

# Which Trade Shows are Worthwhile Visiting in 2012-2013



to learn about  
Large Format Printers  
Scanners & Digital Cameras



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Your only assurance that you have a complete and authentic evaluation which describes all aspects of the product under consideration, benefits as well as deficiencies, is to obtain these reports directly from FLAAR, via [www.wide-format-printers.NET](http://www.wide-format-printers.NET).

## Introduction

Visiting trade shows is a good way to learn about large format digital imaging. But which trade show? Several of the greatest trade shows of all times have either disappeared (Big Picture Show, DPI) or are fading so fast they are too small to attract many exhibitors, or visitors (Graphics of the Americas in Miami). Some trade shows that were must-see five years ago (with even ColorSpan, Mimaki, and others exhibiting), have sunk to becoming not much more than a consumer electronics show and entry-level photo devices. (PMA).

After attending trade shows for about ten years in order to review hardware and software it occurred to me that our readers might enjoy a review of the trade shows themselves.

Since FLAAR receives countless e-mails asking for us to recommend training courses, and since some training programs are associated with trade shows, we decided to cover both trade shows and seminars in two separate reports.

This report discusses trade shows

- For the USA
- For Europe

Appendix A covers trade shows that are defunct or barely lingering (in other words, not as good as the ones we recommend in the “alive and well” section.

- BigPicture Show
- Comdex
- DPI (now part of SGIA)
- Seybold San Francisco
- Seybold Boston / Seybold New York



*Nikon booth at PMA 2009 .*

## Trade shows as one part of a learning process

If you are about to spend your hard-earned money on a printer, scanner, RIP, digital camera or other product, you need to acquire sufficient facts that you can make a well-informed decision.

Millions of people have found that visiting a trade show is a valid educational experience. Even university deans, department chairpersons, and professors visit trade shows to decide what equipment to purchase for their college or university. All the more so for people in business. After all, that's why trade shows exist.

But be sure to balance your trade show experiences with learning from actual installations in a functioning real-world prepress shop, photo lab, quick-print, in-house corporate print shop, sign shop, fine art giclée studio, or whatever your field of endeavor is.



Here FLAAR is inspecting the Grapo Manta UV flatbed in a screen printing company in Hamburg (November 2008). This same printing company also had a Grapo Octopus II combo UV printer.



Here is Nicholas out in the real world, far from a trade show, inspecting the Gerber Solara ion in a printshop in Chicago, December 2008.

Attending a trade show is a good first step, but it is equally important to visit printing companies that can reveal the truth about a printer, laminator, or XY flatbed cutter. That's why FLAAR goes out to visit sign shops, architectural firms, prepress companies, photo studios; we also conduct telephone interviews of owners/users of scanners, RIPs, wide format inkjet printers and related equipment. And most importantly, we have had in past years 27 inkjet printers in-house, so we definitely acquire personal experience ourselves.

In other words, visiting a trade show for us is only one aspect of learning about equipment. What we find helpful about a trade show is where else can you find three brands of XY cutters, five brands of laminators and nine brands of wide format printers within 100 feet of each other? At the large international trade shows you can usually find the six leading RIP manufacturers all in a single booth.

For us as reviewers it is invaluable to learn which printers are fully functioning and which printers are stalled, banding, or inoperable. If a printer does not even function in the manufacturer's own booth, it would seem a good tidbit to know.

Then there are the rare moments when a printer does not even appear: the infamous vaporware. CrystalJet set the record as a no-show in 1999. Then the Kodak 5260 worked hard to match CrystalJet's record during 2001-2002.

Another learning experience is to recognize what kind of hype, nonsense or misinformation you get from the manufacturer's own booth. This usually tells you the weak points of their printer (that's what the hype is supposed to cover over, to smoothen you with glib claims so you don't notice what the printer is incapable of doing). The Océ Arizona 60UV was "too good to believe" when it was shown trade show after trade show. Scores of people placed orders for it; yet the printer did not function adequately and was withdrawn. We commend Océ for being ethical enough not to sell a faulty printer. Yet deficient printers were sold from 2002 through 2003: these are the jerry-rigged solvent ink and eco-solvent printers on a Roland chassis. They looked wonderful in a trade show booth, but in reality they had severe problems. It took Roland almost three years to come out with an eco-solvent ink and printer that worked.

Tiara's retrofitted lite-solvent printers also looked lovely in a trade show booth, but seemingly had a multitude of issues. In 2005 not one Lyson booth had any more Tiara printers on display. Tiara went bankrupt that year.

So a trade show can be extremely misleading... if you do not know what questions to ask, what to watch out for, and how to obtain behind the scenes information. At FLAAR we are privy to considerable documentation and information that is not revealed at trade shows to the casual visitor to the booth. The best solution is to arm yourself with the FLAAR FAQs on UV-cured flatbeds, the FLAAR FAQs on eco-solvent and the separate FLAAR Reports on solvent printers.

Then, with these FLAAR Reports in-hand before the trade show, you will have access to the penetrating questions that enable clever buyers to find out things that are sometimes deliberately missing from the printer spec sheets.

Equally useful is to see in a trade show booth all the nice things that the printer can do just wonderfully. Every printer can do something very well.

FLAAR is not a journalism project: we are photographers (trained architect and art historian actually). So don't expect any journalistic traditions because our goal with the FLAAR Information Network and the FLAAR Reports is very simple: we need to know what is the appropriate printer for our photography and art history institute, and for the architecture and design areas of the universities where we have research facilities. Over the years we have expanded out of photo, art, CAD, into signs, printing on textiles, GIS, UV-curable flatbeds and countless other uses of wide format printers.

And something we often forget, is that visiting a trade show allows us to learn about the qualifications and capabilities of the people behind the product. For example, at an Epson booth you will get abundant enthusiasm from people in the world of fine art and photography. But you will get only the official party line on piezo printheads, and often utter nonsense about the imagined downsides of competing thermal printhead technology. Today, with Epson attempting to sell a solvent printer (GS6000), this kind of signage printer is totally out of place in a fine art booth (besides, you can get essentially the same printer in the Mutoh booth, since that is usually who manufacturers most large-format Epson printers anyway). See, getting your hands on a FLAAR Report is a learning experience.

In the HP booth itself you will get people more oriented to the corporate arena, graphic design, and quick-print markets. At the Mimaki booth you get both the signage world as well as textiles and dye sublimation. Every company has its past history, its style, and its favored philosophy.

Fortunately now you can peruse most of the major national and international trade shows from the comfort of your home or office via the FLAAR Reports. We hope you enjoy this survey of trade shows because we have worked hard to take notes at all these trade shows.



*FLAAR staff at FESPA '09. From left to right, Pablo Martinez, technical writer for solvent printers evaluating the inks at InkWin booth; Jose Melgar, technical writer for UV printers holding an Integration Technologies UV lamp; Tina Košir, in charge of photography and technical writer for textile technology, and Dr. Nicholas Hellmuth, president of FLAAR.*

## ***Be aware, be prepared***

How much you actually learn from a trade show visit depends quite a lot on how realistic you are about the hype you get in some booths. Fortunately most booth attendants are honest, and not all blindly repeat official corporate dogma. Where I have found the most misleading commentary is on the differences of piezo versus thermal printheads. Both printhead technologies have their own significant advantages. But in the booth of most printer brands which use Epson piezo heads you often hear imaginary benefits of these heads and even more illusory disadvantages of thermal printheads. Essentially they tell you that bubble jet output is junk. I would ask why my exhibit of photographs keeps getting exhibited at museums? Any what the thousands who have seen these prints like them so much? They are all printed with thermal printheads. Of course they would have looked nice if printed with piezo technology, but the ink purging costs, the slow printing time, the lack of budget after-market media, would have increased the price substantially.

## ***Be careful to learn which days are exhibits and which dates are just fluff and puff***

Some trade shows advertise that the overall event is four or more days long. So you book your flight and hotel, and only after you arrive do you find out that the exhibit is only three days. The first day turns out to be just golf or other non-industry related smoke and mirrors.

## *B.I.G., now the Sign Business and Digital Graphics Show*



Since this trade show is held in several cities every year I had mistakenly assumed it was a really small regional show. So I scheduled only a single day's visit. It turned out that I found more than I expected, and went back a second day. This was the 2001 show in Columbus, OH. It was my impression that the event in 2002 was smaller, as happened throughout the industry.

Yes, it's not as large as PMA, but it seemed larger than DPI (though DPI had many more large format printer exhibitors).

B.I.G. had lots of dye sub exhibits and all kinds of sign making companies. In this sense it was like a regional version of SGIA or ISA (both of which are much larger trade shows).

If I was in the sign business I would enjoy B.I.G. I definitely intend to attend another year and/or another one of their cities.

What I missed most was scanner manufacturers or even scanner resellers. When you are doing inkjet printing, your output is only as good as your input. Not much on digital photography either. It is as if you are supposed to get better prints merely by spending more money on a new printer. Sorry, does not work like that. A better scanner and new digital camera may be even more pertinent.

Otherwise, B.I.G. had a selection of sellers of media, inks (especially for screen printing), and three laminator companies. In most cases the booths were set up by local resellers though often their national product managers or at least a representative of the manufacturer was also present. However if you need to network and speak with the key people in the parent company, they are seldom at these regional shows. Or if so, only for a single day.

If there were any lectures, I did not attend them. We review only training on scanners, digital imaging, digital photography, or large format printers. We do not attend nor comment on lectures which are primarily sales pitches or discussions of "how to sell more of your prints, signs, etc." Those are valid subjects, but FLAAR is more interested in increasing your profits as a result of improved educational conferences, not just on how to increase your sales by clever advertising.

The B.I.G. tradeshow on its own was well worth visiting for the displays. Although we attended the one in Columbus, Ohio, other B.I.G. tradeshow are held in Texas and elsewhere.

Since 2003 the number of cities has been cut back to Indianapolis, Orlando, and Long Beach (California). The trade show has a new name, The Sign Business and Digital Graphics Show. You can read about this in the magazine Sign & Digital Graphics, of National Business Media.

The web site is [www.nbm.com](http://www.nbm.com). The magazine web site is [www.DigitalGraphicsMag.com](http://www.DigitalGraphicsMag.com). Their October 2004 issue has an article on which computer platform is best for handling RIP software. This discussion is by two of the FLAAR + BGSU digital imaging staff. An issue in Autumn 2005 has an article by FLAAR on the FESPA trade show in Germany.

The most recent Sign Business show that FLAAR attended was in Indianapolis in 2006.

## Graphics of the Americas

If you like to visit Miami, if you are from Latin America, then you will enjoy Graphics of the Americas. If you speak Spanish and especially if you need to see the product managers for Latin America, then Graphics of the Americas is worthwhile. Three of us from FLAAR attended in 2002 and found the show very worthwhile. I am still attending GoA ten years later, most recently in 2012.

The 2003 event was well attended and we learned a lot while attending. We also attended in 2004 and four of us from FLAAR attended the 2005 event in Miami. FLAAR has been present every year including 2008. Then we skipped 2009 but did attend in 2010.

Unfortunately 2008 was the year of DRUPA and FESPA Digital both. So many big manufactures pulled out of GoA. EFI/VUTEk pulled out (they have been cutting costs everywhere, evidently issues with Jettron label printers). DuPont was of course no longer here, nor was Flora. In fact most Chinese manufacturers pulled out (except for Teckwin, Infiniti and whoever sells to SID).

GoA also includes copiers and offset printing to a limited degree. Unfortunately the variable-data short-run digital press section pulled out and only a lone HP Indigo was present.

By 2010 the show had shrunk to one hall, but it was still viable. In 2011 GoA moves to Orlando; fortunately the 2012 GoA returned to Miami, which is a more appropriate location for it. There is a probability that the expo will be under new management by next year. Considering how much the show has shrunk every year over the past four years, it would be time now to rejuvenate it. The venue has potential but definitely needs to be completely restructured from the ground up (and moving it to Orlando is not the way to start). I hope that the show is given new direction so that it can grow and prosper.

