

# Digital printing at the service of the artist

**"La Fresque du Chat" (Cat Fresco) by Philippe Geluck, which was inaugurated in September 2014 in the La Chasse district in Etterbeek, was produced by Promo Signs. The artistic creativity behind this 140-metre long work of art has been further enhanced by the high-quality of its digital printing.**



**Vincent Fournil, Production Manager, and Mika, Digital Department Manager at Promo Signs**



**The adhesive films had to be applied to the panels on-site in order to ensure a seamless and hole-free visual.**

Signs, displays, lettering... just some of the classics for companies offering large format digital printing solutions. Going beyond applications for advertisers and business professionals, digital printing could also find itself operating in the cultural domain by placing itself at the service of art and artists. The La Chasse district in Etterbeek is a beautiful example of this. Since the end of September 2014, a 140m-long fresco has been adorning 24 sections of wall in the Casernes district, featuring Philippe Geluck's Le Chat. "La Fresque du Chat" was thought up by Atrium Brussels, the regional agency of commerce, in collaboration with the municipality of Etterbeek.

The aim: to increase the attractiveness of the La Chasse district for passers-by, customers of businesses and tourists. Following a call for tenders, PromoSigns was the company entrusted with the implementation of this project in collaboration with Philippe Geluck's team of graphic designers. Located in Wauthier-Braine, Promo Signs is a graphic communication company, which primarily produces printed visual material for the property, event and cultural sectors. Covering the whole of the Benelux region, PromoSigns has three teams that take care of everything, from location scouting to the placement of signs. Their ability to offer the best possible quality at low prices for a high degree of customer satisfaction is perhaps what tipped the balance in their favour. PromoSigns, which acquired two Mutoh ValueJet 1638X printers in November 2013, explains that its ability to offer such competitive prices is in part down to savings made on UMS inks (Universal Mild Solvent – Mutoh mild solvent ink). "Our level of productivity is high enough for us to justify the use of 1 litre bottles of ink rather than 440ml ink cartridges", explained Vincent Fournil, Production Manager.

## Very challenging

It was very challenging", said Vincent Fournil and Michaël Swalens, manager of the digital department and known in the field as Mika, on the subject of the creation of La Fresque du Chat. "The initial challenge was staying within the budget, however mounting the composite aluminium panels also proved rather difficult", they explained. "The panels needed to be mounted in such a way that the holes wouldn't be visible. We therefore fitted the screws flush with the surface to preserve the image. Once printed and laminated, the adhesive films were then placed onto the panels on-site, not in the workshop as is usually the case". This is a feat that the Promo Signs team is proud to have achieved, in spite of the rain, wind and dust. After a month and a half of preparation, the mounting team had three days to affix all of the panels ahead of the official inauguration on Saturday 27 September 2014. The result was outstanding, and according to the comments made by Philippe Geluck with regard to the work carried out: "the colours were vivid and the printing was of a very high quality. It was also remarkable from the point of view of the placement of the panels, as the old walls didn't exactly present an ideal surface profile. It's very elegant and everyone seems to be delighted with the results, whether they be the people commissioning the work or local residents. The team is young and dynamic. It's an absolute pleasure to work with people who understand what is being asked of them so well and who are able to implement it".

The fresco is composed of large panels in various sizes, as well as cut-out shapes. The company has been specialising in Print&Cut for almost ten years. Always humorous, the language of the Le Chat comic strips varies between French and Dutch. To ensure that they can be understood by everybody, each panel is accompanied by an A4 plexiglass reproduction in French/English or Dutch/English.



**Geluck's Le Chat: "I've always wanted to know what's behind this famous wall"**

As the duration of the exhibition is not yet known, Promo Signs selected the best possible materials in order to guarantee long-term stability whilst remaining within the budget. "We printed the Avery Dennison adhesive films here. These were then laminated and then applied on the B-bond panels" said Vincent Fournil.

