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Elevated Embroidery

Pairing embroidery with rhinestones, laser appliqué and other techniques adds to a garment's perceived value – and a shop's profit margins.

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The Machine Guide

Get ready to invest in new decorating equipment this year. Here, we showcase some of the best equipment in the industry, from single- and multi-heads, to screen-printing presses, to laser bridges and more, with real customer reviews. In our 2015 Machine Guide, we feature 49 machines from 26 top industry manufacturers and distributors.

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About the Cover
Design: Hillary Glen
Photography: Mark Prickett
Decorated by: Great Dane Graphics,
Mandeville, LA; circle 78 on Free Info Card.

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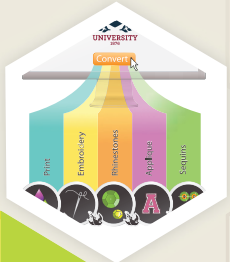
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On the cover is a stock art design, which is part of a fashion collection offered by Great Dane Graphics, Mandeville, LA. The image was printed by the

Epson SureColor F2000 direct-to-garment printer, distributed by Stahls' (asi/88984). The words "The Machine Issue" were added to the design's banner in a heat-seal material, which added dimension and texture to the overall design. It's an easy way to create a multimedia look in a production-friendly manner. The koi design was printed on Comfort Colors' style 1717, a garment-dyed tee made of 100% ringspun cotton in a 6.1-oz. weight in midnight. The heat-applied graphic cutter material was Stahls' CAD-CUT Glitter Flake, which offers a textured glitter finish.

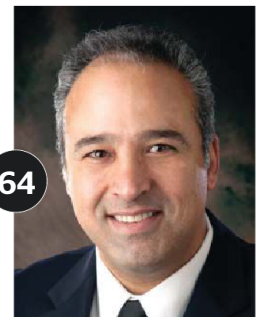


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PHOTO CREDIT: CYBELE KNOWLES

In this month's "Inspiration" section of our "Look Book" department, we feature work by **LISA MARIE COLE** (pictured) and **JULIET COOK**. Cole is the author of the poetry collection, *Renegade//Heart*, published by Cook's Blood Pudding Press. Cook created the paint and fabric art piece photographed for the cover, and stemming from that effort, Cole created additional pieces inspired by it. "We're all – as people – a bit of a mess, after all," Cole says. "The cover looked like the patched up innards of a heart to me, and it was definitely something I'd never seen represented artistically before." In every mess, she reflects, one can find art.

In this issue's "Ask an Expert," **ED BALADY**, president of BITO USA, offers advice about buying an embroidery laser. A good place to start is to determine how much laser power you truly need, and that depends on what you want to cut. "If you'll be using mostly jersey, fleece, felt and polyester twill, you won't need as powerful a laser as if you want to cut a lot of canvas and leather or etch on metal and wood," he writes. "There are three classes of lasers used in the decorated apparel industry. As the size of the machine increases, so should the laser power."



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Investment Smarts



Welcome to *Stitches'* annual Machine Issue. In this packed guide, we feature nearly 50 machines, including single- and multi-heads, screen-printing equipment, direct-to-garment printers, heat presses, dual-function machines and more. Before you invest, here are expert tips from our Editorial Advisory Board:

1. Don't buy on price. The smartest thing, while realistically considering your budget, is to understand what machine best fits your needs. "Shopping strictly on price is a big mistake," says Andy Shuman, general manager for Tipton, PA-based Rockland Embroidery Inc. (asi/734150). "Machines generate your revenue." Likewise, Steve Freeman, managing partner at Qdigitizing.com, advises, "Do your homework and fully understand what the machine can do in a real-world environment."

2. Don't buy without talking to other decorators. "Focus on the track record of the machine and those who own it," says Deborah Jones, owner of MyEmbroideryMentor.com. "Are they happy overall with their decision? This is relatively easy to do within online chat groups of machine owners with businesses. Gauge the com-

ments overall and know there are one or two haters for any brand."

3. Don't purchase what you don't need. For example, "I've seen embroiderers with no desire to digitize buy full digitizing packages," says Erich Campbell, digitizer and e-commerce manager at Albuquerque, NM-based Black Duck Inc. (asi/700415). "I've talked to several 'switchers' who started with a package solely on brand and later switched to a package that worked for them. All major embroidery software can make files to run any standard machine."

4. Don't rule out pre-owned. "It's a mistake when businesses buy a used machine from a private individual based on price," says Mike Angel, vice president of sales and marketing at Melco. "Weekly, we receive calls from firms that purchased used machines and encounter issues. These transactions usually don't include training or accessories." However, Angel says pre-owned machines distributed by reputable manufacturers are great alternatives for companies on tight budgets. "You can invest in a machine that has a warranty, training, service, support and the tools needed to run a successful business while saving a considerable amount vs. new."

Nicole M. Rollender

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Get Your Stitch Report

Stitches Senior Staff Writer Theresa Hegel shares a few tips to help shops add multimedia decoration techniques in a production-friendly way to boost their profits. Watch on Stitches.com.



Podcast: Bling's the Thing

Mark Stephenson of ColDesi tells Theresa Hegel, *Stitches* Senior Staff Writer, about the enduring popularity of bling and how to increase the perceived value of a garment by incorporating rhinestones or spangles with embroidery. Listen on Stitches.com.



Shop Shakeup

Linda and Steve Wachal often don't see eye-to-eye on pricing and major purchases for Iowa-based Creative Impact Co., but there's one thing the couple can agree on: Their struggling shop was in need of a major overhaul. Read the article at Stitches.com.

SOCIAL FEEDS



STITCHES MAGAZINE

Curious about the progress being made by the subject of our August Extreme Shop Make-over? Senior Staff Writer Theresa Hegel checked up with him in the latest *Stitchwork* blog post: bit.ly/1z2xixY

STITCHES MAGAZINE

The Wild Side has launched a retail section of its website, selling transfers by the piece to benefit smaller shops: bit.ly/1ytDxuP

STITCHES MAGAZINE

Learn how to decorate those popular oversized jerseys, also, find out what's considered the new "casual workplace tie." (Hint: it goes on your feet.) All this and more in our "Stitches Business" newsletter: bit.ly/1q17IL9

STITCHES POSTED

What are your plans to diversify in 2015?

YOU ANSWERED

HOWARD POTTER
We're bringing in over 12 new apparel lines for samples to our showroom. That way, our customers have a bigger selection to choose from in person. We're also learning how to do a professional car wrap.

STITCHES MAGAZINE

Medieval scribes sometimes used embroidery to repair damaged parchment. Very cool!
bit.ly/1sMnMeB

STITCHES MAGAZINE

John Lynch, owner of corporate apparel supplier and decorator Lynka, was awarded Poland's Golden Cross of Merit this month: bit.ly/1EviXOL

STITCHES MAGAZINE

Stitches Senior Staff Writer Theresa Hegel shares tips on building engagement on Twitter: bit.ly/1rkOg8l



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Is Lego ruining our kids' imaginations?
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VIDEO: #Stitch Report reveals key findings from 2014 #Power75 Poll: bit.ly/1uWm532 #embroidery

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SanMar just opened a warehouse in the Phoenix area: bit.ly/1taFd81

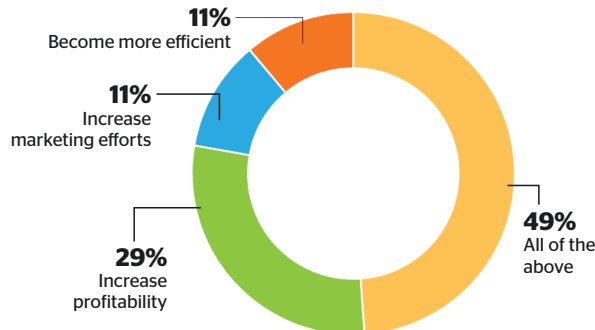
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INDUSTRY POLL

At Stitches.com, we recently asked:

What's your No. 1 goal for your shop in 2015?



BLOG EXCERPT

Scan this code to read the entire blog entry by Erich Campbell, digitizer and e-commerce manager for Black Duck Inc. (asi/700415) in Albuquerque, NM.



On Links and Needles Preparation, Focus and Presence



Mise en place – it's a French term that began its stint in the English language in the lexicon of professionally trained chefs, but it's becoming more and more common to hear it out of its original context. *Mise en place* roughly means something like "putting in place" and refers to any number of preparatory practices that these diligent artists apply to their work. At its essence, *mise en place* insists that one make dedicated time to carefully prepare all the ingredients one may need for a session of cooking – that one prepare, chop, peel and portion one's raw materials, and that once that is done, arrange these materials in one's workspace in such a way that no movement is wasted in the act of preparing a meal. Everything one needs is inches from one's fingertips, every ingredient prepared and measured, every implement clean, ready and in order; some even extend it to the act of keeping your area in this order, or "working clean," maintaining your work area as you go.

Pinterest

Check out the following designs that we pinned on Stitches' Pinterest page – from the *Fashion We Love Now* and *Embroidered Art & Home Accessories* Boards.

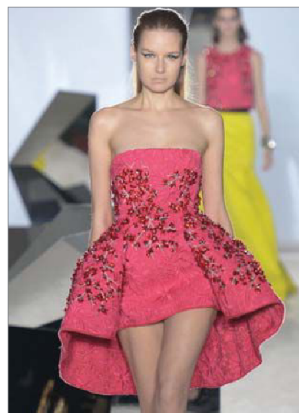
From the Board: Fashion We Love Now



Actress Marion Cotillard models original vintage pieces by Christian Dior for his Haute Couture Spring-Summer collection, 1957, courtesy of Quite Continental, quitecontinental.net.



This dress made of a spaghetti strap top on the bottom and burnout tee at the top includes foil, screen printing, discharge printing and rhinestones. It's by Greg Gaardbo of Des Plaines, IL-based Shockwaves Promotional Apparel (asi/87144; circle 76 on Free Info Card).



This modified fishtail gown with beads and embroidery is by Giambattista Valli for Spring 2014.



This beaded gown is by Valentino for Spring-Summer Haute Couture.

From the Board: Embroidered Art & Home Accessories



This handmade needle felt pillow is by Georgianne Holland, fiber artist and health coach at Nestle And Soar, nestleandsoar.blogspot.com.



This equestrian wall art combines screen printing and embroidery from Penny Farthing Design House, NSW, Australia, pennyfarthingdh.com.au.



This dish towel is made with two different stitch types, perfect for beginners from Craftaphile, craftaphile.blogspot.com.



This quilt features 12 embroidered blocks depicting scenes from the circus from Q is for Quilter, qisforquilter.com.

Visit Stitches' Pinterest page – and all our great boards – at Pinterest/stitchesmag.

INTERACT

Letters

What types of decorating equipment have you invested in recently and how have they helped grow your business? Or, what's your wish list piece of decorating equipment that you'd like to invest in if money was no object?

Jumping in Feet First

A year ago, I took the leap and moved my business from my house to a small local strip of shops. I invested in a four-head Tajima embroidery machine and business began to boom. I went from a \$15K to a \$50K business in just one year. In May 2014, I hired my first part-time employee, and in October, I took on a high school intern. At the ISS Show in Orlando, I invested in a Stahls' (asi/88984) heat press with multiple attachments, as well as a hat press. It's gradually changing my company again, and I hope within a year to have the four-head paid off.

If money were no object, I'd invest in a piece of screen-printing equipment, perhaps a small manual press to do small jobs, as well as enough equipment to be able to screen print transfers. I'd also consider the software and equipment to do my own rhinestone transfers or perhaps sublimation. It's so exciting; I don't know where

to turn next! I love the changes new equipment and location have made in my business. I'm looking forward to continuing to grow. Thank you for all the opportunities ASI and its associates have afforded me with training, up-to-date information and the latest trends!

Krissi Dane

EmbroiderMe, Green Cove Springs, FL

Screen Print Away

I invested \$60,000 in the Sabre automatic press and other screen-printing equipment, along with \$35,000 in a 54" Roland Versa Cam printer and other pieces to go with it.

Howard Potter

A&P Master Images (asi/702505), Utica, NY

New Enterprise

We recently purchased the Brother Dream Machine to add to our Brother Pro PR1000e embroidery machine. We've formed a new company, Hemp Utopia, and we're pro-

ducing embroidered designs on hemp T-shirts and tops to add to our Hemp Clothing line. We also partnered with several other companies to do their embroidery work.

Steven and Paula Kellerman

Hemp Utopia, div. of 3C Botanicals Inc., Lancaster, NY

Hopes for '15

We recently purchased a third single-head embroidery machine. Our existing machines are both SWF, but the company we purchased them from no longer sells or supports them. We decided to invest in a Tajima TUMX-C, not only for the support offered by Hirsch, but also for the machine's ability to accommodate hard-to-hoop items. We also retired our HM1 Kiosk direct-to-garment printer and purchased a new Summit printer. Between it and our Viper printer, we can now produce up to 60 prints an hour. On our wish list for 2015 – we're considering adding a

third garment printer (possibly another Summit) and a fourth embroidery machine, possibly the Tajima TFMX-IIC 1502 two-head model.

Paul J. Howell

Turbo Threads (asi/347763), Rio Rancho, NM

In the December "Power 75" story, the following entry should have appeared in the story. We include it here:

11

Bill Wilson

Chief Product Officer and Co-Founder, Wilcom International Pty. Greg Ross, President, Wilcom America

2013 Rank: 9

Since 1979, Wilcom has been providing industry-leading software for embroidery, digital garment printing, laser cutting, rhinestones and more. In the last year, the company has given out tens of thousands of licenses to its new TrueSizer program, a free app that allows anyone to view and edit digitized designs, whether or not they own Wilcom digitizing software. Based on the overwhelming response to the free version, Wilcom launched its first e-commerce product, TrueSizer Pro, earlier this year. TrueSizer Pro gives users more functionality and flexibility than the free version of the app. The company has also extended classroom training to the U.K. and Australia.

VOILA!

The Best Piece I Ever Embroidered

"Oilcloth is known for its strength and water-resistance and it can be easily wiped down and disinfected. Plus, it never becomes dingy like canvas or fabric bags. We embroidered this medium oilcloth tote bag with a red reindeer for the winter season. It also has a solid black exterior and a fun red polka dot interior. We love doing these bags. They're perfect for carrying winter gear, such as mittens, scarves and hats, and can also be used as a purse or diaper bag, or for a girl's dance shoes or books. We can also customize the oilcloth in different colors."

Submitted by Kari A. Miller, owner and designer at Irresistibles LLC on Etsy, bjandkari@usfamily.net; and Yo Burgess, owner of YoThreadWorks, yotbreadworks@comcast.net, www.yotbreadworks.com



TALK TO US!

Tell us what challenges you're facing in your shop. React to a story you've just read in *Stitches* or on our Facebook page. Email us a shot of the latest and greatest embroidery design you've just run. We can't wait to hear from you, so send letters to the editor to nroller@asicentral.com.

Phil Stitch Answers



Got a question for Phil?

If you can't find what you're looking for in the 2013 Sourcing Guide, write to: *Stitches*, Attn: Phil Stitch, 4800 Street Rd., Treviso, PA 19053. Or fax your question to (215) 953-3107. For the quickest response, email askphil@asicentral.com. For RN inquiries, visit www.stitches.com for the RN Database link. P.S. If you join ASI with the brand-new *Stitches* Membership Package, you'll be able to immediately source imprintable products from every ASI supplier member with ASI's ESP Buyer's Guide. Plus, increase sales with your own e-commerce website full of T-shirts, blankets, caps, bags, plush toys and other embroidery-ready items. Call (877) 276-0292 or visit www.joinstitches.com to get started!

My client needs either a button-down shirt or a polo with racing stripes. Any ideas? - Luke

Race to Tri-Mountain (asi/92125); (800) 824-6464; www.trimountain.com; for the Cobra (909), a cotton/polyester blend peached short-sleeve twill camp shirt. Also check out this supplier's RS-3 (930), another poly/cotton twill camp shirt with side contrast panels, featuring a left-chest pocket and back yoke.

Alternately, the Ladies' Relay Full-Button Shirt (420026) and the Men's Relay Full-Button Shirt (620046) are available from Boardroom Custom Clothing (asi/40705); (800) 654-4002; www.boardroomecoapparel.com. Both shirts are

made of 100% polyester microfiber and contain a sublimated racing stripe accent. Your third stop is Bishop, The Garment Co. (asi/40585); (800) 797-9629; www.bishopwear.com; for the Pitstop Racing Shirt (383), the Chest Stripe Polo (3131) and the Torque Racing Polo (429).

I'm searching for oven mitts for embroidery. Any suggestions are greatly appreciated! - Delicia

Warm up to the Quilted Cotton Canvas Oven Mitt (9002) from Hit Promotional Products (asi/61125); (800) 237-6305; www.hitpromo.net; it features a convenient loop for hanging and comes in four colors. Or, slip into the poly/cotton twill Oven

Mitt (AOM-102) and the Heat-Resistant Oven Mitt (AOM-099) from Apromos Corp. (asi/36557); (510) 732-9099; www.apromoscorporation.com. For a pop of color, try the cotton canvas Kitchen Bright Oven Mitt (OM203) from Beacon Promotions Inc. (asi/39250); (800) 628-9979; www.beaconpromotions.com. This handy kitchen tool is available in assorted neon shades.

Any idea where I can find a Kelly green pant for a dance team in youth and adult sizes? - Theresa

Find the Micro Poly Pant in adult sizes (620) and youth sizes (621) from Staton Corporate and Casual (asi/89380); (800)

continued on page 21



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INTERACT

Problem Solved

Q *With the recent global outcry for improved safety for garment workers and other laborers overseas, how important is it for me to vet my apparel suppliers I'm buying items from to sell to my customers?*



Jimmy Lamb, Sawgrass

Technologies: A couple of years ago, I did a presentation for ASI about green apparel products after researching

the supply chain, from fiber creation to end product. It was amazing to see all the layers and all the influences, such that something like organic cotton, considered an eco-friendly fabric, might not be totally so after harsh dyes were used to color the fabric, chemical preservatives were added to protect the apparel in transit, and questionable decoration techniques were used to add a graphic. The term organic doesn't guarantee total green. So is the retailer remiss in calling this a green product if they don't know about all of those things? How would they even find out? The same goes for labor standards in the global market. How can we possibly find all the hands that touch our products and then get information into how they're treated?

There are so many layers and influences in the supply chain that it's almost impossible to identify who is doing what; thus, there's no practical way to really investigate working conditions or do much about it. And it's even more complex when multiple apparel manufacturers may be buying raw materials from the same company. For example, if Supplier XYZ supplies cotton piqué fabric to Apparel Manufacturers A, B and C and Supplier XYZ is accused of using child labor, then suddenly three brands are affected. Will you drop all three because of something beyond your control? We would hope that they would find new suppliers, but it's difficult for us to do anything other than complain. So from a practical point of view, individual decorators and retailers aren't really in a position to vet suppliers in terms of global

labor standards. And that solves nothing.