For 2011 the GoA was held in conjunction with the new FESPA Americas. But FESPA abandoned GoA shortly thereafter and FESPA bought an expo in Brazil instead!. However GoA 2012 was a viable event even without FESPA co-locating. Reportedly Graphics of the Americas 2013 will be in Orlando.



Graphic of the Americas 2010.





*Graphic of the Americas 2011 general view.*



*FLAAR Reports booth at Graphic of the Americas 2011.*

## GraphExpo (every fourth year called "PRINT")

GraphExpo is held every year except in years when "Print" is held (such as Print '01, Print '05, etc). So Print '09 will be a special event. FLAAR had a booth there.

GraphExpo has the pre-press scanner companies and some wide-format printer booths, but the main show is dedicated the pre-press plate burners and heavy iron (Heidelberg presses). If you live in Chicago, go for it. But you will probably find more of interest at SGIA which is a few weeks after GraphExpo. Yet in 2008 every booth manager at Graph Expo said he had more printshop owners and managers in their booth at Graph Expo than they had at their booth in SGIA a few weeks before (this was mainly because SGIA made the mistake of selecting Atlanta that year; an unpopular destination).

GraphExpo '02 had booths of at least three scanner companies (Creo, Screen, and Fuji) and several wide format inkjet printer exhibitors (Encad, HP, ColorSpan, and a few others).

At GraphExpo '03 Screen and Esko Graphics were still exhibiting but we did not see scanners at either. But Fuji and Creo both had several scanners on exhibit. We did not see Aztek at GraphExpo '03. Otherwise GraphExpo '03 was substantially better in every respect (for wide format digital imaging) this year as compared with 2002. There were more laminating, RIP, and wide format companies. Inkjet media was represented primarily by InteliCoat (formerly Rexam). But if you looked hard for proofing media you could find this at Mitsubishi, Konica, and perhaps elsewhere. Overall,

based on the notable improvement, we now list GraphExpo as a trade show worth visiting, especially since Chicago is an outstanding destination, especially if you like urban architecture.

For the last several years this trade show has organized a Wide Format Pavilion. This way you can more easily find wide-format inkjet products: printers, inks, media, and RIP software all in one area. We have separate FLAAR Reports on this trade show every year.

The web site is [www.GraphExpo.com](http://www.GraphExpo.com). The full official name of the event is Graph Expo and Converting Expo 2008 (except that in 2009 It was named "Print"). The venue is in McCormick Place South, in Chicago. This is a great city to visit.

The 2009 show was too long: the first two days were poorly attended and the last day was poorly attended. The middle days had good attendance.

Nicholas Hellmuth has lectured at GraphExpo in 2006, 2007, 2008 and 2009. But this lecture series is ending so we are not sure whether we will return in 2010. Besides, we have been invited to

If the event in 2010 is four days, that is one day too many. Three days is max since there are not many media or substrates booths and only a few large-format printer booths. Most manufacturers now exhibit at ISA or SGIA or both.



At left photo you can see Diana Zea at FLAAR booth, PRINT 09. At right, general view of the entrance of this trade show.

FLAAR offers professional consulting services to take printshop owners, managers, and printer operators personally from booth to booth at Graph Expo to review each printer on the spot in person. Contact [FrontDesk@FLAAR.org](mailto:FrontDesk@FLAAR.org) if you wish to contract for this professional service. It is offered on the morning of the first day, for three hours. In some circumstances it can be offered at other times.



*General view of Graph Expo 2011.*

I attended Graph Expo 2011 only because two new printers were launched here (before SGIA). Otherwise, the only reason for going to Graph Expo 2012 would be if you are a fanatic and simply are keen to keep learning about printers.

Graph Expo is weak in wide-format inkjet media, and does not have many after-market ink companies (for wide-format). You get more options at ISA or SGIA or even at Graphics of the Americas.

Since 2012 is a "DRUPA Year" all the offset presses of Graph Expo will already be exhibited at DRUPA in May.

The lecture program at Graph Expo dumped wide-format printer topics about two years ago. It is tough to try to be viable in the world of inkjet printing if your expo focuses primarily on office copiers, toner printers, and offset printers. We hope Graph Expo can somehow better understand reality, but so far I don't see much initiative. Dropping wide-format inkjet as a topic was not a good idea. Dropping the wide-format inkjet pavilion was also a sad fact (wide-format distributors understandably prefer ISA, SGIA, or even GoA).

## IFAI

This is a textile trade show. Because it is small, I have not yet been inspired to visit. Its web site touts its success, but I spoke with one printer manufacturer who said their 2009 expo was worse than he expected (not enough buyers and no sales of the equipment he exhibited).

As an expo for tents, car ports, and architectural technical textiles, IFAI is okay. But for wide-format printing on fabrics, ITMA is far better.

[www.ifai.com](http://www.ifai.com)

## Macintosh trade shows

Mac trade shows have lots of software but not many scanners, not much photography, less RIPs, and not many large format printers. Thus I have never been tempted.

Although FLAAR was originally 90% Macintosh, we are not entirely convinced it's up to par with the faster PCs nowadays. Every FLAAR Report is written on a Mac, but our two G4 Mac laptops fall apart with planned obsolescence (the hinges on the monitor breaks and overall the bodies just can't take traveling. Other users of Mac laptops on our university campus report the identical problems with Mac laptops: they are not very well made. Our G5 MacBook Pro is now wearing out too.

But if you are a fervent believer in Macs, attend a Mac revival such as MacWorld.

## ArtExpo and Décor Expo

If you are interested in fine art photography and giclee, ArtExpo in New York is the best show for you. It is about 5% fine art photography and 60% giclee (the rest are originals or screen prints or lithographs). The New York venue is the largest giclee trade show in the world. FLAAR has separate reports on this event.

DecorExpo Atlanta and Baltimore, and ArtExpo Las Vegas, are not as large. None of the venues outside New York has been successful.

I have attended ArtExpo the last four years. I attended twice in Atlanta. DecorExpo is primarily mounting and framing, so is not a venue that features wide-format inkjet giclee printing (FLAAR is a research institute dedicated more to the digitization and printing aspects, not as much to the framing aspects).

I highly recommend ArtExpo, but only the New York venue, if you are a painter, either a hobby painter or a pro. If you are a fine art photographer, you will find at least 10 to 20 booths, but for giclee there are hundreds and hundreds of booths. Exhibitors come from Russia, Armenia, France, Canada, Latin America: it is very cosmopolitan.

ArtExpo shrunk in half between 2007 and 2010 but the 2010 show still had life, albeit was at Pier 94 and no longer in the expensive Javit's Center. I did not bother to attend in 2011. The 2012 event is the same days as a larger wide-format inkjet printer expo, so I will skip ArtExpo again.



ArtExpo New York 2010.



*ArtExpo entrance, New York 2009.*



*ArtExpo 2008, held in New York.*



*Carl Borgia paintings, Gary Kerr giclee atelier at ArtExpo 07*



*Dawn Lundquist at ArtExpo 07*

## PhotoPlus Expo East

[www.PDN-PIX.com](http://www.PDN-PIX.com)

For anyone on the East Coast and especially anyone near New York this is a good choice for a photography trade show: better than PMA if you seek mid-range to professional equipment. Of course this is mainly a show dedicated to input, specifically photographic input (what do you feed your large format printer). Most other trade shows are woefully sparse in the input aspect.

PhotoEast was worthwhile attending the year even after September 11th, though not as large as PMA photography tradeshow or Seybold digital imaging tradeshow. But Seybold faded from the scene several years ago and now PMA has been going downhill gradually each year. I skipped PMA in 2008 all together, but did attend PhotoPlus East (albeit only for one day).

Sometimes this is labeled as "PhotoExpo East," but increasingly as "PhotoPlus." It is all the same tradeshow.

What was good about PhotoExpo East were the training areas. One whole section of the convention center was set aside for demos, where people showed how to use scanners and cameras.

Usually I do not attend any of the lectures because I had only two days to cover the exhibits (since SGIA or

ISA was the same identical week and I had to attend first and then squeeze in the other). For year 2003 the two tradeshow seem to have finally realized it was stupid to overlap.

But I notice for 2001 that all kinds of lecture programs were available. The question is, how do these compare to the "how to sell more products" lectures of regional tradeshow, vs the more informative kind of lecture program at Big Picture and IMI.

Seybold used to have great lectures but they got very expensive and two general. Their final year I did not even bother to look at the list.

For PhotoExpo East, check back in for our review of this event. Also consider PhotoExpo WEST. We have never attended that. Seems not to be as large as the eastern version.

I had to skip PhotoPlus 2007 because I was occupied elsewhere, but I attended PhotoPlus 2010 and 2011. Since 2012 is a "Photokina Year" I may find enough at Photokina; hardly worth it going all the way to New York a few weeks later to see only 15% of what you already just saw at Photokina.

But for 2013, PhotoPlus will be worth attending.



Nicholas at Wescott booth, PhotoPlus 2011.



Wacom booth, PhotoPlus 2011.

**PMA**

PMA used to be an excellent trade show for photography equipment. In past years PMA was slightly larger than PhotoExpo East. But PMA gradually turned into an electronics show, not for serious photographers. 2008 was a particularly rough year for PMA since this is the year for Photokina, which is the Mecca for professional photographers.

The seminars at PMA are what I would call motivational, namely, how to increase sales. So these are not really training in technology. Perhaps such seminars exist but I did not notice many.

Most trade show websites are confusing when you attempt to figure out which days have exhibits and which days have lectures.

We recommend PMA to visit as a trade show in you are beginning or intermediate in level. But for training in photography technique and equipment, that aspect has not yet impressed us, but that's because PMA stands for marketing association; this is not a trade

show for how to take digital photos.

However by no means do all companies exhibit at PMA. Arca-Swiss did not exhibit for example. These and others were at PhotoExpo East.

We attended PMA faithfully every year until 2008. We prefer PMA, Photokina, and PhotoPlus rather than the smaller shows of PPOfA, mainly out of habit. I skipped PMA in 2008 but did attend in 2009 in Las Vegas (and felt it worthwhile).

As water-based printers gradually became replaced by UV-cured and solvent-based printers, fewer and fewer printer companies exhibited at PMA. So now it is mainly camera companies, studio equipment (backdrops), and companies that make or sell accessories. Of the printer companies, only Epson, Canon, and HP even consider exhibiting.

PMA offers free booze to all the attendants three out of the four nights. I don't see how they can afford this. If you are clever you can usually find

people with plenty of extra drink tickets. We were at a table that had about 60 extra tickets! Obviously we could not drink this much, though we did our best. After a long day of walking miles back and forth up and down the aisles, it helps to relax a bit in the evening. Besides, we learn a great deal during informal discussions.

I may consider visiting in 2010, but am undecided whether it's worth the time. I will have to look at their exhibitor list. Canon has already pulled out: not a good sign. Also, Anaheim is dull compared with Las Vegas or Orlando. But there is more potential for business meetings in the Los Angeles area. But my schedule filled up with other opportunities, so I skipped PMA in 2010. I also skipped 2011 (as did many other people and exhibitors). Actually PMA collapsed in 2011 and had no expo!

PMA attempted to resurrect themselves in 2012 by co-locating with CES (Consumer Electronics Show), creating PMA@CES. There are four FLAAR Reports on this 2012 event.



*PMA@CES 2012 entrance view.*



## SGIA



*FLAAR team at SGIA 2010.*

If you are a sign maker then either SGIA or ISA is essential. You get all the key grand format printers and screen printers as well.

I have been to both SGIA and ISA and it's tough to decide which is better. For signs they are both essential each in their own way. For large format printers you also see a lot, though HP did not exhibit at SGIA previously. HP was at ISA but a rather weak presence. Epson was not at ISA 2001 or 2003 at all, in part because their printers are too slow for commercial output when compared with Encad, ColorSpan, Canon, or HP (all of which use thermal printheads which are faster and more efficient than piezo printheads).

