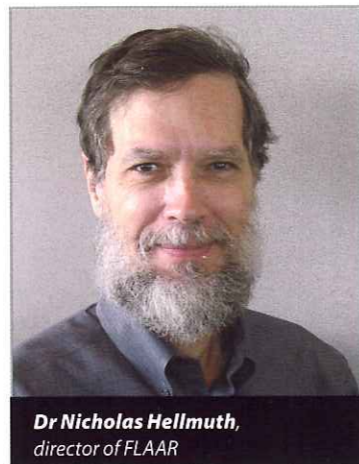


Large format printers evolving the UV way

Says Dr. Nicholas Hellmuth, director of FLAAR in an interview with ME Printer

For me this is an important show. The market here is not developed towards UV yet and I see more solvent printers

Dr. Nicholas Hellmuth is the Director of the Foundation for Latin American Anthropological Research (FLAAR.), and comes from a background devoted to Maya research in Guatemala. He is the Visiting Professor at Bowling Green State University of Ohio, where he is Director of the Large Format Digital Imaging Division, under the Center for Applied Technology, part of the College of Technology and has published several articles and reports on large format printing technology. He is a photographer trained in architecture. FLAAR has produced over 200 reports. He writes for magazines such as Digital Graphics and the Art World News. ME Printer met him recently at the Sign and Graphic Imaging Middle East (SGI) where he was presenting a series of lectures on wide format imaging at the behest of Superwide Digital.



Dr Nicholas Hellmuth,
director of FLAAR

INKJET PRINTING TRENDS EVIDENT AT SGI

According to him, the developments in inkjet printing are more evident in a Middle Eastern show such as Sign and Graphics Imaging than exhibitions in the US, which

he said focuses on several other aspects of signage. "For me this is a much more important show. There are so many printers here. The Chinese companies came to the US in 2003 but they could not get a foothold in the market but I can see them in strength here," said Dr. Hellmuth.

Another aspect noticed by Dr. Hellmuth is that there are not many UV flatbed printers here as is seen at other industry shows such as FESPA, Viscom, Drupa Düsseldorf or shows in Milan. "I see some but the market here is not as developed towards

UV printers yet and I see more solvent printers here. The industry in the rest of the world is moving towards UV. More and more people are buying these printers. Many companies in several countries are conscious about environmental after effects of using solvent printers. In other countries, such as Latin America, they don't really care. But the industry seems to be expanding on those lines. There is a lot of talk about water based printers fading out. But in the US, water based printers are still very active for fine art giclee printing and fine art photography. So every country is really quite different in their adoption of various printing techniques," Dr. Hellmuth felt.

To elaborate further, he cited the example of Epson which has been selling their 7400 and 9400 models. Those models are not sold in the US as people there generally go for eight colour printers. The demand for each product varies according to the country in which it is sold, he added. Similar is the case with trends such as the use of white ink. "I feel people will buy printers with the white ink option but won't use

it very much. They wouldn't know how to use it as they are not accustomed to using it. I think the designers don't know how to design with white ink either. I like the spot varnish option better," he said. About the size of the printers he feels that it would be difficult for super wide format printers to handle page-array sets of printheads. "I think what is going to happen is that the print heads can be configured in very large arrays. As the technology continues to develop, print quality and printing speed will reach even higher performance. The inkjet head's basic design feature is a multi-layer structure of a very large array of nozzles achieving high-speed printing. The more print heads will be closer together the printing will be faster. One of the tested doctrines of UV printers is the staggered row of print heads which print all at once at high speed to output high quality images. The Agfa :Dotrix UV printer is the first example, but is only narrow format. The Sun Fastjet which is made by Inca also has an array of print heads. Bunching of print heads to get fast results is what is in store," said Dr.

