



Sector

Life Science &
Innovation

Discipline

Building Identity &
Interior Wayfinding

Materials

Laminated Glass ·
Aluminium · Acrylic · 3D
Printed Forms

Location

Fulbourn, Cambridge

The Client.

xsign fabricated and installed the building identity and interior signage for CamLIFE 1 to 4, the laboratory and workspace buildings at the heart of Longfellow Real Estate Partners' 42-acre life science campus in Cambridge, working to a design by creative agency f.r.a.

Outside, each building is marked by a numbered glass totem in the campus teal, with illuminated built-up CamLIFE lettering set flush with the entrance vestibules of CamLIFE 1, 2 and 3. Vestibule vinyl and glazing manifestations complete the arrival.

Inside, a dark bronze palette of laser-cut pictograms, 3D printed projecting signs and sculptural floor numerals sits against plywood-lined corridors, fixed without a visible screw. Stair riser lettering adds a lighter touch, encouraging people to take the stairs.



The Challenge.

Four buildings on one campus can easily blur into one another. Visitors needed to know which building they were standing in front of from across a car park, yet the scheme still had to read as a single family, built from the same materials and the same quiet typography at every entrance.

The buildings were also being signed before anyone had moved in. With no tenants confirmed, the entrance signage had to present each building well for letting while leaving room for an occupier's own identity to follow. The spec treats the vinyl on the entrance vestibules as a first phase for exactly that reason, designed to work now and be revisited once tenants arrive.

Inside, the refurbishment had lined corridors and doors in pale plywood. It is a beautiful finish and an unforgiving one: every visible screw or misplaced fixing would show. The lettering on the outside faced a similar test, as it had to sit flush with the front edge of newly built entrance vestibules on existing buildings, with its fixings hidden and its setting out matched to the vestibule glazing and automatic doors.

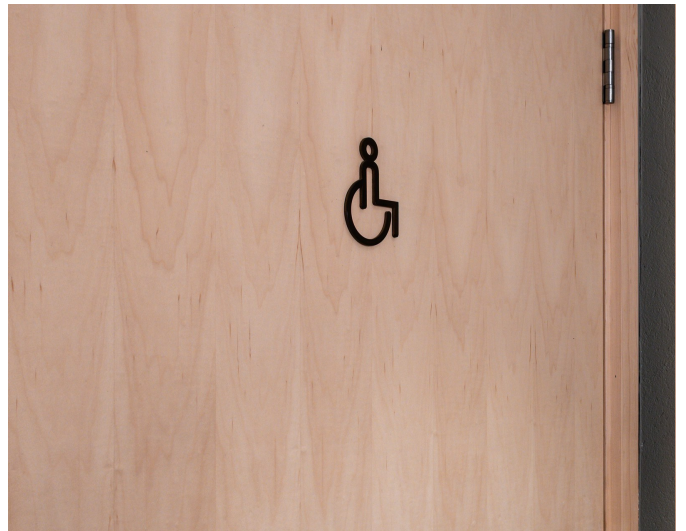


The Solution.

Building identity. Each entrance is marked by a double-sided glass totem carrying the building number at large scale, so a visitor can pick out CamLIFE 2 or CamLIFE 3 at a glance. The totems are toughened laminated glass with a digitally printed gradient interlayer sealed between the panes, in the campus teal, set into a natural stone base. Above the doors of CamLIFE 1, 2 and 3, the CamLIFE name is spelled out in built-up aluminium letters in a soft mint green with silk acrylic faces, internally lit at a neutral white and kept deliberately low so the lettering glows rather than shouts. The letters stand on a folded aluminium tray with concealed fixings, their faces aligned exactly with the front edge of each vestibule.

Arrival and glazing. Matt white cut vinyl on the inside of the vestibule glass carries the building name and directory information for the first phase of occupation. Glazing manifestations to the laboratory screens add a band of soft dots at eye level, keeping the glass safe and visible without interrupting the view into the labs.

Inside the buildings. Interior signage is kept to a dark bronze palette that sits naturally against the plywood. Toilet, shower and accessible facility pictograms are laser cut from 3mm aluminium and powder coated bronze, applied to the timber without a single visible fixing. Projecting signs and the floor numerals are 3D printed and wet sprayed to match, which allowed f.r.a.'s more sculptural forms, such as the hand-carved looking G at ground floor, to be made precisely and repeated across all three buildings. On the stairs, laser-cut lettering centred on the risers carries messages such as "Every step counts", and "Take the stairs" sits beside each lift, a small nudge towards a healthier building.



The Installation.