SGIA is especially good for UV curable ink flatbeds. We find SGIA valuable to attend if you are interested in inkjet printers in general.

DPI has their conferences during the SGIA event. Downside is that you don't always have time to attend all the conferences and still have time to see all the exhibits and booths.

It would help if major trade shows such as SGIA had better equipped Press Rooms, and the Press also appreciated a bit more snacks and food, since other trade shows have full meals twice a day.

SGIA got clobbered by Hurricane Katrina when refugees trashed the New Orleans convention center.

The event was cancelled, and then resurrected by a smaller event held in Phoenix in December. But SGIA 2006 was huge, so we are already looking forward to SGIA 2007. Three or four staff from FLAAR were at SGIA '07. Three of us were at SGIA 08. For 2009 SGIA will be in New Orleans, and at least three of us will be there. But this is the first year the show is reduced from four days to three days. This is because exhibitors complain that the costs for hotels and meals for the fourth day is just too much.

SGIA 2009 had an acceptable audience the first two days but was noticeably fewer people the third day. But overall it was rated as an good show.

FLAAR offers professional consulting services to take printshop owners, managers, and printer operators personally from booth to booth at SGIA to review each printer on the spot in person. Contact [FrontDesk@FLAAR.org](mailto:FrontDesk@FLAAR.org) if you wish to contract for this professional service. It is offered on the morning of the first day, for three hours. In some circumstances it can be offered at other times.

New Orleans during the day was so dead it was embarrassing. At night Bourbon Street was crowded and the (overpriced) restaurants were packed. But the casinos, from the outside, looked empty and almost abandoned (though I am sure they were open).

SGIA 2010 had great attendance and I look forward to SGIA 2011; though frankly I hope it can move back to alternating between Orlando and Las Vegas.

2011 attendance must have been lower than expected since SGIA never fully provided their figures for 2011 compared with 2010; SGIA only shows that 2011 was higher than 2009 (suggesting 2011 was lower than 2010). We hope SGIA gets better for 2012.



SGIA 2011, general view.

## ISA

ISA 2002 had all the grand format companies fully represented: Nur, Scitex Vision, and VUTEk. Several Korean and other grand format manufacturers from the Orient were also present.

ColorSpan, Hewlett-Packard, Kodak-Encad, Mutoh, Mimaki, Océ, and Roland all had exhibits. Epson did not have a booth. Too slow for printing signs and posters.

Did not see a single scanner company nor any digital photography company. Hence no digital imaging software.

In RIP software CADlink, ps (at the Hewlett-Packard booth), Evolution (at DigiFab textiles), Wasatch and a mammoth booth of Scanvec-Amiable were present. Before you

decide on a RIP be sure to consult with the FLAAR report on RIPs.

Lots of companies exhibiting textiles for inkjet printers. Most of the textiles were for solvent ink printers, but textiles for normal printers were also visible at 3P Inkjet Textiles, Digi-Fab, Jacquard, and a few other places.

Naturally most of the big players in substrates and media had exhibits.

Sawgrass offered dye sublimation. Otherwise, SGIA has many more exhibits related to heat transfer equipment. Not many heat press manufacturers at ISA, for example.

ISA '03 was filled with wide format inkjet printers, but not as many UV curable ink flatbeds as SGIA. Both

shows are weak on scanners and digital cameras. At ISA '04 we had so many meetings that it was tough to take notes on all the booths.

Four from FLAAR were taking notes at ISA 2005. It is a good trade show to visit, but too short (3 days is not enough for us to take notes on everything). Plus there is no room for the press to use Internet and have munchies while doing our work. Nonetheless, ISA and SGIA are the two key events in the industry in the US, so we attended in 2007. Four staff from FLAAR will be at ISA.

Five of us from FLAAR were at ISA 2010; at least four of us were at ISA 2011. FLAAR will have a booth at ISA 2012.



ISA 08 tradeshow at Orlando, Florida



ISA Sign Expo 2011, hall view.

FLAAR offers professional consulting services to take printshop owners, managers, and printer operators personally from booth to booth at SGIA to review each printer on the spot in person. Contact [FrontDesk@FLAAR.org](mailto:FrontDesk@FLAAR.org) if you wish to contract for this professional service. It is offered on the morning of the first day, for three hours. In some circumstances it can be offered at other times.

## IRGA

Since this is a small show and mainly for office copiers, I do not attend. I was told that the year 2009 IRGA show was a failure to the point of being embarrassing. For example, "only 30 people showed up at the cocktail part even with free booze available."

I heard the same comment about IRGA show from others, that the 2009 event was dismal. Yet they continue forward, IRGA for 2010 is asking \$75,000 for a 30' x 50' booth, which is fairly substantial.

I have heard that IRGA will co-locate with another expo in the future; otherwise there is not much future for anything other than a small inside group of attendees.

My impression is that IRGA has fizzled and is unlikely to be viable in the future.

[www.IRgA.com](http://www.IRgA.com)

## Sign World USA

Sign World USA is held every year in December in Atlantic City, NJ. I have never attended, probably because it is too much signage and not enough specifically wide-format inkjet printing.

### **Here is a comment I received from an industry analyst who did attend in 2009:**

If you look at the website <http://www.ussc.org/databases/indexBooths.php> you can see the booth map. It is in error in that it is smaller than the map and the location of the booths had been changed. They say 6000 attendees. I'd be surprised. The OEMs there like Mutoh, Mimaki and Roland say it is a buying show where people spend left over capital money before year end. Most exhibitors are distributors/dealers from the North East US. Not worth the trip.

For a few trade shows, a pre-show map, and pre-show exhibitor list tend to vary from wishful thinking to being

seriously misleading. Yes, some exhibitors do cancel at the last minute, but a trade show organizer should have access to their own web site to remove that exhibitor name. And when booth size is downsized, again, this should be indicated clearly on their web site.

I would comment that "not worth the trip" if you are an analyst but if you live in the northeastern US, and wish to look at basic signage printers, it is a place where you can see the three main brands of eco-solvent printers all under one roof.

I encourage printshop owners to visit pertinent trade shows, and we encourage manufacturers to exhibit. Just that the days of 1998-2005 are long gone. The world has changed.

[www.USSC.org](http://www.USSC.org)

## Sign Expos in Canada

Since there are plenty of sign and printer expos in the USA, I have never been inspired to visit a sign expo in Canada. But if invited I would consider attending, and would write a FLAAR Report about any expo that I might attend in Canada. But frankly with ISA, SGIA, FESPA, and the giant July expo in Brazil, I can't imagine I would find any inks, media, or printers in Canada that I can't find elsewhere, though perhaps XYZ cutters would have a major booth at a Canadian expo.

But if you are a printshop in Canada, the advantage of attending an expo in your home country is that here you can meet and get to know your nearby distributors. This makes going to a Canadian trade show worthwhile.

### **Print World 2012**

Nov 17-19, 2012, downtown Toronto.

Digital, offset, in-house, transactional, sign shops.

[www.PrintWorldShow.com](http://www.PrintWorldShow.com)

## Trade shows in the UK

### IPEX

IPEX is held in Birmingham every several years, in 2002, in 2006, and in 2008. The location is convenient, directly adjacent to the airport. Downside of the location is that hotels with reasonable price tend to be far away. Birmingham is an aging industrial city. I am sure it has some beautiful places to visit, but sure did not see any during three days. No cozy old-town city center; no world-class complex of modern architecture, no parks or riverfront that beckons you to bring your spouse along on the trip.

Roland did not exhibit; I could also not find ColorSpan. Can't remember if Epson was there. Biggest printer booth was Canon, Xerox, and Hewlett-Packard. Many RIP companies exhibited, including PosterJet, but a host of other German RIP companies failed to appear.

Scanners very well represented: Creo, Fuji, Imacon and pre-press scanners as well.

Media for wide format inkjet printers represented but not as much as CeBIT used to offer (before media displays were reportedly banned). Although I am glad I visited IPEX after two days there was not much left to see and I returned home a day early. Probably the most surprising aspect of the trip was to see how many Europeans knew of the FLAAR web sites.

Was very elating to note how many companies from the United Kingdom knew the FLAAR web sites and reports in PDF format.

However after 2 days I felt I had seen everything and left a day early. Glad I went but not sure I would go again. Have not really written this up as a separate tradeshow report. As soon as I return to the office there is too much e-mail to allow me to finish writing.

For 2006 we intended to return, and for all seven days. That is because we now have a UV-cured inkjet printer initiative, and need to gather documentation for our over 45 reports on this subject. We are increasing our coverage of solvent ink printers too. Since FLAAR Reports are read in over 42 countries, and especially in Great Britain, it helps to attend a trade show such as IPEX where most of the folks from English and European companies will be exhibiting.

But, it turned out that ISA was the same days as IPEX. So we checked the exhibitor list for IPEX 2006 and simply could not find enough wide format inkjet exhibitors to warrant the cost of the hotels in Birmingham. Why can't these trade show companies coordinate their schedules so they are not on the same days?

So we cancelled IPEX, and went to ISA 2006. I did not bother to attend IPEX in 2008; Birmingham is too dull and the hotels are too far away from the trade show center at the airport.

For 2010 I will also skip IPEX in part because FESPA is far more value and Munich is 10-times more attractive to visit than Birmingham.

*Sign UK (officially they now call it Sign & Digital UK)*



*Sign & Digital UK 2011.*

For the 2010 show, I see very few printer manufacturers listed, though some could be through distributors (and thus hard to notice in advance).

The other issue is the venue, in Birmingham. The city is more dull than even Atlanta or St Louis (where SGIA has made the mistake to hold its trade shows). But if a show is great a boring city should not be a deterrent. However the lack of hotels (other than airport hotels) near the trade show center could be a factor.

However if you need to do business in the UK, or wish to understand the wide-format printer scene in the UK, this is a good show to consider.

We sent a FLAAR representative to Sign & Digital UK in 2011. We didn't attend in 2012.

[www.signuk.com](http://www.signuk.com)

**CROSS MEDIA 2012**

September 3-4th 2012  
[www.crossmedialive.com](http://www.crossmedialive.com)  
Business Design Centre, London

**Northprint**

May 2013  
[www.northprintexpo.com](http://www.northprintexpo.com)  
United Kingdom

## European Trade Shows

It's more pleasant on your nose to visit European trade shows because solvent ink printers are now banned throughout Europe unless they have a functional exhaust system. This ban includes even trade shows. Thus it remains to be seen whether the new Roland printer qualifies. It got sort of snuck into the last CeBIT with no exhaust or filter on it. Encad dropped its entire solvent ink printer development program in part due to the European ban.

European tradeshow are substantially larger than corresponding events in the USA. Downside is that Europeans smoke like chimneys. The tradeshow areas are cancerous.



*FESPA 07 tradeshow held in Berlin, Germany*

## Photokina

Photokina is held every 2 years in Cologne, Germany. This trade show is well worthwhile. It's huge, the size of seven PMAs all together. At least once in your life you should experience Photokina. Since the FLAAR office in Europe used to be in a suburb of Cologne, it is easy for us to get to Photokina. DRUPA is not that far away either.

If you are a photographer, whether professional, prosumer, or hobby, Photokina is considered the Mecca of all tradeshow. Definitely need to attend once in your life.

The year '02 Photokina was attended by huge crowds. Germans really love tradeshow.

This is a fully international event. I ran into a print shop owner from Mexico City; FLAAR is their consultant. Also ran into an astronomy photographer who works in Chile; he took the FLAAR course on digital photography and ran into me in the aisle.

