



**Wide Format Inkjet & UV-Cured Flatbed Printers  
Making News at FESPA Trade Show,  
May 31-June 4, Munich, Germany**

## Preliminary News from FESPA 2005

FLAAR will be releasing its primary report on new technology from FESPA under contract for a leading US trade magazine.

Once we have released our report through this trade magazine, FLAAR will update several dozen of its popular FLAAR Reports and will issue additional new reports.

FESPA itself is May 31-June 4, 2005, in Munich, Germany. Since FLAAR has an office in Germany for years, and prior to that in Graz, Austria, we know Munich well.

A major advantage of reports by Dr Nicholas is that with a name like Hellmuth you can expect he can converse fluently auf Deutsch, and harvest lots of tips directly in German. Fortunately the reports themselves will all be in English.

## Samples of what we expect to find at FESPA 2005 Trade Show

**Aellora Digital**, along with Mimaki, have the highest quality UV-cured inkjet printing systems. This quality is possible only in uni-directional mode, and only with high quality printheads. Aellora, and Mimaki, both specialize in white ink (though the two companies are totally unrelated). FLAAR covers white ink in a separate report.

It is a challenge to tell whether **AGFA** will survive in wide format inkjet printing. Currently Agfa rebrands some Epson and some Mutoh printers and sells them with rebranded RIPs. Their presence at US trade shows has been minimal at SGIA last year and ISA and PMA this year. Canon, Epson, HP, even Roland and Mutoh, are ahead in market share and in trade show presence too. Even Encad is probably ahead in total printer sales. But in industrial printers, this is where none of these other successful companies are well situated. So it is perhaps in these areas that Agfa will do its best to be innovative. Agfa has a relationship with Xaar and with Thieme.

**ColorSpan** still has the most successful entry level UV-cured flatbed printer. None of the other entry level printers function! (not yet). The ColorSpan 72UVR achieves a fuller gamut of reds and other colors that beat printers costing \$225,000 and up. So we look forward to seeing more output on this, and on their popular Gator. All the secretaries in our offices appreciate having the cute Gator mascots on their desks. One of the BGSU students named her mascot, Al E. Gator.



**Dilli**, in the US sold under the DGI and S.I.M. brand name. The quality of their printers is several years ahead of Chinese competition. Korean products are often ahead of Taiwan printers too. We look forward to what they will show at FESPA.

**Dupont** Ink Jet continues to try hard but it's a competitive market for UV-cured ink flatbed printers. Dupont has done an excellent job of improving the original prototype from FLAAR. But during the year(s) that this has been worked on, ColorSpan, Durst, Inca, and Zund have gobbled up the market.

**Durst** continues to be one of the leaders in UV-cured ink flatbeds in part because it is innovative. Instead of sitting on one product, the same year after year, they keep coming out with new features: spot varnish, white, among others. We look forward to further surprises from Durst at FESPA. We already have our invitation to their press conference: 7 hours long: whew, fortunately it includes lots of their new technology (and a yummy-sounding dinner). Now you can see why it is crucial for you to obtain your news from FLAAR (in this case through the trade magazine for their exclusive). We harvest more information, even more than if you were at the trade show yourself. Plus we speak Deutsch and Español, so we can get the facts directly in the appropriate language, and then translate for you.

**Eastech** skipped all major US trade shows this year, so we have not seen them since either DRUPA or Photokina, both last year in Germany. If we see them at FESPA, we will report their re-appearance.

**Gandinovations** printers continue to be among our favorites, both because the printers produce excellent quality, because their ads are reasonable (not filled with silly and embarrassing hype), and because their managers answer all our questions about the pros and cons of their printers without trying to gild the lily. When a printer is really good you don't have to make up nonsense or smoke and mirrors like imaginary dpi numerology. We will be updating our report on the Gandinnovations JETi 3150 UV flatbed and their current solvent ink printers. A Gandy solvent ink printer is currently installed at the sign shop that prints for our university in Guatemala. They used it to replace two other solvent ink printers that turned out to be inadequate (the FLAAR Reports have all the details).

**Infiniti** tries hard, but their printers, as seen at US trade shows, are not up to the standards expected in Europe.

**Keundo Technology Co., Ltd.** never attracted much attention, but recently we did a site-visit case study of the Kenudo solvent ink printer. In general Korean printers are way ahead of Chinese and even ahead of Taiwan.

**L&P** exhibits in Europe through their partners Spühl. We will see more of what L&P had at ISA 2005.

Although t we have already seen the **Lüscher** JetPrint 3530 when it was introduced at DRUPA 2004, the printer is more mature now. I am curious how they intend to get small material situated in the middle of a 9-foot flatbed printer bed, how they intend to clean each and every sheet (dust especially), and how many people it takes to load and unload such a giant bed. Being bigger may turn out to be akin to the dinosaur syndrome.

**Mimaki** now has white ink for solvent printers. Word on the street is that it is more opaque than that of Roland.

**Mutoh** continues to downplay water-based printers since this market is saturated by HP, Epson, and what's left of Encad, as well as Canon continuing to produce great technology albeit low sales. So Mutoh has to continue to move into eco-solvent and solvent printers.