But if decorators start questioning suppliers, and the suppliers feel enough pressure, then they may start looking deeper into the matter, because they're in a much better position to investigate the supply chain than we are. Ultimately, it would be worthy if it became standard practice for the apparel companies to post statements certifying that they've established (and enforce) specific labor guidelines in the manufacture of their products. We have seen this in terms of "green inks" in which the trend has been to move toward water-based, environmentally friendly products. Manufacturers responded to our concerns, made changes and posted those details in public.

I know this can be done in terms of labor, as I have a close working relationship with the co-owner of an industry apparel manufacturer who carefully vetted out his supply chain and proudly discusses it with anyone who is interested. I'm not saying that our suppliers don't care or are turning a blind eye. I'm sure that more than one of them is concerned and taking some type of action. My suggestion is to make this more public so that our industry as a whole can play a part in trying to improve the working conditions for as many people as possible.



Deborah Jones, MyEmbroideryMentor.com:

While this is an important issue, I believe it's even important to research product safety for your customers. For example, any item that might be used by children under 12 must comply with new safety regulations. This legislation has yet to be fully enforced, but you should request product safety certification

for all products you sell that might be used by children.



Howard Potter, A&P Master Images (asi/702505):

We feel that safety is very important even in our own shop. That's why every piece of equipment we have is laid out to be more efficient and safe to work around. All suppliers and wholesalers should want safe work environments to begin with so they know people aren't being mistreated. On the financial side, safety is super important. If people are constantly getting hurt and suing the manufacturer, that slows production down and drives up costs. So whether companies care or not, they should.



Andy Shuman, Rockland Embroidery Inc. (asi/734150):

While I think our industry suppliers do a very good job of vetting their manufacturer partners, the need, desire or importance of taking an additional step in that direction is a matter of one's personal sense of a) trust in their suppliers and b) sense of personal social responsibility.



Anna Johnson, Super Embroidery & Screen Printing Inc.:

We use only well-known established suppliers. We rely on them to vet their manufacturing plants, and they supply us with fair trade information.

Have a problem you need solved? Send your question for the Stitches Editorial Advisory Board to nrollender@asicentral.com.

Phil Stitch Answers

from page 19

950-6611; www.statononline.com. Both feature an outer shell of 100% micro polyester, side seam pockets and a covered elastic waistband with inside drawcord.

Or, get in the spirit with Spiritwear Pants for youth (8597-Y) and adults (8597) from Arrowear Athletic Apparel (asi/36915); (516) 593-7800; www.arrowear.com. They offer microfiber construction, side pockets and zippered bottoms. Finally, head to Heritage Sportswear and Virginia T's (asi/60582); (800) 537-2222; www.heritagesportswear.com. There, you may strike gold with the Medalist Pant (7756A, youth; 7755A, adult), made of heavyweight 100% polyester brushed tricot with contrast color side inserts.

Please help! My client is looking for beanies with attached visor brims. - Walt

Check out the Short Visor Beanie (90-647) from Otto International (asi/75350); (800) 554-1331; www.ottocap.com; it's 100% acrylic and available in black. Another option is the one-size-fits-all Beanie with Visor (W-1900) from Apollo Group (asi/73392); (800) 982-2146; www.apolloemb.com; made of acrylic fabric, this hat comes in six attractive colors. Last but not least is the ribbed knit Brimmed Beanie (MX235) in 18 colors from Max Apparel USA (asi/69706); (888) 629-4287; www.maxhat.com.

I'm looking for a messenger style diaper bag for embroidery. Do you have any suggestions? - Cindy

Keep the little ones equipped with the Baby Bag (product BBY0200) from Two Lumps of Sugar (asi/92244); (212) 695-8677; www.twolumpsofsugar.net. Made of

cotton with polyurethane coating and vinyl lining, it measures 18" x 10 1/2" x 5" and has several large pockets to carry diapers and other essentials.

Otherwise, tote the Tot Diaper Bag (15729) from Norwood US (asi/74400); (800) 336-9198; www.norwood.com. Constructed from polyester, this bag measures 12 3/4" x 13 1/2" x 5" and features five pockets for easy organization and an adjustable shoulder handle. No need to fuss - I've got one more for you! Gemline (asi/56070); (800) 800-3200; www.gemline.com; carries the Peekaboo Diaper Kit (1490), which offers dual front zippered pockets with gussets, an adjustable shoulder strap and a large back pocket for additional storage.

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By Theresa Hegel

EU Passes Plastic Bag Restrictions

The European Union has approved a deal to dramatically reduce the number of single-use plastic bags given out in retail stores. The measure would slash the number of bags Europeans use each year by more than 75% over the next decade or so.

Under the proposal, EU member countries would be able to opt for mandatory pricing of bags by 2019, or adhere to binding targets to reduce the number of plastic bags used per person each year from 191 now to 90 by 2019 and 40 in 2025. A bag tax would be an acceptable equivalent measure.

"It's a huge victory not only for the European environment, but also globally as most of these single-use bags end up in the world's oceans and are one of the big causes of the 'plastic

soup' phenomenon," Dutch politician Gerben-Jan Gerbrandy told the *Guardian* newspaper.

In 2010, the average EU citizen used 176 plastic bags a year, though usage varies widely between member states, EU data shows. For instance, Poles and Slovaks use an average of 466 disposable bags annually, whereas Danes, who are charged for bags, use only four each year.

The EU deal is part of a growing trend of plastic bag bans and restrictions. In November, Baltimore became the first East Coast city in the U.S. to pass a bag ban. California was the first to pass a statewide ban, though plastic bag manufacturers have since poured millions of dollars into the state in an effort to overturn the legislation.

SanMar Opens Eighth Warehouse

Top 25 Apparel Supplier SanMar Corp. (asi/84863) now boasts more than 4.4 million square feet of inventory space across the country, after opening its eighth warehouse. The latest facility, in Phoenix, is 326,000 square feet and includes a showroom and onsite kiosks where local customers can place orders.

"We pride ourselves on offering the most on-hand inventory in the industry, with the quickest ship times to our customers," says Jeremy Lott, president. "The addition of the Phoenix warehouse allows us to be even more efficient in fulfilling customer orders throughout the Southwest, while offering later ship times for one-day shipping to our customers in southern California."

SanMar ranked No. 2 in *Stitches'* most recent Top 25 Apparel Suppliers list, with an estimated \$500 million in annual revenue.

Jetline Adds Decoration Method

Gaffney, SC-based supplier Jetline (asi/63344) is adding JetColor, a full-color inkjet-direct imprinting method, to its lineup of decoration techniques.

Jetline recently added three new X2 UV inkjets to its existing X-Jet system, enhancing capacity, capability and redundancy. JetColor is a process the company has been developing for a while, according to Eric Levin, CEO: "We are very pleased to be able to continue to invest in innovative printing technologies that dramatically improve the end-user's buying experience."

Among the products that can be imprinted with JetColor are stress relievers and vinyl-based products that have traditionally been difficult to decorate.

SBA Has Record Lending Year

The U.S. Small Business Administration approved a record number of loans in 2014, lending out \$19.19 billion to help small-business owners expand their companies. By the end of the fiscal year, the SBA had approved more than 52,000 loans, a year-over-year increase of 12%. In terms of dollars loaned, the program was up 7.4% over 2013.

"As our economy continues to grow and recover, small businesses are the essential fuel to that continued growth," says Maria Contreras-Sweet, SBA administrator.

Event Calendar

Feb. 3-5, Dallas
ASI Show
(800) 546-3300;
www.asishow.com

Feb 6-7, Manhattan, NY
Manhattan Vintage
Clothing Show & Sale
(518) 852-2415;
<http://manhattanvintage.com>

Feb. 9-12, Seattle; Portland, OR; Sacramento, CA; San Jose, CA
ASI Roadshow
(800) 546-3300;
www.advantagesroadshow.com

Feb. 20-21, Columbus, OH
Embroidery Trade Show
(800) 866-7396;
www.nnep.net

Feb. 21-24, San Francisco
San Francisco International
Gift Fair
(678) 285-3976;
www.sfigf.com

Feb. 22-25, Edmonton, AB
Alberta Gift Show
(800) 611-6100;
www.albertagiftshow.org

Feb. 24-27, Raleigh, NC; Charlotte, NC; Atlanta; Nashville, TN
ASI Roadshow
(800) 546-3300;
www.advantagesroadshow.com

Feb. 26-28, Washington, DC
DC Fashion Week
(202) 600-9274;
www.dcfashionweek.org

Chinese Billionaire Drops \$45M for Tibetan Tapestry

A Chinese billionaire recently spent a record \$45 million to purchase a 600-year-old Tibetan tapestry. Liu Yiqian, a Shanghai-based entrepreneur and art collector, started his career as a taxi driver before making his fortune investing in real estate and pharmaceuticals. Liu has spent 20 years amassing a vast collection of Chinese art, the most recent acquisition obtained after a 22-minute bidding war at a Christie's auction in Hong Kong. The Ming dynasty embroidery depicts Rakta-

yamari, a Buddhist deity also referred to as the Red Conqueror of Death.

"Before, our country wasn't very strong or prosperous, so many things were lost to overseas buyers," Liu told *The New York Times* after placing his winning bid by telephone. "Now that we have accumulated wealth, we need to deepen our own cultural sophistication. So we are buying Western art, to say nothing of our own art."

On its website, Christie's called the silk "thangka" tapestry one of the most important



Asian works of art to come to market. The tapestry will be displayed at Liu's new museum in Shanghai, according to the auction house.

Design Firm Creates Faux-Embroidered Signage

A Japanese design studio is using 3-D printing to create signage that resembles embroidery, complete with plastic "strings" that drape between letters like dropped threads. The Wall Stitch Project, which was on display at Tokyo Designer's Week 2014, was created by YOY, in collaboration with K's Design Lab.

YOY, a contemporary design studio made up of spatial designer Naoki Ono and product designer Yuki Yamamoto, was established in 2011 and focuses on "addressing the visual narrative negotiated between space and the objects within," according to www.3dprint.com, a news organization that covers 3-D printing. The Wall Stitch Project creates visual interest by juxtaposing the soft look of embroidery with the hard reality of the plastic letters. "There's also the interest created through the collision of ancient handicraft and cutting-edge technological production, as well as the feminine history and associations of embroidery in contrast with the masculine nature of and predominance in 3-D printing," writes Hannah Rose Mendoza at 3DPrint.

Bookbinder Uses Intricate Stitching in Craft

Embroidery adds a rich, textural quality to the bespoke books bound by Hannah Brown. The London woman with a crafts degree from Brighton University discovered bookbinding at an evening class a few years ago and quickly grew enamored with the dying art. "The appeal of a hand-bound book is owning an item that is one of a kind, which is what I love about it," Brown says. "Each binding is different and not mass-produced, which adds something special."

Brown first picked up a needle as a young child, when her grandmother taught her



how to cross-stitch. "I loved to work with all of the different-colored threads to create an image on canvas," she says. "I have since inherited all of her thread, which I am still using to this day." Given Brown's early exposure to embroidery, it only seemed natural to incorporate that skill into her bookbinding work.

Brown uses hand-embroidery to give depth and a tactile quality to the images on the covers of the books she binds. "Books are made to be handled and enjoyed," she says.

One book may take Brown as long as 200 hours from start to finish, but the effort is worth it to collectors, who are willing to pay thousands of dollars for her efforts. Brown says the most stitching she did on a book was in 2012 for a copy of *Flowers from Shakespeare's Garden*. The book is bound in deep purple goatskin and features a colorful flower garden rendered in colored silks and metallic threads.

SALES

A Passion for Cycling Boosts Business

For Michael Savino, it's all about who you know. Leveraging his own interests and encouraging referrals have helped him grow his small screen-printing and embroidery shop by more than 100% in the last year. Winchester, VA-based Artisan Grafix teetered around \$100,000 in sales in 2014, and Savino expects the shop to grow to revenues of about \$250,000 by the end of this year.

Savino's business has been around in various forms for nearly a decade, but it wasn't until he relocated from New Jersey in 2013 that things really started to take off. From a converted garage, Savino and a handful of employees churn out decorated apparel on a single-head embroidery machine and a four-head, six-color manual screen-printing press for their enthusiastic clientele. "Once people figured out that we were doing it in-house, it's like a whole different world," he says. "Word of mouth has been great."

Savino says he started out "pretty much where everybody starts out," creating logoed apparel for lawn care companies and contractors, but Artisan Grafix has since branched out and is doing more corporate sales and decorating garments for special events. The cycling world has been especially kind to Savino. "That's a personal passion of mine," Savino says. "It's one of those niche things that I have a lot of contacts in." A particularly lucrative event for Artisan Grafix has been the annual Tour de Long Valley in Savino's New Jersey hometown. The event boasts more than 700 riders, and Artisan has been creating event shirts for participants every year.



MARKETING

Gray Wolf Focused on Brand Building

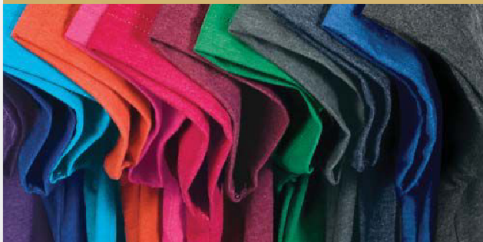
Before you can build your clients' brands, you have to build your own. That's the philosophy John and Cindy Perkins had when they moved their growing decorated-apparel business out of the garage and into a roomier storefront seven years ago. The Bedford, TX, couple changed their company name from Quali-Tees to Gray Wolf Promotions (asi/213041), to reflect the broader range of services they offered. The duo have since expanded and remodeled the space with a Northwestern, wolf-friendly theme and even have a life-size wolf mascot on display. "The kids love that thing," John says.

The Perkins' strong brand has helped them quickly grow annual revenue from \$250,000 to \$800,000. John's favorite aspect of the business is helping small and medium businesses develop their brands from the ground up,

particularly by offering smart promotional products and apparel.

One promotion that worked particularly well involved a large specialty insurance company with office suites above center field at Globe Life Park in Arlington, TX. The company would invite major customers, prospects, vendors and special guests to the office to watch ballgames. Gray Wolf suggested the company present each guest with a baseball-themed bundle that included a special Texas Rangers cap embroidered with the insurance company's name on the back, an embroidered polo shirt, and a baseball placed inside a small stand with an inscription plate listing the company and stadium name, plus the month and year of the game they attended. "Our feedback from the staff was that the guests loved the items, and this was supported by numerous repeat orders," Perkins says.





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■ LONG BEACH	EDUCATION: March 24 ■ Exhibits: March 25-26 Long Beach Convention Center, Halls A&B
■ NEW YORK	EDUCATION and EXHIBITS: May 5-6 Javits Convention Center, North Hall
■ CHICAGO	EDUCATION: July 14 ■ EXHIBITS: July 15-16 McCormick Place, West Building, Halls F1 & F2

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AS-11838

DECORATING SOLUTIONS

Five Steps

By Tonia Kimbrough

Master Multilayer Appliqué

Learn how to create a fashion-forward multilayer appliqué design that incorporates lettering and an image.

1

INTEGRATE CUTTING AND SEWING INTO ONE SEAMLESS PROCESS WITH A LASER BRIDGE MACHINE.

This design was created on a laser bridge machine, but it could also be done on a single-head embroidery laser. How you digitize the design will depend on which machine you buy and which system you use. There are two types of systems. In one type, the digitizing software and laser-cutting software allow you to digitize the design, and it automatically distinguishes between stitching and cutting. The other type of system requires you to digitize the design and import it into a laser-cutting program, which determines the cut lines.

2

CONSIDER HOW EACH LAYER WILL AFFECT THE GARMENT'S STABILITY.

The white background layer has to be first as the other layers are sewn on top. However, because the blue and the tan layers don't overlap, you have the option of which to sew first. Because the blue streams stretch across a wider portion of the sweatshirt, it's better to sew this layer down first. You always want to sew down the appliqué first and the lettering second. This minimizes distortion and puckering that can occur when doing lettering.

3

MEASURE FABRIC SIZE. Your fabric pieces need to be large enough to cover the cut design area, but not so big that there will be too much waste. In general, aim to have about an extra inch of fabric around the cut design's outer edge. This gives enough to allow for a margin of error without sacrificing more than is needed.

4

CHOOSE THE RIGHT FABRIC. One of the greatest advantages of using an embroidery laser is that there's no longer a requirement for material to have some stiffness, as is needed for traditional appliqué. In laser embroidery, once the fabric swatch is laid in the hoop, it's not moved again until it's sewn down and the excess is pulled away. Some options growing in popularity for laser embroidery are fleece, jersey and synthetic felt.

TIP: "If you want to give this design more dimension, the horse could be done in felt, which will create a raised effect. Sometimes combining a matte fabric such as jersey with the shinier poly twill also can create a nice effect. The possibilities are endless," says Ed Balady, president of BITO USA, who provided the five steps. BITO is the exclusive U.S. distributor of Proel TSI embroidery and standalone laser equipment.

5

DETERMINE THE RIGHT LASER POWER. COMPLETE YOUR MULTILAYER DESIGN



SAMPLE COURTESY OF CARROLL, IA-BASED THE GRAPHIC EDGE, CIRCLE 77 ON FREE INFO CARD. PHOTOGRAPHY: HENRY BERNSTEIN.



Fetching Fashion Designs Open Retail Opportunity



Recognizing trends at retail can charge your business, but only if you have access to budget-friendly yet in-demand art. One of the newest categories added to the Great Dane Graphics collection of stock art is “Fashion.” This category spans a wide range of styles that reflect trends currently happening at retail.

For example, new heraldry designs incorporate all the most popular icons such as skulls, crosses, fleur de lis, shields, swords, ribbons and scrolls. Tattoo art continues to thrive and new designs offered include roses, leaves, scrolls, hearts, butterflies, vines, birds and eagles. Use these designs to target audiences such as motorcycle clubs, concerts/bands and colleges/universities.

Expanding the genre are nautical designs with a modern twist. A design might integrate an anchor with seahorses, koi fish, seaweed, ribbons and sea grasses. These would be popular in souvenir shops at the beach or a resort. Every new fashion

design offered by Great Dane Graphics can be used to create screen-printed shirts, direct-to-garment prints, signage, sublimation or digital transfers and cut vinyl designs.

Also catering to the trend-minded retailer is The Wild Side, which recently launched a retail per-piece section on its website. The focus benefits small decorated apparel shops, boutiques and online re-tailers that sell mostly “onesie-twosie” size orders. Located at www.retailer.thewildside.com/heat-transfers/new, this new area allows buyers to purchase by the piece rather than by the dozen required in the wholesale area.

The retail area offers the company’s line of plastisol screen-printed and puff transfers. Choose from a wide range of categories such as beach and surf, bikes and cars, wildlife, country and western, dogs, fishing, humorous, children’s, holidays, religious, sports, women’s fashion and many more.