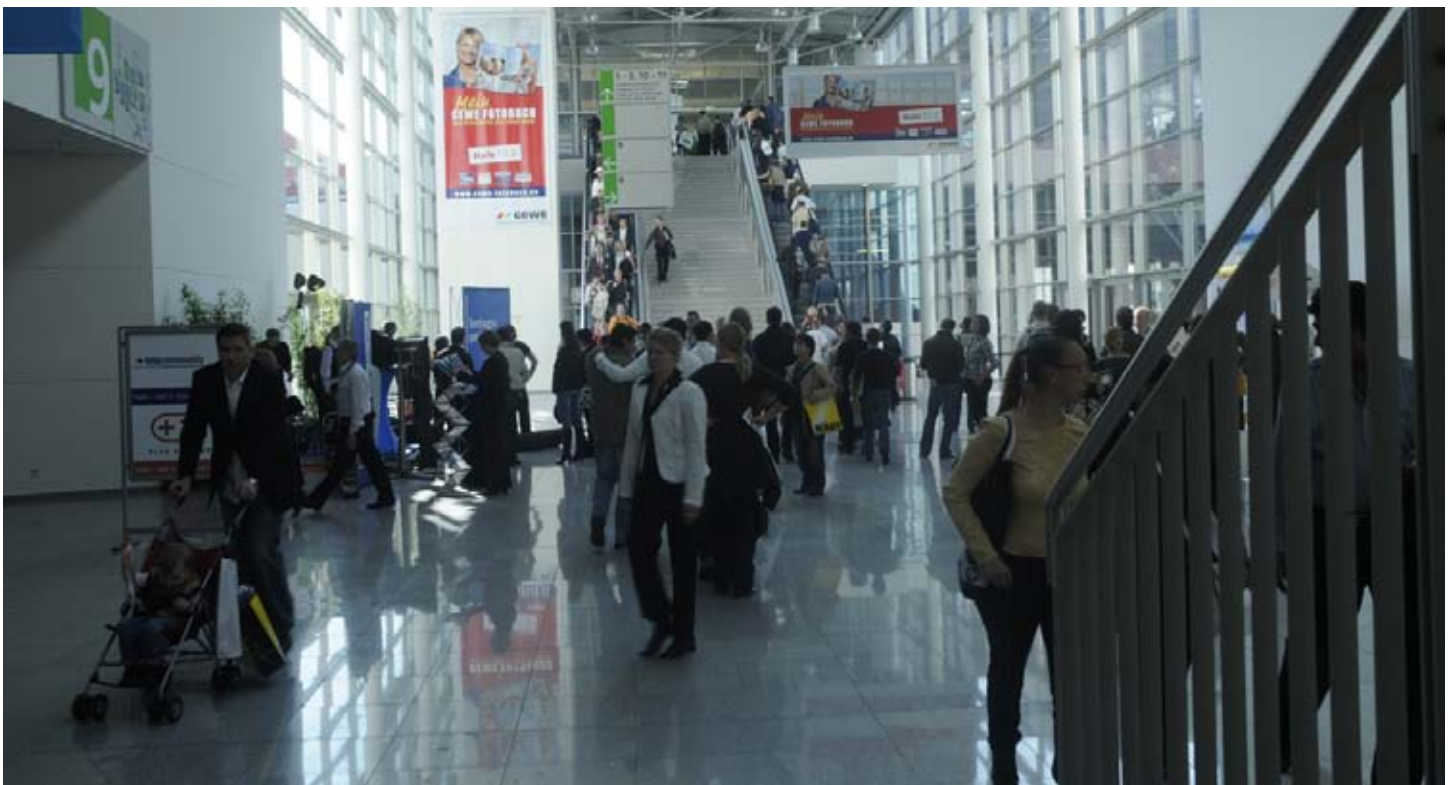
Europeans are also a bit more open about public nudity, so in the photo sessions you get to photograph topless models. However my German girlfriend commented, "why don't they just buy a sex magazine if that's what they want."

Fortunately Photokina is worth going to for more than senseless prurient displays. You get most of the large format and medium format camera manufacturers, in addition to most of the lens companies. Naturally Canon, Nikon and others exhibit as well. Of course many companies have disappeared, such as Minolta, Contax, Bronica, etc. Frankly we do not see Rollei surviving much longer, and Mamiya is struggling. Too bad since both their cameras had their good features, especially Rollei.

The entire trade show area of Cologne was shuffled around during 2005 so the 2006 Photokina was not in all of the same buildings that we were used to from previous years. Many people complained about the new order, but thousands of people still showed up. Since SGIA was the same week as Photokina 06 I had to fly from Las Vegas to Cologne, indeed on the same flight I saw several colleagues who had to do the same jump from one to the other.

However if you attended Photokina in its golden days (1990's) you will notice that today the event does not any longer offer access to all the photography manufacturers. For example, BetterLight has not exhibited for many years (in part because of the lack of non-Smoking laws in German expo centers, and in part because there are few BetterLight distributors in Europe).

Despite the unfortunate downsizing and gradual withdrawal of a few companies, I attended the last four days of Photokina 2008, about the same for 2010 and will definitely attend Photokina 2012.



*Photokina attendees 2008.*



## DRUPA

DRUPA is even larger than Photokina, but held every 4 years. Definitely worth attending (in past years, but frankly FESPA is now better organized). Next DRUPA is in 2012, always in Duesseldorf, near Essen and Cologne.

European trade shows don't always have the lecture or training programs as do American trade shows, but at least you don't get all the inspirational "you can make a zillion dollars with your sign business" motivational type American sales pitch as a lecture topic.

I attended DRUPA 2008 for almost two weeks. But it was poorly organized. It looked as though the trade show organizers decided to move the wide format printer companies as far apart from either other as possible, so as to force you to walk to ten different distant halls. It was as though they were afraid to concentrate all the wide-format printers in just three adjacent halls. They seemed to want to insure there were visitors in each hall (but using a wide-format printer brand as bait).

I would rate DRUPA 2008 as the worst organized in their history, and the poorest of the wide-format printer trade shows: few new model introductions. Plus the local hotels were unrealistic in their excessive pricing. Frankly FESPA Digital, a month or so before, was much nicer, more friendly, better organized, and hotels were HALF the cost of DRUPA hotels (even though FESPA was in Geneva).

It is so simple: just put all the large format printer booths in three or four adjacent halls, period. Put the laminators and inkjet media in the same or adjacent halls. Does not take a PhD to figure this out. Germans are very efficient and good at organizing, so clearly they can do a better job in 2012.

DRUPA is a good example that merely being big is not a guaranteed benefit. For 2012 the expo is scheduled for at least 13 or 14 days long, which is far far too long.



*Drupa attendees 2008.*



*These photos give us an idea of how huge this event is. Drupa 2008.*



## FESPA

FESPA was in Spain several years ago. I wish I had attended, though most of what was there was subsequently at either ISA or SGIA in the USA. The first FESPA I had time to attend was 2005 in Munich, Germany. FLAAR was there taking notes all five days. FESPA 05 was larger than VISCOM Germany and was the most exciting show I have attended all year. FESPA 2007 was in Berlin. We were there for sure.

So if your perspective is international, definitely consider attending one of the FESPA events, either a regular FESPA or the FESPA Digital shows. At FESPA 2007 FLAAR was a major contributor to articles in the official "FESPA Show Daily" published by SIP, the leading German trade magazine. Here are the recent venues:

- FESPA 2010, Munich 22th - 26th June 2010
- FESPA Digital, Hamburg 24th - 26th May 2011.
- FESPA Mexico, 18-20 August 2011, Mexico City
- FESPA Asia, 26 - 28 October 2011, Singapore
- FESPA Digital, 21-24 February 2012, Barcelona
- FESPA Americas, 1-3 March 2012, Miami



Here you can see FLAAR Reports staff at FESPA Hamburg 2011.

FESPA recently bought a Mexico City trade show company. I was lecturing there in August 2008. I attended one other FESPA Mexico but was not inspired to attend in 2011.

FESPA Mexico was well worth the time to visit in 2008 but I did not attend this in 2009 for several reasons: first, high crime in Mexico City, including at the airport. Second, the downturn in the Mexican economy. And third, there was no lecture program to bring me to the show in any event.



*FESPA Digital 2012 entrance, Fira Barcelona.*



*FESPA Digital 2012 general view.*



*FESPA México 2008, here you can see the entrance and a banner of the conferences of that year.*

FESPA India is a very small trade show, with a few dozen exhibitors.

FESPA Asia would have beat all the Korean shows except that the airport was closed down by political opportunists and 90% of the people from outside Thailand were not able to land in Bangkok. I was able to get as far as Tokyo. So I wasted all the airfare and the several days back-and-forth travel. It was a bit irking to see the FESPA Asia web site pretending that everything was just fine, and “the show will go on.”

It did “go on” but I doubt it had more than 3% of the foreign visitors that would have come if there had been a backup emergency plan to get people from Singapore and Tokyo to alternative airports. They offered transportation FROM the alternative airports by land to Bangkok, but did not show what alternative flights could reach those alternative airports.



*Here you can see a panoramic view of FESPA Amsterdam 2009.*

Nonetheless, FESPA is a successful organization elsewhere in the world, and FESPA Digital 2009, in Amsterdam was the best European sign printing trade show of this year.

FESPA 2010 was five days long, in Munich. FESPA 2012, same year as DRUPA, was in Barcelona. I would recommend attending FESPA and skipping DRUPA since hotels in Duesseldorf are scarce and grossly overpriced. Hotels in Hamburg are also overpriced. But unfortunately several manufacturers skipped FESPA and will all attend DRUPA, so no realistic way to avoid the frenzy at DRUPA.

The main issue with FESPA 2013 are the high prices of everything in London, especially hotels.

[www.FESPA.com](http://www.FESPA.com)

## *Grafische Vakbeurs*

I had never heard of this before, but one printer manufacturer mentioned it, so might as well list it. Sounds very small and regional and by no means focused on wide-format inkjet.

[www.grafischevakbeurs.com](http://www.grafischevakbeurs.com)

## *Trade Shows in Turkey*

### *Sign Istanbul*

The main trade show in Turkey is in Sign Istanbul in December. For 2005 their dates are the same as the postponed SGIA-DPI, so I had to wait until 2006 to visit their trade show in Istanbul. If you want to see lots of Chinese solvent ink printers, Turkey is an easy place.

Istanbul is a great city to visit, and I highly recommend attending one trade show in Istanbul. Everyone is helpful and friendly; there is no noticeable crime; the trade show center is modern. Only downside is that this particular trade show area is between one and two hours from the center of Istanbul; so be sure to book a hotel near the trade show (or be prepared for a hideously long commute back and forth every day).

I enjoyed Sign Istanbul 2010 but did not attend in 2011.

[www.ifo.com.tr/sign/index\\_en.php](http://www.ifo.com.tr/sign/index_en.php)



*Sign Istanbul 2010.*

## Outdoor & Indoor

Outdoor & Indoor is a slightly smaller but very pleasant trade show in Istanbul. It is near the airport, so a very convenient location. The people who organize the show are pleasant and my three days there was enjoyable. Istanbul is a fabulous place to visit; I highly recommend doing to a trade show in Turkey.

FLAAR has separate publications on each of the two different trade shows. Each is organized by a completely different group.

[www.cnrexpo.com](http://www.cnrexpo.com)



*Outdoor & Indoor 06 tradeshow hel in Istanbul, Turkey*

## Other European Trade Shows: Reed Exhibitions

### VISCOM Italy

Sign Italy, Visual Communication Italy. FLAAR attended this trade show for three days during November 2005, in Milan, Italy. The FLAAR Reports are read in more than 62 countries, so it is important that we learn about wide format inkjet printing markets in different parts of the world.