I will be curious to see if **Neolt** exhibits its UV-flatbed printer that they showed at SGIA last year in the US. Neolt did not display their flatbed in the US since then.

**NUR** offers the only grand format non-flatbed UV-cured ink printer, the NUR Expedio. They also have their impressive NUR Tempo UV-cured ink flatbed. We will be taking notes on all of these.

**Oce** has shed their Arizona 60UV but their T220UV is a much better printer and we wish it success. It was clever of Oce to take on distributorship of the Gandinnovations solvent ink printer since that model runs circles around older traditional solvent ink machines.

**Roland** showed a solvent ink flatbed at DRUPA 2004 but has not shown this at SGIA or ISA in the US. Obviously Roland is working on a flatbed, but with the success of ColorSpan and others, Roland is rather late to the market with theirs. Roland showed an innovative white eco-solvent ink at ISA 2005, but the question is whether it is really opaque enough. We will report back.

**Scitex Vision** does not usually physically show all its printers (due to their bulk). Thus we hope that at FESPA we can see the VEEjet, though we don't count on it. But for printing on corrugated box material, the Scitex Vision CORJet Premium sure produces impressive quality.

**Seiko** has come from the doldrums of oil-based printers to produce the #1 most popular mid-range solvent ink printer, their ColorPainter 64s. This is now available in a stretch model.

**Sericol** is an industry leader partnered with Inca for production speed UV-flatbed printers. They produce more new models than anyone else. For example, one competitor has produced only one lone model, and it has not changed that much in three years now. In distinction Sericol comes out with a new model almost every year.

**Shenzhen Runtianzhi Image Technology** better known for their brand name, FLORA Digital. They have two UV-curable ink printers: an entry level comparable to that of Raster Printers, and a heavy duty model that is the OEM for the Dupont model.

**Tampoprint** had a non-printing demo machine with innovative print samples at DRUPA 2004, but the quality was the worst of any UV printer (with the exception of some Chinese machine). Tampoprint was using some unusual printhead and was trying for the industrial market. If that is their market, then they should not attempt to showcase works of art, table-tops, and other objects that are viewed at close and embarrassing distance. I hope they have new printers, totally different printheads, and improved image quality.

**Thieme** has been absent from the world of inkjet, so far. But they have partnered with Agfa to develop and sell an inkjet printer to the screenprinting market. We just hope the Thieme printers work better than the Thieme website. Both their US and their German website have links that disappear without linking, and downloads that disappear too. Thieme will be showing two new printers: their co-work with Agfa on an inkjet that works together with a screen printing workflow, and a Computer-To-Glass printer using ceramic toner.

**Vutek** showed white ink at ISA 2005, catching up with Durst that had it earlier.

**Zünd** UV flatbed printers improve with each new generation. We like the Zund 250.

I have not yet seen GRAPO on the list, and do not know if they have continued with their UV-cured ink flatbed printer.

I will be curious if the bugaboos of UV-cured ink are gradually being overcome: Inability of most UV inks to reproduce reds. Two company's inks can't even reproduce their own logo colors. Only three UV-cured flatbed printers are acceptable to our picky eyes: we list these in the FLAAR Reports on UV printers, available from [www.wide-format-printers.NET](http://www.wide-format-printers.NET). Look for the link at the right to UV flatbed printers.

Since FESPA is a screenprinters show, the wide format inkjet printers, especially UV-cured flatbeds, are intended to sell into that market. Screen printing companies need digital presses to print runs that are less than 20,000 (screen printing is economical only in runs in the thousands; but if you need to print one, or 10, or 100, it is more economical to print them digitally and thereby not to have to make up the screens).

### **RIP companies will include**

- CADlink Technology
- ColorGate
- (Oce) Onyx PosterShop
- Wasatch

### **Look for new announcements in ink**

A breakthrough in ink for sign printing will be announced at FESPA. Stay tuned. Details will be in the Nicholas Hellmuth article for the leading American trade magazine.

### **Look for new announcements in printheads**

We are on the alert for new printheads, plus how they are set in an array.

## General Comments

As a courtesy to each company that is releasing breakthrough products at FESPA, we do not pre-announce them. We will wait until the products are shown to the public, and then we will comment on these from our perspective. The first release will be via the trade magazine. The present FLAAR comments are to alert print shops to what is coming, very soon.

Compared with Graphics of the Americas, ISA, and SGIA 2003, 2004, there are very few Chinese manufacturers at FESPA, probably because Europe is not the appropriate place to sell cheap, poorly made, entry level equipment. Chinese companies tend to show their products in the USA because lots of Latin American buyers go to trade shows in the US, since they can enjoy Orlando, Miami, and Las Vegas at the same time.

First issued May 2005. The eye-witness report will be sent to the trade magazine from the floor in Munich the first week in June. We will then announce when and where you can obtain this trade magazine once we know its publication date.

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