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# Sign Builder

ILLUSTRATED



# Triforce

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## The Arrival of Twelve-color Printing

**Personal modifications to an existing inkjet provides one solution for high-definition printing.**

**W**hile speaking to Howard de Cesare of Fossil Industries, Inc. (FossilGraphics.com), in Deer Park, New York, I sensed that big things are happening for his sign company. (His brother Mark also serves as manager of the company.) Fossil manufactures both interior and exterior digital high-pressure laminate (dHPL) signs and murals. "Our durable signs and murals are primarily used by parks, museums, theme parks, zoos, aquariums, and restaurants," says de Cesare. "We offer art production and design services, as well as a variety of mounting hardware."

Fossil Industries currently has twenty-five employees working out of two buildings in Deer Park. Sales, marketing, art production, and digital printing are based in one building, while the other is dedicated to manufacturing. Its manufacturing facility contains a high-pressure laminate press and two laser-guided CNC routers (in addition to an inventory of pedestals and other mounting hardware).

According to de Cesare, Fossil's dHPL graphics aren't laminates in the traditional

sense—they're true composite panels, which are made using extreme heat and pressure. The graphics are made like a Formica® laminate (but are available in sizes up to one-inch-thick).

In the pressing process, they add UV and anti-graffiti layers and use a special binding agent that holds up to changing weather. In essence, Fossil took an existing technology and added the digital component, using inkjet technology. Fossil's panels are routed, drilled, and profiled, because there is no seal to compromise. Thicker grades are self-supporting and are often fitted with threaded inserts for mounting without any visible hardware or a frame.

If you've visited a state park recently, you've probably seen an interpretative sign made by Fossil. For these jobs, the company works in conjunction with designers, fabricators, and end-users to produce both exterior and interior graphics. They've produced interpretive signs for several state park systems throughout the country, including: Niagara Falls, Yosemite Visitors Center, and the Smithsonian National Zoo. They also have exclusive contracts with state parks systems in Alaska, Arizona,

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Colorado, Minnesota, Missouri, and New York. (Other distinct projects include Atlantis Marine World, the Brooklyn Children's Museum, and the City of Chicago Prairie Avenue Historic District. They've also produced the graphics—a quartet of murals up to 12-by-40 feet—for the new "Toy Story Mania" ride at Disney Hollywood Studios in Florida.)

Fossil is also seeing a spike in requests for interior work. "In the past, our primary markets were mostly outdoors, of-mouth referrals among designers, where durability and UV-resistance are key," says de Cesare. "Because our market is expanding, we've lately been doing increasing interior print projects for museums and restaurants."

Interior projects include the 4,000-square foot graphic floor for ESPN's SportsCenter and a series of custom graphic Martin guitars. For Disney, Fossil produced the interior signage for its fleet of cruise ships. The client chose Fossil not only for the quality of the printing, but because the laminates are highly resistant to salt and sun. (*Note:* Fossil doesn't work on the actual installations for its clients but instead produces support materials, such as pedestals, supports, and brackets.)

In addition to their five-year contract with the state of Alaska (where they'll be working on signs for the Alaskan highway and parks systems), Fossil has also produced all the signage for the National Park Service headquarters in Harper's Ferry in West Virginia. Their work has been increasing through word-of-mouth referrals among designers.

All of Fossil's projects and clients are interesting, but some of them are extraordinary—especially because they're located in exotic, remote conditions. The National Geographic Society contracted them to produce an interpretative signage program in Peru. The signs had to be erected along the Amazon River, so they were transported by canoe in moist conditions. Fossil employees had to pack the thirteen panels in small boxes (rather than crates) for easy handling.



On the other side of the world, Fossil's graphics also appear in Russia. Designed for the Ministry of Environment Protection & Natural Resources of Georgia, forty-four Fossil panels are now displayed in Kolkheti National Park & Kolkheti Nature Preserve.

And how they create these extraordinary projects boils down to one ingenious invention: twelve-color printing. They're the first company to create this process, which is now the only type of printing they do.

De Cesare and his brother got the idea from Benjamin Moore paints, realizing that the company produces their own

colors from twelve. They turned to inkjet printing, since there were certain colors they just couldn't get, so they spent the last six years tearing apart basic printers and making their own inks. The result: a homemade, state-of-the-art printer with twelve printheads.

The De Cesares wrote the software to allow the printheads to work together, since their old software only worked for an eight-color process. "Twelve-color high-definition printing creates graphics that are clearly better," says de Cesare. "This revolutionary new printing process delivers superior clarity, more intense colors, bright whites, solid blacks, and a

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vastly expanded color gamut. It's like comparing HDTV to regular TV."

Additional benefits of their twelve-color HD printing includes proprietary inks that use 50 percent more pigment than conventional inks, advanced RIP software that reduces dot patterns by 70 percent, and the elimination of banding and streaking.

With the introduction of twelve-color high-definition printing, who knows what's in store for this innovative company. More exotic, international projects? Earthy, park-based interpretive signs in the U.S.? From what we could gather, the answer should be intriguing. ☐