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BIG PICTURE

THE BUSINESS OF WIDE FORMAT

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FABRICS

OPENING THE WINDOW TO PROFITABILITY

A feature article in the February 2009 issue:

Dream Fabric Printing
Dream Green Banners

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- Acquiring a Rival
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FABRIC PRINTING'S ADVANTAGES

*Five shops show how fabrics
enable unique solutions.*

By Kacey King

If you've been thinking that the fabric market only revolves around a very narrow niche of applications, you need to reconsider that assumption: Yes, banners and flags certainly comprise a large slice of the fabrics pie, but print providers also are generating textile output for trade-show graphics, P-O-P, tents, clothing, and scores of other applications.

One factor that has helped push the increased use of fabrics of late: the movement toward sustainability by many corporate clients and society as a whole. As saving the planet has again become a "cool" thing to do, many of your customers are seeking green solutions for their ideas and designs. You can shove the vinyl aside (or at least give it a nudge) and investigate how textiles can not only better the world but also better your bottom line.

Beyond the eco factor, keep in mind that fabrics in and of themselves can help set your shop's work apart from your competition because they typically enable some unique approaches that should help you to gain repeat business. What follows are five jobs showcasing a variety of digital textile printing applications—including some where print providers and their clients are indeed "going green." Take a look and see where printing on fabrics can take your business in 2009.



Textiles for the maharajah

Keeping up with the sustainable times, the Smithsonian Institution has now taken on “green” processes and prefers its vendors to do the same. That’s what drew the museum to Dream Fabric Printing, a print provider in Orangeburg, New York, that also produces its own textiles.

The company’s eco-fabric, Dream Green Banner, has a canvas-like texture and is made strictly from recycled domestic bottles that are processed in the United States. “We met with the Smithsonian, and they have older buildings but wanted to go ‘green.’ Since they couldn’t do much with the building itself, they have gone green in other ways—including these eco-friendly banners with our banner material,” says Victoria D’Angelo, director of Dream Fabric Printing (dreamfabricprinting.com).

For this particular project, The Smithsonian Institution requested two sets of 45 x 185-inch entry banners for both the Freer Gallery of Art and the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, featuring Indian artwork of garden paintings that once resided in the royal palaces of the maharajahs.

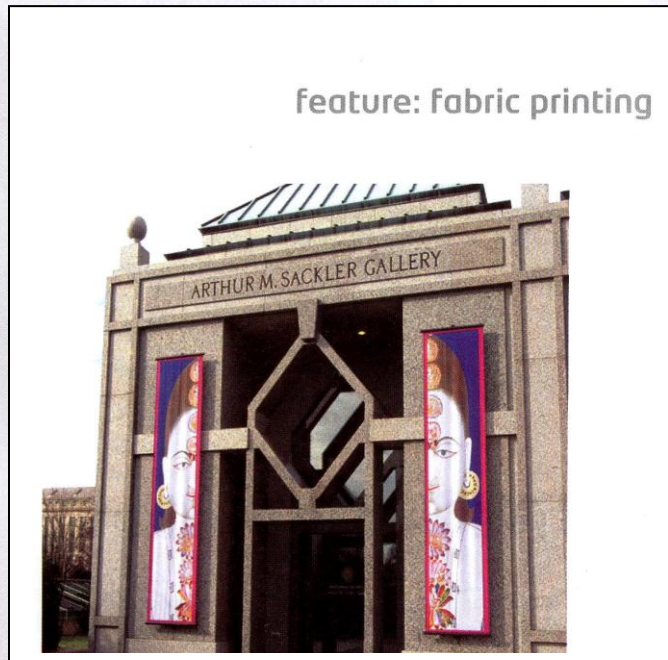
The Smithsonian’s art department produced a digital file of the artwork, created “to the exact measurements needed for their specific fixtures,” says D’Angelo. In the meantime, she says, “We tested the fabric for the percentage of stretch and calculated accordingly so the fit would be tight and there would be no loose fabric to be affected by the wind or the fact that the building is sitting behind the banner (airflow).”

Dream Fabric Printing used its Italian-made Reggiani high-speed printing system with aqueous disperse dye inks and Reggiani Evolution software to direct print onto the Dream Green Banner material. To reduce the carbon footprint of the project, the shop sent the banners to a sewing company near the museum to create pole pockets for banner installation (which was done by the Smithsonian staff).

“This fabric weighs a little less than a pound a yard and ships in a plastic sleeve as opposed to another carton—this reduces wasteful packaging and further reduces the carbon footprint of the project,” explains D’Angelo.

Prior to approval, the shop provided a proof consisting of a miniature of each banner plus an actual-size print of a section on the banner material for the client to check color. It took five days to provide the proof, and another week for printing and sewing.

“The Smithsonian Institution is actively working with us to create a product line in the same Eco fabric for the museum stores—totes, various bags, and possibly small ‘posters’ of the artwork or miniatures of the entry banners,” says D’Angelo.



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