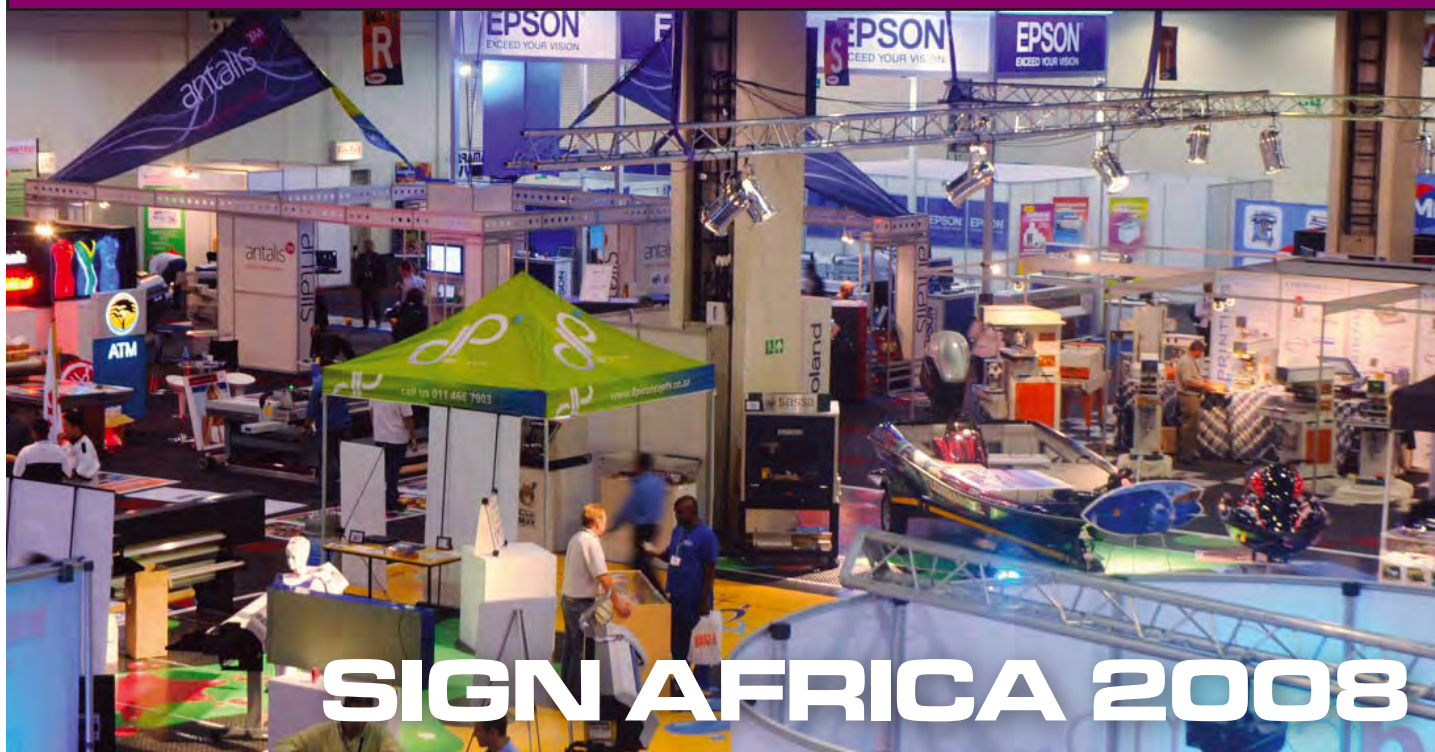


SIGNAGE & INKJET PRINTERS TRADESHOW 2008



By Nicholas Hellmuth

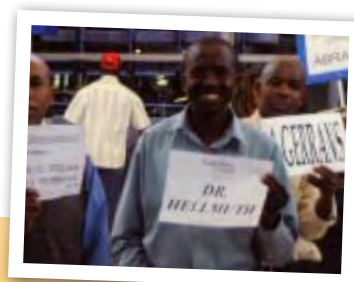
VENUE

Johannesburg is easy to reach by international flights. It is served by both SAA (South African Airways) and Delta. Both have flights from various major European and US cities. The Johannesburg airport is modern and what you would expect for any large successful and growing major city.

The trade show is held in a large modern convention center in the middle of downtown South Africa. There are two or more hotels within easy walking distance; one is directly across the street from the entrance to the convention center. I was put in a hotel two blocks away.

Downtown Johannesburg is so much cleaner, less crowded, and safer than most city centers in other countries there is almost no comparison. I had no hesitation to walk back and forth even in the evening. Naturally I would not have even thought of walking anywhere else at night and I am fully aware of problems in any large urban area in any country with a disparity between rich and poor. Frankly I felt safer walking from the Johannesburg convention center to my hotel than I feel in Atlanta at SGIA trade show walking from their to my hotel any time of the day. Plus there are more people begging on the street in Atlanta (and San Francisco around its trade show center) than I saw in South Africa.