Every key sign type was prototyped and approved before production, including the glass totems, the illuminated lettering, the 3D printed numerals and the riser lettering. The entrance lettering was set out against the vestibule drawings for each building, positioned around the automatic door operators and gridlines, and fixed to concealed support trays so nothing shows on the face of the vestibule. Inside, the bronze signage went in after the plywood linings were complete, fixed on high-bond tape or onto hidden 3D printed fixing blocks, so the timber was left untouched.

The finished scheme gives each building a clear identity of its own and a shared sense of quality across all four. A visitor can pick out CamLIFE 3 from the road and reach the right floor inside without asking anyone, while prospective occupiers see buildings that already feel finished and cared for.

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“Each building had to tell you which one it is from across the car park, then hand over to something much quieter once you are through the door. Inside, the plywood is the star, so our job was to add as little to it as possible. Everything is bronze, and you won't find a fixing anywhere on the timber.”

Richard Jones, Project Manager, xsign

Project Detail.



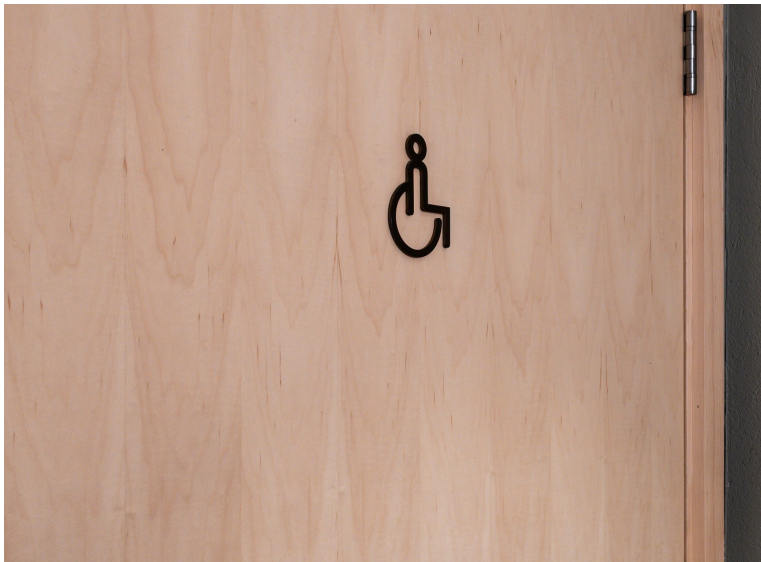
Built-up aluminium letters in a soft mint green with silk acrylic faces mark the entrance to CamLIFE 1. Internally illuminated at a neutral white, they sit on a concealed folded tray with their faces flush to the front edge of the vestibule.



Each building is identified by a double-sided glass totem carrying its number at large scale. A digitally printed teal gradient interlayer is sealed between toughened laminated glass panes, set into a natural stone base.



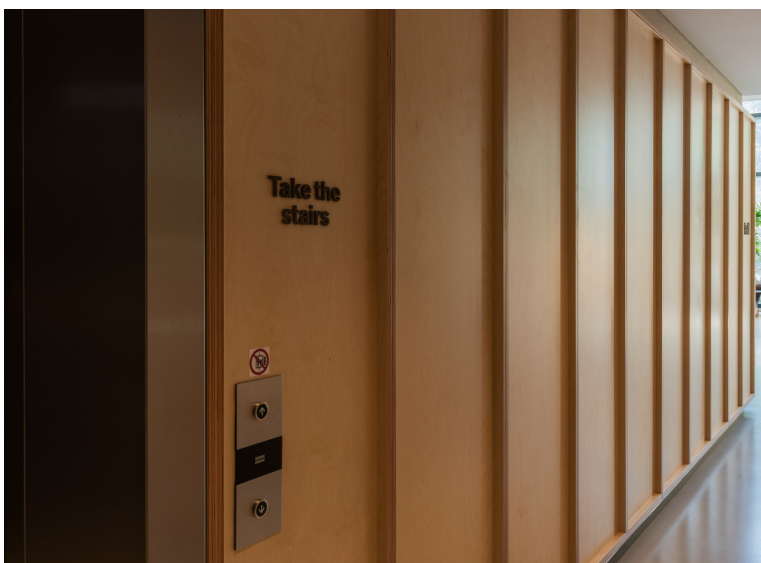
Floor numerals are 3D printed and wet sprayed in dark bronze, allowing a sculptural, hand-carved looking form to be reproduced precisely across all three buildings.



Facility pictograms are laser cut from 3mm aluminium and powder coated dark bronze, applied directly to the plywood doors with no visible fixings.



Directional pictogram strips guide people along the plywood-lined corridors, in the same bronze finish as the door signage so the interior family reads as one.



Laser-cut lettering beside the lifts and on the stair risers encourages people to take the stairs, adding a lighter, more personal voice to the interior scheme.