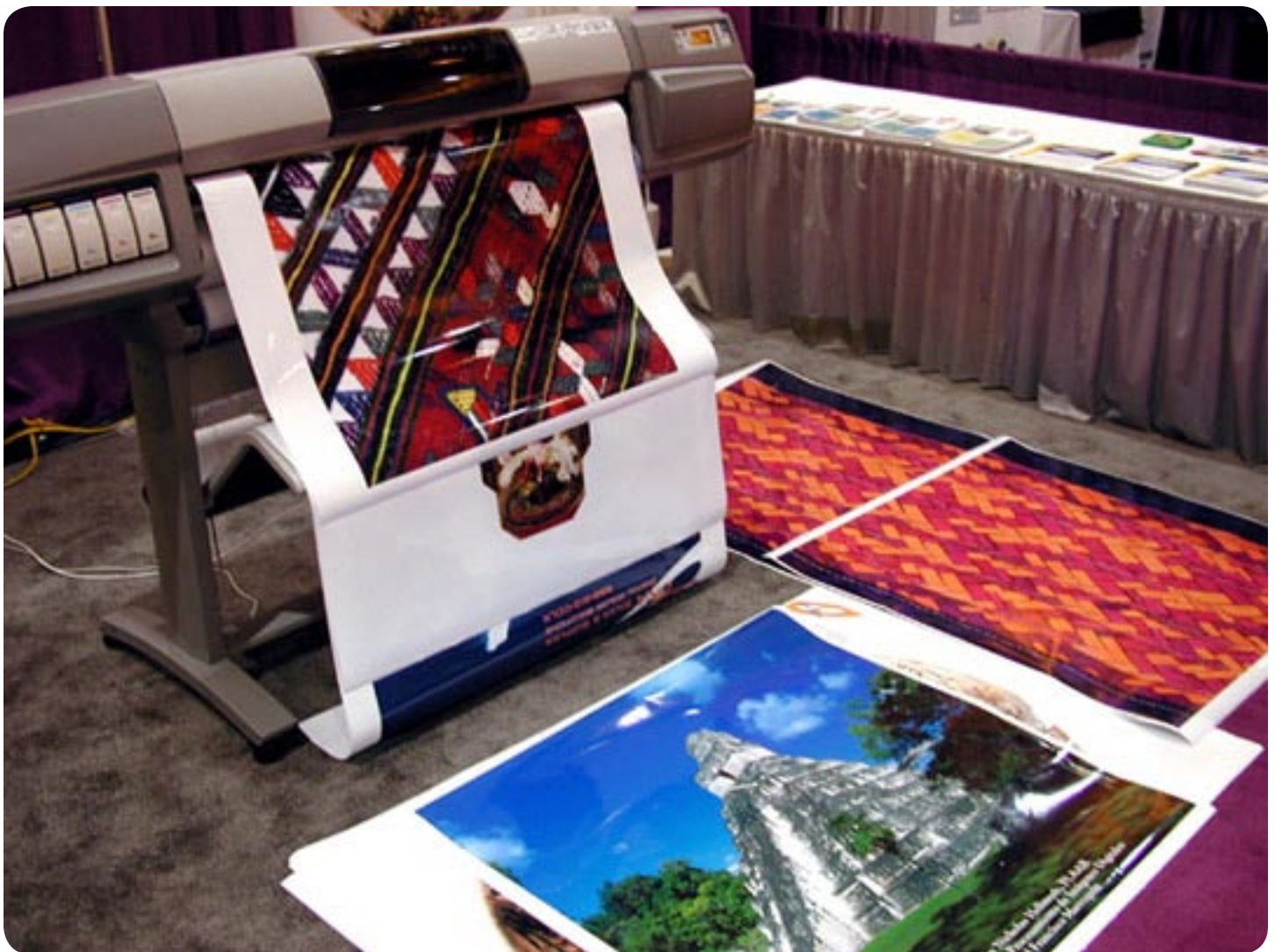# Color DNA
Digital Color Solutions

Site-Visit Case Study
of a Source of Wide Format Inkjet Printing
Equipment & Supplies

Introduction

In many aspects it is as important to select your printer source as it is to dedicate time to learning about which brand or model of printer to buy.

Over the past several years we have heard horror stories of people buying their printer from places that were unable or uninterested in providing backup.

Thus we felt it would be a valuable public service to offer reviews of printer dealers. Obviously we can't review them all because we don't know everyone out there. So to begin with we are offering PDF downloads on those companies where we know the individuals personally.

FLAAR has selected three or four companies to be sponsors. These are the people we know from past years so we can judge their abilities and dedication to wide format inkjet printing. We felt it would be a polite gesture to provide openness so that if our readers had an opportunity to see our sponsors on a more personal basis. FLAAR itself is non-profit, but we have to obtain funds to pay our approxiately 25 employees plus all the normal operating costs that you would expect of a research institute at two universities. Although both universities subsidize FLAAR to some extent (which is what keeps us independent of commercialization), it is expected that we earn enough to cover basic operating overhead expenses. Hence the need for sponsors.

However even though these companies happen to be sponsors, that is not why it occurred to us to write reports on them. The reports are to introduce them on a more personal basis to our readers because of the many readers who have asked for us to suggest a reputable dealer.

Virtually every useful feature that FLAAR offers is the result of what our readers ask for. Other of our offerings are common sense programs, such as consulting, seminars, training, that you would expect of an institute dedicated to providing a general public service.

So here is our first presentation. We have known the folks at ColorDNA for about five years. We have visited their offices twice and have conducted one of our ink tests in their facilities (with an ink that at that time was not yet available commercially).