Plus, I felt welcome and comfortable in interactions from my arrival in the airport, in the hotel, and at the trade show center. It is not Orlando or Las Vegas in the sense of being able to stroll around anywhere in the city, but you can't stroll anywhere in the city in Miami when you are attending Graphics of the Americas. In summary, Johannesburg is an appropriate international destination or visiting a trade show.



WATER BASED WIDE FORMAT INKJET PRINTERS

Epson had the largest booth of any water-based printer company (they also had their eco-solvent printer too). It is rare that a water-based brand puts this much emphasis into a signage show, but now that Epson is attempting to compete with Mimaki, Mutoh, and Roland for the eco-solvent market, Epson has to appear at signage shows too.



The Epson 7900 is said to use HDR (high dynamic range) ink in an 11-color configuration.



HP Designjet 8000s

What I did not understand was the Agfa solvent printers in their catalog. These Mutoh-made printers were discontinued in Europe almost two years ago. The printers were okay (they are made by Mutoh Europe and are similar to models also sold later by Oce and Xerox), just that the Agfa ink was reported to be unusable with Epson printheads (a comment by an Agfa technician!). So perhaps if they use a different ink, and have an impeccable warranty, they would be okay. They were not displayed: only pictured in the catalog.



D.G.I. was one of the companies that exhibited grand format solvent printers.



Nicholas Hellmuth holding samples printed on with the Epson 7900. These samples pertain to the FLAAR archaeological archive.



Epson 4880.



Canon had two water-based printers on display in the booth of Antalis. I appreciate their help in printing several of my PDFs on their laser toner printer.

HP had their usual water-based printers on display; the Z3200 would not be launched until Photokina 2008 a few weeks later.

SOLVENT BASED WIDE AND GRAND FORMAT INKJET PRINTERS

Gandinovations and D.G.I. exhibited grand format solvent printers. Never having visited the Scitex Vision of HP Scitex factory or demo room, I have not yet had the opportunity to evaluate their solvent printers (I have been at Gandy twice, each time for two days, and have been at the new D.G.I. factory as well as their impressive R&D facilities in Korea).

Roland had the largest display of eco-solvent printers, with a giant booth on the upper level and a good sized booth on the lower level. The RS-640, RS-540 VersaArt was a new model.

Mimaki had several models of their various kinds of solvent ink printer on display, including their new print-and-cut machine, the CJV30 series. Nashakele Graphics exhibited Challenger and Infiniti solvent printers upstairs. These two brands, so far, are the only models of Chinese-made solvent printers that some end-users indicate are acceptable (for entry-level).



Roland SJ-104EX solvent printer. Roland is one of the companies that exhibited their own printers and not through local dealers.



Roland booth at Sign Africa 2008.

UV-CURED PRINTERS AT SIGN AFRICA '08

- Agfa :Anapurna Mv
- At least two Gandinnovations UV printers (flatbed and roll-to-roll)
- Mimaki UJV-160
- NUR Expedio Inspiration rebranded as HP Scitex
- VUTEK QS2000

Full-scale FLAAR Reports exist on each model of Gandinnovations UV printer based on two factory visits, so there is no need to repeat that information here. I have inspected all Dilli-made UV printers in their factory in Seoul. Twice I had the opportunity to visit the NUR factory and R&D facilities in Israel (before it was bought by HP).

So at Sign Africa '08 trade show, the UV printer that I spent the most time with was the Mimaki UJV-160. There is now a FLAAR Report on this printer, as well as a new FLAAR Report on the LED curing of the Roland 30-inch roll-to-roll UV printer.



Gandinnovations booth already set-up.



Gandi Jeti 3150 UV flatbed printer.



Gandi JetSpeed RtR.



Agfa :Anapurna Mv printing on flexible material. This is an exposed combo UV printer.



The front and rear tables of the :Anapurna Mv are easily detachable from the main chassis.



Some companies are manufacturers and direct distributors of their own printers. Such is the case of Gandinnovations. The advantage of this is that the customer is in direct contact with factory-trained personnel that know the printers inside out.



Mimaki JF-1631UV is a dedicated flatbed.



Mimaki UJV-160 UV is the new hybrid UV printer.



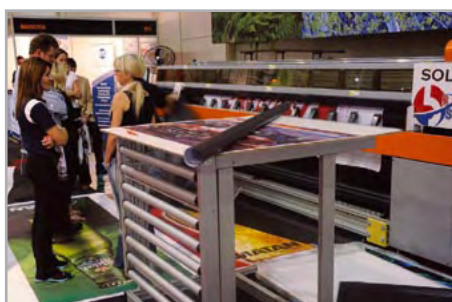
Oce Arizona 250GT, another dedicated flatbed.



