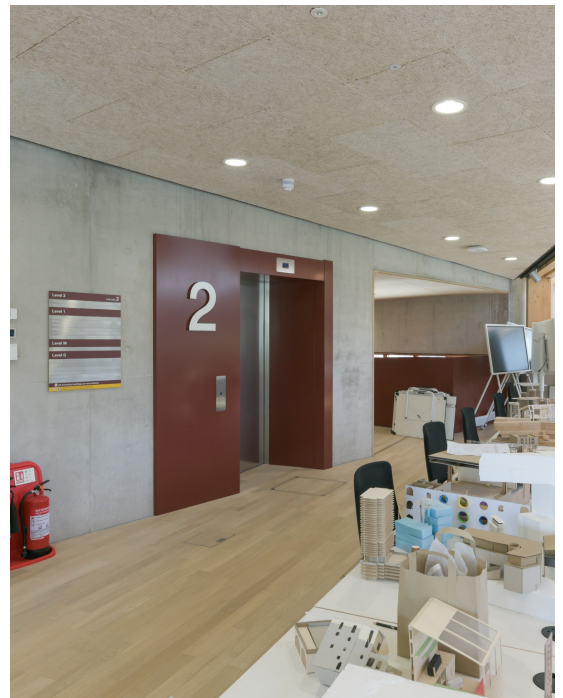
Location

Abercromby Square,
Liverpool

The Client.

xsign delivered the complete interior wayfinding, identification and statutory signage scheme for the redeveloped home of the Liverpool School of Architecture, working to a design by O'Donnell + Tuomey for the University of Liverpool. The building weaves a Georgian terrace, the 1930s Leverhulme Building and a new addition into one legible whole, and the signage had to satisfy the most design-literate audience imaginable while flexing with a teaching building that changes every year.

The scheme is led by xsign's patented Jigsaw interchangeable system: directories, wayfinding and a freestanding entrance totem built from brushed stainless steel and painted aluminium in the University's oxide red, on a concealed rail of lockable panels the School can swap itself. Oversized cut-vinyl level letters mark the lift cores, and stainless steel room signs, acrylic door tags, projecting facilities signs and crested floor-plan directories complete the scheme, all in one typeface and finished to sit with the building's concrete, timber and red oxide steel.



The Challenge.

Few buildings put signage under closer scrutiny than a school of architecture. Everything on the wall would be read, every day, by staff and students who teach and study this exact kind of detail. The scheme had to be quietly excellent, and it had to hold its own against a confident palette of concrete, timber and red oxide steel rather than sit apart from it.

The building itself is a composite of four periods, so one family of signs had to land cleanly on very different surfaces: board-marked and fair-faced concrete, plastered walls, exposed brick, timber-lined openings and full-height glazing. A detail that looks considered on smooth plaster can look like an afterthought on raw concrete.

A teaching building also never stands still. Studios are reallocated, rooms are renamed and cohorts move around the building from one academic year to the next. A scheme printed and bonded to the wall would be out of date within a term, so the University needed something its own team could keep current without redecorating.



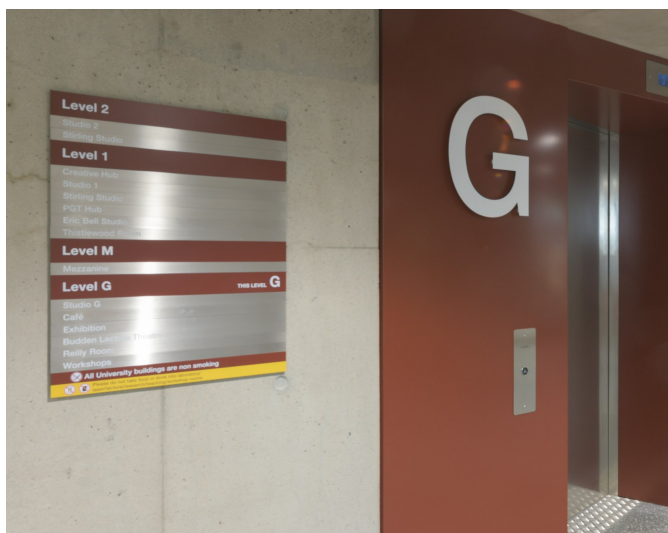
The Solution.

Built to be changed. The heart of the scheme is xsign's patented **Jigsaw™** modular system: a concealed wall rail carrying lockable, interchangeable panels. Each directory and wayfinding sign is built from brushed stainless steel and painted aluminium, finished in the University's oxide red with a signal-yellow band for the statutory house rules. When a room is renamed or a studio moves, one panel slides out and a replacement slides in, with no marks left on the wall and no sign remade from scratch. In a building whose contents change every year, the wayfinding changes with them.

A first point of orientation. A freestanding Jigsaw™ totem greets visitors at the entrance, listing every level and destination on the same interchangeable panels, so the directory at the door is as easy to keep current as the ones upstairs.

Legible at a glance. Oversized level letters, cut in vinyl and applied straight onto the red oxide lift cores, mark each floor from G to 2 so clearly that they read the length of an open studio. The oxide red was chosen to sit with the building's own red steelwork rather than compete with it.

Down to the last door. Brushed stainless steel and aluminium room signs identify named spaces such as the Reilly Room, while slim acrylic door tags carry each room number and space reference. Double-sided projecting signs mark the toilets, stairs and lecture theatre, and printed floor-plan directories carrying the University of Liverpool crest orient people level by level. Everything is set in a single typeface and tape-fixed where it can be, so nothing penetrates the architects' finishes.



The Installation.

The scheme was surveyed on site and installed in phases as each area of the fit-out was handed over, working to the live site programme. Setting out on board-marked concrete and around exposed services meant agreeing every position on site rather than resolving it on a drawing, so that fixings stayed hidden and each sign sat square to the architecture.

Because the wayfinding runs on the interchangeable Jigsaw™ system, the building was handed over ready to look after itself: the School's own team can re-letter a room or reorder a directory in minutes as studios change hands. The result is a scheme worthy of the audience that uses it, and one that will still read correctly long after the first cohort has moved on.

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“An architecture school is about the most demanding audience you can design signage for, so the bar was high from day one. What I am proudest of is that the whole scheme runs on our interchangeable Jigsaw system: the University can rename a room or move a studio and update the sign themselves in minutes, without calling anyone or marking the wall. For a building that changes every academic year, that is exactly what they needed.”

Leanne Barnett, Sales Manager, xsign

Project Detail.



A freestanding single-sided aluminium totem carries the full building directory at the entrance, built on the patented Jigsaw modular system so the panels lift out and reorder as studios and rooms change.



Each interchangeable directory is brushed stainless steel and painted aluminium in the University's oxide red, with a signal-yellow band for the statutory house rules. The panels sit on a concealed, lockable wall rail and slide out for replacement, so a rename is a swapped panel rather than a new sign.



Oversized level letters are cut in vinyl and applied directly to the red oxide lift cores, marking each floor so clearly that they read the length of an open studio.



Directional wayfinding uses the same brushed stainless steel and oxide-red palette and the same interchangeable panels, so a change of destination never means a change of sign.



Double-sided projecting signs in oxide-red aluminium mark the toilets, stairs and lecture theatre, readable along the corridor from both directions.



Room and facilities signs are digitally printed and tape-fixed to the door or wall, so identification stays crisp and nothing penetrates the architects' finishes.