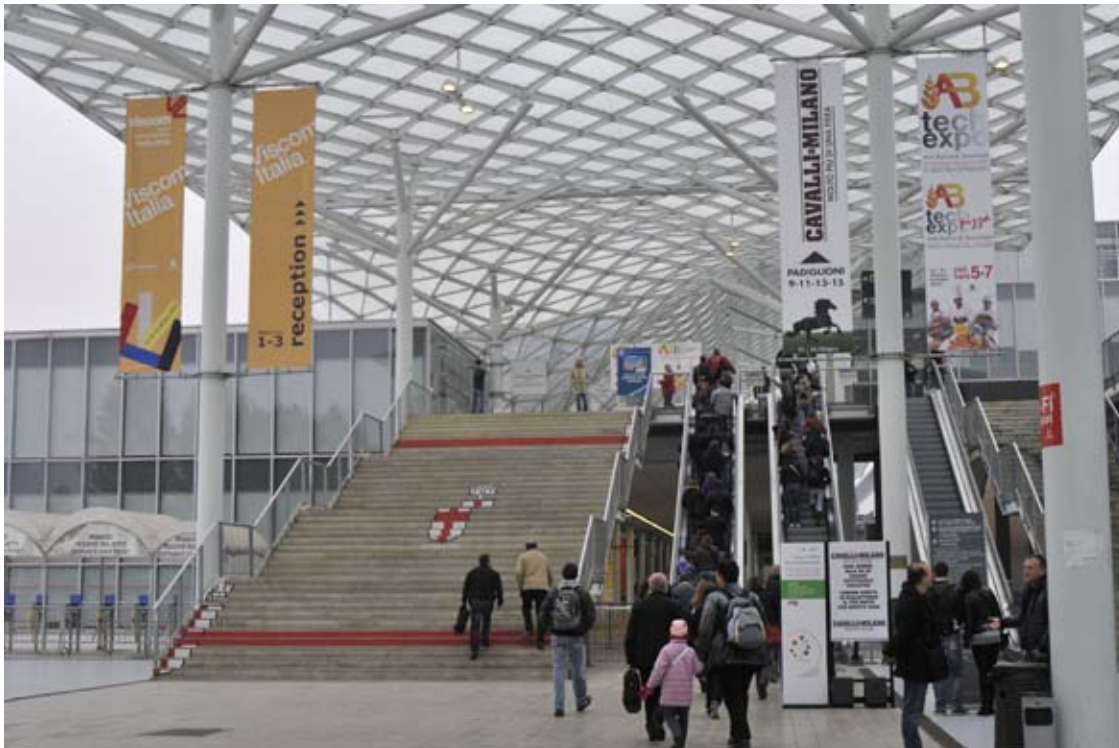


*This is a panoramic view of  
Viscom Italy 2008.*

VISCOM Italy is in an inconvenient location: far from hotels, traffic is so badly managed it took 1 hour to get there for VISCOM Italy '07 (with the taxi ticker running up its bill the entire time) and it took 2 hours to get out of the parking lot at night. The aisles were arranged in a deliberate manner that made half of them dead-ends. The floor map was inexpertly printed in obviously poor quality by a cheap printer (or by someone who did not care about tweaking quality from his machine).

But, if you are clever and book a hotel that is on a direct Subway ride to the fairgrounds, then the distant location is no longer an issue. Milano is a great city to walk around the downtown area (where I would recommend getting your hotel, so you can walk out your door and be within at least seven to ten blocks from the main (Gothic) cathedral.

Shrunk about 30% in 2010, and shrunk even more in 2011. But I still look forward to attending in 2012.



*Viscom Italy 2010 entrance*

## VISCOM France

Between the disorganization and flight delays in Paris airports, to excessive smoking all throughout France, to the legendary way that many French treat visitors to their country, and because the Reed event in Paris is local rather than regional and definitely not international, I have not yet visited this event (until 2009).

If you like to be in Paris, however, there is also this Visual Communications show in France, but airports in Paris are a mess; a noticeable percent of the people in the airport tend to be rude and unhelpful, and the baggage handlers tend to be on strike. After twice having my luggage lost for a week in a Paris airport, I prefer to avoid Paris all together, especially when most of the country is rioting or on strike. Many other business people also tell me they prefer not to have to change planes or land in a Paris airport.



But I decided to attend Paris 2009 VISCOM, the event was pleasant. Organization of the exhibit aisles was occasionally a bit odd, but they had a nice Press Room. There were plenty of exhibits and lots of visitors. Hotels were acceptably priced though getting from the airport (north of Paris) to the exhibit area (southern portion of Paris) is rather costly. But I actually had cab drivers that did not try to cheat me (though this can happen in any country on earth).

The Paris show even gives members of the press a free catalog (VISCOM Spain, if I remember correctly) stonewalls you when you ask for an exhibit catalog and demands payment.

Too bad, since the French people I know personally are all pleasant and Paris is otherwise sometimes enjoyable to visit (other than it being excessively expensive).



*Viscom Paris, France 2011 entrance.*



*Viscom Paris, France 2009 attendance.*

## VISCOM Spain

Twice I have been at VISCOM Spain and enjoyed it. This is one of the nicer Reed events. But for 2009 everyone said that the economy in Spain was so bad that the show this year would not be worth attending, so I skipped it.

I heard later it was the most down-sized show in the world, and a public embarrassment to all involved.

I will skip VISCOM Spain 2010 also. For 2011 I sent one person, who happens to live in Barcelona so getting to Madrid is not overly expensive, and this trade show still has the tendency to disappear.



*Viscom Spain 2011, entrance.*

## VISCOM Germany

VISCOM, held in Germany. Not as large as FESPA, but worth attending if the brands you are looking for are present. But we were disappointed to find no Internet access in the Press Room, and no laser printer available for the Press either.

All the VisCom shows are arranged by Reed Exhibitions. What is confusing is that although Reed organizes them all, there is no consistent name (poor branding). Some are called "Sign" others are called "Viscom." It's confusing as to which is which, and what differences there are, if any. I don't have an MBA, but I do know that brand recognition is crucial.



*Here you can see some of the booths that were present at Viscom Germany 2009.*

## Other trade shows in Europe

### *ExpoVisual 2010, Naples, 16-18 April*

I have never heard of this trade show and thus would have no idea whether it is worth visiting. At least perhaps Naples has finally gotten its infamous garbage trucks back after several years on typical Italian strikes.

[www.edinova.com](http://www.edinova.com)

### *Graphispag 2011, Barcelona, 22-26 March*

Graphispag is celebrated every four years at Spain, it includes wide format printer, digital presses and all kind of screen printing. The last edition were celebrated at Fira Barcelona with Sonimag which is an tradeshow for photographers.

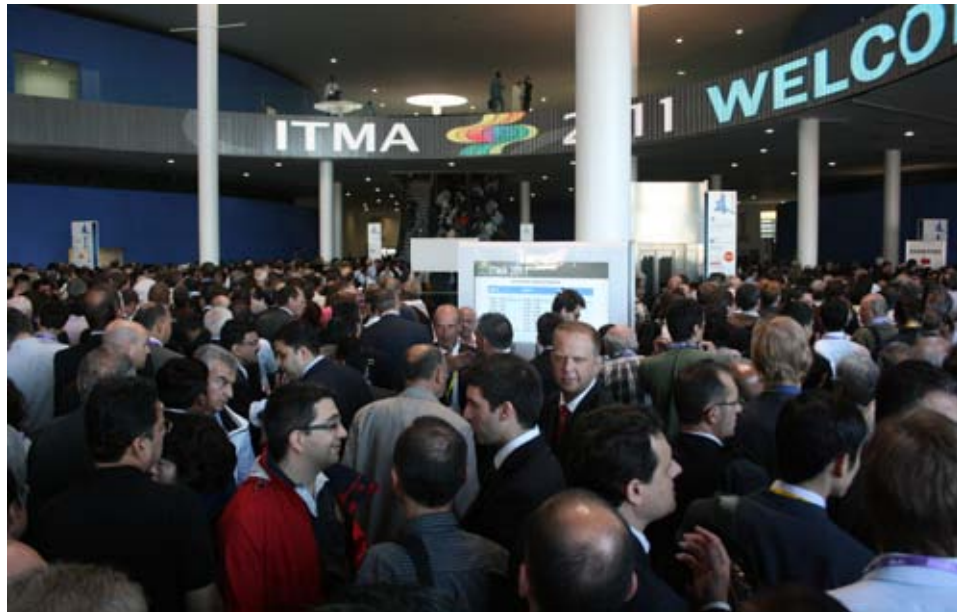
[www.graphispag.com](http://www.graphispag.com)



## ITMA

Is an exhibition of textile printers, which has grown in the area of large format textile digital printing, in 2011 was held in Barcelona and its next edition in Europe will take place at Milan in 2015.

[www.itma.com](http://www.itma.com)



## Sonimag 2011, 23 – 27 March 2011 Barcelona

Sonimag is a fair for photographers and displays all types of photographic equipment. FLAAR visited this trade show because it was at the same time and at the same place that Graphispag 2011 because apparently it is a local trade show.

[www.sonimagfoto.com](http://www.sonimagfoto.com)



## Additional European Trade Shows: Eastern Europe

We are in the process of learning more about sign trade shows in

- Romania
- Russia
- Scandinavia
- And other countries

As soon as we have attended one key trade show in each of these countries we will add this trade show to our FLAAR Reports.

<p><b>Bulgaria</b></p> <p><b>Expo Print &amp; Imaging, autumn</b> <a href="http://www.iec.bg">www.iec.bg</a></p> <p><b>Print Imaging &amp; Sign Expo</b> <a href="http://www.dev.bulgarreklama.com">www.dev.bulgarreklama.com</a> Sofia Bulgaria</p>	<p><b>Brussels</b></p> <p><b>Label Expo Europe</b></p> <p>Brussels Expo 2011. I am glad I attended this show. But because of Reklama Moscow and VISCOM expos that year, I could get to Label Expo for only one day. <a href="http://www.labelexpo-europe.com">www.labelexpo-europe.com</a> Brussels Expo</p> <p><b>Print Brussels 2011</b> <a href="http://www.easyfairs.com">www.easyfairs.com</a> Brussels, Belgium</p>	<p><b>Czech Republic</b></p> <p><b>Reklama Polygraf, Prague, Czech Republic</b>, organized by the M.I.P. Group, <a href="http://www.mip.cz">www.mip.cz</a>. We have not yet attended this event, but the Czech Republic is certainly a great place to visit.</p> <p><b>Print Expo Brno 2011</b> PRINT Expo refers to the traditional international trade show, which was until 2009 held as EmbaxPrint. This year it was held as Print Expo Brno 2011. Czech Republic <a href="http://www.bvv.cz/en/printexpo">www.bvv.cz/en/printexpo</a></p>
<p><b>Finland</b></p> <p><b>Finn Visual</b> <a href="http://www.jklpaviljonki.fi">www.jklpaviljonki.fi</a> Finland</p>		
<p><b>Ireland</b></p> <p><b>Print For Packaging</b> Simmonscourt RDS, Dublin, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4</p>	<p><b>Hungary</b></p> <p><b>Printexpo Hungary</b> <a href="http://www.printexpo.hu">www.printexpo.hu</a> Budapest, Hungary</p>	<p><b>Romania</b></p> <p><b>Digital Print &amp; Sign-Bucharest</b> Bucharest, Romania <a href="http://www.printsign.ro">www.printsign.ro</a></p> <p><b>Printex-Romania</b> Bucharest, Romania</p>

## Russia

### Reklama Moscow

I attended Reklama Moscow in 2010 and 2011 and will return in 2012. However if you do not speak Russian, and if you do not have an interpreter, be sure you realize what traveling in Russia is like.

[www.reklama-expo.ru/en/](http://www.reklama-expo.ru/en/)

### PolygraphInter

[www.polygraphinter.ru](http://www.polygraphinter.ru)

Russia, Moscow, CROCUS EXPO, pav 1, hall 1,2,3,4

## Serbia

### Grafima

[www.grafima-fair.com/](http://www.grafima-fair.com/)

## Swiss

### Suisse Emex 2011

August 23-25 2011

[www.suisse-emex.ch/de/international/english](http://www.suisse-emex.ch/de/international/english)

Zurich, Switzerland

## Ukraine

**T-Rex** is a signage trade show in Kiev, Ukraine. It was not as small a show as I expected, though half the size compared with a VISCOM. But if you come to Kiev, be sure you have a translator with you at all times if you attempt to use the underground subway system. It is a good system but stations are never listed on the walls of the actual station: only on the TV set inside the car. And often the TV set is broken.

