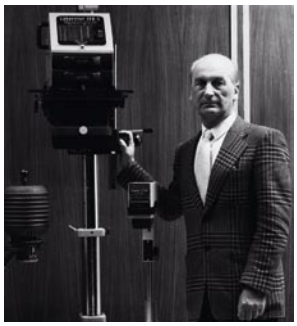
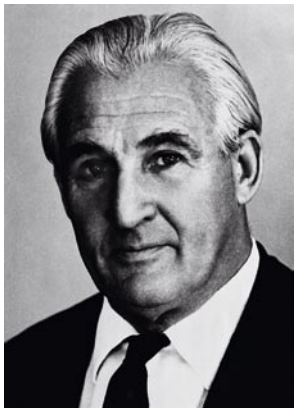
Nearly 70 Years of Experience

Julius Durst



Gilbert Durst



Luis Oberrauch

Julius and Gilbert Durst
It began with 2 brothers from Brixen, whose inclination toward photography did not come without reason. Their father was a painter, who always had a certain soft spot for photographs. Their mother, who was the daughter of an engineer, had her own darkroom equipment. In addition, most of their relatives were photo enthusiasts. At an early age, the brothers developed immense interest for the field, and along with this interest, they possessed remarkable technical talent. In their youth, the brothers designed and made hunting weapons, kites, sailing gear, and radio sets - they even made grass skis, bob sleds and rocket cars.
Despite all their creations, however, their main interest was still photography. Therefore, the brothers decided to pursue an education in this field: Julius (1909 – 1964) attended the technical academy in Konstanz, and collected the necessary paraphernalia for this field. Gilbert, who later became the manager, was trained at a renowned photo shop in Innsbruck. On top of this, they diligently continued designing and building various creations during their spare time.

The Oberrauch Family
"This can't go on like this", Julius Durst said to himself one day after working for four years. The valuation of the self-developed patent for photographic equipment required a larger capital and a rearrangement of the company. Therefore, they began looking for a suitable financier in Bozen. A well-known leather factory named "Alois Oberrauch und Söhne", which was founded in 1865, showed interest in the plans of the Durst brothers. In 1933, the cooperation between Oberrauch and Durst was therefore sealed. The Dursts were responsible for the technical aspects of photography whereas the Oberrauchs were responsible for the economic aspects. The combination of skills and capital was a success. In 1936, the Durst brothers announced the grand opening of their Durst Phototechnik AG Company. They needed an office with enough rooms for planning, production, and assembly, so they rented a nearby building. Finally, they could begin with the industrial manufacturing and the worldwide distribution of modern photographic techniques . . .

The „Old Durst" in Brixen

It started in 1929 . . .
The initial passion turned into a profitable occupation. In 1929, Julius and Gilbert dared to take that courageous step to independence. They built and repaired all kinds of photo equipment at home. Their friend took over the sales and collection part. Each and every project was designed in line with customer preference. Elaborate custom-made products originated during this era, for example movie equipment such as winders and viewers, projectors for stamps, darkroom equipment, cutters for reel paper and copy machines for post cards. With the "magic lantern", the first enlargements were attempted.
Each piece of equipment was created autonomously, while the required parts were produced at a Brixner locksmith – amongst the most primitive conditions and with completely antiquated machines. Gilbert Durst once remarked, "No person knows how much we suffered under these conditions."

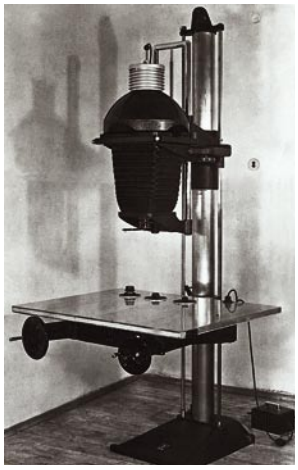
1930 – Post cards for South Tyrol
Tourism flourished in South Tyrol, and therefore, post cards were very much in demand. Although the post cards had very high picture quality, they were simply too expensive. Thus, rational measures needed to be taken. In 1934, the famous Durst copy machine was brought in. This was an excellent device because one could produce a lot of different motives on small cards. Though the demand for the machine was great, sales were not enough to support the whole entire company. Thereafter, the brothers began looking around for more profitable areas.

One of the first roller copiers from 1931.

The first Patent Specifications
In order to protect themselves from their ideas being stolen, they came up with their own patent in 1934. Protected by this patent were enlargers, copy machines, innovative negative holders, as well as the automatic focus. In the following years, they gained a further amount of intellectual property rights, some of which were international. Soon thereafter, the global market was open to Durst's great inventive talents and small, but decisive innovations.

1938 – Photo hunting with Gil
The dream of having a camera, which could shoot in series, never died. In 1938, this dream became reality with the first Durst Camera Gil. It was a box camera with a 6 x 9 cm format for rolls. Thanks to the double exposure prevention and the curved lens, the camera produced a much better picture quality than the other cameras in the same price range. Since cameras required extremely high tuning and precision, Durst soon set up a separate department for camera production.

