

CONFERENCE REPORT: Importance of digital textile printing in Italy

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Alessandro Gigli opening digital textile conference

A digital textile conference, organised by the Associazione Italiana di Chimica Tessile e Coloristica (IACTC) held on September 28, 2012, at the Università dell'Insubria in Como, Italy, had unprecedented demand from the Italian textile printing industry.

There were over 300 applications to attend the conference, which led to a second conference room being set up with video links to the main proceedings.

The Como area has developed into the major centre of digital textile printing and the IACTC has estimated that 40% of world apparel fashion digital textile printing production is now in Italy.

Consisting of 14 presentations, the conference was split into three sessions and a final 'round table' discussion, where six of the major digital textile printers answered a range of interesting questions, submitted both before the meeting and from the delegates at the conference.

The first session had presentations from the Como textile printers, and the opening presentation by the Marzotto Group, which includes the famous Ratti silk printing company, was given by its CEO Sergio Tamborini. The presentation was particularly interesting as it gave a comparison of production trends on a monthly basis at Ratti, over the last three years and showed a three fold increase in digital production output. In a cost comparison of digital textile printing compared to hand screen tables, the production cost of digital textile printing was a third of the cost of hand screen table printing.

The second session had four lectures, which included new developments in disperse dye inks for digital textile printing from Huntsman, the importance of cloth pre-treatment by For-Tex, and an interesting overview from Epson on its print head developments.

Additionally, the importance of controlling the manufacturer of digital textile inks at every processing step to ensure quality was emphasised by Jos Notermans of Stork Prints, with a presentation that gave some insights into Stork Prints' digital textile ink technology.

The third session was given by digital textile print machinery manufacturers.

These were Fratelli Robustelli, with the Monna Lisa concept, using Epson print head technology; Reggiani with the ReNOIR Evo machines; MS Italy, now with its portfolio of five machine types, targeting all production levels in digital textile printing and all using Kyocera print heads; Durst with the Kappa 180; and Konica Minolta with the Nassenger series of printers.

During the final session, there was a 'round table' discussion involving some of the major Italian digital textile printers (Mascioni, Martinengo, Miroglio, Seride, Nomega, Stamperia di Cassino Rizzardi) answering detailed questions.

The two questions, of the many discussed, which I found interesting, was the view that there should be more developments in the digital textile pigment ink area, before the quality is acceptable for the Como textile printers.

The question of which is the best production model for the Como textile printers, high production machines, or a series of medium production digital textile machines was debated and the pros and cons of the different approaches were discussed; one of the views that the Como printers prefer is flexibility of production.

The one day conference, covered all areas of digital textile printing and with such a high attendance from the textile industry, it emphasises the importance of digital textile production in the continuing success of the Italian textile printing industry in world markets.

All the presentations and discussions were videoed and will appear on YouTube and summaries of all the presentations and 'round table' discussions are available.