At the show itself plenty of people in the booths spoke English.

Hotels are reasonable priced but have little or absolutely no Internet. But you can get easy Internet at MacDonaldis or at most good restaurants.



T-Rex corridors 2009.



T-Rex 2009.

## Trade Shows in Africa & Middle East

### Sign Africa

I was invited to lecture at Sign Africa '08 and again at Sign Africa '09 and found it an educational and enjoyable trade show. I look forward to returning to Johannesburg in 2010. There is a separate FLAAR Report on this show, so I won't repeat here what is already in that separate evaluation.

FLAAR is a VIP guest at Sign Africa and Dr Hellmuth will be giving three lectures there.

I have attended every year recently and look forward to being back in 2012.

[www.signafrica.com](http://www.signafrica.com)

*Panoramic view of some booths at Sign Africa 2011*



## Trade shows in Dubai

I have lectured at both the two different competing trade shows in Dubai. The one earlier in the year has the most grand format printers (Sign & Graphic Imaging). Dubai is a pleasant city to visit: hotels are reasonable cost. There is no crime. I have enjoyed both my visits to the city and the trade show events here.

There are several FLAAR Reports on the Sign & Graphic Imaging expo in Dubai.

FLAAR was a VIP guest at Sign & Graphics Imaging expo in Dubai again in 2011 and we will be attending in 2012 (probably sending two people, as this is the first international printer expo of every new year).

[www.sgi.com](http://www.sgi.com)



### SIM

Abu Dhabi has a friendly city, with no crime. But the show had hiccups in 2011 after IPEX purchased it. It's tough for an expo in Abu Dhabi to grow since the SGI Sign Middle East in Dubai is so well established.

### Beirut Sign

[www.beirutsign.com](http://www.beirutsign.com)

Beirut

### Light Middle East

[www.lightme.net](http://www.lightme.net)

Light Middle East is the Middle East's

### IPPEX Digital Middle East

[www.ipexme.com](http://www.ipexme.com)

This is what SIM turned into; but their 2011 venue was not successful at all.



## Trade shows in Korea and Japan

Korea and China each have several competing trade shows too, but it is a challenge to be on the other side of the globe when there are trade shows simultaneously on two different continents.

A knowledgeable person in Korea said that “Actually there are two major shows, KIPES which targeting industrial market and alternative printing industry and KOSIGN which mainly targeting sign/graphic market though both tradeshows are still quite small compare to the other international shows. As far as I know both shows will be combined together to expect better output.”

FLAAR has an entire Series of FLAAR Reports on Chinese inkjet printers. We also have special reports on Korean printers. In these reports we discuss trade shows in Korea and China.

Japan Shop to be held in Big Sight, Tokyo on Mar.

9 – 12, 2010. I was told by several people in the industry that this is one of best places to see uv-cured printers in Japan. But I was extremely disappointed: all brochures were in pure Japanese language. 99.9% of the attendees were not international. This is a huge difference with Dubai and Chinese shows where most of the foreign distributors are walking the show. Here in Tokyo it is a purely local Japanese event.

And, it is not a wide-format printer show; it is a decoration show: how to decorate your shop (and I don't mean print shop, I mean selling purses, ice cream, real estate...). I am glad I went to experience it, but can not recommend it. Hardly any printer manufacturers: even Canon and Epson and Seiko were not exhibiting!

Most people who have visited the Korean trade shows say that they get smaller and smaller each year. But the Chinese trade shows are much larger in comparison. However I do hope to visit Kosign in november 2012.

## Trade shows in China

There are three or four different printer trade shows in China. The one that is rated as being the best organized is in Shanghai in July each year: APPPEXPO. I recommend this one. I have attended in 2007, 2008, and 2009 and definitely intend to attend in 2010.

### APPPEXPO

This is the major Shanghai show: Int'l Ad, Print, Pack, Paper Expo.

[www.APPPEXPO.com](http://www.APPPEXPO.com)



APPPEXPO, Shanghai 2009.

## D.PES

China International Digital Printers & Engravers & Signage expo.

Held in Dongguan, China the first two years. D-PES moved to Guangzhou in 2012, by which point D-PES was larger than ISA + SGIA put together. For a European comparison, D-PES was larger in 2012 than FESPA Digital + VISCOM put together

[signexpo.dpes.cn](http://signexpo.dpes.cn)



D.PES 2012



## Sign China

Don't confuse Sign China which is in Guangzhou with China Sign Expo which is in Beijing. The Guangzhou show is worth visiting for one day, but allow two days to visit Dongguan show one hour away (approximately the same days as Guangzhou show).

By 2012 the Guangzhou expo lost about 40% of their media and substrate exhibitors who defected and moved across the street to the rival D-PES expo. Only 20% of Chinese printer manufacturers exhibit at Sign China. The other 80% exhibit at D-PES the same week.

So for 2013 you can stay in Guangzhou and visit both expos together. Guangzhou has all the LED and LCD signage. D-PES has most of the printers and half the flatbed cutters.

Together D-PES + Sign China (for printers, inks, and media) are approximately the same size as the printers, inks, and media of APPPEXPO in Shanghai.

[www.SignChinz-gz.com](http://www.SignChinz-gz.com)



*The venue of the Sign China 2010*

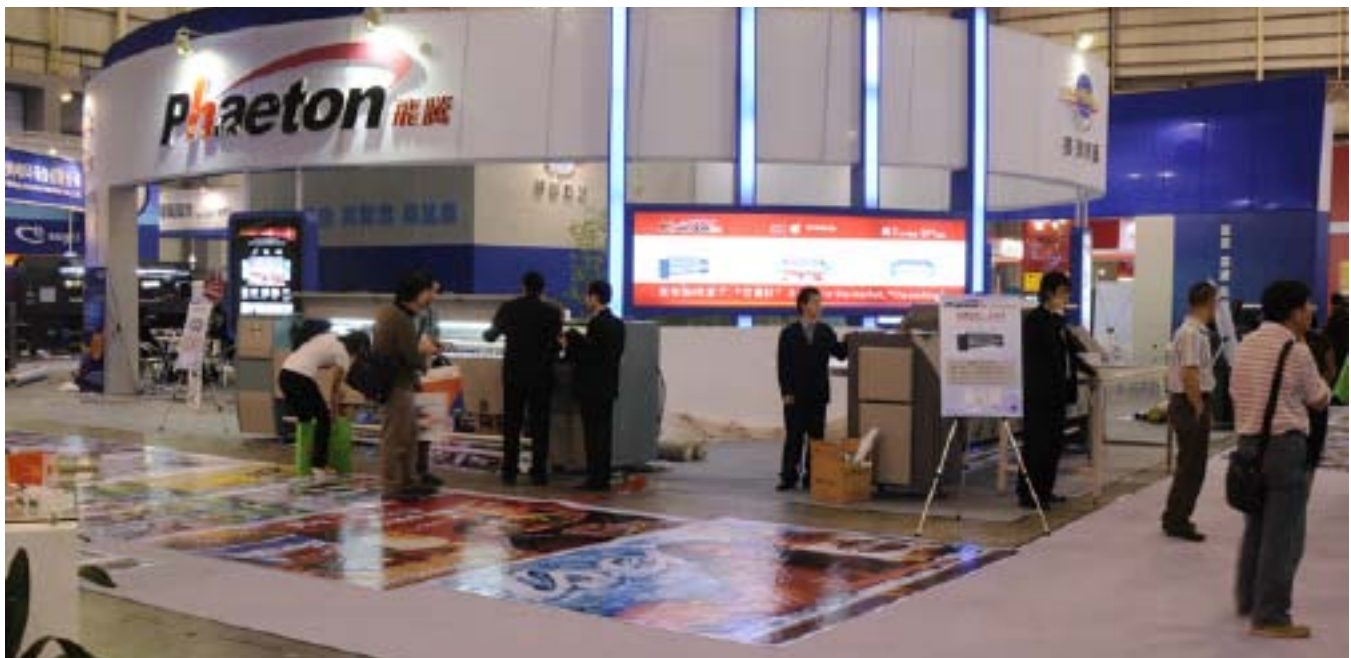
## *China Sign Expo (Dongguan), see D.PES*

2010 was the first year this event was held in Dongguan. It was the result of 90% of the wide-format printer manufacturers of China boycotting the Guangzhou show and moving en-masse to Dongguan, one hour away.

The Dongguan show was great (but not many people in US or Europe realized all the printer manufacturers had abandoned Guangzhou and moved to Dongguan).

There was a shuttle bus to get people back and forth between the two shows. This expo is now in Guangzhou. China Sign is now across the street from Sign China.

[www.chinasignexpo.com](http://www.chinasignexpo.com)



Some booths at China Sign Expo 2010

## *China Sign Expo (Beijing)*

This is considered the smallest of the three major trade shows, but may be better organized than that of Guangzhou. So far I attend only that of APPEXPO, both because it is the largest and because it is relatively well organized. I wanted to attend the year 2010 Beijing event as invited VIP guest, but there was another event elsewhere in the world those same days, so I did not get to this expo.

In 2012 one of the organizers of the China Sign Expo departed and formed his own expo, China Sign Show, in March.

China National Convention Center, Beijing

[www.4nshow.com](http://www.4nshow.com)



## *China Central Sign Show*

China Central Sign Show sounds like a regional or local show. I have never heard anyone speak about it. This expo is held in Zhengzhou.

[www.signshow-zz.com](http://www.signshow-zz.com)

## *China Sign Show*

This is a new event, scheduled for March 10-13, 2012, Beijing.

FLAAR has been invited to be VIP Guest on opening day.

[www.BSS-Beijing.com](http://www.BSS-Beijing.com)

## Trade Shows in Singapore

### *mediaeXpo Asia*

Organized out of India, [www.TheMediaExpo.com](http://www.TheMediaExpo.com)

FESPA Asia for 2011 was in Singapore.

## Trade Shows in Australia

The trade show situation in Australia has been changing a lot in recent years. In 2010 four shows co-located. In 2011 two groups co-located in Sydney for May 2011. Two clients flew me to the 2011 events in May.

In 2010 there was a “Visual Impact Image Expo” during September. Whether this expo will be viable in 2011 only time will tell. I will not attend it unless hosted.

There are evidently also expos in Melbourne; but the ones in Sydney would tend to be larger. I attended to co-located expos in Sydney in 2011, but will probably concentrate on DRUPA for 2012 and return to Australia for 2013.



## Trade Shows elsewhere in Asia

### Indonesia Printing & Paper Expo 2011

Exhibition on Printing and Paper Machinery, Equipment, Supplies in Indonesia, at Jakarta International Expo Kemayoran.

[www.allprintpaperindonesia.com](http://www.allprintpaperindonesia.com)

### Sign Asia Expo

Sign Asia Expo, 8th edition, Digital Sign Asia 2011 (typical to have various play on words as name; but is awkward brand image; a trade show needs to find one name and focus on that).

Oct. 13-16, 2011.

[www.SignAsiaExpo.com](http://www.SignAsiaExpo.com)

### VietAd

The 2nd Vietnam International Advertising Equipment and Technology Exhibition, 18-21 August.

DongNam Promotion.

[www.VietAd.com.vn](http://www.VietAd.com.vn)

## Trade Shows in India

I was guest speaker at a trade show in Mumbai about a decade ago (courtesy of TechNova India). But I have never attended another, in part because they tend to be local rather than international. But I enjoy visiting India and if any new invitations to speak appear, I would attend again.

MediaExpo company arranges exhibitions for indoor and outdoor advertising. You can check out their web sites. The exhibit is in New Delhi.