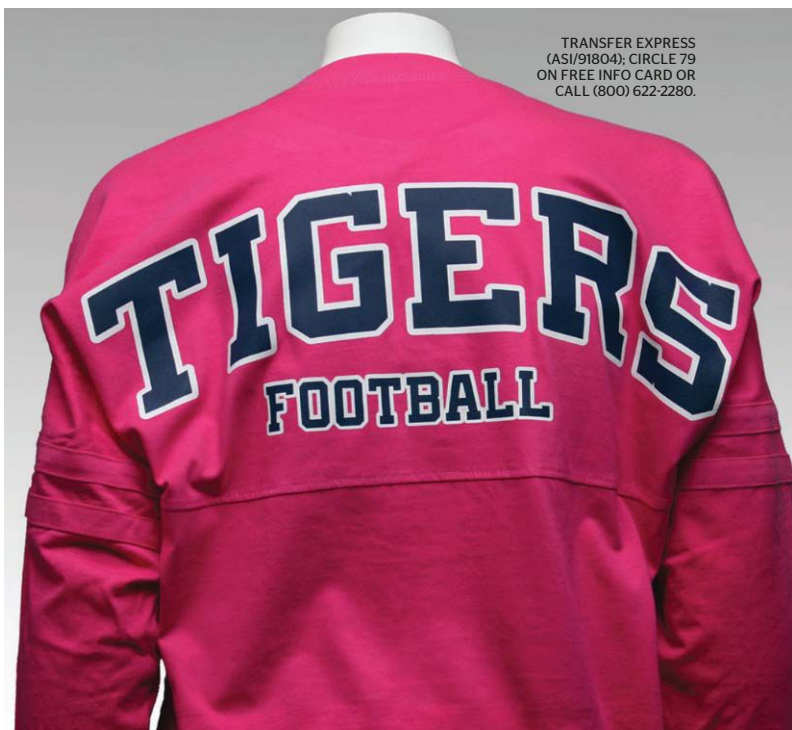
Shoulder Prints Made Easy

All-over and oversized imprints have been popular and continue to be in 2015. Now there’s a fresh nod to the “larger is better” camp from Transfer Express (asi/91804).

This latest trend in decorated apparel is referred to as “shoulder,” “billboard” or “pom-pom pull-over” prints. A loose fit or oversized shirt or jersey is decorated with tall lettering across the back of the shoulders. Typically, a school or team name is used.

Transfer Express recently added three new layouts specifically for shoulder prints to make ordering custom transfers for this look easy. Detailed directions from how to order to application can be found on its blog at <http://blog.transferexpress.com/blog/use-custom-transfers-to-print-oversized-shoulder-prints>.

Ready-to-apply, one-color designs ship the same day, and by ordering extras, you can quickly do fill-ins for any client.



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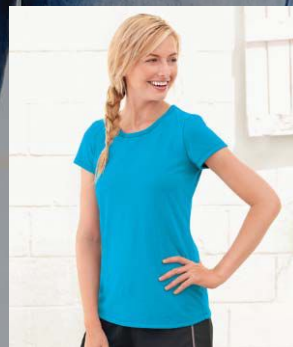
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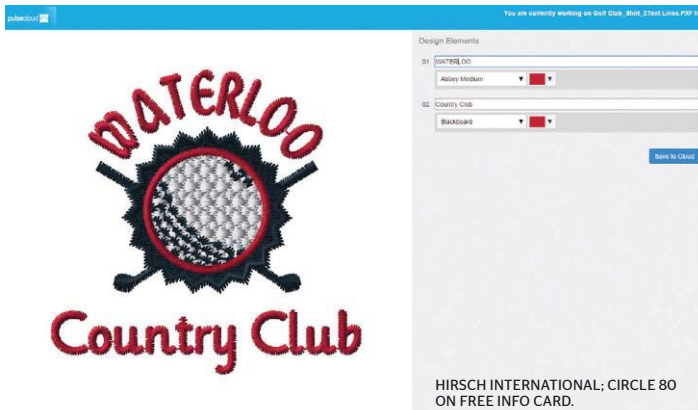
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PulseCloud Puts You in Control From Any Location

Imagine having the capability to work from anywhere in your facility, as well as from home, the car and the airport. The new PulseCloud, offered by Hirsch, now allows you to take your productivity on the go. Available to all owners of the new Tajima DG15 by Pulse digitizing software, PulseCloud allows embroiderers to upload all of their designs to a secure location and work with them away from their desktops.

From your mobile device, PulseCloud gives you access to your designs so you can search, tag, show to customers and post to social media. You also can edit, change text or fonts, change thread colors and more. PulseCloud is connected to your embroidery equipment, which allows you to see which machines are running; find out why a machine has stopped; manage each machine's job



queue; and send new jobs.

PulseCloud stores up to 100,000 designs and provides pertinent information about each one, including how many bytes, how many stitches and the dimensions of the embroidery file. It also shows a thumbnail of each design. To learn more, visit www.bic.us.

New Alignment System Ensures Precision

Imprinting requires exact precision. Now, there's a reliable tool to make positioning designs simple. Stahl's Hotronix has introduced a Portable Heat Press Laser Alignment System that can be used with any heat-press brand. It allows the user to precisely position and align graphics prior to heat printing for accurate placement.



The system has four flexible laser lights that can be adjusted independently to set the correct placement for left chest, name and number, script and other design layouts. Each light is operated individually with the touch of a button. The unit has a solid steel base with rubber feet for counter or tabletop placement and requires 18" of space. It's compatible with all Hotronix and MAXX brand heat presses as well as competitors' models.

The Laser Alignment Wizard, which comes with the system, is preprinted with five layouts and rulers for custom layouts. This handy tool is used for initial set-up for each heat-printing job. A 6' electrical cord with A/C adaptor is also included. For more information, visit www.stahls.com/portable-laser.

Moveable Flashback Shuttle Makes Flash-Cure Easy

You no longer need to dedicate a print head to flashing. The new and improved Flashback Shuttle from Workhorse Products is more versatile and easy to use giving shops more flexibility to meet the changing needs of a wide range of jobs.

While the original shuttle was attached to the press, the new version is mounted on a stand with locking casters that allows it to be rolled to other stations and presses. It's also height-adjustable and will work with the Freedom, Javelin and Sabre automatic presses.

It can be used in two ways. It retains its ability to print, flash



WORKHORSE PRODUCTS; CIRCLE 82 ON FREE INFO CARD OR CALL (800) 778-8779.

and cool all on the same head, but it also can be used as a traditional standalone flash. Once in position, the shuttle automatically slides its thin quartz element between the garment and screen. At a temperature of 1,000 degrees, it flashes the design and then automatically returns to its starting position. After each flash, the garment is cooled with built-in turbo fans. With the increase in the use of waterbased discharge and specialty eco-type inks, a fourth fan has been added to increase the air flow, making it more effective in the curing and cooling of shirts.

Quick Tips



FLORIANI EMBROIDERY COMMERCIAL: CIRCLE 85 ON FREE INFO CARD.

1 Protect against scratchy-feeling stitches. Dream Weave Fusible is a six-way stretch material that's designed to fuse over the back of a finished embroidered piece. To learn more, go to www.florianicommercial.com.



COTSWOLD INDUSTRIES: CIRCLE 86 ON FREE INFO CARD.

2 Protect your equipment, screens and hands. Super-soft Wonder Wipes from Cotswold Industries won't scratch metal or other surfaces or be abrasive against the skin. The nonwoven wet-laid stabilizers are designed for a wide range of miscellaneous cleaning jobs around the shop. They're less expensive than paper towels as well as stronger and more absorbent.



CLIPARTBOOM.COM: CIRCLE 87 ON FREE INFO CARD.

3 Win hockey-themed orders. Win hockey-themed orders. Clipartboom.com's new collection of hockey-related vector templates and clip art files positions you to score big with customers. The Hockey Pack contains 35 black-and-white and color-interactive design templates and clip art elements, so you can mix and match backgrounds, fonts and colors for production-ready art. Visit www.clipartboom.com.



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www.embroideryowl.com | 804.693.2581
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Look Book

Trend Alerts

By Patricia Cangelosi

APPAREL

V-Necks

From the runway to retail, spanning all ages and both genders, the V-neck trend is turning heads – and flattering them in the process. “The shape of the ‘V’ is flattering to most face shapes,” says Monika Rene, customer service representative at Bishop the Garment Co. (asi/40585). “The crew neck accentuates the broadness of the cheekbones and emphasizes roundness of the chin line by presenting a round line right under the chin. Most people would prefer that their cheekbones appear wider than their jawline, and the V-neck shirt accentuates that; the V also accentuates the chest.”

According to Rene, women tend to favor a deeper V-cut, while men prefer more shallow styles. She believes the best ages to target with this trend are people in their mid-twenties through forties. “Tech companies and groups that tend to focus more on athletic apparel” would be drawn to V-necks, she says, also noting that left-chest logos and full-front logos are popular decoration locations.

To industry salespeople selling this style, Rene says: “Understand the needs of your client, and it’s always best to offer the V option rather than not.” Even if they say no, they’ll know it’s an option to revisit if they wish.



Bodek and Rhodes (asi/40788; circle 90 on Free Info Card) supplies the trendy Next Level Men’s CVC V-Neck Tee (6240), made of 60% combed cotton/40% polyester jersey for a super-soft feel. It contains a baby rib-knit set-in collar and comes in 12 colors; decorated by Utica, NY-based A&P Master Images (asi/702505; circle 89 on Free Info Card).



Consisting of 100% combed ringspun cotton, the Junior Fine Jersey V-Neck Tee Dress (3622) from Bodek and Rhodes (asi/40788; circle 90 on Free Info Card) features a ribbed V-neck collar and double-needle hemmed sleeves and bottom. Choose from black, raspberry sorbet and white; decorated by Utica, NY-based A&P Master Images (asi/702505; circle 89 on Free Info Card).



PHOTO: EDWARD JAMES

▲ This model sported a stylish V-neck under a fashion-forward blazer at the Soia & Kyo Spring/Summer 2015 fashion show during World MasterCard Fashion Week at David Pecaut Square in Toronto.



This Ladies’ Flowy V-Neck Tank (8805) is from Bella Alo (asi/39590; circle 88 on Free Info Card); decorated by A&P Master Images (asi/702505; circle 89 on Free Info Card).

The V-Neck Jersey with Striped Sleeves (06334) from Americana Sportswear (asi/35722; circle 91 on Free Info Card) is a 50/50 cotton/polyester knit V-neck shirt; decorated by Utica, NY-based A&P Master Images (asi/702505; circle 89 on Free Info Card).



COLOR

Strawberry Ice

A fruity favorite this season, Strawberry Ice is “both tasty and tasteful,” according to the Pantone *Fashion Color Report* for this spring. Pantone asserts the color is “suggestive of a cooling and refreshing delicacy, yet its warmth as a color is quite appealing ... Strawberry Ice is a confection color that evokes a feeling of being ‘in the pink,’ emitting a flattering and healthy glow.”

Kimberly Damp, sales and marketing coordinator for WOV-IN (asi/92980), agrees. “Pink is a positive, healthy color that often makes people feel positive vibes,” she says, which is why companies providing valuable services may choose pink to leave strong, memorable impressions.

In addition to evoking a sense of well-being, Damp says, “Pink is the ultimate fun color. Its palette is so diverse and fun that it’s easy to work into many designs.” In fact, just about any demographic can appreciate this color; hospitals can use it for new baby welcome gifts, organizations can use it to support breast cancer awareness, and the list goes on. “Pinks work well with a variety of palettes,” Damp adds. “For apparel, deep, warm, rich colors pop when complemented with a cool, sharp rose pink.” Pantone names Toasted Almond and Tangerine (both hot this season) as palatable palette pairings.

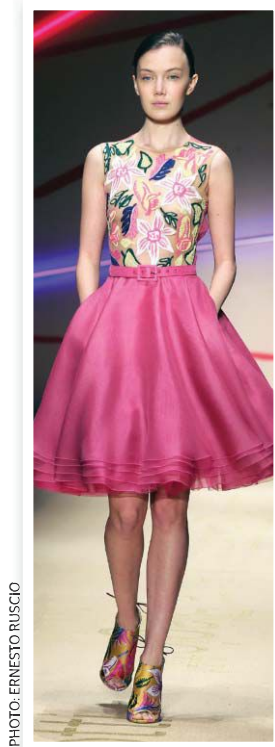


PHOTO: ERNESTO RUSCIO

▲ **No doubt, Strawberry Ice** lends itself to feminine tastes, so why not embrace it on a figure-flattering skirt? On the runway in Milan, Italy, during the MSGM Show - part of Milan Fashion Week Womenswear Spring/Summer 2015 - one model showed off the pretty pink attire.



The Adams Cotton Twill Resort Palm Trees hat (LPPT1) from Bodek and Rhodes (asi/40788; circle 90 on Free Info Card) is a 100% cotton twill cap, garment-washed and pigment-dyed. Features include an embossed leather strap with brass buckle and grommet and tonal embroidery on the right side panel.

With a gently contoured silhouette, an open collar with ruffled placket and pearlized buttons, the Ladies' Crosshatch Ruffle Easy Care Shirt (L644) is supplied by SanMar (asi/84863; circle 92 on Free Info Card); decorated by Janelle Bolt, owner of Dundee, OR-based Busy Hands Embroidery.



Get the Basic Essential Tote (TEL), made with 600D polyester including 50% recycled material. It contains a matching-color zipper and 28" handles for easy carrying from WOV-IN (asi/92980; circle 93 on Free Info Card).

These Pink Camo Stretch Flare Pants (3348) made from a cotton/twill spandex blend are from Rothco (asi/83708; circle 95 on Free Info Card); decorated by Carolyn Cagle of Stacy, MN-based Strikke Knits (circle 99 on Free Info Card).



Ame & Lulu (asi/35232; circle 94 on Free Info Card) offers this water-repellent canvas Wristlet (WL-071) with an interior zip pocket and a handy strap.

Look Book

EMBELLISHMENT

Fur and Faux Fur

Fur has long been a fashion staple, lending elegance, softness and a cozy feel to any garment it graces. It was once considered a luxury item that only the rich could afford, but no more. “Faux fur, being available at a fraction of the cost of real fur, is a great substitute that provides a high perceived value to any item,” explains Sharon Griffith, vice president of sales and marketing at Kanata Blanket Co. (asi/63823). She says as the synthetic process to create faux fur improves, it becomes harder to tell the real from the imitation.

The synthetic material is seen in many major retailers, and not just on clothing. Griffith mentions “furnishings such as rugs, cushions and blankets, and even in place mats,” to name a few. “Faux fur has a universal appeal, so any demographic can be targeted and any type of company or group,” she adds. “It’ll appeal to those looking for an elegant, luxury touch to those looking for something funky and stylized.”

Selling points of fur include its luxurious look and feel, as well as its timeless popularity. For the faux alternative, point out that it offers the same high-fashion style as the real thing.



Lined with faux fur, the District Trapper Hat (DT625) is available from SanMar (asi/84863; circle 92 on Free Info Card). It has a 100% polyester construction with acrylic/poly faux fur lining and self-fabric chin straps with buckle; decorated by Nancy Woodruff, president and owner of Villa Park, IL-based Cherokee Rose Embroidery (circle 96 on Free Info Card).



Kanata Blanket Co. (asi/63823; circle 97 on Free Info Card) carries this Velvafur Throw (20380), featuring plush, high-pile faux fur on one side and micro fur on the other.



PHOTO: CHINA FOTOPRESS

▲ At the Copenhagen Fur Collection show during Mercedes-Benz China Fashion Week Spring/Summer 2015, a model spotlighted an elegant-looking fur shawl. The show took place in Beijing.

This stylish Women’s Faux Fur Fleece Hoodie (5125) from Charles River Apparel (asi/44620; circle 98 on Free Info Card) consists of anti-pill Evolux filament fleece, and the trim contains 85% acrylic/15% polyester for an animal-friendly garment, fitted with princess seams; decorated by Carolyn Cagle, owner of Stacy, MN-based Strikke Knits (circle 99 on Free Info Card).



Showcase: Kids' Apparel and Accessories

Children: the walking, running, ever-enthusiastic billboards for your clients' brands. Any logo that's worn by a kid is sure to be noticed, but the question is, what to logo?

"Kids' styles are following adult fashions, which is where the main influences in trends originate. Polka dots, stripes and picot trims are trending fashions right now for youth apparel as well," says Andrea Routzahn, vice president of portfolio and supplier management for alphabroder (asi/34063). She notes that bright, fun colors are popular, as are fabrics that are both comfortable and durable.

When marketing apparel for the younger demographic, aim a little higher in age. "Children's apparel is marketed most strongly to parents or caregivers," says Gina Watson, CEO of LAT Sportswear (asi/65948). "Being able to grab that 'aww' moment is essential. A mom, grandmother or aunt may fall in love with a Tutu bodysuit, or a father or grandfather may see a football bodysuit printed with their favorite team logo and snatch it up immediately for purchase."

Kids' apparel and accessories are ideal for summer camps, back-to-school gifts, day cares, hospitals and charity events.



Check out the Kids' Regular Fit Long-Sleeve Pullover Hooded Sweatshirt (460) from Topsy Inc. (asi/91420; circle 100 on Free Info Card), made of poly/cotton fleece and featuring bold stripes and a kangaroo pocket.



This 100% cotton jersey Toddler 5.5-oz. Ringer T-Shirt (RS3380) from alphabroder (asi/34063; circle 123 on Free Info Card) has contrast double-needle ribbed binding on the neck and sleeves; decorated by Janelle Bolt, owner of Dundee, OR-based Busy Hands Embroidery (circle 105 on Free Info Card).



Stay warm with this Youth Polar Fleece Vest (Y/V164-VEST), made in the USA and available from 20 Degrees Below (asi/92366; circle 106 on Free Info Card). Choose from dozens of color options and sizes ranging from youth extra small to youth extra large; decorated by Janelle Bolt, owner of Dundee, OR-based Busy Hands Embroidery (circle 105 on Free Info Card).



Vitronic Promotional Group (asi/93990; circle 107 on Free Info Card) carries the Paws N Claws Backpack (A740), made of polyester with zippered closure, front and side pockets and padded, adjustable shoulder straps.

Look Book

Niche: Health-Care Apparel and Accessories

When it comes to outfitting professionals in the health-care industry, fashion matters more than you might think. And who says scrubs can't be fashion-forward? "Medical apparel is no longer just the standard 65/35 poly/cotton, boxy V-neck," says Brad Anderson, marketing specialist at Scrub Authority (asi/86018). "It's about functionality, fashion and fit." In his experience, this audience is willing to spend more to get what they want.

"Function and durability are key," Anderson explains. "Wrinkle resistance and easy-care fabrics are in high demand. Many pieces now feature a more athletic and stylish look with hidden pockets for cellphones, badges and more." End-users also appreciate a comfortable fit with fabric that stretches, Anderson says.

Many popular brands are available to consumers, but which would be best for your client's needs? Anderson's advice: "If value is your customer's key consideration, know and pitch the brands that offer the best bang for the buck. If style is paramount and money isn't a sticking point, be able to offer the customer a range of high-end options."

