

ENHANCING DECOR WITH DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

Ken Hanulec highlights a range of interior decor applications that can be produced sustainably, cost-effectively and on demand with digital inkjet printing

Demand for custom, personalised and adaptable interior décor for hospitality and retail businesses, corporate offices and consumer homes continues to grow. This presents a significant opportunity for sign and display graphics businesses that have implemented digital inkjet printing technologies – as well as traditional decor manufacturers who can augment their offerings by adding digital printing to the mix to better address smaller quantities and shorter cycle times that are becoming more common today.

So, are you equipped to handle the wide variety of unique applications digital can address? We'll lay out five application areas – some of which you may already be doing and some you might consider adding.

HOME AND HOSPITALITY FURNISHINGS

You can provide home and hospitality furnishings with a dye-sublimation soft signage printer. Decorative items, such as headboards, drapes, shower curtains and room dividers, can all be produced on any polyester-based material either direct to fabric or transfer paper then sublimated. Since the ink is infused into the fabric through the heat transfer process, the hand ['feel'] of the material does not change. It is also odourless, making it ideal



Digitally printed wooden floor

for items such as bedspreads and pillow shams [decorative pillow cases].

Today's industrial dye-sublimation printers, such as EFI's VUTEk FabriVU 340i, offer production level speeds, high image quality and inline sublimation if floor space and economics are issues in regard to adding an offline heat press.

In many cases, a customised home installation will only need a few yards of fabric. But in cases of larger demand – such as for a small to mid-sized hotel chain – direct-to-fabric printers with higher rates of speed and greater efficiencies are available, such as the EFI POWER 340 printer. Once you decide on your target market, there are solutions that can meet just about any need. Digital printing is cost-effective (no screens or set up times and reduced inventory requirements) and has minimal waste for most applications.

“Use white ink and multi-layer printing for a realistic wood grain or leather feel”

Digital printing also allows the production of one-off designs and short runs for custom furniture and accessories, such as tabletops, doors, picture frames and more. Print directly onto wood, wood veneers, acrylic, leather and other unique or dimensional materials – even media up to 10cm thick using the EFI Pro 30f flatbed printer. Use white ink and multi-layer printing to add texture to a smooth surface, leaving it with a realistic wood grain or leather feel. This technique can be used to enhance low-end pieces, which can then be sold for a higher margin.



Digitally printed glass office divider



Digitally printed wall décor

WALL COVERINGS AND MURALS

Digitally printed wall décor is becoming increasingly popular because it also can be customised and produced in short runs and on-demand. Traditionally printed on paper-based or vinyl substrates, companies are now developing new and unique UV printable wallcovering materials, from suede, metallic and sparkly finishes to removable peel-and-stick wallpaper fabric.

With the high-quality imaging and accurate colour reproduction of digital technology, you can produce photo-realistic murals or intriguing wallpaper designs. For example, using multi-layer white ink printing on a metallic substrate can deliver stunning results or be used to add a textured look

"Digital printing allows the option to print directly to glass or Plexiglas"

and feel for an upscale look in any location. Combine durable materials and LED inks to produce wall coverings for higher-traffic areas, such as office buildings and hotel lobbies.

Today's innovative solutions offer media handling for jumbo rolls and inline finishing for high-volume jobs, so the final product is ready to ship when it exits your printer. Make sure the printer's inks, such as Genuine EFI Inks, are certified to GREENGUARD standards for low chemical emissions into indoor air

during product usage, and that the printer and media together have achieved Type II certification for wall coverings, an indicator of quality, safety and durability for wall coverings.

WINDOW GRAPHICS

A wide variety of UV printable window films are available for glass decoration; and with digital printing, you have the option to print directly to glass or Plexiglas. Use white and clear inks along with coloured inks to create stunning, eye-catching designs. White and clear ink can also be used to create areas of opacity and translucency, so people can see into areas like conference rooms, but only to a certain extent. This allows for some sense of privacy while still enabling a bright, open appearance for conference rooms, for example.

PHOTO PANELS AND TABLETOPS ON CHROMALUXE

ChromaLuxe is a high-definition print media for a wide variety of applications, including photo panels, tabletops, and other high-end décor. Graphics for these applications are printed onto transfer paper using a dye-sublimation printer then sublimated onto the ChromaLuxe material, infusing the ink into the substrate for higher-end results. The final piece is very strong, extremely scratch-resistant, and can withstand disinfectants

and harsh chemicals, making it ideal for use in public places, such as restaurants, airports, and lobbies.

DIGITALLY DECORATED WOOD FLOORING

Digital printing is a new option for wood décor. EFI Cubik industrial, single-pass inkjet printers let you digitally stain and decorate natural wood. Print stunning woodgrains and gradients, high-resolution graphics, and vivid colours direct to wood surfaces with water-based mineral inks that integrate into the wood, resist sunlight, and promote the

"It's not the inkjet printing you may know today"

nobility and warmth of natural flooring. It's not the inkjet printing you may know today, but EFI mineral inks and the digital staining process have been designed for hardwood and parquet floor finishing, as well as plywood, particle board and other engineered wood boards.

INTERIOR DECOR: A BRIGHT AND PROFITABLE FUTURE

These are just a few of the exciting interior décor applications that can be produced sustainably, cost-effectively and on demand with digital inkjet printing. With EFI's portfolio of innovative digital printing technologies, you can add a broad range of unique applications to your offerings and take advantage of the ease of use and automation, including colour management, workflow and in-line finishing, that make the learning curve fast. Leveraging these technologies to print unique applications on a broad range of media adds more value for your customers and gives you a competitive edge. ■

For more information on leveraging digital inkjet technologies to offer unique, profitable interior décor applications, visit go.efi.com/interior-decor.

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