**« Subconscious trust »**

Alongside its experience of more than 20 years, Promo Signs puts the quality of its work down to the materials it uses and its printing equipment. Founded in 1992 by Patrick van der Rest, for the last 15 years Promo Signs has been placing its trust in Mutoh and its reseller, Papyrus Viscom, which also supplies consumables and materials, and which is a key partner to the company. All of the panels and cut-outs making up the Le Chat fresco were printed



**The colouration of the cheeks, which was Mika's personal touch, added to provide depth, was approved by Philippe Geluck.**

using the ValueJet 1638X with UMS inks. "The Toucan printer broke, and, no doubt driven by a great deal of subconscious trust, I naturally turned to Didier Ryckaert from Papyrus to replace it. Having compared various manufacturers, we decided upon the purchase of two ValueJet 1638X printers,

which best met our criteria regarding quality and speed", explained Mika. In this way, Promo Signs was able to double its productivity and meet even tighter deadlines, all while maintaining a level of quality without a "banding" effect. "We gave them free rein to test the machine under their everyday working conditions. They actually produce items for artists, which must be absolutely perfect", said Didier Ryckaert from Papyrus. Alongside signs and advertising, the ValueJet printers, which have a printing width of 161.5 cm, are actually also designed

to print photographs. Equipped with two staggered print heads (1440 nozzles per print head), the ValueJet printers produce superior-quality printing at speeds of up to 36 m<sup>2</sup>/h at 720 x 720 dpi, but are also capable of reaching speeds of up to 94 m<sup>2</sup>/h.

**A race against time**

La Fresque du Chat is characterised by numerous tint areas. This meant that particular attention had to be paid to the reproduction of colours. The digital printing needed to be flawless and with no banding effect. "As time was short and in the interests of speed, I worked using 8 passes instead of 12. Some of the blue colours were very difficult to reproduce, so I had to decide upon a speed that offered the best compromise between quality and speed. We therefore ran at 15 m<sup>2</sup> per hour, which is very reasonable. When production levels allowed it, I also used the second ValueJet printer in order to gain some time", explained Mika.



**Fresco 'Le Chat' wants to brighten the La Chasse district in Etterbeek.**

"After that, we also had to factor in a certain amount of drying time, as some areas contained a relatively large amount of ink. This meant that we weren't able to laminate it straight away". Promo Signs possesses an additional infrared dryer for this very purpose, which can be used for large panels.

### « The black is very deep»

Working for a comic strip artist necessitates a solution that offers a certain degree of quality. This is particularly true with regard to colour management. Mika explains: "We needed to remain true to the spirit of Geluck's Le Chat, and the colours had to remain consistent across all of the panels. The very specific grey colour of Le Chat, for example, could not be allowed to vary from one panel to the next. However Philippe Geluck remained very confident. During the test run, he found the black to be very deep, the orange a lovely peach colour and also approved the grey". Promo Signs uses Mutoh UMS inks, which have been specially developed for large-volume printing. "The range of CMYK UMS inks covers 83 percent of the Pantone colour chart, which explains the high-quality reproduction of colours", stated Michaël Swalens.



**Inauguration of La Fresque du Chat. The fresco is 140 metres long and is made up of 24 panels and shaped cut-outs.**

### Mission accomplished

The production of printed works of art requires both technical and artistic expertise along with very high resolution large format digital printers. Philippe Geluck's graphic designers have perfectly mastered the art of digitally processing his drawings to make the files suitable for printing. However the expertise, experience and talent of the printer are also crucial factors. They must be able to calibrate the printer in such a way as to achieve the best possible result from the combination of inks, the digital image and the printing material. All while ensuring a final result that is true to the original.

The aim of this artistic project was to make the La Chasse district more attractive and dynamic for both passers-by and retailers. It appears that this goal has been achieved thanks to the partnership between Philippe Geluck, the graphic designers and the expertise of Promo Signs. "Local residents tell me that their district has become happier and more radiant since the arrival of the fresco, and the people who pass through here all have smiles on their faces. It wasn't always like that before. And that brings me great pleasure", said Philippe Geluck, who also hails from La Chasse.

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