In the end, it comes down to the old mantra that knowledge is power. "Know the range of brands and be able to speak intelligently about them," he says.



This Cotton Surgical Cap (210) from Sparkling Earth Products (asi/88449; circle 101 on Free Info Card) comes with an absorbent terrycloth sweatband. Durable and comfortable, it's made in the USA; decorated by Andrea Dobson, owner of Appleton, WI-based Simply Fetching Designs (circle 102 on Free Info Card).

Sparkling Earth Products (asi/88449; circle 101 on Free Info Card) provides the Banded Bouffant Surgical Cap (214), featuring a flat headband in the front with an absorbent terrycloth sweatband. Made in the USA; decorated by Andrea Dobson, owner of Appleton, WI-based Simply Fetching Designs (circle 102 on Free Info Card).



Constructed from a blend of polyester/rayon/spandex twill, the Luxe V-Neck Top (1999) features an asymmetrical design, tonal snaps, zigzag stitching and front curved patch pockets. Available from Rugged Outfitters (asi/84143; circle 103 on Free Info Card).



This Meta Unisex Lab Coat (6116) features four pockets, hand access slits and a polyester/cotton poplin blend. From Scrub Authority (asi/86018; circle 104 on Free Info Card); decorated by Carolyn Cagle, owner of Stacy, MN-based Strikke Knits (circle 99 on Free Info Card).



Available from SanMar (asi/84863; circle 92 on Free Info Card), the Cornerstone Reversible Scrub Pant (CS502) is constructed of a 65%/35% poly/cotton blend and includes a dyed-to-match drawstring and a back pocket on both sides; decorated by Andrea Dobson, owner of Appleton, WI-based Simply Fetching Designs (circle 102 on Free Info Card).



Scrub Authority (asi/86018; circle 104 on Free Info Card) carries the Wink Origins "The Charlie" Y-Neck Mock Wrap Top (6026), with five pockets, a signature ID bungee loop and an invisible three-part accessory loop; decorated by Andrea Dobson, owner of Appleton, WI-based Simply Fetching Designs (circle 102 on Free Info Card).

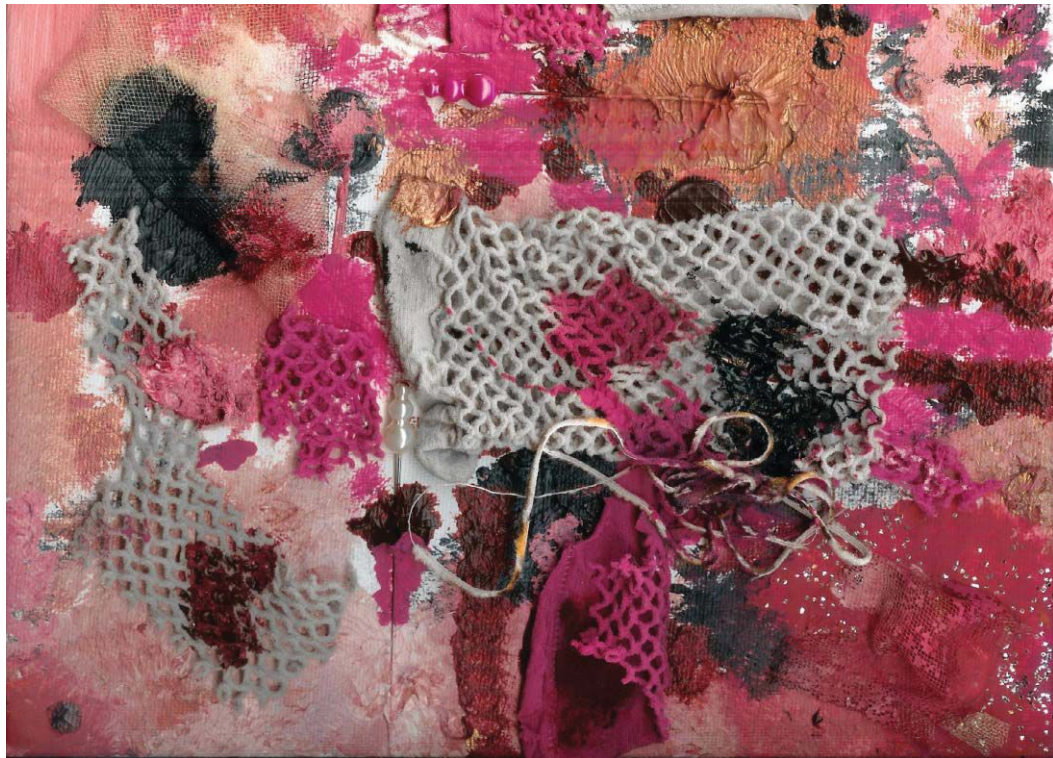
Inspiration: Lisa Marie Cole and Juliet Cook

Poet, yarn artist and “dabbling” fiber artist Lisa Marie Cole sees each piece of art as its own poem – regardless of whether it includes words or not. Cole creates unique masterpieces using quotidian items. “I use yarn, ribbon and magazine cutouts for my fiber art and collages,” she says.

Cole also expresses herself through poetry. When she published a poetry chapbook called *Renegade//Heart* in 2013, textile artist Juliet Cook created the cover. “Juliet used a variety of mediums, including paint and fabric. I have the actual art piece, ‘SOCKET MAUL,’ hanging on my living room wall,” Cole says. In every mess, she believes, one can find art. “We’re all – as people – a bit of a mess. The cover looked like the patched-up innards of a heart to me, and it was definitely something I’d never seen represented artistically before.”

Cook says, “I thought the visual styles of my ‘SOCKET MAUL’ – its colors, shapes and textures – melded well with what I perceived as a sort of abstract art/emotional expression fusion of Lisa Cole’s poems, offering lines such as: ‘I am tied//hold me open//rip me//I am poised//silver glint of fear.’”

Cole’s work is on her Facebook page, [Facebook.com/Lisa.Marie.Cole](https://www.facebook.com/Lisa.Marie.Cole), and her website, lisamcole.blogspot.com.

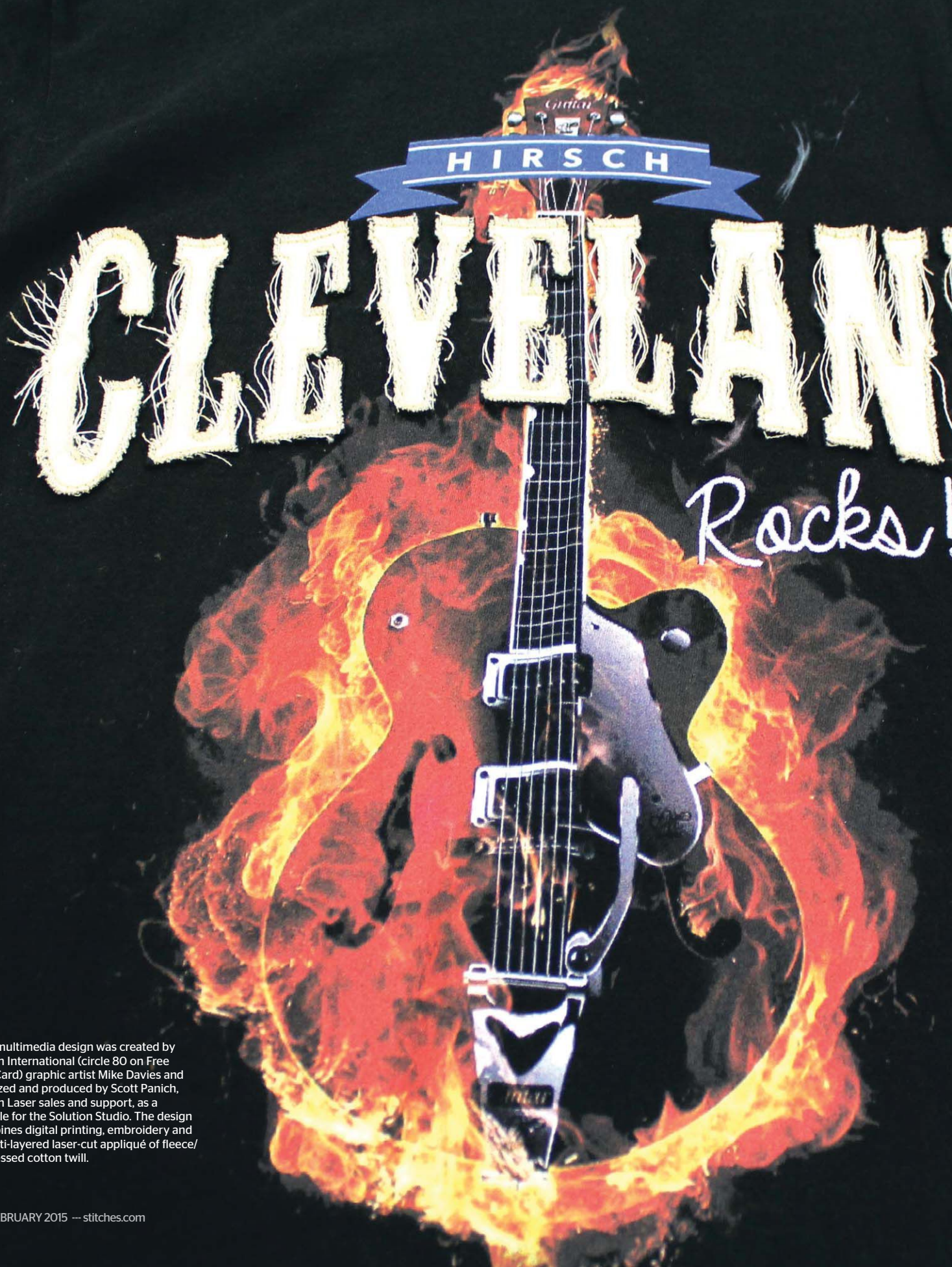


Created by artist Juliet Cook, “SOCKET MAUL” includes torn hot pink tights, torn light gray tights, glitter and other elements, all affixed to the paint. It is the cover art for poet Lisa Cole’s chapbook entitled *Renegade//Heart*. According to Cole, “The cover looks like the innards of a heart, which is the theme for this collection.” *Renegade//Heart* was published by Cook’s Blood Pudding Press in 2013. Visit Blood Pudding’s Etsy shop: www.etsy.com/shop/BloodPuddingPress.



Cole calls her work “art objects,” and uses knitting techniques, ribbon, yarn, wrapping paper and other items to create them.





HIRSCH

CLEVELAND

Rocks!

This multimedia design was created by Hirsch International (Circle 80 on Free Info Card) graphic artist Mike Davies and digitized and produced by Scott Panich, Hirsch Laser sales and support, as a sample for the Solution Studio. The design combines digital printing, embroidery and a multi-layered laser-cut appliqué of fleece/distressed cotton twill.



Pairing embroidery with rhinestones, laser appliqué and other techniques adds to a garment's perceived value – and a shop's profit margins. Learn what types of equipment you'll need to invest in to create multimedia designs.

By Theresa Hegel

ELEVATED EMBROIDERY

Picture a flaming guitar, with the words “Cleveland Rocks” emblazoned across the neck. How would you render the intricate design on a T-shirt? A digital direct-to-garment print would show off the vibrant colors of the guitar, but perhaps end up looking a little flat. Embroidery wouldn't be able to capture the fine details, and the stitch count would be through the roof. So, why not combine the two? And while you're at it, throw in some distressed laser appliqué to give the shirt retail-ready flair.

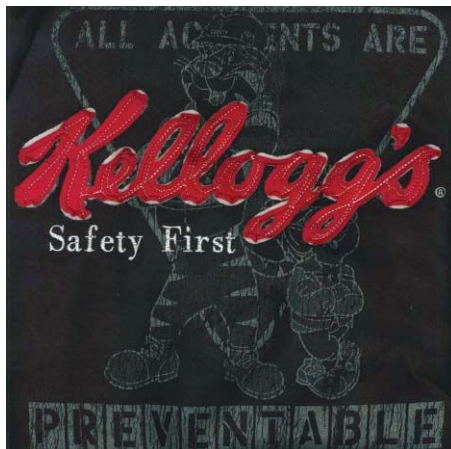
In the last few years, advancements in technology have fueled seemingly endless opportunities for creative multimedia designs and shop diversification. For the shops with the resources to acquire lasers and other high-tech equipment, “It was like magic,” says Paul Gallagher, president and CEO of Hirsch International. “In the last decade, the embroidery industry has really transformed into the decorated apparel industry. Decorators who've embraced the new technology differentiated themselves in the marketplace and ended up with more customers.”



This design from Vantage Apparel (asi/93390; circle 108 on Free Info Card) combines laser etching, appliqué and embroidery.

For example, incorporating an embroidery machine with a built-in laser allows decorators to create complex appliqué designs without the hassle of manual cutting and positioning. With a typical sports-team appliqué, that could translate into a time savings of as much as 70%, Gallagher says. In that way, “Multimedia makes perfect sense,” he adds. “It allows decorators to be more profitable or do more business. Either way, it’s a win-win.”

Multimedia designs also give decorators an avenue, besides price, in which to compete, especially since there still aren’t too many shops willing or able to tinker with the high-end trend. “Anybody can lower their price, and if you’re doing basic stuff, pretty much anyone who’s halfway decent can compete with you,” says Charlie Taublieb, a decorated apparel consultant from Colorado and outspoken advocate of multimedia designs. “As soon as you throw in extra elements, it knocks out the crowd. You can be the go-to person.”



Quality Embroidery (circle 109 on Free Info Card) in Lexington, NC, paired screen printing with laser-cut multi-layer jersey appliqué.

Mixing and matching embroidery, appliqué, laser etching, rhinestones, spangles, sublimation and other techniques takes some creativity and often a significant capital investment to get started, but proponents say the rewards are worth it. Here are several embellishment techniques that pair perfectly with embroidery – and the decorating equipment you need to create standout multimedia designs.

Laser Focus

Laser appliqué brings the richness of embroidery without the high stitch counts, says Ed Balady, president of BITO USA, which specializes in textile laser-cutting equipment. “We’re bringing back the sophisticated age of embroidery in a very, very automated way,” he adds. Though a laser bridge machine comes with a hefty price tag, in the hundreds of thousands for some models, decorators with the business to support one can expect a return on investment of only about a year, he says. “This is



VSA Custom Apparel (asi/700739; circle 110 on Free Info Card) sublimated a customer’s design onto a twill patch, adding chenille and embroidery to complete the look.

definitely a power tool,” he says. “When it’s on at full capacity, all the machines below it are humming and producing at top-dollar income.”

Unlike some other multimedia techniques where you risk design uniformity by moving artwork between multiple machines, laser bridges allow you to combine appliqué, etching and embroidery in an efficient, production-friendly manner, with little room for error, says Gina Barreca, director of marketing at Vantage Apparel (asi/93390). “We can be very specific and exact and hit many requirements,” she says. “If you don’t have to hoop or frame a garment more than once, you bring down your variance.”

Creating a multimedia design requires a logo to have interesting details to work with, Barreca says. She points to a high-pile fleece garment Vantage decorated with the Smirnoff vodka logo. The artwork has a background image etched into the fleece, with a red ribbon-like appliqué atop it. White lettering is embroidered

Multimedia Myth Busting

Many decorators express reluctance to delve into the world of multimedia design. Kristin Williams of Minnesota-based VSA Custom Apparel (asi/700739) recalls sending one of her employees a few years ago to “secret shop” a competitor, who quickly steered Williams’ employee away from even a hint of multimedia, saying

such designs “look silly.” As multimedia has continued to gain traction both at retail and on the runway, the competitor has since changed his tune, Williams says.

But for those still singing the same old song, we’re here to bust some of the lingering myths regarding this hip niche, once and for all.

MYTH:

Multimedia takes too much time.

REALITY: Though multimedia techniques are often more labor-intensive and time-consuming than their single-technique counterparts, the extra work should be reflected in the price tag. “If you’re getting an extra \$3 to \$4 a shirt for your added effort, you

should be willing to do that all day, every day,” says consultant Charlie Taublieb. “You’re giving them something that’s a very unique-looking piece.”

MYTH:

Multimedia is too expensive.

REALITY: Buying expensive new machines is often worth the capital outlay, but it’s not the



Iridescent sequins give some extra sparkle to this design by Shockwaves Apparel (asi/87144; circle 76 on Free Info Card), which also includes embroidery and appliqué. Visit Stitches.com for a slideshow with more multimedia designs.

across the appliqué. The multimedia elements add “more dimension” and textures to what could have been a flat-looking design, had only one technique been employed, Barreca says.

The laser bridge also allows decorators to replicate retail effects, like the vintage-looking appliqué popularized by stores like Abercrombie & Fitch. “They made the distressed thing fashion-forward,” says David Setchel, owner of Quality Embroidery in Lexington, NC. His contract shop

often combines screen printing and laser-cut appliqué, like a T-shirt given out as a safety award to Kellogg’s employees who remained accident-free. Two layers of appliqué, in red and gray, spell out the company logo over a screen-printed image of Tony the Tiger in a hardhat. Because the appliqué is made of a soft jersey fabric, the edges roll up when washed, allowing the bottom color to show along the edges.

That effect would have been impossible without the laser, Balady says, because

“We’re in a blingy world right now, and I don’t think that’s ever going to end.”

Greg Gaardbo,
Shockwaves Apparel (asi/87144)

the soft layers are too prone to curling. “It would never have made it to the embroidery machine intact,” he adds.

Bling It On

If you’re an embroiderer with a heat press, the natural next step is to add some sparkle, whether with rhinestones, sequins or spangles. The glittery trend has been ascendant for several years, and industry insiders don’t see it waning anytime soon. “There’s no cheerleader in the country that you can’t go up to and show a cheer shirt with rhinestones and you can’t sell it,” says Mark Stephenson, director of marketing at ColDesi, a Tampa, FL-based company that distributes decorated-apparel equipment.

Rhinestones and sequins have a much broader appeal than just the cheer market, however. As Greg Gaardbo, president of Des Plaines, IL-based Shockwaves Apparel (asi/87144), puts it: “We’re in a blingy world right now, and I don’t think that’s ever going to end.” Gaardbo, for example, added a border of iridescent sequins to a complex full-back design on a men’s blazer. The artwork for Silver Wings Merch included puff embroidery

only way to achieve multimedia success. If it’s not cost-effective to do laser appliqué or sublimation in-house, why not outsource? Contractors like VSA Custom Apparel and North Carolina-based Quality Embroidery say they like being able to help other decorators expand their services.