[www.themediexpo.com](http://www.themediexpo.com)

### FESPA India

I have attended every FESPA in Europe since Munich 2005. I attended FESPA Mexico twice (their first one, in 2008 and then 2010, and enjoyed it), but I have not yet attended FESPA India. As of late March 2010 their web site shows only their 2009 event !

FESPA Asia has never been as much a success as FESPA (Europe). And no expo in Asia outside China can compete with the Chinese expos.

[www.FespaIndia.com](http://www.FespaIndia.com)

## Trade Shows in Latin America

In Guatemala there are occasionally an Open House by HP or a separate Open House by Epson. Otherwise I have never attended any trade show of wide-format inkjet printers in Guatemala. There is, however, a trade show area (Parque Industria). All the Guatemalan distributors and printshop owners go to Graphics of the Americas, ISA or SGIA, and occasionally to FESPA. Perhaps some of them attend FESPA Mexico as well, though ISA and SGIA are popular; as was GoA in the past.

I would estimate it is the same for each other country in Central America: none are large enough for a major trade show, and everyone finds it more productive to attend a really significant international exposition such as either ISA or SGIA, or sometimes FESPA or perhaps DRUPA (in a DRUPA year).

## ***FESPA Mexico***

I attended FESPA Mexico its first year as invited lecturer (2008). When the world economy collapsed, and as crime in Mexico rose, I skipped the FESPA Mexico 2009. I attended in 2010 and gave three lectures there. I skipped FESPA Mexico in 2011.

## ***Mexigrafika***

This show seems more like Graphics of the Americas: offset printing spare parts, office printers (copiers) and very few wide-format inkjet printer manufacturers (especially now that FESPA Mexico is available).

[www.Mexigrafika.com](http://www.Mexigrafika.com)

## ***Digital Image***

Seems to be every two years with next show in 2011. Number of exhibitors quite low (meaning at least an honest count). Covers screening printing and digital printing.

[www.apsfeiras.com.br](http://www.apsfeiras.com.br)

## ***Expoprint Latin America***

Flexo, offset, so by no means dedicated either to digital printing nor specifically to wide-format. Held in Sao Paulo, Brasil, June.

[www.ExpoPrint.com.br](http://www.ExpoPrint.com.br)

## ***Serigrafia, Sign 2010; Serigrafia SIGN FutureTEXTIL 2011***

The main company web site, [www.GrupoSertec.com.br](http://www.GrupoSertec.com.br) a year ago was no help whatsoever. You have to know that you need the events page.

Then you find the page is entirely in the local language: Portuguese of course for Brazil. No problema for us because we are lucky to be multi-lingual, but a challenge for the rest of the world for whom Spanish or Portuguese is not familiar.

Most people in USA and Europe comment that "this is the trade show in Latin America to go to." But curious that the organizer calls it screen printing. In the rest of the world screen printing is dead years ago. FESPA and SGIA are both screen printing organizations; both abandoned focusing on screen printing already many

years in the past.

3 halls; claims to have 42,000 visitors in a recent year but I am skeptical of most visitor lists. At least they are honest with number of exhibitors: about 300.

So although the number of exhibitors is not high, the actually number of visitors that we experienced in 2011 was impressive. I would rate this as the best attended sign expo I have been to in many years.

IPEX now owns this event, and there is a lot that can be improved to make the expo more international.

[www.gruposertec.com](http://www.gruposertec.com).



## ExpoPrint Digital

March 13-16, 2012, Sao Paulo, Brazil

This is the current version of what was previously the 2011 Digital Image and Print South America. The names are confusing as one name fades and another name takes over. Confusion is even worse if the expo is not every year.

Now FESPA has bought into a Brazil show. Since IPEX was faster and bought the larger expo in Brazil (the July one), FESPA got the one that was not as well known.

Considering that FESPA co-located with GoA and then abandoned this relationship after only one expo, it will be curious to see how the Brazil marriage works out.

Since the July event is so well known, it will be interesting to see how a March expo can compete.

[www.ExpoPrintDigital.com](http://www.ExpoPrintDigital.com)  
[www.FESPA.com](http://www.FESPA.com)

Too many other trade show hosts claim every 3x3 meter or 10x10 foot area as “one exhibitor.” So if one company as a booth that is 3 x 9 meters or 10 x 30 feet, the host company claims it is “three booths.”

This is a lie and misleading if the host makes this kind of claim. At least one US trade show organizer has used this sleazy manner of advertising.

I also suspect that some trade shows count the number of people who enter the halls. If one person enters all three days, I suspect some organizers could them as three visitors! This is more difficult to prove, but frankly with trade show attendance going down, some organizers are perhaps a bit desperate.

## Summary on Trade Shows

For **scanners**, in past years there were plenty at IPEX, DRUPA, and PMA (but not always the manufacturers). Prepress scanners were also visible at the annual trade show in Chicago (Graph Expo). Scanners were displayed at Graphics of the Americas, but primarily by resellers, not the actual manufacturer. The difference is crucial: at a reseller’s booth you get a sales rep. At the manufacturer’s booth you may get the product manager or other people who know the scanner inside out.

Scanners are noticeably absent at most other trade shows. Hardly any at Big Picture 2000. Scanners were scarce at Seybold ‘02; in general that tradeshow is withering a bit (for 2003 it is even more shrunken). Nowadays, scanners are seldom at any trade show except possibly one or two at Photokina.

If you wish to learn about all the **peripherals** (digital storage devices) then it’s Comdex (which went out of business years ago) or CeBIT in Germany or PMA. Most American trade shows blissfully ignore the reality of how you are supposed to store all your scanned images.



Cruse Scan-Technologie booth at FESPA 07 tradeshow held in Germany

RIP Wasatch tends to exhibit at about half the US and major Western European shows (such as FESPA). PosterJet is only at a few shows in Germany or neighboring countries. Wasatch usually exhibits at ISA and SGIA. You can find Caldera at most European shows, such as FESPA or VISCOM. ErgoSoft exhibits at about 30% of the trade shows that I visit. Although several major RIP companies do not always have a booth, their key personnel are usually walking the floor. So if you wish to meet them, they are around if you can recognize them.



Caldera booth at ISA (Las Vegas) 2009.



Here is Nicholas at Wasatch booth at ISA (Las Vegas) 2009.



ErgoSoft booth at SGIA 2009.

**Large format printers** are at the sign trade shows such as ISA and SGIA, but not everyone (either HP or Epson tend to be absent at one or the other). PMA and PhotoPlus used to be especially good. But large format printer manufacturers are not often exhibiting at PMA any more, since the popular machines today are solvent ink, and these are too smelly for most photo labs. Epson was the main holdout for exhibiting at PMA and PhotoPlus. HP tends to have a smaller conservative booth. But even Epson abandoned PMA in 2010, and PMA collapsed in 2011.

RRoland tends to be at lots of shows. Hewlett-Packard is absent from several trade shows, perhaps figuring most people already know their products. Epson is at the big shows but missing from a few others. Mimaki is metimes present and sometimes not at trade shows other than ISA and SGIA. Mutoh is at SGIA and ISA and some VISCOM venues. Agfa is at only a few, such as Graph Expo, SGIA and ISA.



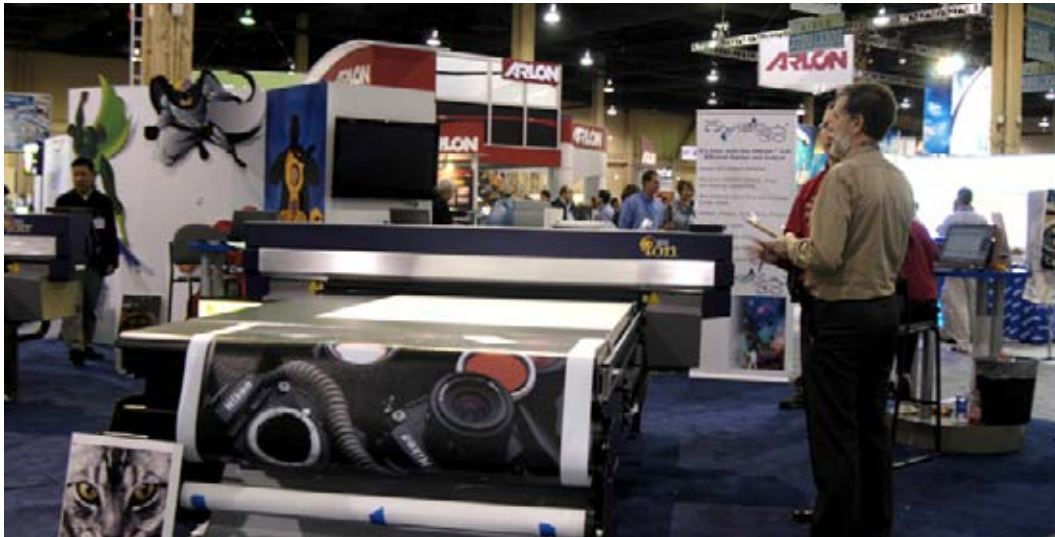
*Roland booth at SGIA 07 tradeshow held in Orlando, Florida*

**Laser printers** tend not to be at trade shows which feature sign making equipment. PMA, Graphics of the Americas and Graph Expo have some laser printers, as do the European trade shows.

**Inkjet media** is no longer allowed to be displayed at CeBIT in Germany, surely one of the silliest decisions ever made. At least that was the idea; once I heard this rumor I did not bother to attend CeBIT '02. Can't remember any inkjet media at GraphExpo '02 but surely it was there somewhere.

Lots of inkjet media at Photokina, but otherwise media displays are becoming scarce. But only two or three inkjet printers were exhibited at Photokina 2008. ISA and SGIA still have some.

If you want to see practically everything in media and substrates, then you need to attend the Chinese expos.



*Use the trade show to make your shopping list: then visit printshops to make your short list. Then, after visiting printing companies where your preferred printer(s) are doing acceptably, make an appointment to visit the manufacturer.*

## Where to find FLAAR at a trade show?

FLAAR had a large exhibit area at SIGGRAPH '03, but that venue is not really our core competency. Otherwise, being non-profit FLAAR does not tend to have a booth. Instead our teams are out on the floor taking notes. However we do carry a cell phone and often can be reached by e-mail as well. If you have purchased 5 series of FLAAR reports and/or have retained FLAAR as a consultant, we will be glad to meet you at a tradeshow, such as a breakfast meeting, dinner meeting, or lunch, and review the new technology on the spot for you.

FLAAR will be walking the floor at GraphExpo, Dubai Middle East Sign trade show, SGIA, PhotoPlus, Graphics of the Americas, PMA, ISA, SGIA and Photokina in 2006. If you wish to meet any of the FLAAR staff at a trade show, and especially if you wish to walk the floor with Dr Hellmuth and get his comments first hand in each pertinent booth, please arrange beforehand for a consulting schedule. If you purchase (before the trade show), a specified number of FLAAR Report series, there is no fee for consulting with Dr Hellmuth at a trade show (we just ask that a meeting time be set up in advance if possible).

For 2010 we were at Graphics of the Americas, Art Expo, ISA, FESPA (Munich), Photokina, SGIA, Dubai, Dongguan (March), Guangzhou (March), Beijing (April), APPPEXPO (Shanghai, July) and at least two of the VISCOM expositions. FLAAR will also be at other trade shows if invitations arrive for speaking or otherwise interacting with the trade show management.

For 2010 we added trade shows in Moscow and Abu Dhabi.

For 2011 we attended all major international trade shows: ISA, SGIA, GoA+FESPA Americas, FESPA Hamburg, Dongguan, Guangzhou, Shanghai, most VISCOM, Reklama Moscow and added trade shows in Barcelona, Australia and Brazil.

For 2012 you can find FLAAR at most major international printer expos. However we rarely have a booth (since we are not selling products). FLAAR is a research and consulting institute.



FLAAR staff at APPEXPO 2011.