Hellmuth. He feels that continuous inkjet has limited applications. "It was used by the Iris printer, a large-format color printer from the Iris Graphics division of Scitex. Now there is a Kodak printer formerly of Creo that uses continuous inkjet. Elsewhere, the continuous inkjet technology is not very popular. I believe that Kodak has a transactional printer – the Versamark that uses continuous inkjet. I understand that continuous inkjet can be used for labels and similar applications. I don't think that anybody would have the patience to put up with continuous inkjet in wide format signage." According to him drop on demand and the thermal dye transfer technology are suitable for signage. "Matan had shown some very nice printers in 2000 at Drupa and in 2002 at Photokina that use thermal dye transfer technology. The ribbons were heated to transfer inks. It is a bit difficult to run these printers but the quality of output is very good. That technology is hence dying out," said Dr. Hellmuth. He thinks that this would be an

exciting year for printers. "What is going to happen this year is especially interesting because of developments such as HP buying Scitex Vision. Canon is coming up with several new printers including a 60 inch one. Ipex will be interesting from this point of view. That Ipex show in the UK, however, focuses more on offset than digital printing. I would say that there are more inkjet printers here in the Dubai show than there will be in Ipex." "Drupa would be the biggest show for signage. They have a lot of inkjet printers. The show I really liked is FESPA and they had a lot of inkjet textile printers. At this Sign and Graphic Imaging show, I can see many outdoor printers but at FESPA we can find outdoor, indoor and textile printers." Dr. Hellmuth said that although he worked primarily on inkjet printers but he also interested in variable data short-run digital presses, such as the Xeikon 500 and Xerox iGen3. "I have published at least 60 reports on UV-curable inkjet printers. We do write on solvent ink and water based printers as well. We did thermal transfer but that technology is quite dead. We also cover scanners and digital cameras. The scanners are thriving especially in the US because they can be used to scan drawings, maps, pages from old books and paintings. It is a huge industry there. Thousands of artists want their work to be reproduced."

The print heads can be configured in very large arrays. As the technology continues to develop, print quality and printing speed will reach even higher performance
Dr. Nicholas Hellmuth

UAE: Giffin Graphics holds pre-Ipex KBA seminar



Ramzy Kteily (third from left), managing partner of Giffin Graphics speaking at the event

Giffin Graphics, the regional distributors of KBA and other popular brands held a pre-Ipex seminar to familiarize customers and prospective customers from the UAE, Oman, Qatar and Bahrain about KBA's offerings at Ipex. The event was held at the Hyatt Hotel in Dubai recently. Opening the seminar, Ramzy Kteily, managing partner of Giffin Graphics spoke about the company's longstanding relationship with KBA since 1982. He referred to over 35 KBA installations of sheetfed presses including the Rapida 74, 104 and 105 in the region. Thomas Kagemann, KBA sales director responsible for the Middle East and North Africa gave an overview

of the company's plans for Ipex. Under the banner, 'Champions in Print' KBA will show its B3 to B1 embedded with JDF workflows. The new-generation 18,000sph Rapida 105 will be shown. The model that will be displayed will be a ten-colour perfecter with sheetfed. The B2 press that KBA is showing is a Performa 74 five-colour anilox coater press built by the group's Czech subsidiary, KBA-Grafitec. "It will be the first of its kind in the UK. The Performa 74 and its sister press, the SRA2 Performa 66, are entry-level presses addressing the low-budget end of the market. Visitors will be able to see a 10 minute total change over including plates and the first sellable sheet in Ipex,"

said Kagemann. The third exhibit on the KBA stand will be a Genius 52 five-colour UV coater press. The Genius 52 targets the high end of the short-run offset market. Another exhibit, Universys is an automated, modular system for personalising gift cards, membership cards, prepaid cards etc with PIN numbers, barcodes, serial numbers, scratch-off patches and personal data. "For anyone interested in the latest CTP systems or plate-making in a networked production environment the pre-press area on the KBA stand also boasts a number of attractions, among them Kodak's new Magnus 800 medium-format thermal platesetter. Demos will be given of Kodak's new MIS

device along with the Hiflex and Rogler systems already embedded with Rapida presses in numerous JDF networks," he said adding that the market for larger presses is evolving. He also mentioned KBA's role in the offset packaging market, and its sheetfed flexo press for the corrugated market, the Corrugraph and the drier for different sheet fed presses. He added that visitors to Ipex keen to find out more about KBA's LF and VLF press technology will have the chance to visit production plants near Birmingham.