Even shops without specialized equipment have access to a sharp

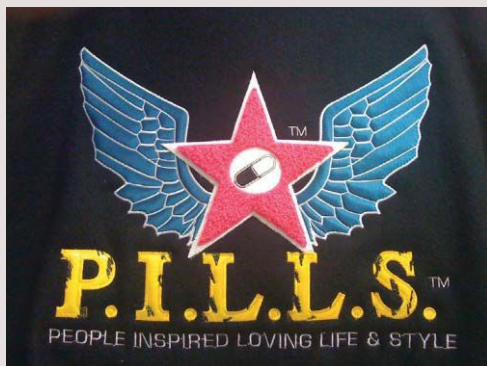
pair of scissors, which can be just as effective a tool for a creative, innovative decorator, Taublieb says. “One of the things I teach people to do is chop up a shirt,” says Taublieb, who adds additional texture to shirts in that way. “And it’s not always about adding something to a garment. Sometimes taking away from the shirt also works.”

MYTH:
Corporate customers aren’t interested.

REALITY: Multimedia is an easy sell for youth, collegiate and resort markets, with buyers eager to mimic what they see Nike, Adidas and other retailers doing. Corporate customers, traditionally, have been reluctant to stray from tried-and-true left-chest embroi-

dery. Those attitudes have been changing, however, with more and more brands ready to take a risk with their logo. Taublieb always brings multimedia to the table as a consultant because “it’s worth their time and effort to look at it,” he says. His clients are often pleasantly surprised by how well their newly acquired multimedia decoration skills are received, he adds.

Get Creative to Cut Costs



While it's true that combining multiple decoration techniques is a way to boost your profits, sometimes multimedia can be deployed to help clients stay within their budgets.

For example, Kristin Williams of Minnesota-based

only way to produce it without it costing an arm and a leg was to step outside the box," she says.

The VSA team solved the design problem by adding black embroidery details on top of gold twill lettering to give it the worn, faded look the customer wanted. The red chenille star and feather-like embroidered details on the blue appliqué wings gave the design a three-dimensional pop, Williams adds. "We were able to show the logo the way the designer had done it originally. It was a really big deal, a huge win for him," she says.

Gina Barreca, director of marketing for Vantage Apparel (asi/93390), has a similar story of solving a logistical problem by mixing media. Vantage fulfilled an order of 1,000 women's jackets that combined three embellishment techniques. For an upscale look, Vantage used embroidery on the left chest of the jackets. A full-back appliqué logo continued the high-end appearance, while keeping the job cost-efficient. On the jackets' sleeves, Vantage used screen printing to keep the small letters looking crisp and readable. "The client wanted to hit all the zones," Barreca says. "It was about maximizing placements and logos and sizes as opposed to artistic creativity."

VSA Custom Apparel (asi/700739; circle 110 on Free Info Card) once had a job to decorate a jacket back for P.I.L.L.S., which bills itself as a luxury streetwear brand. The logo features a pill capsule inside a star with wings. Underneath, the word P.I.L.L.S. was "really jagged, really scratchy," Williams says, adding that it was important to the client that the jacket retain the distressed aesthetic. "The

“We’re bringing back the sophisticated age of embroidery in a very, very automated way.”

Ed Balady, BITO USA

and appliqué, among other techniques.

The nice thing about bling machines, Stephenson says, is that, like embroidery equipment, they fit in a relatively small space and aren't messy like some other add-on techniques. "If you do direct-to-garment or any kind of printed shirt, it's a little more of a production," he says.

Bling also gives decorators a lot of bang for their buck. Adding just a dollar or two in materials, perhaps a spangle outline around the names on a girls soccer jersey, could bring in anywhere from \$5 to \$10 more per garment, Stephenson says, adding that, "It's kind of a 'what your market will bear' approach." Because few competitors are offering comparable services, clients have less leverage to shop around for a lower price, he adds.

Stephenson recommends decorators skip right to a spangle transfer machine, rather than less expensive rhinestone machines, because it creates designs with almost no hand, and the supplies are one-seventh the cost of rhinestones. "Spangles create something that is absolutely soft like embroidery

and always lead-free," he says. "People put them on baby onesies and lingerie because there's no weight."

Sublimation Fixation

Sublimating designs onto performance fabrics is a hot technique in the apparel world, but it can also be a versatile tool in your multimedia arsenal. Gaardbo, for instance, has experimented with sublimating directly onto a field of white plastic sequins to give the finished artwork an extra sheen. It's a multi-step process: First, Shockwaves creates two designs, one for sublimation and the other for sequins, making sure they're the same size. Then, the shop attaches the sequins to the garment and prints the sublimation paper. The sublimation paper is cut out, matched to the sequins, then heat-pressed to transfer the image to the sequins. Oftentimes, Shockwaves will add another sequin border around the whole design "to button it all up," Gaardbo says. He adds that a client who services the collegiate market is "eating up" the innovative technique, continu-

ally coming back with new orders.

Kristin Williams, president of Minnesota-based VSA Custom Apparel (asi/700739), likes to give her appliqué some extra punch, by sublimating patterns and artwork onto the fabric. "Regular old twill is a tired concept," she says. A custom varsity jacket her shop decorated for the Greek market features a chenille patch spelling out "Legacy" on top, a twill patch in the center with the customer's own artwork sublimated on it and embroidered lettering below. Other designs pair paisley or leopard print patterns sublimated onto the "traditional preppy collegiate look" for a new twist on the classic, she says.

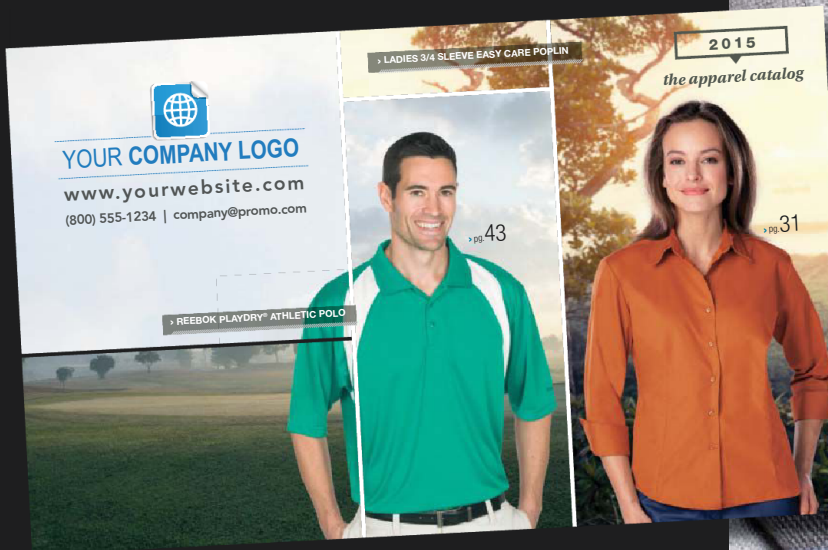
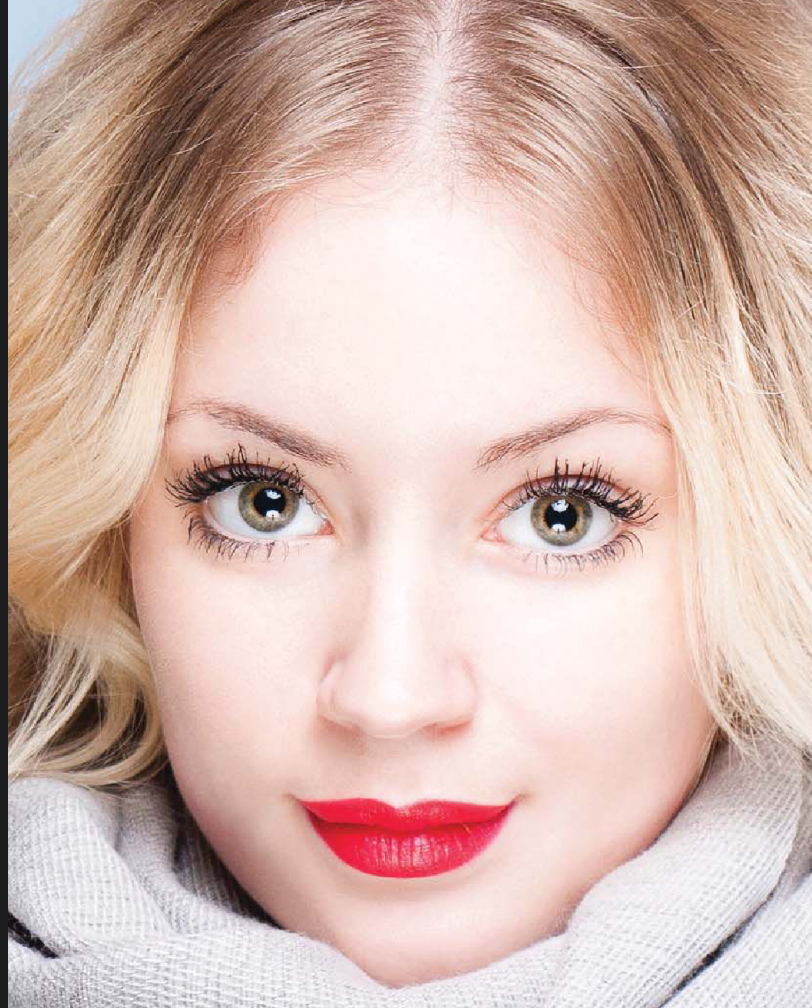
Sublimated appliqué is a premium many customers are willing to pay for, especially in the youth and college markets, Williams says. "They don't want to look like everybody else," she says. "Whenever we present multimedia as an option, it's always met with a lot of excitement."

THERESA HEGEL is a senior writer for *Stitches*. Contact: thegel@asicentral.com; follow her on Twitter at @TheresaHegel.

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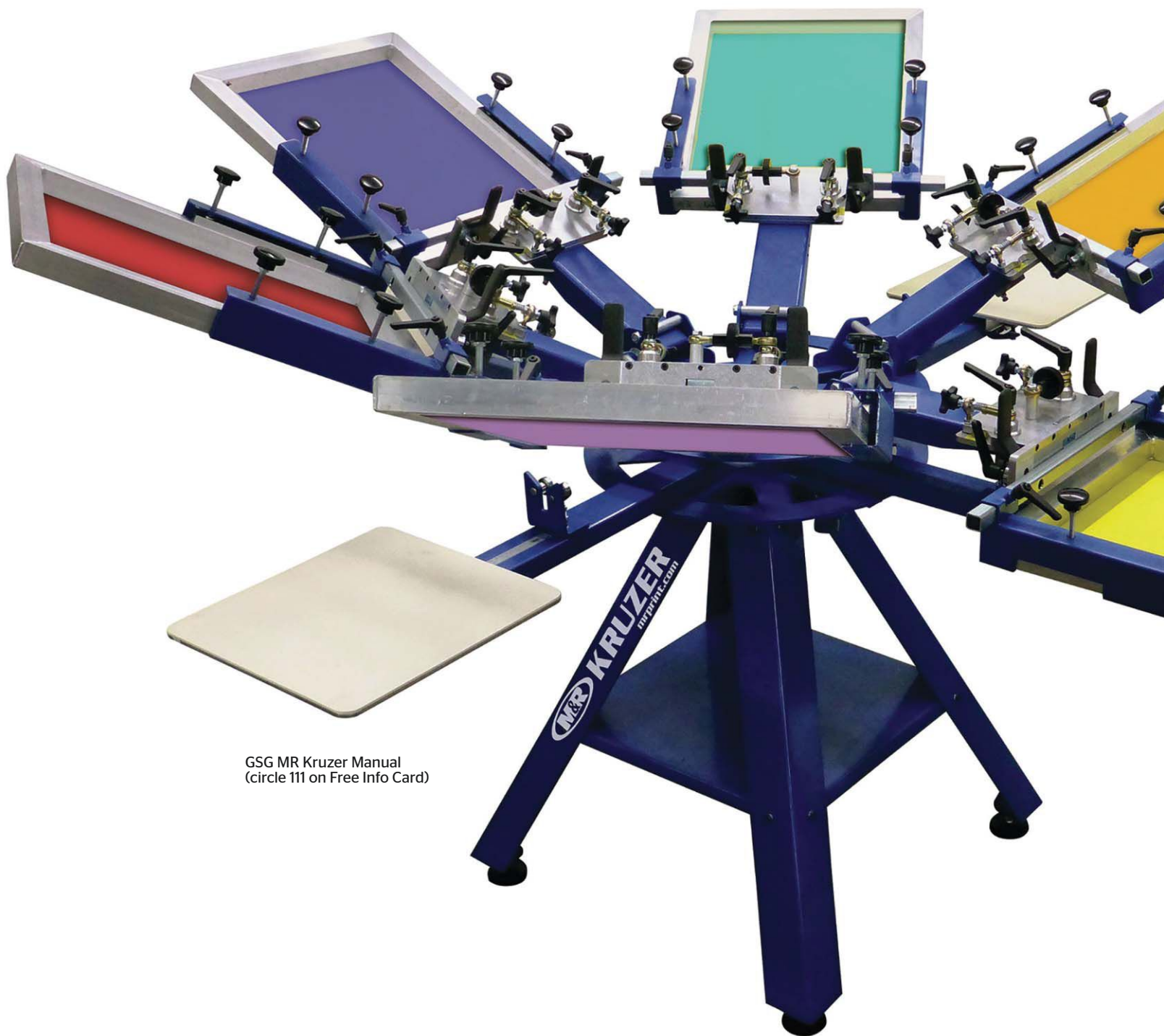
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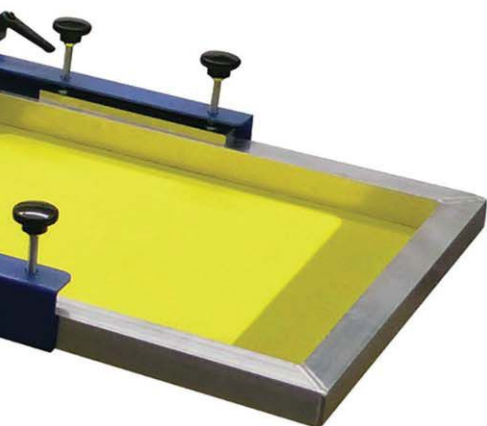
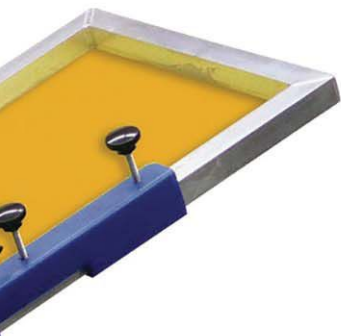


GSG MR Kruger Manual
(Circle 111 on Free Info Card)

Machine Guide

Get ready to invest in new decorating equipment this year. Here, we showcase some of the best equipment in the industry, from single- and multi-heads, to screen-printing presses, to laser bridges and more, with real customer reviews. In our 2015 Machine Guide, we feature 49 machines from 26 top industry manufacturers and distributors.

Compilation and reporting by Sara Lavenduski



SINGLE-HEAD EMBROIDERY MACHINES

Elite XLII-BEVT-S901CAII

Barudan America Inc., Solon, OH; (800) 627-4776; www.barudanamerica.com

Cost: Contact manufacturer for price.

What it is: This is a compact, single-head, nine-needle embroidery machine that's network-ready and has a 250mm by 400mm sewing field. It's portable at 154 lbs.

What's new:

- SmartHead sewing head for higher performance, easier maintenance and increased durability
- Servo Motors for increased production, more power and accurate stitching
- Open frame design for bags and heavy items
- Improved access to lubrication points.

Key features: 1,200 spm on flats and 1,000 spm on caps

Buyer's note: This machine is a good choice for sewing samples before production or small-quantity runs. It works for a variety of company sizes, from home-based businesses to large shops, with multiple single-head machines in a networked order-entry system.

Entrepreneur Pro PR1000E

Brother International Corp. (asi/12600), Bridgewater, NJ; (800) 4-A-BROTHER; www.brothersews.com

Cost: \$14,499.95; optional software kit upgrade, \$449.95.

What it is: This is a 10-needle home embroidery machine with a large embroidery area of 14" by 8".

What's new:

- InnovaChrome LED thread color system: LEDs under spools indicate closest thread color and correlate to colors on LCD touchscreen
- Advanced Super View HD LCD touchscreen display by Sharp with 16.7 million colors and enhanced viewing angle of 176 degrees
- Optional software upgrade includes a scanning feature to find the optimal design placement in the hoop, a color-shuffling function to change the design color palette and an onscreen auto-density adjustment to automatically recalculate stitch count when designs are resized.

Key features:

- InnovEye technology, Snowman embroidery positioning marker and eyelet threading system
- Built-in automatic needle threading system
- Three USB ports to import designs, use peripherals and download updates from brother.com
- Oversized worktable for larger projects.

Buyer's note: The ideal user is an experienced embroiderer looking to work on larger projects and output multiple items quickly.

Avancé 1501C

ColDesi Inc., Tampa, FL;
(877) 793-3278;
www.avance-emb.com;
www.coldesi.com

Cost: Contact manufacturer for price.

What it is: The result of more than three years of development, the brand-new Avancé 1501C is a single-head, 15-needle commercial embroidery machine with a new 19.7" x 13.8" sewing field and a maximum speed of 1,200 spm. It's compact enough to fit in a home office, but also capable of powering an embroidery business.

What's new:

- More than 4,400 free embroidery designs
- Comes with two cap frames and full complement of hoops
- Network-ready for expansion.

Buyer's note: With a low entry price, free training and support, and the opportunity to upgrade after two years, this machine works well for small or startup embroidery businesses. Customers can trade up to a four- or six-head unit after two years or add on additional single-head machines

and network them together. The machine comes with free training, technical support and a five-year warranty.

TUMX-C1501 Hybrid

Hirsch International
Hauppauge, NY;
(800) 394-4426; www.hic.us

Cost: Contact manufacturer for price.

What it is: With a large tubular embroidery space at 14" by 19.5", this single-head machine with an LCD color monitor will accommodate apparel and promotional merchandise that doesn't fit under a traditional compact embroidery machine.

What's new:

- Unrestricted sides for larger products
- Built-in LED lamp and position marker
- Precision notched needle plate to avoid bending or twisting stitches on caps.

Buyer's note: The hybrid machine is designed for decorators who want the ability to embroider on larger products but prefer a compact frame.

User review: "We had a bottleneck," says Beth Canedy, owner of custom embroidery shop Ragtime in Cottonwood, AZ, on her decision to invest in the TUMX-C1501 Hybrid single-head. "We had a six-head, and when we had smaller jobs, we got stuck." Canedy says her single-head from Hirsch made the process more streamlined and reduced turnaround time by half in many cases. "We love it so much that we got a second one," she says. "And Hirsch is great to work with. If you have a question, they respond within 24 hours."



Barudan BEUT-5901
(Circle 112 on Free Info Card)

EMT16 Modular



Scan this code to view and download the Melco EMT16 brochure.

Melco International; Denver;
(800) 799-8313;
www.melcousa.com

Cost: Contact distributor for price.

What it is: This is a network-based 16-needle modular embroidery machine with a large 15.7" by 16.1" sew field, meant to accommodate jacket backs, bags, blankets and other large products.

