

Statements by Martín Cayre, Head of Arburg's Spanish subsidiary

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How do you use 3D printing in your company?

Arburg is one of the leading global manufacturers of plastic processing machines. With Arburg Plastic Freeforming (APF) and the Freeformer, we have specifically developed an open system for the industrial additive manufacturing of functional parts. A key feature of this system is its ability to process a wide range of the same standard granulates as are used for conventional injection moulding. Materials are qualified for the Freeformer and, based on the results, the process data for the processing operation is determined. Customers can, of course, also qualify other materials independently and optimise them for their own application. The open system therefore provides the opportunity to incorporate your own knowledge when using the machine as well as to acquire process data expertise.

At the central Arburg production location in Lossburg, Germany, the Freeformer is used for additive manufacturing of its own components, e.g. the housing for its main switch and transport stabilisers for shipment. We also use APF to produce components such as spacers made from PEI (Ultem 9085), which are installed in our Allrounder injection moulding machines, in small-volume batches of 70 units.

Why is additive manufacturing important (in your products)?

The Freeformer makes our customers' production operations future-safe because it meets the demand for short product life cycles, greater variant diversity and the desire for individual products. It is primarily of interest for those who wish to process a wide variety of materials, want to and are able to work with an open system while making use of their expertise in plastics

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processing and special materials. The Freeformer can be used to increase their flexibility and expand their portfolio.

What will be the role of your company in the IN(3D)ustry?

At the In(3D)ustry 2017, we will be showing how functional components can be manufactured from original material using the Freeformer. We will also be demonstrating how our customers can implement Industry 4.0 in injection moulding production practice. For this purpose, a Freeformer will flexibly individualise luggage tags according to visitors' specifications using additive manufacturing.

What are your expectations in that regard?

Arburg, a company that also has comprehensive expertise in the processing of plastic, was the first machine manufacturer to work on additive manufacturing, launching the Freeformer worldwide in 2015. We are expecting additive manufacturing and the topic of Industry 4.0 to grow in importance. We want to communicate its huge potential to the industry visitors at the In(3D)ustry 2017 through good discussions, both qualitatively and quantitatively, and generate new contacts and customer inquiries.

How do you think that 3D technology will evolve the industry in the future?

3D printing is opening up new options for plastics processing and is already becoming more common in industrial applications. Many of our conventional injection moulding customers have a need for production machines for one-off parts and small-volume batches. Individually produced plastic parts for consumer goods, medical implants and functional spare parts are only three of the many areas of application that are predestined for our open system for additive manufacturing. Moreover, additive manufacturing processes will increasingly be used in production in the future, for example, for the cost-effective, fast and flexible production of equipment such as assembly devices and grippers for automation.

However, the Freeformer and additive manufacturing will not be a substitute for injection moulding in five, ten, or fifty years, but will remain an ideal complement.