



The media choice

Mac'Ants highlights the importance of media selection for effective surface preparation

Surface preparation, whether for cleaning or ongoing processing objectives, is fundamental throughout engineering. Transforming surfaces of all types to a pre-determined condition can have a direct impact on performance, appearance and thus, ultimately, profitability. The selection of the most suitable abrasive material is crucial therefore, and with some 35 years' experience in the field, the Mac'Ants Group is well placed to offer a brief oversight of just some of the choices.

Mac'Ants' success is based on offering a wide range of abrasive solutions, many derived from an ongoing commitment to development and innovation. Since 1973, it has provided a range of abrasive, electro-minerals and metals-based media and has grown steadily into other blast media fields alongside the supply of application equipment. Matching material to application objectives remains at the heart of the Mac'Ants' philosophy as director, Kent Martin explains:

"Hard abrasives continue to meet a long list of requirements that are addressed by our choice of fused aluminas and associated by-products of secondary aluminas," he says. "While these satisfy a wide range of general applications needs, other associated media can fulfil particular process objectives. Silicon carbides, for example, are well suited where thermal stability, hardness and appearance are important, such as in the application of slip-resistant coatings.

"By contrast, the prismatic characteristics of glass beads make them highly suitable for reflective material applications such as the production of safety wear and signage," he continues, "whilst our vegetable-based media range is ideal where a gentle application is required. This alone demonstrates the extent of the abrasives spectrum and varying needs that can be met by the correct media choice."

Recent innovation has centred on Mac'Ants steadily growing plastic blast media business. This is seeing products such as urea, acrylics and melamine provide specific performance and environmental benefits – central, indeed, to their worldwide growth as an abrasive



media. "Because the plastic product range offers many different types and grades, gauged by the hardness of the raw material, a wide variety of application environments can be addressed," adds Kent Martin. "In all cases plastic minimises the risk of damage to the substrate, closely linked to low pressure application, which also minimises breakdown rate and thus creates extensive re-use opportunities. This markedly enhances its environmental appeal, which is already significant when compared to potentially more toxic alternatives.

Kent Martin highlights the use of plastic media by Socomor Ltd. as a prime example. Part of the 'Group Meaban', the French based Socomor SAS has a well-established track record in the supply of component stripping products through its partner agreements and subsidiaries, including the UK organisation. Traditionally, this has centred on the use of chemicals but has now been significantly enhanced by the Mac'Ants plastic media range, which is seen as a complementary option. It will, according to Socomor Ltd's sales manager, David Wooldridge, directly address the changing needs often arising from the use of new methods and materials across, for example, the aerospace industry.

"We have long had a commitment to identifying new products and services to meet a developing marketplace," he explains. "In the aerospace sector, for example, many of these result from long term assessment and analysis and are centred on both construction and maintenance procedures and higher performance materials." He cites the use of aluminium bonded carbon fibre as a case in point.

"The ability of plastic media to strip away material without unacceptable damage to the substrate can be a key factor, which could become even more significant, we believe, as new materials come on stream. Adding the Mac'Ants products to our range will clearly strengthen our role in the industry and provide an enhanced service for our customers," he adds.

With surface preparation, and abrasive processes in particular being such a key factor in manufacturing, Kent Martin points out that the importance of media selection has never been more important:

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