

MEDIA ADVISORY

New doors open for US Flock industry

With the closing of Spectro Coating, other US flock companies announce expanded manufacturing operations, new product lines and exciting new, high tech applications.

For Immediate Release

(May 8, 2023, Cherryville, NC.....) This spring, Spectro Coating in Leominster, Mass., USA, shut its doors. Spectro was one of the largest flock providers in the US and several factors were involved with their decision to close. For one, the owners - Hemendra Shah and his son, Raj Shah - decided to begin focusing their expertise on various flock consulting and sales projects and equipment installations in the US and overseas.

In addition, the flocking sectors that his company serviced – including traditional flock applied to upholstery and greeting cards – had begun to wane, and they had a fabulous offer on the building in Leominster where Spectro had operations.

But as they say, when one door closes, another is bound to open. And in this case, others in the US Flock industry have benefitted dramatically from the Shahs' decision.

Two well-known flock companies have taken over large pieces of Spectro Coating and Claremont Flock, a division of Spectro, and in the process are expanding manufacturing operations, hiring new talent, collaborating with scientists and engineers under NDA to explore new, high tech applications for flock and are opening up new product lines.

Fifield Fabrics, which has offices in Hingham, Mass., China and Hong Kong, purchased laminating equipment from Spectro, and bought a great deal of their inventory.

"We've taken over much of Spectro's business," said Todd Der Manouelian, president of Fifield Fabrics and National Velour. "We've increased our inventory by 50 percent and are now the only flock company in the US with a commitment to carrying stock rolled goods. With this expansion, we now are offering 14 lines of flock on our floor and all but one of these is manufactured in the US."

Fifield is well positioned in what has become a growing sector of the flock industry – high end displays for companies such as Tiffany's, Ralph Lauren, Rolex, and luxury shoe, handbag and accessory brands. Der Manouelian said they are also exploring other new, higher end markets.

Cellusuede Products, Inc., which is a large supplier of precision cut flock based in Rockford, Illinois, purchased cutting machinery and inventory from Claremont Flock, a division of Spectro that sold precision and random cut flock to a variety of industries, including automotive. "We've always competed with Claremont, and now we are taking on \$3 million in new business, while adding a second shift and looking for new talent," said Andy Honkamp, company president.



Although in business for 85 years, Cellusuede has started focusing on a number of new industry sectors that have begun opening up for flock in the US. “The projects we are working on are very exciting and we’re signing more and more NDA’s,” Honkamp said.

This includes developing flock for 3-D printers, smart fabrics, bio sensors and shock-absorbing flock foam for NFL helmets. Honkamp added that they are even developing flock from Aramid fibers – best known as Kevlar, which is used in body armor. “Aramid fiber is one that has a future,” he said. “It’s difficult to work with, difficult to cut, but we figured it out.”

Douglas W. Russell, Jr., President of Middlesex Research Manufacturing Co., Inc. also stopped by Spectro before it closed to purchase equipment. Middlesex is located nearby in Hudson, Mass.

“In addition to its toll coating operations, Middlesex will continue to supply rolls of flocked goods to the jewelry box and table pad industries as well as selling cut and dyed flock by itself,” said Russell. “We have exactly the same capabilities that Spectro/Claremont had and are willing to run smaller minimums which can be attractive to some customers.”

“All in all, it was a sad thing to see them fold,” Russell added, “but hopefully the rest of us can pick up where they left off and supply all of their former customers with the flocked and coated products they need so that American manufacturers can continue to source within the United States and avoid the temptation to purchase abroad.”

“This truly is a sad day for those of us who have worked with Hemendra and his son Raj,” said Steve Rosenthal, Managing Director of the American Flock Association. “Raj is on the AFA Executive Committee, and word on the street has it that he will remain in the industry, consulting for one or more of our members. We hope this is true. We’ve even heard that he and his father may continue working together in this capacity. Their institutional knowledge and technical acumen can benefit the industry – especially now with so many new and fascinating flock applications on the horizon.”

Honkamp agreed with Rosenthal’s assessment about that new horizon for flock. “There’s a lot of untapped product development potential out there,” he said. “There are so many things flock can be used for in a functional way.”

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American Flock Association

The American Flock Association (AFA) was established in 1984. AFA members include manufacturers of roll-to-roll coated textiles, papers, and films as well as coaters of three-dimensional objects and printers of apparel decoration and graphics art products. Industry suppliers are a key sector of the membership. The AFA is affiliated with the National Council of Textile Organizations, a non-profit trade organization representing a large number of textile manufacturers and industry suppliers with operations in North America. For more information, go to www.flocking.org

Media Contact: [Glenna Musante](mailto:Glenna.Musante@afaflock.com), 919.604.7213