

companies

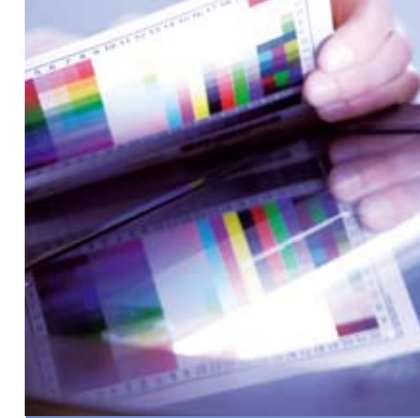
LaserSoft Imaging AG, Kiel

The house of scanners

In the Düsternbrook district of Kiel, close to Schleswig-Holstein's parliament building, work is going on to shape the future. This quiet street in an exclusive residential area of Kiel is where LaserSoft Imaging has its HQ. This small company's customers include many of the great names in the scanner, printer and photographic industries: Canon, Epson, Nikon, HP and Samsung. Their equipment is supplied with software from Kiel. SilverFast is the program scanners use for precise, true-colour digitisation of images. Around the world more than 1.5 million users scan their pictures with SilverFast.

In December 2006, LaserSoft Imaging launched SilverFast 6.5, the latest version of its classic software tool. It was extremely well received. 15,000 upgrades were sold in the first month after the launch. "We are the only developer who can supply high-end scanning software for all the well-known scanners working with the MacOS, Windows 95/98, Windows NT and 2000 operating systems," says Dr. Peter Heil, Head of Marketing at LaserSoft Imaging. He explains that the "impressive quality" of scans produced with SilverFast is due to the patented calibration process in which a defined colour series on the target slide or paper print is compared with a reference file inside the program. "This procedure maximises colour quality and fidelity," Peter explains. He goes on to point out that SilverFast also enables data-rich images to be opened and edited in seconds: "And we all know that time is money."

Drum, flat-bed, transmission and slide scanners – more than 300 different types of scanners are kept in LaserSoft Imaging's two villas and garden house. They are used in the process of continuously developing and testing the program. SilverFast has



Patented LaserSoft calibration: The target is compared with a reference file inside the program.

Karl-Heinz Zahorsky set the early standards in the development of scanner software and even today, the founder of LaserSoft Imaging programs individual features himself.

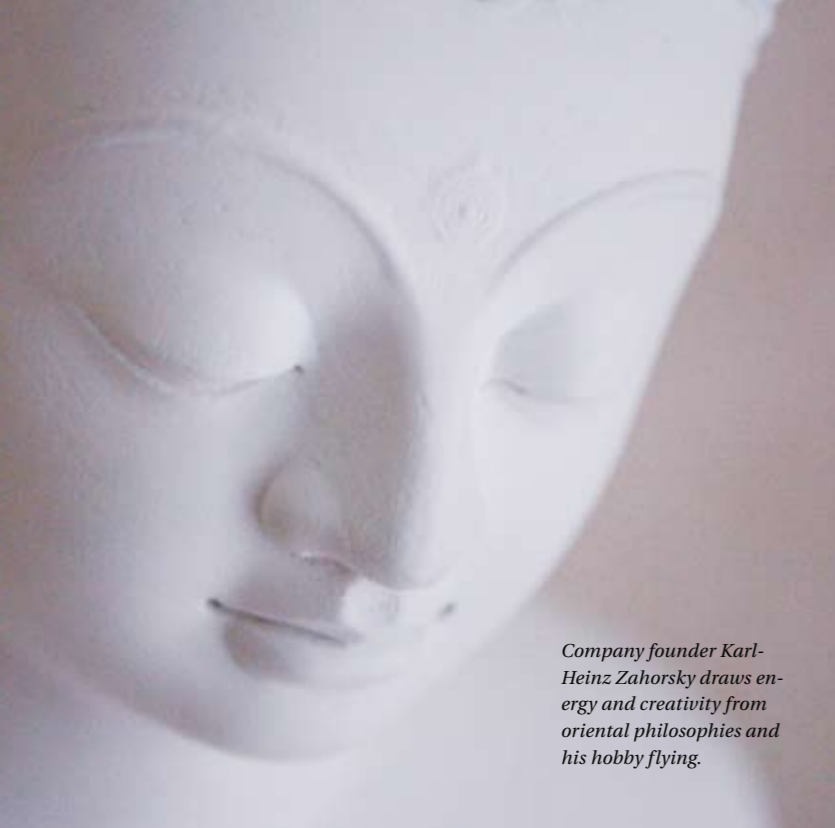


For 20 years LaserSoft Imaging, a Kiel-based company, has been developing imaging software for the global market. Even today, the visionary company founder Karl-Heinz Zahorsky still programs some of the features of successful products that ensure supreme colour quality in the machines of prominent manufacturers.

