

User report

AST beschriftet AG, Emmenbrücke, Switzerland

A colourful network is helping to bring in orders for a signage firm, which supplements its core business with specialities like individualised sun awnings. The team are all-rounders - just like their Nyala 2 large format printer. And the projects they handle have gained in breadth and depth thanks to this acquisition.

"We operate in a creative environment", states Gerry Meier. A colourful community is indeed at work on the former Viscose factory site near Lucerne. Up until the end of the 20th century, synthetic yarns used to be spun here and exported around the world. Today, the industrial site is subdivided into numerous units, and businesses like 'AST beschriftet AG' along with architects, artists and the Lucerne School of Art and Design have breathed new life into the grey halls. The canyons between them even served as a film set recently. Gerry Meier laughs: "One evening I stumbled directly into a scene". From this embarrassing situation a conversation arose, which ultimately led to orders for props. "Many projects just kind of happen", he grins. "We have never done any advertising ourselves". Instead, the team takes care of visual appearance for others.

Lettering and more

While the core business centres on signposting, building signs, vehicle wrappings and lighting systems, the list of services also includes interior design: styled glass, printed wood panelling and similar indoor architectural elements. Then again, spontaneous orders arrive. They may come



from teachers and students at the nearby school of art, or from freelance artists, architects, craftsmen and, yes, film-makers. Anything is possible, from a one-off upwards. And that is a success factor, Meier points out.

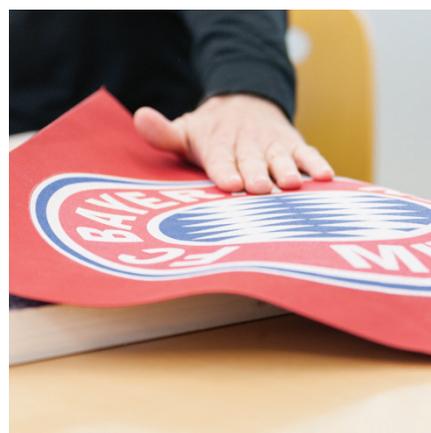
Branded awnings

A long-standing speciality is artwork and lettering for the sun blinds and awnings seen outside restaurants, shopping malls and individual shops. Whereas this was previously done by hand using negative

stencils, today's method uses direct printing on the swissQprint Nyala 2 large format printer. "We begin by laying the ready-stitched awnings on the flatbed", explains Gerry Meier. "First we print primer, then the design". It is a quick, clean process.

Nyala 2 for every application

Mostly rigid materials land on the Nyala 2 print bed. New bus stop signs for a local public transport operator are just finished and ready for delivery - printed onto rigid foam board. This kind of thing is bread-and-butter business at AST beschriftet AG. But for a stand at a construction trade fair, the team dipped deeper into their bag of tricks. Copper, clay, oak, shuttering panels, roughly sawn and varnished spruce needed doing-up for appeal to architects. The standard demanded was high, recalls Gerry Meier: "The base material had to stay discernible and aesthetic". When it came to doing the job, the team simply dusted off and degreased the various substrates before printing them directly on the Nyala 2. The customer made a successful showing





at the fair. Moreover, 'AST beschriftet AG' submitted their project to the swissQprint Creative Challenge 2016 and made it to the shortlist.

More time for the customer

"Our subjective feeling was that the Nyala 2 had already paid for itself before we even got it", reports Gerry Meier. Screen printing and laminating are passé. "We save a lot of time in production", he explains. Time that the team now puts into brainstorming and customer care. "We can get our customer on board and be at his side from a much earlier point", explains Meier as he talks about a shopping mall project: not only did the firm deliver the shop signs, they also got a preview of visitor flows and devised the mall's entire wayfinding system. Overall, orders have increased in volume and scope. When all is said and done, 'AST beschriftet AG' can now offer more than it used to. "Because we know things will work, we can present a far more confident pitch", concludes Gerry Meier.



Efficiency: an ongoing theme

The pace is picking up. Of course 'AST beschriftet AG' handles short-turnaround orders, sometimes overnight. "We work steadily on efficiency", says Gerry Meier, "and the Nyala 2 was the first big step in this direction". The tandem function, which keeps the UV printer working non-stop, is just one example. Combined with a Zünd cutter, 'AST beschriftet AG' has established a continuous print-and-cut workflow. Meier confirms: "We can make well-directed use of human resources". Each member of the production team is skilled to operate every machine and piece of equipment. Frequently, one employee will handle an entire order from start to finish. With large volumes, everyone lends a hand or else the call goes out to friends in the business. "We treat the competition as partners", underlines Gerry Meier. A good network is worth its weight in gold.

Investment works out

According to Gerry Meier, he much prefers it when the thing that matters is quality, rather than speed. "We try to combine the two." This concept fits well with the Nyala 2 precision printer, which Meier praises both for its productivity and print quality. As he knows: "Being so hugely versatile, the Nyala 2 is kept busy every day". In addition to CMYK, the large format printer is also equipped with light colours, white, primer and varnish. Considering the printer's moderate ink consumption and the minimal effort required for maintenance, the investment is proving a total success.

Info box

AST beschriftet AG, Emmenbrücke, Switzerland
www.ast-beschriftet.ch
 Segment: Advertising technology
 Established: 1983
 Employees: 10
 Printer: Nyala 2
 References:
 - National and international companies across various sectors: complete signage systems
 - Architects: indoor architectural elements, signposting (concept & execution)
 - Film sets: props and scenery
 - Artists: one-offs