



**2009
August**

Having a Domestic

I have just returned from India and it has changed my way of thinking. As a middle aged middle class male who has found life relatively smooth seeing contrast within the sub-continent has had a profound effect on the way I see life. The startling poverty of people who live by the roadside put our credit crunch troubles into perspective. What was extraordinary in what is their life is the fact that the roadside dwellers were often in family groups cooking together, sleeping, bathing, working, talking and laughing together. They managed their environment living off what the rest of the population threw away. No waste in these groups; neither was there any obvious drugs or alcohol. Their fortitude and innovation is a lesson to us all.

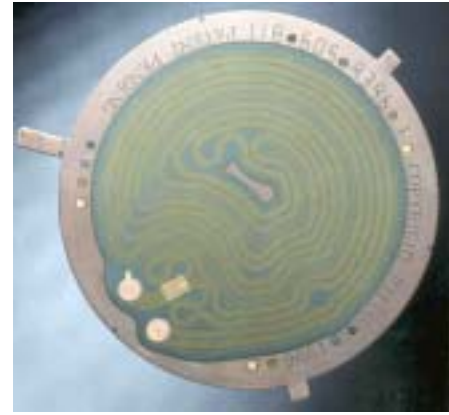
So why this discourse about something outside our life experience and apparently nothing to do with screen printing? I passed these communities as I travelled between businesses where the contrast was absolute but the basic principles remained. The facilities I was visiting were probably the most sophisticated graphics screen printing organisations I have seen. Fully air-conditioned and clean room environments with state of the art equipment from Europe, US and Japan. Inks and chemistry from Europe and Japan. The management team were highly educated several having doctorates. Led by a CEO who was gutted if his company didn't win the "Best Place to Work" competition for manufacturing companies.

The contrast between the street community and the marbled head office environment was extreme but the similarity was the teamwork, work ethic and the will to succeed in one case and survive in the other. People who have not worked in such environments feel that their success is all about cheap labour. That may have been the case in the past and still is in some areas but now it is about best practice, the right equipment and effective management. 90% of production stays in a country that has been relatively untouched by the credit crunch and is growing at a rate that we in the west can only dream of. Whereas Brussels and Westminster appear to want to throttle manufacturing but boost service industries and the financial sector, on the sub-continent there are tax free zones for manufacturing and light touch bureaucracy. Based on what I see whilst travelling the world, what chance is there for our economy? Quite simply we are stuffed; our government is continuing an unsustainable level of public spending and borrowing and there is a wild notion in the general public that we deserve success and security of employment. Sadly the situation will have to get a lot worse before our society realises that if it wants to maintain its standard of living we will have to create wealth by making products that people want to buy at a price they are willing to pay. There is no alternative.

So what is all this to do about screen printing domestic products. Screen printing exemplifies the changes that have happened to the UK and European economy. Screen printing was dominant in its sector, practitioners became complacent, manufacturers lost their innovative spark and digital printing strolled in and very nearly cleaned up. Screen printing hasn't and it won't disappear because there is space for every process in graphics and mass imaging technology markets into the foreseeable future. In the domestic environment screen printing is everywhere.

When you are making your cuppa and you notice the kettle is boiling faster nowadays, is it because the electricity is more powerful? Is the water different? Have you lost your sense of time? Look inside the kettle, just water and nothing else. It must be microwaves; no it is a hidden screen printed kettle element that is the flat bottom of the kettle. Clever technology where a resistive ink is printed onto a ceramic insulated stainless steel. Printed conductive tracks provide the electrical supply and the whole circuit is covered by a protective glaze. The element will heat up very quickly and reach temperatures of 250 to 300oC providing instant energy to heat the water. No longer are the bulky heating coils filling the kettle bottom. The screen printed elements are more efficient and easy to manufacture. This technology can be used in other industrial heating applications where the printed thick film technology is ideally suited. One of the main suppliers of the materials used in the manufacture of these elements is ElectroScience Limited they can provide the complete package and advise you on your application.

**ELEMENT PRINTED WITH
ESL MATERIALS**



We know that a buying decision in a retail environment is made in the last 7 seconds. That means that the buyer is heavily influenced by how a product looks, that includes its brand. Just watch how people look at washing machines, occasionally they open them to look inside but generally it is the control panel; it is the attractive face of the machine. Smooth curves clear lettering that communicates the flexibility of the machine. That lettering and branding must withstand domestic cleaners and abrasive cloths. Only screen printing either on the surface or in the form of in-mould decoration with provide the visual quality and product resistance required in this application. There are times when its sister process pad printing will be needed for extreme contours. For sophisticated images on contoured surfaces it is a great help to have servo controlled machines that can maintain the quality of print required. The cost of reclaiming badly printed moulding is considerable. Even worse is a badly printed washing machine being displayed in the showroom and ruining that 7 second purchasing decision.

KENT PAD PRINTER FROM TAMPO LTD



In previous issues we have discussed all the screen printed textiles that decorate the house and clothe its occupants. Those very expensive silk scarves that adorn the heads of well heeled horse lovers come from a wonderful screen printing shop in the Cotswolds. Despite the demise of companies such as Wedgwood there are dozens of small potteries and decorating shops in Stoke on Trent using beautifully screen printed



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waterslide transfers to adorn their ware. As large enterprises belonging to multi-nationals are leaving our shores faster than the tide retreating in Morecombe Bay, it is these small innovative companies that will help create the wealth we need to survive in the future. High quality exclusive designs that sell at a premium.

Have you noticed if you go into a high street art gallery you see that the limited edition prints are numbered as usual 20/350 or 10/250 etc the process is often "Giclee;" that is ink jet printing to you and me. If you ask the sales person if they have any screen printed work you will hear the classic mechanics intake of breath before they tell you the likely cost. "Oh, screen printing, that is very expensive sir. We can't get that any more." What they mean is they have a mate with a digital printer who can knock them out as required. Have you seen the price of their "Limited edition" prints? Now I am sure there will be letters to the editor by Guild Members who print and sell genuine digitally printed limited editions. How much better to have an alternative analogue process (screen printing) where the stencils and origination are destroyed after the one and only limited edition print run. Talk to prism or e-mail us and we will put you in touch with printers who can produce wonderful quality screen printed work. Better still offer the service yourself.