to run smoothly on top-quality machines whether they are new or old (Linotype-Hell/Heidelberg). Looking at all the different scanners is like studying a slice of engineering history while catching a glimpse of the future of scanning.

A scanning pioneer

The company was founded by physicist Karl-Heinz Zahorsky in 1986. He is still the visionary managing director of LaserSoft Imaging. He was involved in developing the first image processing systems for Macintosh computers. In 1990 Hell, the world's leading developer of reprographic systems from Kiel, heard about Karl-Heinz Zahorsky and offered him a consultancy contract. In the early 1990s LaserSoft Imaging developed RipLink, a software tool that enabled the leading reprographic systems of the time, Hell, Scitex and Crosfield, to link up to >



Company founder Karl-Heinz Zahorsky draws energy and creativity from oriental philosophies and his hobby flying.

LaserSoft Imaging AG

- Founded in 1986 by physicist Karl-Heinz Zahorsky
- Transformed into an owner-run joint stock company in 2002
- 35 employees in Kiel, Germany
- 5 employees in Sarasota, Florida
- €3.5m turnover in 2006
- Breakdown of turnover by software product group: 70% scanners, 20% digital photography, 10% printer/output devices

Macintosh computers. 1995 saw the dawn of the SilverFast era as LaserSoft Imaging presented the first version at CeBIT. Since then it has become the standard software for scanners.

In 2006 LaserSoft Imaging generated around two-thirds of its turnover through bundled sales by prominent hardware manufacturers, primarily based in the Far East. But direct sales and e-business are becoming more and more important. "Every day some 10,000 visitors click onto our website and we sell 30 programs per day via the Internet," Peter Heil says. The most important markets for sales to end users via specialist retailers are the European Union and the USA, which accounts for 45% of turnover. This is why LaserSoft Imaging maintains a branch office in Sarasota, Florida.

A market of the future

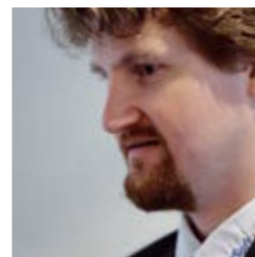
The German documentation for SilverFast software is translated into English, Portuguese, French, Spanish and Italian. There is no translation into Korean or Japanese because the customers in these countries are manufacturers rather than the end users who actually use the software. The geographical distribution of customers is reflected in the work schedule of the LaserSoft Imaging Service Department: enquiries by telephone or e-mail from Asian manufacturers arrive in the morning, European end users in the afternoon and American end-users in the evening – time zones as a definition of customer profile.

Even though scanning is certainly not a dying technology, the future for LaserSoft Imaging lies in another field: digital photography. "The popularisation of a professional-style technology is gener-

