

Conference Report

Optimism and Energy at *Holo-pack•Holo-print*

Although attendance at *Holo-pack•Holo-print* was reduced by reluctance to fly following September 11 and the JFK plane crash, combined with the closure of US visa departments in many countries, the vibrancy of the hologram industry was revealed at the event. The 110 participants sensed that this was one of the most informative and important hologram industry conferences in recent years.

The conference underlined that holography is energetic and needed. At the Effective Holographic Packaging Workshop which preceded the full conference, several companies reported that the lull in packaging business in the first half of the year has been replaced by full order books and capacity production, as customers recognise that holographic packaging can help them fight the recession. And for different reasons, at the seminar on Holograms and ID Documents, there was optimism about the role of holograms in improving identification security. These themes were repeated and endorsed in the full conference sessions, where several speakers prompted questions and discussion sessions livelier than usual, as participants reflected on the upswing in market interest and the opportunities in packaging and authentication which are now opening up.

True Colour Reflection Excitement

Technological developments also contributed to a sense of energy and excitement at the event. Colour played a big part in this, with Yves Gentet's true colour reflection hologram *The Clown*, made with his *Ultimate Hologram* process, winning the Best of the Year award. Mike Klug showed examples of Zebra Imaging's latest generation of pixellated true colour reflection holograms, while Jörg Gutjahr created a stir of interest in Pronova's *HoloPro* display screen (see HN Vol 14 No 8), which he used to good effect for his conference presentation. He also impressed delegates with views of *Eyefire*, a holographic artwork on the façade of a building in Bonn. The work, in silver halide material, is 65m², and won the Hologram Excellence Award for Illustration. Together, these items reawakened interest in true colour display holography and engendered a feeling that this type of holography, a long-standing target for the hologram community, could be about to become commercially significant. Gutjahr and Klug's papers were the last two on the programme, ending the conference on a high note of expectation.

Occupying a different point in the spectrum of holography, Ed Dietrich ran through the thin film deposition technologies used by Flex Products. The company has coined the phrase *color by physics* to describe its materials because the colour de-

pends on the physics of diffraction. Flex is perhaps best known for its diffractive materials used by SICPA to make the optically variable inks used on banknotes, but it is now producing authentication and packaging films as well as colorants for ink and paints. Dietrich attracted considerable interest in his offer to work with hologram producers where there might be opportunities for further developments with the thin film processes.

Impact of the Euro

More immediately, the imminent launch of the euro formed a significant sub-text at the event. Alex Jarvis, who led the working group to specify the technical features of the new banknotes, explained how the DOVID foils fit the anticounterfeiting mix and speculated that the future will bring optical taggants for forensic detection, more specialised optical microstructures and, in the longer term, in-line 'printing' of the DOVIDs on banknotes. Oliver Gray, of Secura Monde International, reviewed the advances in foil application machinery stimulated by the decision to use foil on the euro notes, from the multi-million dollar high-speed OptiNota presses to the more modest but still effective Gietz, Bobst and Cavomit machines. His paper focused on European equipment, implying how much development there has been as a result of the requirements of euro banknote printers.

There were also some interesting and successful case-studies reported. John Halotek, of ITW, gave details of the numerous contributors to the US Postal Service's Space Stamp series, issued for the millennium, and an Award winner last year. Dave Williamson from the API converting subsidiary Henry & Leigh Slater, by contrast, explained the issues in producing the Moët & Chandon presentation box, a seamless holographic laminate with 3D components in register the carton folds. This project was highly commended in the Awards and demonstrates the buoyancy in the packaging sector referred to in the Packaging Workshop. The value of holograms in lifting sales was shown in Phil Maniscalco's description of the *TV Guide* Elvis series, which broke sales records for this listings magazine.

These good news presentations were a morale boost to delegates, and particularly welcome after two papers on the first morning offered a sobering view of the long-

term future of the industry. Ian Lancaster gave a summary of the Reconnaissance International Holo-pack•Holo-print Industry Study and Market Report (details on page 1), and David Tidmarsh, reviewing the important issue of financing the industry, suggested that its growth curve may slow

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