1942 The Dimensions are growing
A giant enlarger for negatives up to 30 x 40 cm went into mass production. Via the die-cast method, the newly developed, extremely thin aluminum parts enabled a much more elaborate construction. Apart from the function, the aesthetics also needed to be pleasing so special mixtures of lacquer were refined and refurbished for the surfaces.



1943 – The Motor enters
A motorized enlarger containing quicksilver gave way to a new generation of equipment. The motor was produced after these formulated principles: "quality, stability, exact mechanics, precise optical axes, carefully selected optical finishing, and long product life."

1946
The economic depression after the Second World War was quickly overcome. After the camera Gil, came Duca, a pocket camera for taking small pictures with a coreless spool of 12 photos. Experts agreed that this was an ingenious creation, not only because of its high technical quality but also because of its "absolutely original oval shape".
The coloring of the Duca camera was also quite fashionable: the black, brown, blue, red or white polish looked great at every photo session.

1953
Durst further expands their sales and distribution abroad. A great amount of their products were already sold in the 40s and the 50s. In 1953, their first distribution company, the German Durst GmbH in Munich, was founded.

1956
The height, and at the same time, last camera model was the Automatica: the first camera containing automatic exposure control with pre-selected lens aperture. A special make, where a certain "coincidence" played a large role: during the later part of 1944, an American bomber was shot down in Brixen. The instruments on board were strewn about the woods. Amongst these instruments was a tiny controller, which Julius Durst took with him. He analyzed this object until the first automatic exposure control was born. The Automatica's premiere was in 1956. In 1963, camera production had to be stopped due to financial reasons. With this, the era of the Durst cameras officially ended. From this point on, enlargers became the Durst's main line of production.

1957
The immediate question then was: black/white or in color? For the first time, Durst equipped quite a few of their enlarger models with color heads.
In the 50s, the Durst Company was one of the few large employers in Brixen. At the time, Brixen's economy was suffering.

1966
In this year, the new factory premises was commissioned. Following the death of Julius Durst, the constructive head of the company who died in a car crash in 1964, his young team had to resume their duties and responsibilities on their own. This clearly demonstrated their ambition and success, as depicted in their first color head with automatic exposure control for all picture formats from 24 x 36 mm to 13 x 18 cm. In 1966, their production program was made up of eleven models featuring enlarger accessories and diverse darkroom devices. Shared features: extreme precision, compactness, and very convenient operation.

The employees in front of the new factory in Brixen.

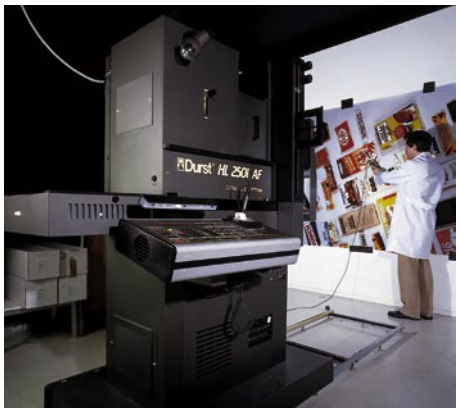
1972
The renaissance of the household sector began with the first amateur color analyzer. In the 60s, it appeared as if the period of the amateur darkrooms had ended. Color photos celebrated their breakthrough, but hobby lab workers didn't believe that they would be able to develop good quality color photos. This opinion changed when Durst came up with the new, user-friendly household equipment. The amateur sector played a very important role for the Durst Company during the next ten years. In 1977, this sector reached 60 percent of the total turnover.

Founding of Durst (UK) Ltd. in Epsom, England. Durst UK is their first foreign production site.

1975
A new light shone into the world of enlargers: Magica 300/350, the first Durst Daylight enlarger, which delivers perfect work even without a darkroom.
The second highlight of the year is the first professional color analyzer CAN 450 for modern photo labs.

1976
In order to intensively cater to the humongous American market, Durst North America Inc. situated in Temple, Arizona was founded.

1981 - Durst „Horizontal"
The market leading company took the experts by surprise with the first horizontal enlarger. Furthermore, a new amateur enlarger with automatic exposure control and integrated analyzer was presented in the early 80s. This easy-to-use device was a great joy for ambitious hobbyists!



The innovative Durst model HL 2501 with micro-computer control and electronic focus setting left nothing to be desired.

1985 – More exact, more profitable, and quicker
Optimo and Optopia marked the beginning of a new generation of enlargers. Behind the catchy names was a complete system for modern, rational picture composition. Special features include the novel lighting system, the elaborate electronic control and the high ease of use operation.

1990 and following . . .
New products and power ratings point the way: items that strike the eye are the approved modular 70 of the amateur sector or the developing machine Printo, which guarantees top quality and easy usage. A "secret tip" for hobby-lab beginners is Magico, a completely new and unique enlarger accessory concept with considerable advantages.