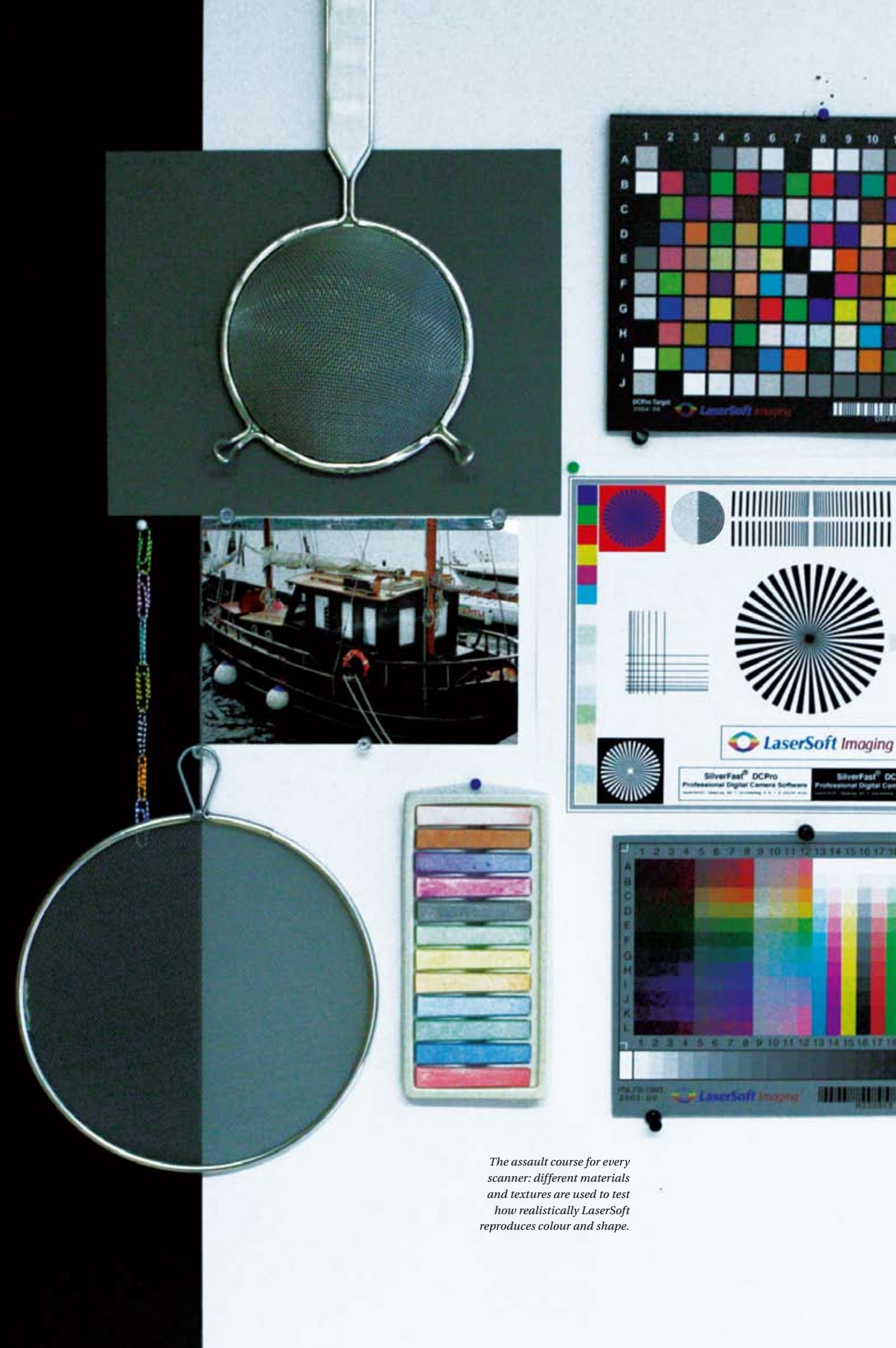
ating a lucrative mass market," Peter Heil says. In the era of analogue photography, image processing and developing was the domain of professionals. But now thanks to digital photography, more and more amateurs are doing this work themselves. Private individuals transfer their photos straight to their computers, where they edit them and print them out on their photo printer.

This is where the new products from LaserSoft Imaging come in. LaserSoft Imaging offers an image processing program called SilverFast DC Pro for processing uncompressed RAW image data. SilverFast DC Pro enables LaserSoft Imaging to enter a market segment dominated by the US company Adobe. PrinTao, the Kiel firm's DTP program, is also challenging the American competitor. But LaserSoft Imaging is actually one step ahead: "Right now we are exploring the possibilities of processing photos from mobile phones. As image quality increases, an interesting market could develop for our software here."

Nevertheless, Peter Heil is confident that scanning will continue to have a future. "When new developments arrive, people are quick to write off old technologies. Yet these supposedly obsolete technologies often have many years of life in them." He still sees considerable potential for the image processing software from Kiel when it comes to digitising the analogue images of childhood memories, family events and unique holiday trips that are stored away in slide boxes. <



Marketing Manager Peter Heil sees further economic potential in the digitisation of analogue images.



The assault course for every scanner: different materials and textures are used to test how realistically LaserSoft reproduces colour and shape.