We first became aware of Color DNA at trade shows circa 2000, 2001. Nowadays it is not as common for individual resellers to have their own booth. Here you see photos by Nicholas Hellmuth being printed with HP DesignJet printers.

FLAAR Reports

Color DNA

Color DNA is a privately held company owned and founded by Jonathan Knecht. The company provides what they feel are the best solutions for large format digital imaging. Color DNA is a value-added reseller, meaning that they add their own expertise and knowledge to help their customers decide on the products that are best suited for their needs. The company sells printers, RIP software, media, and manufacturer's ink.

After working at a printing company, Jonathan Knecht started the company in 1995 with end-users in mind. Frustrated with the way his former employer operated and sensing no room for growth or exploration, Knecht wanted to be able to try new ideas and find new and better ways to help customers. When he started in the business, the large-format printing industry was truly in its infancy.

Today Knecht feels that the industry has reached its saturation point. As he puts it, the field is in a "shakeout." He is frustrated that new companies that know little about the technology they are selling offer their equipment at increasingly lower prices until they put themselves out of business. The well-trained staff at Color DNA strive to offer the best products; ones that have been tested. They pursue only interested parties, ones that are willing to learn about the equipment in order to use it to make money for their organizations. Color DNA also tests and profiles media, and does color profiling for HP and Wasatch products. If the manufacturers have not taken the time to do profiling, Color DNA will, in order to provide the best information to their customers.

The company has sold printers to a number of well-respected companies, including Nestle, Disney, the US Department of Fisheries, and US Forrest Service. Some of their printers were also sold to print pictures from the recent Mars Lander project. Their customers fit no certain profile, and include graphic artists, packaging printers, pay-for-print outfits, giclee printers, and large corporations that have large-format printing needs.

One interesting application of Color DNA's printers comes from Nestle, who used them to create signage inside of elevators; a different candy bar on every floor. Ken apparently has a sweet tooth, as he thinks this is a fun idea.

The bulk of Color DNA's clientele are referrals. Satisfied customers tell other interested organizations about the service they received from the company, sending more business their way. It is the customers that especially interest Knect in the business. He is always interested to see what kinds of projects they are hoping to undertake, and is excited to see new and innovative applications of the technology his company has helped them choose.

Jonathan Knecht's goals for his company include exploring digital and screenprinting as well as direct to plate printing. He is impressed by the current nanotechnology used in the field, particularly in inkjet printers, and hopes that the technology will continue to allow for more printing applications. He also hopes to retain customers and to watch his employees grow, both within the company and in their lives. As for his personal goals he simply replied "I want to watch my daughter grow up and get married some day."

You can see why FLAAR likes like the HP 5000 and now the HP 5500: the bright color gamut that the Hewlett-Packard printers offer. The images here are flatbed scans of indigenous Mayan textiles from Guatemala. Two of the photos on the floor are Mayan artifacts from museums in Guatemala.

When we can get such a wide color gamut, and this level of image qualiity, we don't feel the need to look for other brands of printers. We have two HP 5000 printers and one HP 5500 printer and are content with them for about 85% of our printing needs. The HP 30 and HP 130 cover need for an even larger color gamut and an image quality closer to continuous tone that you need for commercial photography, professional photography, fine art photography, or graphic design.

FLAAR is in the same building as the architecture department at BGSU. At UFM we do the printing for most of the architecture students. So we have experience in selecting reliable printers for doing drawings. Today, for line drawings, CAD, or 3-D renderings, we would recommend the new HP 4000, which is much faster than the HP 500, HP 800, HP 1050, and HP 1055.
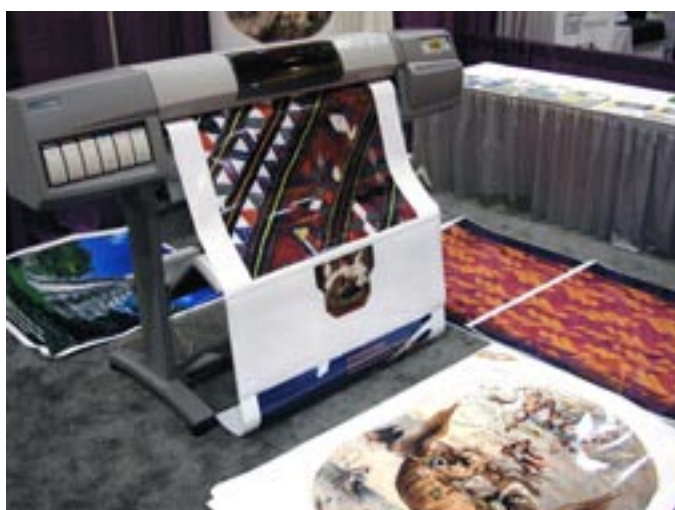
FLAAR used a HP DesignJet 5000 to print its art exhibits of giclee prints of 7th century Mayan ceramics of Guatemala. We also did an exhibit of enlargements of indigenous textiles (again printed with a HP DesignJet).

The pyramid in the photograph is Temple I of Tikal, burial monument of the King of Tikal. When Dr Hellmuth was a student at Harvard he discovered, excavated, and wrote his 400-page thesis on the royal burial pyramid of the son of the king found under Temple I. It is archaeological photography that got FLAAR into digital imaging, and once the images were scanned or taken with digital cameras, FLAAR began to evaluate which printers would be best for their museum projects. Today the FLAAR websites on wide format inkjet printers are read by over half a million people a year.

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