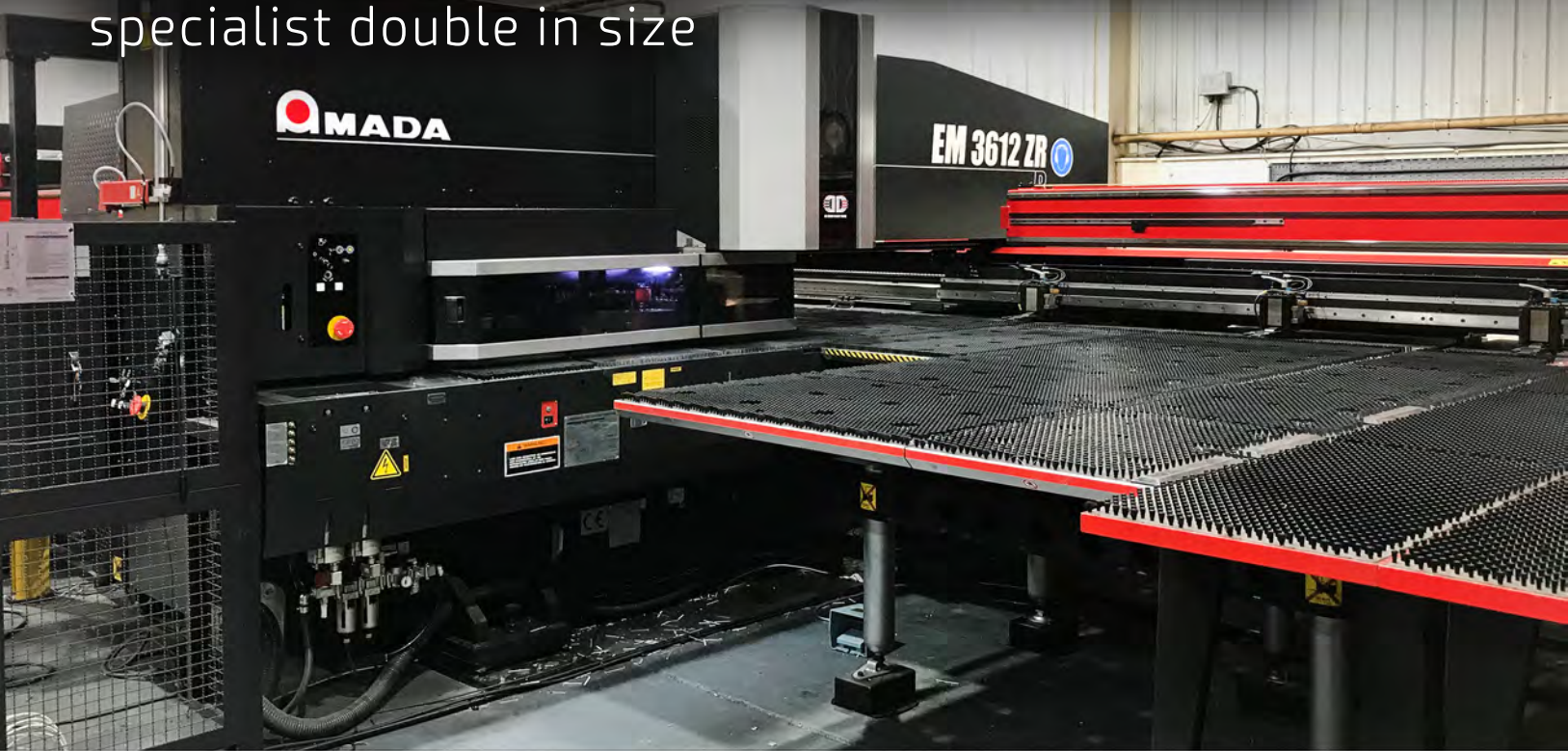


United Kingdom

# Finish Architectural Ltd

## Automated AMADA machines help architectural specialist double in size



Birmingham-based Finish Architectural has used its investment in the latest automated punching and laser-cutting technology from AMADA to double the size of its business over the past five years. Formed in 1991, this ISO9001 and ISO14001 accredited company today employs 48 people and generates turnover of circa £5.5 million.

Finish Architectural Ltd is a market leader in the manufacture of products that include window cills and pods, copings, rain-screen systems, facade steel supports, steel bracketry, flashings, perforated sheet, punched art, louvre systems, and bespoke pressings – essentially any construction-related fabricated item. The company has developed a highly acclaimed reputation for competence and manufacturing knowledge, making it the preferred supplier to many major players in the UK fenestration, unitised system, curtain wall and building envelope fabrication sectors.

