

## Case study

# Swiss Re - 30 St Mary Axe (The Gherkin)

### What was the brief?

To devise complementary external public signage and an internal wayfinding system for insurance company Swiss Re (aka the Gherkin) at 30 St Mary Axe.

### What were the main challenges?

Norman Foster's 'Gherkin' is one of London's most recognisable landmarks, a bold, award-winning architectural statement rooted in a radical approach. Inside, however, it's an exercise in restraint, with subdued grey tones and neutral finishes. The information graphics needed to reflect this understatement, to be useful without being conspicuous. Swiss Re occupy floors 2-15 of the building.



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### What approach was taken?

A subtle one. A neutral colour palette was adopted, using grey tones shot through with more vibrant supporting colours. A restrained bespoke typeface, Swiss Re Sans, together with a system of easily interpreted pictograms, was used throughout the building, bringing consistency and a suitably discreet tone to the design. All internal signage needed to be future-proof – easily updateable to take into account evolving usage and tenancy. This was achieved through modular wall directories and door plating, which can be adapted as necessary.

The real challenge at the Swiss Re building was helping staff, clients and visitors make sense of a highly unusual layout. Providing relevant information as to how to use the lifts and lobbies was a key consideration, and the rest of the system fell into place from this starting point. Outside, public information was treated in a similar style, using low plinths and high-quality, stainless steel, laser-cut signage.



**inside**information

wayfinding design for spaces and places

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