Personally styled living spaces

Room-enhancing printed shower walls, kitchen splashbacks and wall coverings.

PlateArt GmbH, Bad Karlshafen, Germany. Custom wall coverings rather than standard wallpaper. Straightforward, cost-effective bathroom makeovers. Kitchen splashbacks with personalised motifs. Two swissQprint large format printers have helped create a new feel to living in 50,000 German households.

“People enjoy bringing a personal style to their living spaces.” This consumer need forms the basis of the business model at PlateArt GmbH. Founder and CEO Daniel Hähner got the spark for his idea years ago while collaborating with a company active in wallpaper design. He pushed the envelope of the tried-and-tested concept by thinking of places where wallpaper does not work, namely in rooms subject to moisture and in outside areas. Then he imagined how those might look when clad in smooth, decorative wall coverings free from grout seams.

Start of a success story

Daniel Hähner began the success story in 2016, with the first design for a shower wall. Not long afterwards, he founded PlateArt as a marketing company and repurposed his existing business: Print-it, originally a traditional print shop and agency for printed products, is now the production company. Its operations centre on two swissQprint flatbed printers, with the workflow built around them.

Wall coverings as a lifestyle product

The PlateArt vision is to help people beautify their living spaces. Frank Handras, responsible for Sales & Marketing, says: “We specialize in wall coverings and seek to offer the best possible quality on the market.” The main sales channel is the online shop, where customers configure their shower walls, kitchen splashbacks and wall coverings according to preferences. They can seek advice by telephone if necessary, or visit in person:

The premises include a 120 square metre bungalow that serves as a showroom. “Women tend to focus on design, men are more interested in technical aspects and assembly,” observes Frank Handras. 60 percent of customers are DIY enthusiasts. The rest are businesses – bathroom and plumbing companies, kitchen design studios, hotels and others – that use the panels in their design concepts.

Tailor-made total package

PlateArt manufactures to measure. Before printing, a CNC cutter trims boards to the size ordered. “We don’t really have standard sizes,” says Frank Handras. Customers can choose from a wide selection of off-the-shelf designs, or send PlateArt their own personal motif. For assembling the end product, PlateArt supplies the requisite accessories: aluminium profiles, mounting adhesive and more. Extras include a cleaner with orange oil for the best possible care. Frank Handras says with a smile: “The cleaner makes things spotless, keeps the print work in shape and leaves a pleasant, fresh scent of oranges and lemons.”

Environmental protection is a personal concern

The cleaner comes in bottles made from ‘ocean plastic’, material that has been fished from the sea and recycled. The robust packaging used for product shipment is completely plastic-free, made from paperboard and wood. “As a premium manufacturer, we have taken to heart the cause of environmental protection,” says Frank Handras. For him it is also a personal concern. “We keep a regular look-out for new materials that are environmentally friendly and recyclable.”

Greenguard Gold certification of is an important aspect. PlateArt manufactures not only for private households but also hospitals, kindergartens, nursing homes, kitchens and restaurants – all areas where harmful emissions must be kept to a minimum.

Creative applications

The PlateArt configurator offers a huge selection of motifs: maritime themes, mountain landscapes, architectural impressions, stone looks, plant motifs, ornamental and single-colour designs. “There is currently great demand for the gold and gloss effects that we figured how to do on our Nyala,” says Daniel Hähner. “We constantly monitor trends and expand our range of designs.” Helping to turn out those designs is the versatile configuration of the two printers, which are equipped with effect varnish as well as light colours that help to produce smooth gradients.

Gracing 50,000 households

Customers for their part are doing exciting things. As at the end of 2021, PlateArt has helped create a new feel to living in 50,000 German households. The customer gallery on the company website shows some examples. Daniel Hähner tells of a private customer whose swimming pool makes you feel like you are in the Caribbean. Hähner himself has revamped an old wall in his garden using stone-look panels. Business customers likewise go for PlateArt products: Sole-Therme Bad in Harzburg has created the illusion of a waterfall setting around one of its spa pools, for example. A complete installation usually consists of multiple panels butted flush together for seamlessly covering large expanses of wall.

Proven, tested, consistent

PlateArt prints either onto 3 mm aluminium composite panels with various surface finishes, or onto rigid foam board. In both cases the maximum size is 3×1.5 metres. PlateArt provides a five-year manufacturer's warranty on the print work. “We extensively tested resistance to scratching and cleaning, some of that in the laboratory,” explains Daniel Hähner. In terms of colour reproduction, he appreciates being able to print orders in parallel on the Impala and Nyala. “Consistency across machines is also guaranteed over the long haul, without constant calibration.” Colour deviations were a big problem in the early days, when PlateArt outsourced its printing.

Making customers happy

Colour consistency aside, Daniel Hähner also praises the swissQprint machines' reliability. Production is assured even through 10 to 12-hour shifts, maintenance downtimes are foreseeable. “It's both a joy and a relief.” Interaction with swissQprint is also a pleasure. On first visiting swissQprint Germany he already sensed: “Here is a company with the same philosophy as ours: making customers happy.”

Company	PlateArt GmbH, Bad Karlshafen, Germany
Website	www.plateart.de
Segment	Interior decoration
Established	Print-it in 2012 / PlateArt in in 2016
Employees	14 (Print-it: 9 / PlateArt: 5)
Printers	Nyala 3 & Impala 3
References	Private customers: bathrooms, showers, kitchens, living spaces Health sector (clinics): décor for wet areas Public and commercial construction clients: bathroom areas in student halls, sports centres, fitness studios Hotels/hostels: bathrooms, expansive design walls in reception areas and restaurants Commercial: subcontracts from bathroom and plumbing businesses, tilers and kitchen design studios with their own installation service