Production facilities at Finish Architectural house some of the most advanced CAD/CAM-linked CNC manufacturing equipment available in the industry, a fact that demonstrates the company's ongoing commitment to investment and year-on-year growth. The desire for continuous improvement can be seen in the recent decision to automate major elements of production, introducing running in the process.

"In 2015 we bought our first automated machine, and have doubled in size since then," states Operations Director Terry Turner. "Automation removes manual input and provides a lot more control over our operational efficiency."

The shift to automation began with the arrival of an AMADA EM-ZR B servo-electric turret punch press with 4,000mm x 1,525mm X-Y travel, which benefits from an ASLIII MP300/40 automated tower loading system and automatic part picker. This machine replaced an older EM model that was part-exchanged in the deal. Two years later, in 2017, an AMADA LCG-AJ 4kW fibre laser cutting machine was installed featuring an AS LUL automated load-unload system.

"These investments were purposely designed to upgrade our facility and bring automation online," says Mr Turner. "We knew that automation would unlock the potential growth we had in the business."

To identify the right model for the job, Mr Turner and his team worked closely with AMADA, even visiting the AMADA facility in Spain to see an EM-ZR B in action and make sure it met all the criteria for achieving the desired levels of business growth.

"The beauty of the EM-ZR B is that it offers a buffer turret, so we can hold more tools, up to 65, which in turn lends itself to automated operations as we don't need an operator to be constantly changing tools," he says.

On a daily basis at Finish Architectural, the EM-ZR B is set to work producing parts such as copings for the tops of building, window cills and surrounds, as well as bespoke sheet metalwork and punched art, chiefly from aluminium in thicknesses from 1.5 to 3.0mm.

With the success of the automated punch press, thoughts turned to profiling and how these processes could be automated.

“We had a plasma cutter, but it was very slow and laborious,” explains Mr Turner. “There was a clear opportunity to produce profiled parts a lot faster by making the switch to fibre laser cutting. As our decision to implement automation on our turret punch proved to be the right option, we wanted the same for the AMADA fibre laser cutter. We were experiencing increased demand for more complex shapes, so we knew the laser cutter would help, particularly with its potential to produce tighter radii than plasma technology. The AMADA LCG-AJ means we can provide more options for our customers, again facilitating growth.”

As well as a host of aluminium parts, the laser cutter is also used to process mild steel sheet, sometimes up to 15mm thick.

The impact of the automated AMADA machines on business at Finish Architectural cannot be overstated. In 2015, the company operated a single-shift pattern, but by 2018 had switched to 24-hour operations, with the machines running fully throughout at the weekends.

“AMADA have held our hand and been there every step of the way, to make sure that we develop and grow the business around the automated machines,” says Mr Turner. “The AMADA support has been fantastic from the start.”

Aside from the two automated AMADA machines, Finish Architectural is also home to five AMADA press brakes, namely HFE and HFP series models from 1.2m to 4.0m in capacity. In addition, the company has six seats of AMADA VPSS BlankCAM software, a fully automated and highly efficient programming system for sheet-metal processing using AMADA punching, laser and punch-laser combination machines. VPSS BlankCAM supports both the processing of individual components as well as complex nesting.

“All of our machines are networked and we now looking at the AMADA V-factory system, which is the next step for us,” says Mr Turner. “With V-factory we will be able to monitor machines in real time from any device with an internet connection. We also like the idea of being forewarned about potential breakdowns, whereby the AMADA service team can come in before a production stoppage to make the necessary rectifications, so continuity of supply is always there for our customers.”



Adds Mr Turner: “All of our AMADA machines are on service contracts, which we find important. While any issues with the machines are few and far between, customer satisfaction is paramount to a business like ours, and reliability of supply underpins that ambition.”

Finish Architectural’s commitment to rapid and reliable product delivery is matched by a quality service at competitive rates, from initial concept right through to completion. This ethos is certainly paying dividends, and has helped Finish Architectural to move into its current 25,000 ft2 facility, supported by state-of-the-art automated AMADA machinery.

“Our company philosophy is simple: we endeavour to manufacture to the highest possible standards and specifications, offering cost-effective solutions, great communication and rapid lead times,” concludes Mr Turner. “Today, we have the experience and expertise to assist with demanding and unusual designs, smaller specialised projects, as well as volume repeat work. Unfortunately we have competitors who are prepared to sell with little or no margin, so we have to stand out from the crowd in terms of our service and capability, as well as our on-time delivery record. The automated AMADA machines help in so many of these aspects.”