What's new:

- Embroidery production times reduced by 20% compared to previous Melco machines
- Combines Melco's patented Acti-Feed system with a simplified

user interface for easier operation and training

- Stand designed for mobility, strength and functionality; includes large open space under the pantograph, allowing bulky items to move with the machine
- Sturdy wheels and optional removable tabletop.

Key features:

- EMT16s operate independently of each other on the same network
- Small cylindrical lower arm
- Operating and embroidery software included.

Buyer's note: This commercial embroidery system is designed for efficient production, low operation costs and maximum sew speeds. Buyers are typically startups or large enterprises.



Mesa Distributors
Highland
HM/D-1501C
(circle 113 on Free
Info Card)

Highland HM/D-1501C

MESA Distributors Inc.
(asi/16004), Fort Worth, TX;
(800) 330-3867;
www.mesamachines.com

Cost: Contact manufacturer for price.

What it is: This single-head, 15-needle commercial embroidery machine with a 500mm by 360mm sewing field and a maximum speed of 1,200 spm comes with a five-year warranty. It also has a quick-change cap and hooping system and built-in noise reduction technology.

What's new:

- Control panel with 7" touchscreen color LCD display
- Built-in 16 million-stitch/400-design memory
- Machine can shift between tasks like design input, preparation for the next design and changing design parameters while working.

Key features:

- Automatic thread trimmer,

color change and thread break detection

- Laser light and one-touch design tracing
- Stitch filtering.

Buyer's note: This machine works for startups or established businesses looking to add another embroidery head.

GS1501

Pantograms Mfg. Co. Inc.,
Tampa, FL; (800) 872-1555;
www.pantograms.com

Cost: Contact manufacturer for price.

What it is: This is a single-head, 15-needle commercial embroidery machine with a 22" by 14" sewing field. The networkable machine with a maximum speed of 1,200 spm includes a five-year warranty.

What's new:

- Extended table-top border frame expands the sewing field to 48" by 14"
- True Trace traces design's outline
- Color LCD control panel

display.

Key features:

- 270-degree quick-change cap driver for sewing a 14" by 2.9" field; changes from flats to caps in less than two minutes
- Integrated power supply and heavy-duty workstation with lockable wheels.

User review: Bill Dichtl, graphic arts instructor at the Pioneer Career & Tech Center in Shelby, OH, recently purchased two Pantograms single-heads for the school. "Employers are looking for prospective employees with a basic knowledge of embroidery," Dichtl says. "All students wear embroidered T-shirts, so we thought having them do the work would teach them new skills and ease the school's textile budget." After the machines arrived, students worked with them immediately. "They began sewing out simple and complex designs, and were able to troubleshoot any problems," he says. "They've sewn out close to 500 shirts so far. They really enjoy operating the machines and they've been a real draw to the program."

RiCOMA 1501TC-7S

RiCOMA International Corp.
(asi/18200), Miami; (888) 292-6282; www.ricoma.us

Cost: Contact manufacturer for pricing.

What it is: This is a new 7" HD touchscreen commercial embroidery machine with an expandable sewing area up to 48" by 14". The machine with a speed of 1,200 spm has a new 20 million-stitch/200-design memory and a standard sewing area of 22" by 14", expandable up to 48" by 14".

What's new:

- Pre-set hoops, cap frames and special hoops

- Machine won't start if design is bigger than selected frame
- Auto-centering of designs
- One-step tracing
- Reads multiple design formats
- Universal power supply, 110-240V self-adaptable worldwide.

Key features:

- On-board lettering with multiple font options
- 270-degree wide cap system
- Auto color change and trimming
- External 100-degree button and trimming button.

User review: Aaron Stillwater, owner of Sharky Tees in Pensacola, FL, says he runs his RiCOMA 1501TC-7S 14 hours a day for embroidery clients all over the world. "The ease of use is second to none," he says. "The touchscreen makes it easy for my operators to train on it, and the sturdy construction means it's going to last a while." RiCOMA's customer service has gone "over and above" for Stillwater on more than one occasion. "I'd recommend this machine to anyone at any time," he says.

HAPPY HCD2-1501

Texmac Inc., Charlotte, NC;
(877) 335-5206;
www.happyemb.com

Cost: Contact vendor for price.

What it is: This single-head, 15-needle embroidery machine weighs in at 233 pounds and features a cast-steel frame and 7" touchscreen control panel with onboard help and auto-error correction. It has a 520mm by 400mm sewing field and a 40 million-stitch/250-design memory.

What's new:

- Faster operating speeds compared to 2013-2014 model
- Onboard program improves design management

• Machine-generated production and error reports.

Key features:

- 3" by 14" cap sewing field allows for sewing of front and sides of cap in single hooping
- Built-in networking and USB connections for PC
- Dual set of hoops included with each unit, including cap sewing system
- Production and error reporting functions display histories of production and error codes
- Networks with all Happy machine models listed in this guide, allowing operators to manage multiple machines from one PC
- Training and support included.

Buyer's note: This machine is ideal for small shops that want maximum production and a sewing field from a single-head machine; embroiderers looking for large production capability with the flexibility of networked single-heads; and large shops that need a single-head sample machine and/or wide-field embroidery machine.

HAPPY HCH-701 Journey

Texmac Inc., Charlotte, NC; (877) 335-5206; www.happyemb.com

Cost: Contact vendor for price.

What is it: This is a single-head, seven-needle embroidery machine with a cast-steel frame, a vertically mounted laser pointer and a 290mm by 290mm sewing field. It has a 40 million-stitch/250-design memory and sews up to 1,000 spm.

What's new:

- White sewing head instead of last year's painted blue head
- Onboard program with more settings for design management
- Fine-tuning to improve performance and reliability.

Key features:

- Compact dimensions: 88 pounds, 11" by 17" base
- 7" touchscreen control panel with onboard help and auto-error correction
- 2.7" by 11.5" cap sewing field allows for sewing on front and sides in one hooping
- Built-in networking and USB connections for PC
- Networks with current and previous generation HAPPY machine models, allowing operators to manage multiple machines from one PC
- Open area around sewing arm allows direct sewing on large objects
- Built-in bobbin winder
- Training and support included.

Buyer's note: This machine is a good choice for startups looking for an affordable multi-needle machine, or home hobbyists and sewers taking the next step to a multi-needle machine.

HAPPY HCS2-1201 Voyager2

Texmac Inc., Charlotte, NC; (877) 335-5206; www.happyemb.com

Cost: Contact vendor for price.

What is it: This is a single-head 12-needle embroidery machine with a 7" touchscreen control panel that features onboard help and auto-error correction. The cast-steel frame machine has a 320mm by 290mm sewing field and a 40 million-stitch/250-design memory. Training and support are included with your purchase of this machine.

What's new:

- Improved, independently driven cutting system similar to larger HAPPY models
- Onboard program with more settings for design management.



Texmac Inc. Happy HCR-Z series (circle 114 on Free Info Card)

Key features:

- Compact dimensions: 88 pounds, 11" by 17" base
- 2.7" by 11.5" cap sewing field allows sewing on front and sides in one hooping
- Built-in networking and USB connections for PC
- Open area around sewing arm allows direct sewing on large objects
- Built-in bobbin winder.

Buyer's note: This machine is ideal for home embroiderers who want production capability and faster speeds, but not a large machine. It's also a good investment for embroiderers looking for a starter production machine or a more compact, quieter production machine.

Sprint 6

ZSK USA Inc., Franklin, NH; (800) 525-2366; www.zsk.com

Cost: Contact manufacturer for price.

What it is: This low-noise 12-color single-head is compact and all-purpose, with an embroidery field of up to 18.1" and a maximum speed of 1,200 spm. It has an adjustable presser foot, automatic reverse embroidering function and a memory of 80 million stitches.

What's new:

- Smallest industrial tubular

arm without picker at the front

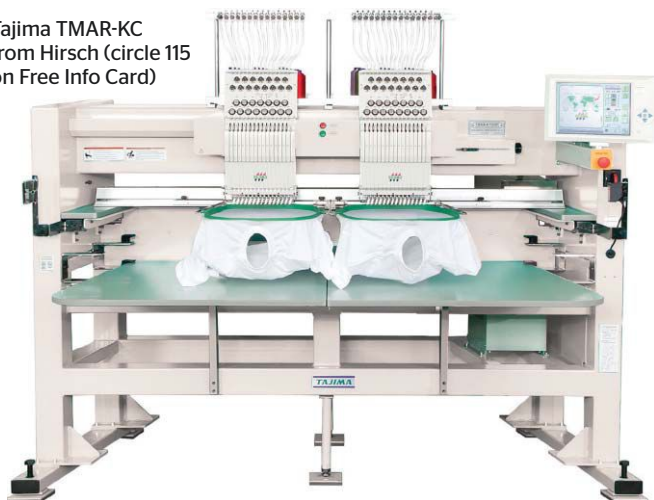
- Main shaft brake
- Designed thread stand
- Optional quick-change system for all frames
- Designed shoe frame with wide embroidery field
- ZigZag EP3 cording device
- Software version for advanced network functionality.

Key features:

- Operation modes: tubular, cap and border frame
- Error analysis
- T8-2 control terminal
- Network functionality
- Barcode capability.

User review: Jay Meyer, co-owner and founder of Blue Dolphin Screen Print & Embroidery (asi/522731) in Somersworth, NH, has eight ZSK machines, and has also welcomed the company's Germany-based president for two site visits. "Customer service at ZSK definitely starts at the top," Meyer says. "We've always been treated fairly and professionally." Meyer appreciates ZSK's knowledgeable tech service, including in-house training, live phone support and a YouTube channel. "They help solve issues quickly, and they continue to offer innovative solutions. The new Sprint 6 will be our next machine."

Tajima TMAR-KC from Hirsch (circle 115 on Free Info Card)



MULTI-HEAD EMBROIDERY MACHINES

BEXY-S1506CII

Barudan America Inc., Solon, OH; (800) 627-4776; www.barudanamerica.com

Cost: Contact manufacturer for price.

What it is: This multi-head machine is available with two, four, six or eight heads. With an 8.4" LCD display, it boasts 100 memory locations and a 20 million-stitch capacity.

What's new:

- SmartHead sewing head
- Fewer oiling points and better access
- Servo motors for increased production
- Shorter throat plate for better cap embroidery
- Larger standard sewing field at 18" by 17".

Key features:

- Three USB ports
- Mark 7 trimmers
- Standard LAN connector for Barudan's networking software
- Reinforced steel frame
- Sewing heads and table raised 4" for better ergonomics.

User review: Gene Conroy, owner and president of Treefrogg Specialties Inc. near Cincinnati, heads a shop that

offers embroidery, screen printing, heat-press and rhinestones. "I'm 100% loyal to Barudan, based on how I've been treated and their customer service," he says. "Plus, their machines are made with sturdy cast-iron frames. When I found them, I looked no further." When Conroy first bought his machines, he needed them quickly. Barudan worked with Conroy on financing so he was able to set up and fulfill orders immediately. "If you have any questions, they'll call you back in an hour," he says. "The schematics and literature are second to none, and their warranty is the best I've seen."

TMAR-KC

Hirsch International Hauppauge, NY; (800) 394-4426; www.hic.us

Cost: Contact manufacturer for price.

What it is: This multi-head automatic embroidery machine has features that include a middle thread guide that cuts threading time in half. The manufacturer has decreased needle wobble by 60%.

Key features: Digitally controlled presser foot adjusts to fabric thickness for easier sewing with fewer thread breaks and tension

Buyer's note: This machine is a good choice for shops that specialize in challenging jobs such as 3-D foam, leather and highly intricate designs.

User review: "There wasn't much of a learning curve on this machine for us because we had already used a touchscreen," says Bruce Perryman, MAS+, owner of Embroidery Unlimited Inc. in Phoenix. "We did have to learn some of the features, like adjusting the presser foot. We really like that the needle bar is now on a separate shaft from the presser foot as well." Besides small mechanical differences from some early models, "getting trained on this machine was pretty seamless," Perryman says. He adds that it runs quietly and is easy to maintain. "We love working with Hirsch," he says. "We've been buying from them for 25 years."

EMT16 Modular



Scan this code to view and download the Melco EMT16 brochure.

Melco International, Denver; (800) 799-8313; www.melcousa.com

Cost: Contact distributor for price.

What it is: This is a 16-needle, multi-head modular embroidery machine with a large 15.7" by 16.1" sew field, meant for designs on jacket backs, bags, blankets and other large products.

What's new:

- Embroidery production times reduced by 20% on average

compared to previous Melco machines

- Combines patented Acti-Feed system with a simplified user interface, for easier operation and training
- Stand designed for mobility, strength and functionality; includes large open space under pantograph, allowing bulky items to move with machine
- Sturdy wheels and optional removable tabletop.

Key features:

- Melco EMT16s operate independently on the same network
- Small cylindrical lower arm enables embroiderers to personalize a variety of products
- Network-based to create multi-head production environments
- Operating and embroidery software included.

Buyer's note: Buyers are typically business startups or large enterprises that want efficient production, low operation costs and maximum sew speed.

Highland HM-1504

MESA Distributors Inc. (asi/16004), Fort Worth, TX; (800) 330-3867; www.mesamachines.com

Cost: Contact manufacturer for price.

What it is: This 15-needle multi-head commercial embroidery machine comes with a five-year warranty and is available in two-, four-, six- or eight-head models. With a maximum speed of 1,000 spm, the machine has features that include an automatic thread trimmer and thread-break detection.

What's new:

- Control panel features a 10" color LCD display
- Built-in memory holds 2 million stitches, up to 99 designs.

Key features:

- 8 500mm by 450mm (19.6" by 17.7") sewing fields
- Quick-change cap and hooping system
- Automatic color change, design trace and stitch filtering
- Built-in noise reduction technology.

Buyer's note: The Highland two-head embroidery machines are well-suited for small shops needing more embroidery heads, while the four-, six- and eight-head machines are an excellent choice for larger shops looking for high-production, commercial-quality machines.

RCM-1504CTS

RiCOMA International Corp. (asi/18200), Miami; (888) 292-6282; www.ricoma.us

Cost: Contact manufacturer for factory-direct price.

What it is: RiCOMA's new four-head, 15-needle industrial embroidery machine has an all-servo system and a large 20" by 17.7" embroidery area. It's also available in six heads and comes with a five-year warranty. This fast and quiet machine has a 2 million-stitch memory and a 270 degree-wide cap system.

What's new:

- Maximum speed of 1,000 spm
- Newly developed small arm reduces the space between the cap device and needle plate for better embroidery on caps.

Key features:

- Suitable for flat, cap and finished garments embroidery
- Automatic color change, thread trimmer, thread-break detector
- USB port ready
- 5" LCD display shows real-time stitching
- Pre-sew design trace-capable

- Up to 18" by 18" on tubular
- In stock for immediate delivery.

HAPPY HCR2-Series

Texmac Inc., Charlotte, NC; (877) 335-5206;

www.happyemb.com

Cost: Contact vendor for price.

What it is: This is a multi-head machine line with two, four, six or eight heads. Each machine includes a 40 million-stitch/250-design memory, a 450mm by 360mm sewing field and a maximum speed of 1,100 spm.

What's new:

- Large 10" color touchscreen control allows all major functions to be performed from the main screen
- Customizable front screen Onboard program improves design management
- Machine-generated production and error reports.

Key features:

- 3" by 14" cap sewing field allows sewing of front and sides of cap in single hooping
- Built-in network and USB connections for PC
- Dual set of hoops included with each unit, including cap sewing system
- Two hoops of each size included per sewing head
- Compact enough to wheel through a standard door
- Networks with all current Happy machine models; operators can manage multiple Happy machines from one PC
- Onsite installation/training included with purchase.

Buyer's note: This machine is a good investment for production embroiderers at a premium for space, as well as production and contract embroiderers who handle large quantity orders.



Ricoma RCM-1504CTS
(Circle 116 on Free Info Card)

J-Series (JAFA/JNEA)

ZSK USA Inc., Franklin, NH; (800) 525-2366;

www.zsk.com

Cost: Please contact manufacturer for price.

What it is: Made in Germany, this commercial embroidery machine is available with one, two, four, six or eight heads and includes a memory of 80 million stitches and a maximum speed of 1,000 spm. Embroidery field measurements are 70mm by 360mm for caps, 405mm by 395mm for tubular goods, 495mm by 700mm for single motives and 700mm by 3,200mm for the border frame.

What's new:

- Optional quick-change system for all frames
- Designed shoe frame with wide embroidery field at

124mm by 175mm or 4.88" by 6.89"

- ZigZag EP3 cording device
- Software version for advanced network functionality.

Key features:

- Operation modes: tubular, cap and border frame
- Thread control, low noise and error analysis
- Automatic thread trimmer and back-stitch function
- Adjustable presser foot
- Embroidery field depth of 500mm or 19.69" for the JAFA and 700mm or 27.56" for the JNEA

• T8-2 control terminal
• Windows-based networking.
Buyer's note: This machine is a good choice for promotional products, corporate fashion, club wear and individualization on different textiles.

SCREEN-PRINTING EQUIPMENT AND ACCESSORIES

Volt Servo All-Electric

Anatol Equipment Mfg. Co., Lake Bluff, IL; (847) 367-9760; www.anatol.com

Cost: Contact manufacturer for price.

What it is: This is an industrial all-electric screen-printing press capable of printing more than 1,000 units per hour. The press is offered in four models, starting at four stations and two

colors all the way up to 18 stations with 16 colors.

What's new: Aries O.S. 2.0 allows operator to save and recall every print job, including RGB or CMYK color spectrum.

Key features:

- Near 360 degree 15" color touchscreen
- Servo-driven indexer and AC print heads
- Digital central off-contact
- High-tension screen clamping system
- Maximum print areas: 15" by 16", 16" by 18", 20" by 20", 20" by 28"
- May be wired for single and three-phase electrical
- Tool-free adjustments.
- Number of U.S.-based installations: More than 30

User review: Tim Francis, owner of D&T Shirtified in Fremont, NE, says this press doesn't require an air compressor or chiller. "I've gone through two air compressor motors since I've started my business," he says, "and that's not enjoyable when the printing schedule is crammed full. Any disruptive variables you can remove from production is a very good thing." Francis adds that setup and training were a breeze for his operators: "The installing technician gave us the run-through, and we had it cranking out shirts by morning."

M&R Kruzer Manual
GSG, Dallas; (214) 712-6200; (800) 366-1776; www.gogsg.com
Cost: Contact vendor for pricing.

What it is: This is an entry-level manual screen-printing press with six colors and four stations that accommodates most frame types and manages screen sizes up to 58cm wide.

What's new:

- Lever-adjusted off-contact system operates vertically, eliminating need for separate angle adjustment
- V-Guide locator system for precise registration
- Tool-free quick-release pallet locks.

Key features:

- Designed to fit through a 78cm (31") doorway
- Micro-registration with zero set point guides.

