

Service Bureaus and Other Digital Textile Printing Printing Alternatives

By M. Kathleen Colussy & Steve Greenberg

Reprinted with permission from their book *Rendering Fashion Fabric & Prints with Adobe® Photoshop®*

Where to Turn for Help When You Can't Afford a Textile Printer Just Yet Your Next-Best Friend Could Just be Your Local Service Bureau

Naturally, when we began our section on digital textile printing alternatives, it soon became apparent we had to include interviews from the folks at First2Print and Design Works of New York City.

These two companies, under one umbrella of ownership, provide a unique blend of creative design and technical skill that makes them leading resources for textile design today. We caught up with one of the principals, owner and president, Neil Breslau, for his insights into "closing the loop on digital textile design challenges."



Since 1989, Design Works International has been providing design services to customers, producing anything from home furnishings to apparel. Design Works and First2Print provide a wide array of services through the product development process and closing the loop on the production cycle. According to Neil Breslau, "we currently deal with over 225 customers' designers. Each one is different, so it is important we have a feel for the way they think and the way they work. We create the art to fit the product. Supplying the resources, whether computerized or hand painting techniques to give them solutions they are looking for. Our aim is to create something that shows the ultimate customer what he's going to get from the finished article. Using digital technology and a variety of off-the-shelf and proprietary software, the design team create and render fabric designs in series of colorways and samples matched to fit their client's needs.

The speed of getting to market is particularly important for customers in the fashion business. Traditionally it takes from eight to ten weeks, however now with the design team approach we can save them something like four to six weeks! There is tremendous saving from cutting screens and printing minimum lengths of textiles. The bottom line—we save our customers valuable time and money!" We found that at Design Works there is a unique blend of creativity, artistry, and professionalism making extensive use of the most modern digital electronic systems and devices to take any company from concept to consumer with quality assurance.



Forging New Frontiers for Many Clients

Meet: *Danielle Locastro of First2Print*



It doesn't take long to discover that the highly successful company of Design Works-First2 Print employs another secret weapon besides the latest technology. This secret weapon we are referring to comes in the form of a petite powerhouse by the name of Danielle (Dani) Locastro. While my co-author Steve has known Dani professionally for years, I personally first met Dani when she was a scheduled speaker for a CADEXPO conference in New York City. Perhaps the most accurate description of Dani's speech was that she spoke with the vision of a prophet and the zeal of an evangelist, but with the humility of an educator. It was clear to all that Dani's passion was to inform, to educate, and to serve anyone wanting to know more about digital fabric designing and printing!

Systematically, Dani walked the audience through the nuances of how to navigate the new frontier of digital textile printing and reproduction issues. At the same time she offered simple and profound solutions to what she refers to as "streamlining the process" and "closing the loop in the production process."

The Textile Design World according to Dani!

Here is an encapsulated summary, “digital gospel” according to Dani. “Seeking a textile service bureau is not about contracted production; it is about on-going mutually benefiting relationships.” According to Dani, “it is all about trust and good communication-asking question, lots of questions-by both parties as well as listening will result in sensibly and creatively responding to project as well as challenges!” Dani concedes, you have to begin with questions, in order to determine end results. It is important to be sure you and the client are both speaking the same language. Textile needs vary greatly from graphic needs. Dani provided us with a list of several types of client needs such as:

1. Sampling and design proof
2. Pre-line or sales samples
3. Showroom and marketing samples
4. One-of-a-kind products
5. Costumes
6. Photo shoot materials
7. Outdoor sign and banners—soft signage
8. Backdrops
9. Trade show signage and products
10. Short-run apparel
11. Interior design applications
12. Replacing “strike-offs”



Dani’s list of the numerous other variables you will need to consider when seeking a textile printing service bureau should be familiar. It is similar to our earlier list of challenges that face this new industry as a whole. It includes very specific issues that need to be addressed on a more personal basis between a service bureau and a client.

1. Substrate-related issues
2. Pretreatment
3. Dyes vs. inks vs. medium used
4. Color issues—color gamut and color matching
5. Color saturation
6. Color fixation—reducing bleeding
7. Including postprinting finishing aesthetic and performance issues
8. Quantities
9. Quality
10. Size
11. Budget
12. Timeline—speed