Lambda 130, the large format output device

1994 - Durst goes digital
Intensive research and development was started in 1992 and the final result was Lambda 130, which was presented in 1994. Lambda is a laser-supported large format output device for the high resolution exposure of digital picture and text data on all conventional photo materials up to 127 cm in width. Since 1995, more than 900 installations have been made in photo labs, reprographic facilities, pre-press facilities and industrial firms. A new dimension of large-screen technology was discovered and new picture quality criteria were set.

1999
Market launch of Durst Epsilon
Durst developed a professional fiber glass LED photo printer for exposing digital photographs on photo paper up to 76 cm in width. This device was especially made for small and mid-sized specialized laboratories, mini-labs, wedding and society photographers, portrait and school photographers, etc. Durst Epsilon Plus was characterized by top quality (254 dpi continuous tone) and flexibility in paper formats and media selection, as well as by custom-made software programs.

Durst opens a new production site in Lienz/East Tyrol
With their entry into the world of ink jet technology and their subsequent growth potential, Durst's production capacity needed to be expanded.
Due to the affordable conditions in East Tyrol, Durst decided to set up a new production site in Lienz. On the 30th of July, 1999, the new factory in Lienz – Durst Digital Technology GmbH – was ceremoniously opened.

The new production site in Lienz/East Tyrol. As of August 1999, new products will be manufactured at this site (2750 m^2 still in construction).

2001
Market launch of Rho 160. Durst Rho 160 is the first high-performance inkjet printer designed for industrial large-format digital print in the realm of photo labs, screen printing and printing industries. This new technology allows one to print directly on uncoated roller materials and plates of up to widths of 160 cm and thicknesses of 40 mm found in inflexible materials. Printed materials could then be utilized immediately without having to go through any sort of finishing.

Market Launch Sigma.
Sigma is a professional, high-speed film scanner for photo finishers, specialized labs and prepress facilities. Sigma delivers top quality scan samples for various data formats in color, black/white negatives and film slide samples from 35 mm to 4 x 5. This enables the direct output of different output devices such as Lambda, Theta, Epsilon, etc. Due to its automatic film transport, high-resolution line sensors and intelligent, top quality software, Sigma Plus is one of the quickest film scanners around.

2002
Their strategy of being present with their own distribution companies in all the important markets was pursued in Germany, England, the USA and France.

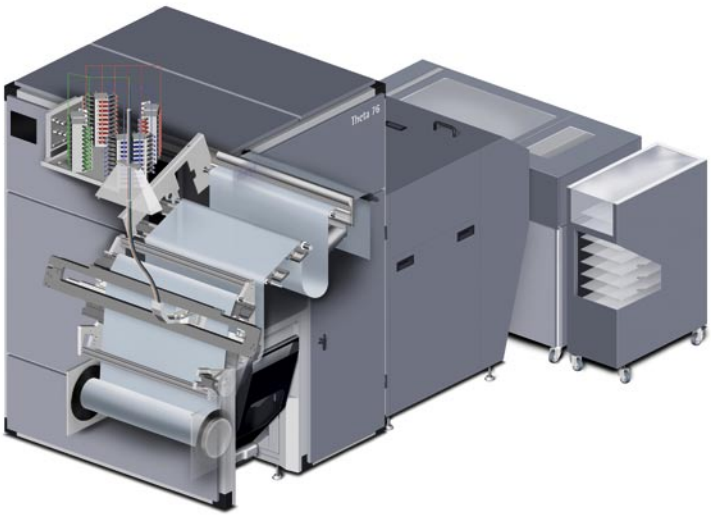
Market launch Theta
Durst Theta 50 is a complete digital lab system based on laser exposure technology, which was developed for the top production and quality in portraits, photo finishing and specialized labs.

2003
The production and market launch of the proprietary development of Rho 205 – a solely 2 m wide inkjet flat bed printer in Lienz begins.

2005
The distribution company Durst Image Technology Latin America S.A. was founded in Mexico City in order to efficiently deal with the Latin American market.

In June 2005, Rhopac was introduced to the public at the FESPA, a fair for digital printing in Munich.
This flatbed inkjet printer based on Quadro Array Technology was especially developed for printing on corrugated cardboard cartons found in the packaging industry as well as for printing displays.
It enabled the efficient and quick production of sample packaging and small series up to 2000 pieces without having to produce printing plates.
Rhopac is produced in Lienz.

Market launch Theta 76
Durst Theta 76 is a complete digital Lab System based on fiber optic LED Technology with continuous exposure of pictures on RA4 roller material up to a max. width of 76.2 cm.



In Lienz, Durst doubled their production site to 5600 m² and turned the site into a high-tech location. At the same time, a "Technical Academy" for digital printing and an "art park" named after Luis Oberrauch, the co-founder of Durst were opened. The new building accommodates an entire assembly line – from pre-press preparation stations to complete punching and bending units for digitally printed packaging – as well as training classrooms, where users from all over the world learn about the digital printer.