

Airbus Develops Inkjet Printer... For Planes

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Airbus might be the last name one might expect to take on printing technologies-- after all, it is an aircraft maker-- but that is exactly what the company is working on, if as a means to paint liveries on planes.



Painting a plane is something of a tricky business, one involving either a time-consuming process of multiple paint layers or the sticking of, well, giant stickers. The Airbus method promises to make the process a lot simpler via direct inkjet printing.

Inkjet printing on a plane is actually quite similar to inkjet printing on paper-- an inkjet head sprays 3 basic colours (cyan, magenta and yellow) and black, line by line, on an aircraft component on a 7m-square bench. Once printing is done a clear coat seals the component.

Airbus says the process allows for colour gradients and photorealistic motifs without need for heavy printed films.

The inkjet printing method is currently at the experimental stage, and should be finalised and qualified by early 2015. Following that, maybe prettier aircraft will become a norm in our skies.

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