User review: Brett Bowden, owner of Printed Threads (asi/529006) in Keller, TX, owns and operates an M&R Kruzer at his screen-printing shop. "It comes with side clamps, so it can handle our 23" by 31" frames," he explains. "That's important since we only want to have one frame size in the shop." Another feature that Bowden appreciates is the off-contact controls. "It's extremely easy to change the off-contact on each head to ensure a great print and allow for some special effects processes, like capillary films," he says. "For the price, there's no better solution on the market."

MHM iQ Oval

Hirsch International
Hauppauge, NY; (800) 394-4426; www.hic.us

Cost: Contact manufacturer for price.

What it is: This is an automatic screen-printing press with wi-fi capability for real-time technical support.

What's new:

- iDS, MHM's intelligent drive system, features a small drive motor on each pallet arm that allows independent operation of each arm and smooth motion in both directions
- No safety barriers, giving



Anatol Volt Servo
(circle 117 on
Free Info Card)

the operator unrestricted access to loading areas.

Key features:

- Equipped with latest "m-touch pro" operating system with tablet interface
- Control panel at each station for convenient setup.

Buyer's note: The iQ Oval is available in many configurations up to 52 pallets and is a great option for high-volume businesses that want to take textile screen printing to the next level.

User review: "Our experience with the MHM iQ Oval exceeded our already high expectations from MHM based on our experience with their other press models," says Tom Davenport, president/founder of Motion Textile Inc. in Sacramento. "The design offers total stability and flexibility in operation, including ultra-precise registration, an oversize print area, multiple load/unload stations allowing for running two jobs concurrently and the ability to add additional printheads." Davenport adds that his team recently on-boarded two new operators who had no experience with automatic presses, and "they picked it up quite quickly," he says. "The operator interface is intuitive, and the safety features make me feel more comfortable with a new operator running the machine."

S.Roque Eco Automatic

Ryonet Corp., Vancouver, WA; (800) 314-6390; www.screenprinting.com

Cost: Contact manufacturer for price.

What it is: This is an automatic press available in up to 18 colors/20 pallets, featuring a 10" polychromatic touch control panel and an AC servo-motor rotation system.

What's new: More user-friendly, streamlined interface.

Key features:

- Independent control panel on each printhead
- Printheads with independent elevation and high-lift position
- Zero-position for fast and easy setup
- Choice of "U" clamp or pin systems.
- Number of North American-based customers/installations of this machine: 81

Buyer's note: This is an ideal press for businesses looking to take the next step in production.

User review: Christian Moore, owner/operator at Ink Kustoms Screen Printing in Deptford, NJ, first saw the S.Roque Eco Automatic press at the ISS Show in Atlantic City, NJ. "I knew I had to have it," he says. After only two hours of training in his shop, he was ready to fulfill orders. "Everything is very clear," he says. "Icons on the printheads make everything

visual, so it's not a guessing game." He estimates that manually registering the screens is about five times faster than registering on any other press. "I knew automatic screen printing was going to be easier than manual printing," he says, "but I had no idea that everything was going to be easier."

Mach Six-Color/Six-Station Manual

Workhorse Products, Phoenix; (602) 437-2305; (800) 778-8779; www.workhorseproducts.com

Cost: Contact manufacturer for price.

What it is: This is a manual screen-printing press with precision machine-cast aluminum printheads and center wheel for tight registration and optional attachments for printing caps, jackets, signs, beverage holders, stickers and pockets.

What's new:

- Pallet bracket for faster change-out of platens from shirts to sleeves; one knob tightens platen to arm as opposed to two in the previous style
- Optional casters for moving machine
- Quick-release bracket to use the same platens on operators' manual and automatic presses.

Key features:

- Large-diameter, full-length center shaft combined with print station support struts to maximize rigidity
- Tool-free X, Y and Z micro registration.

Buyer's note: This machine is ideal for part-time or small shops doing multicolor work that want the flexibility of six stations or six-color capacity. It can be expanded to an eight color/six station as business grows.

User review: "Workhorse makes a great press," says Laura Maring, president and owner of McSherrystown, PA-based Teamzila Printing. "My production staff has been super happy, and Workhorse has been so easy to work with. They truly work hard to earn my business."

Sabre Six-, Eight-, 10-Color Automatic

Workhorse Products, Phoenix; (602) 437-2305; (800) 778-8779; www.workhorseproducts.com

Cost: Contact manufacturer for price.

What it is: This AC electric automatic screen-printing press features quick release pallets with a standard 20" by 20" image area and patented flash-back capabilities.

What's new:

- Patent-pending indexing system
- Tablet touchscreen control panel
- Web portal, accessed through tablet, tracks press production and jobs in real time from any browser.

Key features:

- Micro-registration
- Independent flood bar and squeegee pressure adjustments.

DIRECT-TO-GARMENT AND SUBLIMATION PRINTERS

mPower MP10i

AnaJet LLC (asi/16000); Costa Mesa, CA; (877) 626-2538; www.anajet.com

Cost: Contact vendor for pricing.

What it is: The AnaJet MP10i-series is a single-platen direct-to-garment printer that has a small footprint and high-



Workhorse Mach Press (Circle 82 on Free Info Card)

Buyer's note: This machine is ideal for manual printers ready to take the next step toward higher production.

User review: Monica Sumner, president of Liberty Screen Print Co. LLC (asi/705550) in Beacon Falls, CT, leads a contract screen-printing shop that operates an eight-color Sabre and two additional six-color presses. "The Sabre has more features for the experienced production printer than its modest price lets on," she says. "The only thing you should consider is whether to purchase a six-, eight- or 10-color, and that's every shop owner's dilemma. Our eight-color Sabre meets all our quality standards in a quiet and efficient manner. We're happily looking forward to purchasing a 10-color as soon as possible."

control of ink settings and built-in ink cost calculator

- "Plug-n-Print" from storage devices
- Versatility of multiple applications
- Industrial performance.

Buyer's note: This printer is a good choice for businesses new to digital printing as well as experienced, high-volume shops.

User review: "We researched the direct-to-garment printers available and always came back to AnaJet," says Sue Wodzicki, co-owner of Color Image Designs (asi/165209) in Lutz, FL. "The quality has surpassed both our customers' and our own expectations." Color Image Designs couldn't be happier with the print detail from the MP10i. "We print photos on shirts that are just incredible, and our customers love how they feel," Wodzicki says. "Some of them come back to show us shirts they bought from us a year ago and they still look as good as the day we printed them. We tell everyone that the print will outlast the shirt."

SureColor F2000

Epson America; Long Beach, CA; (800) GO-EPSON; proimaging.epson.com

Cost: \$19,995

What it is: This is an all-new,

endurance industrial printhead with a nearly airtight ink delivery system.

What's new and key features:

- Faster, more efficient ink delivery
- AnaRIP software enables TrueView that allows user to preview image as output onto a garment; also includes con-



Epson SureColor F7170
(circle 118 on Free Info Card)

purpose-built direct-to-garment inkjet printer.

What's new:

- Epson PrecisionCore TFP printhead and Epson UltraChrome DG garment ink technology
- Garment creator software provides flexibility for print workflow, control to review job history and ability to estimate costs.

Key features:

- Prints directly onto garments ranging from 100% cotton to 50/50 blends
- Epson UltraChrome DG water-based pigment CMYK and CMYK+White ink technology.

Buyer's note: This machine is ideal for print shops looking to capitalize on short-run, highly customizable printing jobs.

User review: Andrew Lanier, production coordinator at Denver-based Phunkshun Wear, imprints winter facemasks and balaclavas with two Epson direct-to-garment printers.

"The colors are far superior to what we used to make," he says. "We're able to create detail that we would never have been able to hit before. We'll print a map of a ski mountain and you can actually read it." When Lanier and his team were in the market for a new printer, they saw the F Series printing on a snowboard. "That sold us

on it," Lanier says. "It has far exceeded anything we've been able to do before. We offer multiple mask styles, from perforated single-layer to double-layer with fleece, and we do all of them on the Epsoms."

SureColor F7170

Epson America, Long Beach, CA; (800) GO-EPSON; proimaging.epson.com

Cost: \$19,995

What it is: The Epson SureColor F7170 64" production dye-sublimation printer integrates roll-to-roll support for better performance, reliability and image quality in fabric production and soft signage.

What's new:

- Epson PrecisionCore TFP printhead and Epson UltraChrome DS ink system
- Accurate take-up reel and substrate system, ideal for a range of textile applications
- High-capacity ink system with refillable tanks allows for continuous printing through a full roll of media
- Post-platen heater for faster drying times.

Key features:

- Delivers industrial-level production, image quality and reliability
- Precise roll-to-roll feeding technology allows for maximum uninterrupted production runs with minimal main-

tenance downtime

- Epson UltraChrome DS dye-sublimation CMYK ink technology produces vibrant colors, intense blacks, sharp contours and smooth gradations.

Buyer's note: This machine is a good investment for small-to medium-sized print/textile shops looking to improve production times, less maintenance and lower cost of ownership. It's ideal for digital textile applications, including flags, banners, home furnishings and apparel.

Kornit Avalanche Hexa

Hirsch International
Hauppauge, NY; (800) 394-4426; www.bic.us

Cost: Contact manufacturer for price.

What it is: The Kornit Avalanche HEXA printer was specifically developed to meet color and quality demands of the fashion and sports industry.

What's new: Two additional color channels (red and green) increase standard CMYK color gamut by 30%.

Key features:

- Color matching and accurate spot-color printing
- 20 Spectra Polaris print-heads with six color channels
- Enriched accurate spot-color printing
- 23.5" by 35" in print area for XXL garment and cut pieces.

SummitDTG 520

MESA Distributors Inc.
(asi/16004), Fort Worth, TX; (800) 330-3867; www.mesamachines.com

Cost: Contact manufacturer for pricing.

What it is: The SummitDTG 520 printer uses CMYK and white inks to print directly onto light- or dark-colored

garments. It includes a 1"-wide ink-repelling printhead and is capable of both bidirectional and unidirectional printing.

What's new: One-pass printing for faster prints: print a full-color 12" by 12" image on dark garments in three minutes.

Key features:

- Maximum print size is 16" by 20" with included four-in-one platen, or 16" by 45" with custom platen
- White ink management system constantly circulates and filters ink to prevent clogging
- Bulk ink system saves money
- Automatic platen height adjustment.

Buyer's note: This machine is a good fit for shops looking to offer custom-printed garments.

Texart RT-640 Dye-Sublimation Printer

Roland DGA Corp.
(asi/18201), Irvine, CA; (800) 542-2307; www.rolanddga.com

Cost: \$19,995 (MSRP)

What it is: The Texart RT-640 uses Roland's Texart SBL3 dye-sublimation inks, and incorporates advanced print control technology for outstanding imaging and color consistency at speeds of up 351 square feet per hour.

What's new:

- Bulk ink system
- In four-color mode, ink-switching system swaps empty pouch to a new pouch for continuous printing
- Advanced feed adjuster
- Includes Ergosoft Roland Edition Professional Textile RIP software
- Ability to control common printer functions from iPad.

Key features:

- Available in four-color (CMYK) or eight-color



Photo by Michael Allen

Running is my freedom.

A few years ago, I decided it was time to put myself first. Facing the many pressures of a distributor salesperson, I wasn't sure how I could fit it all in my life. Enter ASI.

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(CMYK/LcLmOrVi) configurations

- Designed for long production runs
- Included TU3 take-up system.

HEAT-TRANSFER EQUIPMENT

DK20S Digital Swingaway Heat Press

Dalco Athletic, Dallas; (972) 494-1455; www.dalcoatbletic.com

Cost: Contact manufacturer for price.

What it is: The DK20S is a 16" by 20" digital swing-away heat-transfer press that has interchangeable lower tables with a variety of optional platens.

Key features:

- Digital temperature and time controls
- PSI pressure control gauge
- Heavy-duty solid-steel welded framework capable of up to 2,200 lbs. of pressure
- Oversized LCD display shows temperature and time simultaneously
- Heat platen pressure adjusts to accommodate material thicknesses past 1" in height
- Number of North American-based customers: 62 (sold by Dalco as a distributor).

Buyer's note: The DK20S is a good choice for shops that print a wide range of products, including apparel, plaques and tiles, using plastisol, digital and sublimated heat transfers; embroidery appliqué; and rhinestones.

User review: Reza Karimi, owner/manager of Soccer City in Frisco, TX, bought his first DK20S from Dalco Athletic in 2006, and a second in 2010. "We have seven employees and most are trained on this press," Karimi says. "I can honestly say there was little to no learning curve. It was very

Buyer's note: This machine is best suited for textile/apparel companies, sign shops, screen printers and trade show/exhibit companies.

simple to learn, once we figured out how best to use pressure. Dalco Athletic has been very good to work with for the past eight years."

Maxi-Press Air-Op Automatic Large-Format Press

George Knight & Co. Inc., Brockton, MA; (800) 525-6766; www.heatpress.com

Cost: Contact vendor for pricing.

What it is: This large-format heat press is available in 32" by 42" and 44" by 64" sizes.

Key features:

- Available with optional bottom heat, allowing for double-sided printing of finished garments
- Decorators can now print bulky, finished garments on both sides simultaneously for a full-bleed, full-color sublimated result.

User review: Tim Lynn, vice president of Condé Systems in Mobile, AL, leads a team that does wholesale sublimation printing for large-format applications, such as panels and welcome mats. He has worked with George Knight since 1992, when his company was first established. "They're great to work with," Lynn says. "They're responsive. Whether you email or call them with a question, they respond the same day." Lynn's team invested in a second press from George Knight last year, after using their previous press



Hotronix Dual Air Fusion (circle 81 on Free Info Card)

for seven years. "To produce the size prints we do," he says, "you have to have this kind of machine."

Hotronix Dual Air Fusion

Hotronix, Carmichaels, PA; (800) 727-8520; www.hotronix.com

Cost: \$6,495

What it is: The Hotronix Dual Air Fusion is a heat press that shuttles between two platen workstations. Each station can be configured with a unique application time and pressure, allowing for high production of the same item or two different items simultaneously.

What's new:

- Fully threadable lower platen allows a garment to be decorated on front, back or side without removing it from platen
- Auto-adjust pressure automatically adjusts to thickness of item being printed
- Dual platens allow for a heat-free workspace on one platen while the other is being pressed.

Key features:

- Laser alignment system
- Full-auto, semi-auto and manual modes
- Touchscreen stores frequently used settings, produc-

tion cycle counter and auto on/off capability.

Buyer's note: The Dual Air Fusion is intended for medium to high-volume decorators looking for a press that will help increase productivity, and for shops using a heat press to cure digitally printed apparel. You can program one station for pretreatment and the other for curing.

Heat-Seal Machine Model 201

Insta Graphic Systems (asi/704730), Cerritos, CA; (800) 421-6971; www.instagram.com

Cost: Contact manufacturer for price.

What it is: The Model 201 is a swing-away, 13" by 13" platen heat press that's user-friendly for the home, craft and hobby industries.

What's new:

- Dual pressure systems
- Prints thick materials such as plaques and books, and thin substrates for apparel
- Prints on sublimatable products with no ghosting
- Tapered edges of upper platen reduce impression marks.

Key features:

- Integrated digital controller for time, temperature and auto-off



Wild Side Hotronix Fusion
(circle 119 on Free Info Card)

- Heavy-duty distribution of pressure and even heat across the platen
- Swing-away with unobstructed view of entire platen
- Cast-in tubular heating element
- All agency certifications.

Buyer's note: This machine is ideal for schools, churches, embroiderers, hobby/craft, the color-copy industry, and the sublimation-trophy and awards business. It's also designed as an entry-level machine.

Model 228

Insta Graphic Systems
(asi/704730), Cerritos, CA;
(800) 421-6971;
www.instagram.com

Cost: \$1,895

What it is: The Model 228 features a 15" by 20" swing-away upper platen, giving a user complete access to the lower platen while loading garments and placing transfers.

What's new:

- Interchangeable lower platens: Simple pin system allows user to easily change out lower platen and drop in smaller accessory platens for printing on pockets, sleeves, pant legs, yokes and more
- Sleep mode and auto off: Energy-saving feature allows

machine to go into sleep mode after specified time has elapsed or automatically shut off after two hours of non-use.

Key features:

- Cast metal construction
- Pressure source strategically placed over the center of its upper platen; uses struts to drive pressure out to all corners for even, heavy-duty distribution of pressure
- Tubular heating element cast into aluminum upper platen, heating metal from within, and coiled throughout the upper platen to provide even heat circulation
- Digital controller for regulating time and temperature
- Sliding pressure scale for adjusting pressure settings
- Lower cut-away base for ease of loading and unloading
- UL-, CuL- and CE-approved; RoHS/WEEE-compliant
- Lifetime warranty on upper heating element.

Hotronix Air Fusion

Transfer Express (asi/91804), Mentor, OH; (800) 622-2280;
www.transferexpress.com

Cost: \$3,800 for machine on pedestal; \$3,650 on tabletop stand

What it is: The Hotronix

Air Fusion is an auto-open, auto swing-away heat press with touchscreen controls. Powered by an air compressor, it's designed to increase production and reduce operator fatigue.

What's new:

- Fully threadable lower platen allows a garment to be decorated on the front, back or side without removing it from the platen
- Patented auto-adjust pressure has up to four programmable pressure and time settings, allowing user to select appropriate application for each garment
- Optional Heat Press Caddie Shelves attach to pedestal and allow operator to keep heat-transfer products and blanks within reach during application.

Key features:

- Exclusive auto-open, swing-away upper platen provides a heat-free workspace and user-safe two-hand operation.
- Programmable settings for multi-step applications, preset programs, energy-saving sleep mode and a production cycle counter
- Ergonomic height adjustability for multiple operators.

Buyer's note: The Air Fusion is intended for medium- to high-volume decorators looking for a press that will help

LASER BRIDGES

Proel Laser Bridge

BITO USA, Deer Park, NY;
(866) 248-6872;
www.bitousa.com

What it is: This embroidery laser with Windows 8 compatibility is designed to span multi-head embroidery machines and/or other work stations up to 120' (35m) across.

increase productivity.

Hotronix Fusion

The Wild Side, San Fernando, CA; (800) 421-3130;
www.thewildside.com

Cost: Contact manufacturer for price.

What it is: The 16" by 20" Hotronix Fusion is the only heat press in the industry with a patented dual-function capability, The Wild Side says. It operates as a swing-away or with a draw motion that fits how operators use it.

What's new:

- Touchscreen technology allows a user to program an unlimited number of frequently used application settings
- Twin timer allows users to preset individual time settings for two-step application or for preheating and application.

Key features:

- Production cycle counter
- Auto on/off settings
- Eight optional language settings
- Optional quick-change platens, requiring no tools.

Buyer's note: The Fusion is intended for low- to medium-volume decorators looking for a press that will help increase productivity and reduce operator error.

Cost: \$125,000 to \$350,000

What's new:

- Latest in PLC logic controller technology
- Integrated Vision System (option sold separately)
- Access to factory remote assist (requires Internet connection)
- Enhanced integration with

plotters, and automatic rolling and feed systems

- Higher capacity for more devices.

