



Photography: TVPAV.com

THE BIG PICTURE

Imagine wallpaper that can talk back to you on a smartphone... that lets you move superheroes and cartoon characters around at will, or simply brings you a beach or a cityscape to your living room on a grand scale. It isn't fantasy and it is happening very soon

For a company targeting a global market with bespoke, personalised products, Wallsauce isn't exactly a hive of activity – at least not in any way you would notice.

But while a handful of people work away quietly in their rural Ribchester workplace, powerful computer systems are processing orders from all over the country, setting in motion specialist print companies and turning customers' visions into reality in a way that would have seemed impossible just a few years ago – and all to make wallpaper.

Although, to be fair, 'wallpaper' is rather an understatement for the remarkable products

this company is producing, from entire wall-sized murals to – very soon – life-size superheroes and computer game landscapes,

“ ANYONE CAN GO ONLINE, CHOOSE AN IMAGE – OR EVEN SEND ONE OF THEIR OWN... CHOOSE A BASE MATERIAL, GET A PRICE, PLACE AN ORDER AND HAVE IT PRINTED ”

all with a whole range of personalised options and even plans for smartphone interactive scenes and characters.

As co-founders Andy Gerraty, Tony Fairhurst and Colin Watson point out, the real USP

of Wallsauce is the level of automation that makes the process quicker and more competitively priced than anything else on the market. This means anyone can go online, choose an image – or even send one of their own – personalise it to their own wishes, add dimensions, choose a base material, get a price, place an order and have it printed without any human intervention at any stage.

Andy explained: “That is already done with small products like personalised greeting cards, and there are already companies doing that, but we are pretty much unique in producing large format products from a completely automated platform, and that makes us very cost competitive.”

Colin added: “The site has been live for about three months but we spent a lot of time before then developing the proposition and gaining copyright licences on some major entertainment and gaming brands and now have exclusive rights in the UK and Ireland to use their images on large format products. At the moment, the photographic and art murals form the bulk of our work, both to householders and businesses, but very soon the licensed material will be going live alongside it.”

“ AUGMENTED REALITY WILL GIVE CUSTOMERS AN APP FOR A SMARTPHONE OR TABLET THAT CAN BRING CHARACTERS OR FEATURES ON A MURAL TO LIFE ”

With those licences covering big name movie and comic book brands such as Star Trek, The Hobbit, Batman and Superman and computer games like Bin Weevils and Movie Star Planet, Tony said the next step was to source the best materials not only for wallpaper and outdoor murals but also peel-off products that enable customers to add graphics and life-size characters to any of the backgrounds or plain walls. If they choose, they can even have a complete peel-off mural to move from room to room or another location.

“We went for the highest spec we could with everything,” he added, “For example, our peel-off products can be moved many times without leaving a mark on surfaces like emulsion paint – even after they have been in place for a year.”

One of the latest innovations soon to make use of this moveability is an ‘Avatar-Grabber’ which will allow gamers to add their own avatars to game or virtual reality murals, then move them around the scenes as often as they please.

Youngsters' bedrooms will



be an obvious target for many of the characters and games but a wider repertoire including stock photo scenes, a fine art catalogue, a designer art collection – and of course the option for customers to send their own images – has already given Wallsauce a strong customer base in many living rooms as well as hotels and restaurants, offices and even theme parks.

As if the company has not pushed the technological boundaries far enough already, the next innovation is set to take things to another level altogether. It's called Augmented Reality and it will give customers an app for a smartphone or tablet that can bring characters or features on a mural to life with interactive features in sound and vision via the device.

It all puts a whole new perspective on the saying ‘off the wall.’ ■



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