## *If you wish professional consulting services*

You will notice that nowhere is our street address provided, nor any telephone. That is because 30,000+ people read [www.wide-format-printers.org](http://www.wide-format-printers.org) a month, generating over a million hits, every month. All the sites together across our overall web network are read by about 100,000 people a month.

Thus we do not reply to snail-mail nor to telephone inquiries at all. We can only handle your requests by e-mail. Unless, unless you are an individual or company that wishes consulting services.

There is a flat consulting fee for Dr Hellmuth to visit your company anywhere in the world and answer all your questions in person. We have consulted in India, Japan, Germany, Greece, Spain, Malta, Mexico, Turkey and naturally in Guatemala (where we have an office). After a relationship is established, you can call and consult by phone anytime you wish, at a fixed hourly rate.

We can sign an NDA before consulting or at any time you request, even before we see your initial material. Inventors will often consult with us to ask where their invention should best be marketed, or whether it has a chance of survival.

Manufacturers often wish to learn what new products end-users really want. Photo labs, fine art giclee studios, museums, universities, home-furnishing printed fabric producers—often they prefer personalized private direct consulting in their own office so all the key people in the company can learn all at once.

Just contact us by e-mail, [FrontDesk@FLAAR.org](mailto:FrontDesk@FLAAR.org), and indicate the nature of your situation. If you wish to walk the trade show floor with Dr Hellmuth, and benefit from his personal description of the pros and cons of the products you are looking for, we offer a consulting during all major trade shows.

## *Appendix A*

### **Trade Shows that Are Dead, or Dying**

#### **The Big Picture Show**

In its day, this was one of the smallest but yet one of the better trade shows for those interested in large format printing. This show is not so much oriented to sign making as is B.I.G. The Big Picture Show has more inkjet printing.

What I liked most of all about The Big Picture Show were the lectures. They had qualified people with factual discussions. There is nothing worse at a trade show than some sales rep touting his products for an hour. You get enough of that on their web sites and at the booth. This kind of promotion is sort of frowned upon at this trade show (though of course you still do get straight forward commercial hard sells at some of the talks). Sales reps, sales managers, and product managers just have it in their blood. But occasionally the other speakers are at arms-length from the manufacturers and can thereby offer comparative critique.

Another nice feature of this trade show is that the lectures are in the morning and the trade show is open in the afternoon and evening. This means you can attend the lectures without worrying about missing all the booths.

In many ways it's unfortunate that such nice trade shows are so poorly attended. In 2000 it was in Palm Springs, California. This meant there was no urban center to draw attendance from (other than Los Angeles). A single FLAAR web site gets more visitors in a week than the entire trade show attracted. I guess the desert location was intended to appeal to the exhibitors, so they could play golf, but you can play golf anywhere. No need for potential buyers to come to this trade show to play golf when you can go to Seybold and learn about digital graphics.

The next year (2001) The Big Picture Show was in Tampa, so it should have attracted people from that part of Florida. The terrorist attacks of Sept 11th, the decline in the economy, and lack of publicity outside the trade magazine circuit resulted in low attendance. I especially noted a lack of students. Considering how many community colleges and universities are in Florida, and that most of them teach photography and related subjects, it seemed a waste that their professors did not bring entire student groups to this tradeshow and to the lectures. It's probably lack of PR to the colleges and universities, after all, students don't buy printers. But the lecture rooms looked rather empty: some had only two or three people attending. Yet the speakers were really good.

Considering that the readership of their nice magazine is rated at 30,000, it's regrettable that more people don't attend. Another reason is that most of these 30,000 readers are in the industry. They make printers, inks, media, or accessories...they aren't potential buyers. That's why FLAAR now includes discussion of tradeshow. Over 240,000 readers a year come to the FLAAR information network to find out what equipment to purchase (in addition to over 30,000 readers from the industry). All these readers also want to know what tradeshow to visit. However so far we have no direct relationship to any specific tradeshow.

In the March/April 2002 issue of The Big Picture magazine they announced the end of their tradeshow and lecture series. One reason they pointed out is because today there are more information sources than when their conference series began. Today you can get tons of material on the internet, the over 1000 pages on the FLAAR information network being an excellent example.

We hope that The Big Picture Conference and Exhibition continues in some future year, since it was one of the best. However if there is no more Big Picture Conference, we recommend those who attended that to switch to the IMI and the Tiara Group programs.

But don't give up reading the Big Picture Magazine. They occasionally have articles that are written by independent outside sources. This magazine is continuing. It is one of our several favorite trade magazines.

## CeBIT

CeBIT is held every year in Hannover, Germany. This is the largest trade show of its kind in the world (much larger than Comdex in the USA). But since CeBIT is about computers in general, digital graphics is only a small portion.

Although PMA and Seybold have more digital imaging, since I lived in Germany for many years I went faithfully to CeBIT each year.

But in 2002 CeBIT stated they would no longer allow inkjet media companies to exhibit. I do not know if that actually happened, but I did not want to waste my travel money to find out, so for the first time I did not attend. I have not attended CeBIT since. I find DRUPA, Photokina, and IPEX better. I tried FESPA in 2005 and found it great. I doubt I will ever attend CeBIT again.

So CeBIT itself exists, just that FESPA and VISCOM have taken over for large format printer markets.

## **Comdex**

In a typically American fashion Comdex is labeled as the “world’s largest computer trade show.” Clearly they have not been to CeBIT (or DRUPA or Photokina). Any of these German shows dwarf’s Comdex totally.

If you like the computer aspect of digital imaging, then Comdex was a good show to attend. Besides, it’s in Las Vegas (which means reasonable airfares). A representative sample of large format printer companies exhibit. However this kind of show is weak in displays of media or substrates. It’s definitely not a sign trade show nor for fine art giclee.

As the economy has slumped, Comdex has fallen in popularity considerably. I have not attended for several years. I do not know how many scanner, digital camera, or wide format inkjet companies exhibit anymore. In fact I don’t even know whether Comdex exists any more as a large enough trade show to make it worthwhile.

## **DPI**

DPI was surprisingly large and well visited in Atlanta 2001. In 2002 it was in Palm Springs, CA, many fewer exhibitor booths, so we decided to skip it. But companies who did exhibit said the visitors were higher quality (people that actually wanted to buy printers, RIPs, media, and ink).

Unfortunately DPI will no longer be a stand-alone exhibit in 2003; instead they offer only lectures, and specifically during the SGIA tradeshow. Thus DPI will drop its own exhibit portion (that is, DPI will not have a separate exhibit, but SGIA of course is still a major tradeshow). The October 2002 SGIA, was in St Louis but their trade show always overlaps with that of PhotoPlus Expo East in New York, so its tough to attend both. Kind of stupid to always schedule on the same day when many people would like to attend both tradeshow.

Downside of the DPI combination with SGIA is there is no way to attend all the lectures and simultaneously attend all the tradeshow.

I noticed that several of the lectures at DPI 2002 seemed very similar to ones already given at either IMI or The Tiara Group. I would recommend you attend the IMI or Tiara conferences because then you can hear them all in a more relaxed atmosphere without the competition of a giant tradeshow in the same building.

## **Gutenberg Festival**

I attended this trade show about 7 years ago, but not recently. If you are in Southern California it’s worth checking out. I remember that several laser printer manufacturer’s exhibited here. Gutenberg Festival was for a short period operated by the same folks who do GraphExpo.

## **Seybold Boston – Seybold New York**

Seybold used to hold tradeshow in Boston but moved the venue to New York. This East Coast tradeshow is in February. In 2002 it had a pathetically small list of exhibitors. With such a small list of exhibitors it does not offer coverage of scanners or wide format inkjet printers. East coast Seybold seems to have disappeared in 2003. Even if held it would not be worthwhile attending.



### Seybold San Francisco

I have been to Seybold San Francisco several times. Seybold San Francisco trade shows have been worth going to until 2002.

The lectures used to be okay for general introduction, but either too many people or too general to get much meat. Besides, the lectures used to cost \$2,595, which is an arm and a leg for a normal mortal. For lectures I prefer IMI. I no longer attended Seybold lectures beginning in 2001 (even free with a press pass). Nowadays the lecture subjects don't seriously include large format digital imaging anymore.

Indeed the overall tone of Seybold is moving over to the Internet, web publishing, PDF software for offset printing. For 2002 the big thing at Seybold was PDF shootout. Sorry, I realize PDF is important for printing and publishing, but I prefer to see all the wide format printers under one roof.

Seybold used to be a relatively large tradeshow: two giant halls in 2000. In 2002 Seybold San Francisco collapsed down to one hall, and 20% of that was filled with free space given to photo and art exhibits. I suspect that Apple got much of its giant booth at bargain prices just to fill the hall. Kodak and Encad did not even show up at all (in 2001 they had a booth space but never showed up to fill the booth since their Kodak 5260 printer was not yet working; now a year later the printer is still not finished).

The general industry consensus is that Seybold has lost its focus. San Francisco is a nice place to visit; the convention center is easy to get around in (by coincidence my father's architectural firm Hellmuth, Obata + Kassabaum architects designed it). But if it were not for the fact that both Roland and HP each presented new printers in 2002 there, I probably would have skipped Seybold.

Industry trade magazines report that the parent company is in deep financial trouble too, since they also run COMDEX, which has fallen on meager earnings during the slump in computer sales. For year 2002 it was early in September because Photokina occupies the later part of September every two years.

2002 was the last year Seybold San Francisco was a full-fledged tradeshow. The 2003 event was so downsized and changed in focus that we did not bother to attend. Too bad, since this had been my favorite wide format tradeshow for many years. Evidently Seybold may have suffered in part due to the downsizing of Comdex; I gather they are both organized by the same company, which either skirted with, or actually went into, bankruptcy (or at least substantial downsizing).

Kind of an expensive bummer if you travel all the way to a trade show and you can't really do serious comparison of all the printers and RIPs and media you are considering. Seybold escaped bankruptcy but emerged as only a shadow of its former self. Seybold San Francisco '03 happened but the exhibits were so few we have decided for the first time ever that it is not worthwhile attending. We could not really find a single seminar or even an individual lecture that was meaningful to our arena of digital imaging. For lectures on topical subjects DPI offers much more at SGIA.

If you live in the Bay Area, you might stop in to peek. However as much as I look for any excuse to be in San Francisco, I cannot justify the airfare or hotel costs for the two or three exhibits, especially when it is doubtful much new will be shown anyway. If you need to do comparative shopping, SGIA, ISA, PMA, PhotoPlus or even Graphics of the Americas are more practical.

## Appendix B

### Misleading booth statistics

About two years ago one of the two largest signage trade shows in the US claimed XYZ booths. But they appeared to cheat: they called every 10x10 space “one booth”, so if a single company had a 10x20’ booth they counted this as “two booths.”

They allegedly were trying to convince everyone that XYZ different companies had booths (to attract more companies to exhibit, and to draw more visitors).

You could use the word misleading, or simply fraudulent.

It is thus sometimes a bit unconvincing when they provide attendee figures, whether they count each time one person enters as an attendee! Hopefully most trade show organizers are honest and ethical and count only individual registered attendees (not how many times they enter and then re-enter the hall another day).

### Misleading floor space statistics

Another ploy is to make your aisles double-width, and to make sitting areas or cafes throughout your expo space. This way you can claim that “total exhibit space was...”. But this is a fake (and misleading) and unethical calculation. You should count only booths which are physically occupied: not aisle space and café spaces.

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#### Most recently updated April 2012

Previously updated September 2001, updated December 2001; updated March 2002, updated April 2002; updated July 2002; August 2002; updated October 2002, updated November 2002; updated January 2003; updated May 2003; updated August 2003; updated September 2003, September 2004, October 2004, March 2005, July 2005, November 2005, January 2006, October 2006, March 2007, June 2007, December 2008, October 2009, April 2010, July 2010 (twice), April 4, 2011, September 2011