

PRESS RELEASE

Mermet: A new direction and new ambitions

A manufacturer of fibreglass yarn fabrics since 1951 and a specialist in solar protection since 1976, the company Mermet is beginning a new chapter in its history. While clearly representing a new direction and new ambitions, it will strengthen Mermet's "unique" position in the market as a quality French company which offers technical and highly differentiated products.

A brief history

In 2005, the family company Mermet was sold to the Dutch group Hunter Douglas, enabling the company to refocus on its core business, with significant investments being made to underpin its future business activities.

G rard Mermet, Managing Director, and Guy Mermet, Industrial and Finance Director, stayed on in their respective positions to ensure a smooth transition, and at the end of 2009 they selected Fran ois Lacquemanne, whom they had known and respected for over 20 years*, to take over the control of the company.

At the request of the Group, Guy Mermet is staying on for a period to oversee investments in manufacturing.

And finally, to assist the process of change, the "dual management" principal in the Sales & Marketing Department is being maintained with Marc Paillon, who has already been with Mermet for over 10 years as Area Sales Manager and will be taking over from Christian Gautheron as Sales and Marketing Manager.

In 2007 the Hunter Douglas Group also acquired the French company XLScreen, a manufacturer of technical fabrics for solar protection. The global economic climate in 2009 prompted the HD group to restructure, and a decision was made to bring the companies Mermet and XLScreen closer together, first in manufacturing and then on the commercial side. These two entities will from now on be led by Fran ois Lacquemanne and the collections will be marketed by Marc Paillon's team.

Strategic investments for a stronger product range

With the objective of strengthening the presence of the two brands Mermet and Hexelscreen in Europe, against a backdrop of competitors forcing down quality and prices, the two companies will be striving to re-establish market shares:

- by strengthening ties with product specifiers,
- by offering technical and innovative products, available in a wide range of colours and widths (specifically for large scale applications).

A global initiative will be announced at the next R+T Trade Fair in 2012, but it already includes a number of clear features:

- Hexelscreen will focus on the finishing and coating of fibreglass fabrics:
 - major investment ( 700k) at the Les Aveni res production site in the Rh ne-Alpes region with new technology:
 - to respond to environmental demands in the market place,
 - to expand the range of product finishes,
 - to develop new dim out and blackout products.
 - product development, especially for Screen Nature and its new metallic version, the only PVC-free woven fabric on the market which provides transparency alongside optical and thermal comfort.
- Mermet will continue to concentrate on the coating of fibreglass yarns:
 - investment in R&D to meet market needs and to make a real difference in the face of the current trend towards "uninspiring" products (for example, by optimising fabric properties for "Blind" applications),
 - targeted marketing efforts towards niche and high-potential products such as:
 - Acoustis[®] 50, which combines solar protection and acoustic correction,
 - Natura, the decorative fabric with 2-tone fibres which offers a natural effect product for the residential market.

Oxygen Tower in Lyon, the ocean liner Epic and many other prestige projects in Portugal, Italy and even in Asia... Fine examples of projects for the two companies which have always known how to conduct business openly, at a local level and with the recognized "made in France" quality in the highly competitive solar protection market.

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** Fran ois Lacquemanne began his career at Porcher Industries/Chavanoz Industrie between 1987 and 2000, before becoming Sales and Marketing Director at Saint Gobain VetroTex between 2005 and 2009, and then Development Director for a variety of business sectors at Saint Gobain Textile Solutions.*