Key features:

- High-speed galvanometric laser
- Can be integrated with any embroidery machine
- Variable cutting area of up to 600mm by 600mm (24") for each embroidery head
- PC controlled via interface cards
- Multiple layers of fabric can be kiss-cut simultaneously
- Number of units sold in North America: 120.

User review: Keith Kearney is president of Stitches Embroidery (asi/89823) in Pittsburgh and has worked with BITO USA for his machine needs since 2007. "Owner Ed Balady doesn't just sell you a product," Kearney says. "He sets you up for success. He truly cares about his clients and makes certain that they're in line to be productive into the future. He believes in his product, and so do I. We couldn't be more satisfied with our Proel Laser Bridge, and Ed has stayed in close contact with us ever since to be sure of that satisfaction."

Proel TSI E-Laser 1200 All In One Embroidery Laser

BITO USA, Deer Park, NY; (866) 248-6872; www.bitousa.com

What is it: The 1200 is a combination single-head laser and 12-needle embroidery machine with ear-to-ear cap sewing field (400mm high by 520mm wide) and optional specialty cap sewing frames.

Cost: \$38,000 to \$48,000

What's new:

- Operator can choose power level, either 30 or 50 watts, to

cut materials such as canvas, suede and synthetic leather

- Laser beam comes out of the needle 14 position and shoots down into the hole of the needle plate; laser is moved by the machine's motor, not the pantograph, making it possible to do headwear
- Embroidery head shield.

Key features:

- Maximum speed of 1,200 spm
- Easy design positioning with easy design trace and visual hoop maps
- Multi-position arms accept a wide variety of hoops and accessories.

User review: Ethan Lipsitz is CEO of Los Angeles-based Apliiq Inc., which specializes in custom appliqué apparel and accessories at www.apliiq.com. He says the Proel TSI E-Laser 1200 All In One Embroidery Laser is very precise, as long as the laser is clean and running properly. "From time to time the laser gets dirty and the strength isn't consistent," he explains, "but otherwise it's performed well for us so far. There was definitely a learning curve, but with practice and communication with the Proel team, we've been getting better with it."

Seit SL-10 Laser Bridge Machine

Hirsch International, Hauppauge, NY; (800) 394-4426; www.bic.us

Cost: Contact manufacturer for price.

What it is: This textile laser-bridge machine features improvements that increase production speed, improve safety, allow for more precise cutting and offer a larger cutting area.



Mesa uPrint (circle 120 on Free Info Card)

What's new:

- Patented exhaust system built into rigid pipe mounted on bridge; its straight shape reduces turbulence and increases suction
- Improved scan head is approximately 35% faster than fixed model
- Two security sensors operate horizontally to cover the front, sides and back of machine.

Key features:

- Available in custom lengths to accommodate any machine configuration and space requirements
- Heavy-duty C-shaped central supports provide continuous, unimpeded movement; multiple embroidery machines and test stands can be placed at any position along entire length of the X-axis.

Buyer's note: The series is for mid- to high-volume embroidery shops looking to add or speed up appliqué production.

uPrint Laser Transfer Printers

MESA Distributors Inc. (asi/16004), Fort Worth, TX;

(800) 330-3867;

www.mesamachines.com

Cost: Contact manufacturer for price.

What it is: uPrint Laser Transfer Printers print full-color designs to transfer paper. The machine can print up to eight 8" by 11" designs per minute (Express Model) or six 16.5" by 11.5" designs per minute (Elite Model, pictured).

Key features:

- Maximum print area: 11.5" by 16.5" (Elite) or 8" by 11" (Express)
- Print images at up to 1,200 dpi
- Decorate light or dark garments with custom graphics on demand
- Inexpensive way to decorate full-color T-shirts that will withstand powerful wash cycles.

Buyer's note: uPrint Laser Transfer Printers are a good choice for business startups that wish to offer custom-printed garments, and an excellent addition to shops looking to add designs to a wide variety of items.

DUAL-FUNCTION MACHINES

THE Dream Machine Innov-is 8500D

Brother International Corp. (asi/12600), Bridgewater, NJ; (800) 4-A-BROTHER;

www.brothersews.com

Cost: \$13,999

What is it: THE Dream Machine Innov-is XV8500D combination machine includes



Brother Dream Machine
(Circle 121 on Free Info Card)

over 100 new or improved features, including InnovEye 2 camera-like technology. My Design Center integrates InnovEye 2 Technology with design techniques like line art scanning and illustration scanning.

What's new:

- ScanImation Scanning Frame: scan drawings or printed clip art using InnovEye 2 technology and auto-punch feature
- Virtual stitch preview allows operator to see desired stitch superimposed on project using InnovEye 2 Technology, and HD LCD display allows user to modify stitch length and width
- AccuTrac Embroidery System provides better underarm support and stitch quality, and reduces bounce
- Couching technique and MuVit digital dual-feed system allow operator to add consistent decorative cording
- InnovaChrome LED Thread Coloring & Monitoring System indicates when a color changes and thread breaks.

Key features:

- 10.1" high-definition LCD display, with expandable library of over 40 built-in HD tutorial videos

- Expansive 11.25" needle to arm (56 square inches of workspace)

- Large 9.5" by 14" illuminated embroidery area.

Buyer's note: The ideal user is a highly experienced quilter/embroiderer/sewer, who owns more than one machine (likely lower-end for quick mending projects). This machine would be used for more detailed/complex projects.

Mixed Chenille Embroidery Machine

Hirsch International, Hauppauge, NY; (800) 394-4426; www.bic.us

Cost: Contact manufacturer for price.

What it is: This machine combines the chenille and embroidery process, with a chenille embroidery head paired with a standard embroidery head. It combines chenille with embroidery, sequins,

cording, taping, coiling and boring. Loop and chain stitches can be automatically swapped at the control panel.

Key features:

- Dual automatic thread-break systems
- High speed (750 spm chenille/nine-color embroidery)
- Graphical full-color LCD control panel
- Supports Tajima binary data format (TBF) for improved design management
- Design data input via USB, flash or LAN.

Buyer's note: This machine is for decorators who want to produce creative chenille and multimedia designs without investing in a chenille-only machine.

User review: Billy Spencer, owner of Koalaty Embroidery Inc. in Phoenix, started his business eight years ago, and bought his Mixed Chenille Embroidery Machine from Hirsch two years later. "We use it every day," he says. "I bought it for a specific contract job, but now we use it mostly for varsity jacket patches." When he was first trained on the machine, he says the chenille aspect involved the sharpest learning curve. "But overall," he says, "it functions just like other embroidery machines. The embroidery and chenille parts work pretty seamlessly."

SPECIALTY MACHINES/ ATTACHMENTS

GCC Expert 24 vinyl cutter

Imprintables Warehouse (asi/58475), Masontown, PA; (800) 347-0068; www.imprintables.com

Cost: \$550

What it is: The Expert 24 is a budget-friendly vinyl cutter that cuts at speeds up to 15.7" per second for sign makers and apparel decorators. It can

be used for creating letters, numbers and shapes out of heat-applied graphics products for decorating apparel, or cutting signage materials to make decals, bumper stickers and more. It's compatible with GreatCut Software and CadworxLive.com.

What's new:

- Cutoff tool allows for precise, straight cutting after job is finished
- Hosts dual-point connectivity for USB and serial ports
- Uses only 65.6 watts of power during use.

Key features:

- Comes in a 24" width with up to 250 grams of downforce and 3m tracking
- Cuts any standard vinyl or film for apparel decoration or signage.

Buyer's note: The Expert 24 is ideal for startup decorated apparel shops or craft hobbyists.

DECOR Automatic Rhinestone Setter

MESA Distributors Inc. (asi/16004), Fort Worth, TX; (800) 330-3867; www.mesamachines.com

Cost: Contact manufacturer for price.

What it is: The DECOR Automatic Rhinestone Machine sets rhinestone designs to transfer paper at speeds up to 170 stones per minute. It's available in two-, four- and six-color models.

What's new: Requires no air compressor; built-in ultra-quiet vacuum pump provides all air requirements.

Key features:

- Two-color model design area: 12.5" by 12.5"; four- and six-color models design area: 15.75" by 15.75"
- Large color touchscreen

control panel with 6.4" display

- Transfer designs using SD memory cards
- LAN port for design transfer via FTP
- Dual sensors help prevent missed, skipped or flipped stones
- On-board memory holds up to 1,000 designs.

Buyer's note: The DECOR line of automatic rhinestone setting machines allows any shop to offer custom design transfers or rhinestone apparel.

DECOS Automatic Spangle Machine

MESA Distributors Inc. (asi/16004), Fort Worth, TX; (800) 330-3867;

www.mesamachines.com

Cost: Contact manufacturer for price.

What it is: The DECOS Automatic Spangle Machine uses a die punch system to punch spangles from a roll of tape. It's available in four- and six-color models, and sets up to 1,000 100% lead-free spangles per minute.

What's new: Requires no air compressor; built-in ultra-quiet vacuum pump provides all air requirements.

Key features:

- Four-color model design area: 16" by 16"; six-color model design area: 17" by 20"
- Four-color model features removable table
- Large color touchscreen control panel
- Transfer designs using standard SD memory cards
- LAN port for design transfer via FTP
- On-board memory holds up to 1,000 designs.

Buyer's note: The DECOS line of automatic spangle-setting machines allows any shop to offer custom design trans-



Roland VS-300i Inkjet Printer/Cutter (circle 122 on Free Info Card)

fers or custom bling apparel. Spangles also offer a lead-free alternative to rhinestones.

Roland VersaStudio BN-20 Desktop Printer/Cutter

Roland DGA Corp. (asi/18201), Irvine, CA; (800) 542-2307; www.rolanddga.com

Cost: \$8,495 (MSRP)

What it is: The VersaStudio BN-20 is a compact, affordable 20" desktop printer with integrated contour cutting. It offers users a choice of four different ink configurations, including metallic and white options.

Key features:

- Integrated printing and cutting in a 20" desktop inkjet
- Eco-Sol MAX ink in CMYK, CMYK+Mt (Metallic Silver) or CMYK+W (White)
- Supports Windows 7, Vista and XP
- Supports popular Windows design software including CorelDRAW and Adobe Illustrator
- Comes with bundled VersaWorks RIP software, R-Works design software, Windows driver.

Buyer's note: Compact, affordable and versatile, this desktop

printer/cutter is a great choice for entry-level shops that want to produce everything from stunning heat-transfer T-shirts to signs, labels and decals, quickly, easily and cost-effectively. The BN-20 is also ideal for medium-sized and larger shops that want to supplement their existing equipment and capabilities in order to handle shorter runs.

Roland VS-300i Inkjet Printer/Cutter

Stahls' Equipment (asi/88984), St. Clair Shores, MI; (724) 963-6115;

www.stahlsequipment.com

What it is: The Roland VS-300i is a 30" inkjet printer/cutter.

Cost: \$16,495 (MSRP); contact vendor for current pricing and specials.

What's new:

- Redesigned eight-channel piezo inkjet print head and variable droplet size
- Eco-Sol MAX 2 inks for smooth gradations
- Automated ink circulation system reduces waste.

Key features:

- Maximum print resolution is 1,440 dpi

- Maximum cutting speed is 11.8 ips (300 mm/s)
- Gold plating reduces static electricity
- Compatible with Adobe Illustrator and CorelDRAW
- USB interface.

Buyer's note: The VS-300i is perfect for decorating garments, as well as stickers, window decals and bumper stickers with metallic inks.

User review: "In a day and a half, we were up and running with our new VS-300i," says Veronica Williams, partner at Fraser, MI-based Marvelous Promotions (asi/263380). "There was a small learning curve when we started with new materials, but Stahls' continues to be hands-on and always helps us when needed." Marvelous Promotions offers in-house embroidery, screen printing, digitizing, vinyl and promotional products. "We'd like to see a little more documentation from Stahls' on how best to use this Roland machine for different products and cut forces," she adds. "But overall, they've been great to work with."

SARA LAVENDUSKI is an assistant editor. Contact: slavenduski@asicentral.com.

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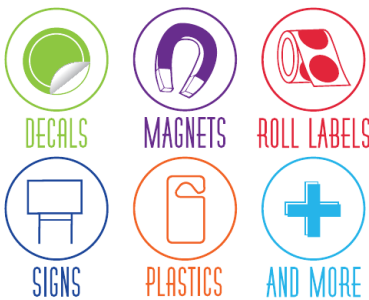
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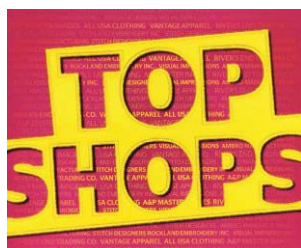
Stitches February 2015, Vol. 29, No. 2 (ISSN 099-5893) (USPS 2387) is published monthly, except bi-monthly in May and September/October, by Advertising Specialty Institute, 4800 Street Road, Trevoise, PA 19053. Periodical postage paid at Langhorne, PA and at additional mailing offices. Subscription rates: free and controlled circulation to qualified subscribers. Non-qualified persons may subscribe at the following rates: USA, 1 year, \$35, 2 years, \$69; Canada, 1 year, \$39; Outside USA and Canada, 1 year, \$59 (\$95 airmail delivery). POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Stitches, PO Box 2197 Skokie, IL 60076.

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COMING NEXT ISSUE

What's coming up in March/April Stitches

by Nicole Rollender



Stitches Top Shops

For the second year in a row, we award four \$500,000-plus decorators our Top Shop Awards. These are the best of the best, the shops to emulate and watch. We go inside these firms to see what makes them super-profitable.



School Days

Stitches takes an inside look at how the Rhode Island School of Design and other institutions are incorporating embroidery into their fashion design and textile programs.

Plus ...

- See what out-there items Phil Stitch finds for inquiring decorators.
- Social media slump? An expert shows you how to get back on track.

And much, much more!

needle watch



Needle Patrol

Our friend Slick (an embroidery machine needle) has hidden himself somewhere in this issue. He might be in an editorial photo, graphic or text – he's not in an advertisement. If you find the needle, send us a note that says, "I found the February needle on page XX," along with your name, company, address and phone number (or email address) so we can contact you if you're the winner. Mail or fax it to us at Stitches, Attn: Needle Patrol, 4800 Street Rd., Trevoise, PA 19053; fax: (215) 953-3107. Also, tell us a little about your business. No phone calls please; you must respond in writing. Hurry! Responses for the February needle are due by February 27, 2015. From the correct responses, we'll randomly select one winner who'll receive a \$100 gift certificate, courtesy of Madeira USA, Laconia, NH. Please submit only one entry per drawing. We'll announce the winner in the May issue.



Slick Likes the Power List

In the December issue, Slick hid on page 58 in the "The Power Poll" section, in a computer monitor image. Jean Bernier of Omro, WI-based Knottypine Designs was chosen at random from a grand total of 20 responses. As this issue's winner, Jean will receive Madeira USA's gift certificate. Keep your eyes peeled for the industry's favorite game of hide and seek!

ASK AN EXPERT

By Ed Balady

LOOKING FORWARD

In the next issue, you'll learn what new social media activities you need to do in 2015 to connect with clients and prospects.

Q *I'm interested in purchasing an embroidery laser. I understand that lasers come with different degrees of power. How can I determine which wattage I should buy?*

While the wattage of your laser is the primary determinant of the laser's power, there are other factors, such as the speed the laser is being run at and what the laser's "spot" is.

The laser spot is determined by how far the laser beam has to travel from the point of origin to the surface it is cutting. The distance is determined by the type of laser and the technology used to build the machine.

Two commonly used technologies are fiber optics and mirrors. With fiber optics, the beam travels down a tube. With mirrors, the beam is bounced from mirror to mirror until it reaches its destination.

The farther the beam has to travel, the weaker it becomes. This is why a 25-watt laser with a 0.2mm spot will have greater cutting power than a 60-watt tube with a spot of 0.6mm.

Fiber optics allows for a more direct route and therefore does a better job of maintaining the laser's strength. Each time the beam bounces from one mirror to the next, it weakens it, so mirrors are less effective. They also require more frequent cleaning, creating the need for more maintenance.

The speed of the laser also affects the power. If you're cutting a dense material that requires more power, one way to increase it is to slow it down.

This gives the laser more time to cut through the material. Of course, if you slow the laser down too much, it impacts productivity, so your goal is to find the happy medium between sufficient power to do the job and maintaining a productive speed.

To determine how much laser power you need, the first question is, what do you want to cut? If you'll be using mostly jersey, fleece, felt and polyester twill, you won't need as powerful a laser as if you want to cut a lot of canvas and leather or etch on metal and wood.

There are three classes of lasers used in the decorated apparel industry. As the size of the machine increases so should the laser power. In the single-head embroidery laser class, there are two types of machines. One is an add-on integrated laser that can be attached to any make or model of embroidery machine.

The second type of single-head embroidery laser comes as an all-in-one unit so it can be used only with that brand of machine. The laser is built into the single-head embroidery machine, and it can't be detached and re-attached to another machine as the above model can do. In this class, laser power starts at 10 watts and goes up as high as 50 watts.

A 10-watt laser will handle the most popular fabrics such

as knits and lace. A 25-watt laser gives you the power to cut tackle twill and felt. At 30 watts, you also could cut canvas and synthetic leather, and at 50 watts you can handle thicker fabrics such as plush velvet and home furnishing materials with tighter weaves. You can also etch metal, wood and plastics.

The next category of laser is standalone. This is an independent machine that's not attached to an embroidery machine. The embroidery hoop must be removed from the machine and brought over to the standalone. This is more labor intensive than the integrated embroidery lasers, but depending on the type of work and its flow, it can be the better choice.

The third category is laser bridge machines. These are the Cadillacs of embroidery lasers, with the most versatility, speed and flexibility. A bridge is built over a multi-head embroidery machine that the laser head travels up and down to reach each embroidery head.

The laser power of standalones and laser-bridge machines are similar in what's offered. Technically, these two classes can have power ranging from 10 watts to 400 watts, but the common usage ranges between 50 and 200 watts.

The greater the wattage, the higher the price, so this also is a consideration when choosing

laser power. Once you get above 50 watts, you increase the range of materials that can be cut and the cutting speed. In addition, there's a greater ability to cut through multiple layers.

With standalones and laser bridge machines, another choice that affects the quality or cleanness of the cut and the size of the cutting field is the scan head, which come in 2-D and 3-D. In short, a 2-D scan head will give you a cutting area of approximately 12 inches square while a 3-D scan head can go up to 32 inches.

Before shopping for a laser, research what you can do and which products you want to offer. If you want to stick to basic appliqué on apparel, a laser between 10 and 50 watts will do. If you want the ability to cut appliqué faster or expand into promotional products made of metal and wood, a higher power is necessary.

ED BALADY is president of BITO USA, the exclusive U.S. distributor of Proel TSI embroidery and standalone laser equipment. He has been involved in the embroidery industry for 30 years. He is based in Deer Park, NY. Contact: (866) 248-6872 or ebalady@bitousa.com.

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