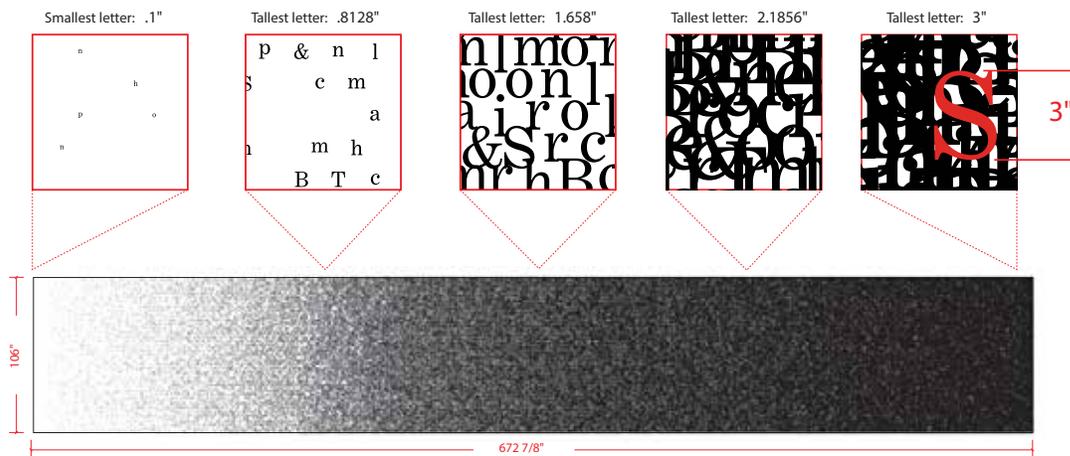


Client: Simpson Thacher & Bartlett LLP / A&D Firm: Gensler / Glazier: Lakeview Glass & Mirror

**Project Challenge:** When Simpson Thacher & Bartlett, a leading law firm with a substantial pro bono practice, opened a new office in Houston, Texas, they initially occupied a temporary space for three years. Ready for a move into a more permanent location, they joined forces with the architectural firm Gensler to create an interior that is cutting-edge yet reserved enough to accommodate the level of privacy a top-tier law firm demands.

Simpson Thacher was established in 1884 and has since grown an international presence with 11 offices and more than 850 lawyers, so the Houston space needed to maintain the company’s strong identity while remaining welcoming to clients. An opportunity was recognized in the elevator lobby—an internal corridor that winds to the reception area and the rest of the office space—where everyone from visitors to staff enters. With the potential to become a main focal point, the lobby left room for innovative ideas. “The elevator lobby is very disconnected from the rest of the space so our whole goal was how do we draw people from one direction to another without putting an arrow saying, ‘Go this way,’ or ‘Go that way,’” says Vince Flickinger, an associate designer at Gensler.



**Skyline's Solution:**

As you reach the end of the lobby and turn toward the reception area and law offices, rare, sweeping views of downtown Houston open up. "They're 54 floors up and Houston's flat," says Lynn Langston, an associate from Gensler working on the project. "You walk out of the elevator lobby, turn the corner, and you're presented with the reception room. You can see for probably 25-30 miles." Glass presented an opportunity to draw light into the elevator lobby, creating the effect of a bridge. Five hundred square-feet of Letters patterned Eco-etch® glass was introduced into the lobby and reception area. The glass was floated in front of a dark metallic bronze finished wall to emphasize the custom-etched typography, which incorporated the company's name and font. Letters from Skyline Design's Make collection allowed for adjustments to the pattern's scale and density—an individual letter begins as a pin dot and increases in size, overlapping with additional letters. "As the letters get larger and start to fill in, it actually makes the space feel lighter and brighter," says Flickinger. "The transition to a lighter space is a natural progression to the reception area around the corner."

The changing pattern on the glass shifts with the quality of the light, allowing you to discern the various meeting room doorways. "At two different points on this wall, there are doors into a corridor and another door into their employee break room," says Langston. "The views into those two areas are not distracting and they don't compete. It's actually nice to be walking along and have peeks into the rest of the space through the glass."



**Result:**

Gensler retrofit the formerly drab elevator lobby with customized glass to emphasize an important but previously neglected space. The newly configured interior creates meaningful connections with the rest of the office. The synergy between transparency and opacity plays up the porous relationship between inside and out, visitors and staff.

"The glass really served our purposes well. It furthered the design concept and it was a way to introduce some identification for them in a subtle way," says Langston, referring to the variously scaled letters borrowed from the firm's logo. "The glass is more representative of who the company is at a certain time and it also shows an evolution that things can change," adds Flickinger. "It starts clear with little specks and evolves from there, and just because the glass stops doesn't mean that Simpson Thacher's evolution and change stops."