VUTEK QS2000.



Matan Barak booth.



HP Designjet 4550, former ColorSpan 5440uv series. The FLAAR Reports list the issues with this entry-level printer


HP Scitex XP2700 at Sign Africa 2008.

CHINESE PRINTERS

In trade shows in Dubai, Italy, Istanbul and even in the US, you often see many brands of Chinese solvent and UV printers. There was not one single Chinese-made UV printer at Sign Africa and only about three brands of Chinese-made solvent printers: Liyu, Challenger and Infinity were the ones that I recognized. I have been to the Honghua factory in China where most of the Challenger and some of the Infinity printers are manufactured.

I have also visited printshops (in Guatemala) which have Challenger and Infinity printers. They are rated as among the best of the Chinese solvent printers. This is a polite way of saying that I have visited printshops with other brands (Liyu) and that owner said he much preferred his D.G.I. solvent printer, which he used with Inkwin ink. He said that the ink from Lyson clogged his heads and that Inkwin brand was much better.


Challenger booth at Sign Africa 2008.


Note that most FLAAR evaluations are undertaken in actual printshops and in the factories and demo rooms of the manufacturers. It is usually too crowded and hectic in a trade show booth, and there is not enough opportunity to photograph a printer inside out in a booth. So if I have not been to a factory, there may be no FLAAR evaluation and definitely no FLAAR Report on that brand or model of printer.

Besides, there are so many brands and models that it is not realistic to have time to inspect every single model in detail. Thus there are FLAAR Reports on two Mutoh solvent printers (because it was possible to send an entire week in the Mutoh Europe factory) but effectively no FLAAR Reports on any Roland or recent model Mimaki printer because of never having been to their factories in Japan. The exception is the Roland AJ-1000 because I found one in a printshop where I was visiting to inspect their Infiniti UV printer.

PRINTERS FROM KOREA AND TAIWAN

Agfa had one of the few Korean-made printers at the show: the Anapurna Mv (manufactured by Dilli). No printers from Taiwan were on exhibit.

NOT EXHIBITED

There was no Gerber or Spandex booth. So there was no Gerber ion with its cationic UV ink. Durst did not have a booth. Teckwin, GCC, IP&I, DYSS all did not have a booth. Although there was a lecture by HP on their latex printer, the actual printer was not on display.

There was no Mutoh booth, and I noticed only two Mutoh eco-solvent printers in a small booth on a side aisle. Compared with two huge Roland booths and a strong Mimaki presence in the GSW booth, Mutoh did not have a presence corresponding to the capability of their printers. Even D.G.I. had a stronger presence. Yet Mutoh was the first to offer Intelligent Interweaving software and printing technology.

TEXTILES & DYE SUBLIMATION

With a major soccer championship playoff being scheduled for South Africa in the next year, many printshops are buying textile printers now to prepare soft signage. Most of the brands were in the booth of GSW; Keundo's dye sub system was one example.

There were also two of three leading brands of calendaring machines on display. Transmatic and Monti Antonio were two of them that I noticed.


Gandi Jeti 3324 AquaJet Rtr.


Trade shows are now being held in non-traditional parts of the world as well, like Mexico and Africa. Many companies search for local distributors to promote their printers.



CUTTERS AND TRIMMERS

There was no Zund cutter that I noticed but Aristo and Fotoba were both represented (both by GSW).



Fotoba exhibited the TJOL cutter for roll materials. Some industrial size UV printers don't have any cutter on-board (all the cutting is manual). This is the case of the HP Scitex XP5300, the Matan Barak5, the Gandinnovations Jeti 3348 JetSpeed, and others.

OTHER SIGNAGE PRODUCTS

Although the 3M booth was small, it had a number of interesting signage products, namely various kinds of wall-covering material, such as their Di-Noc Film, and also a material that could be applied over bricks: 3M Textured Wall.

COMMENTS FROM COLLEAGUES AT SIGN AFRICA

One person explained what it was like to buy a Chinese printer from Flora, pay for it, have it arrive with inadequate UV lamps and an electronics board that failed immediately. So now he has a printer that he paid for: no UV lamps and no electronics board. No service, no one answers e-mails. Because the UV system is made by hand, so to speak, there is no other normal UK or European UV lamp that is easily obtainable in South Africa.

Another person indicated that from GCC "the response to questions was phenomenal."

OBSERVATIONS

Whereas in some trade shows there are a hundred smaller distributors and dealers, at Sign Africa there were four huge booths:

- GSW (Graphix Supply World)
- Gandinnovations
- HP
- Roland

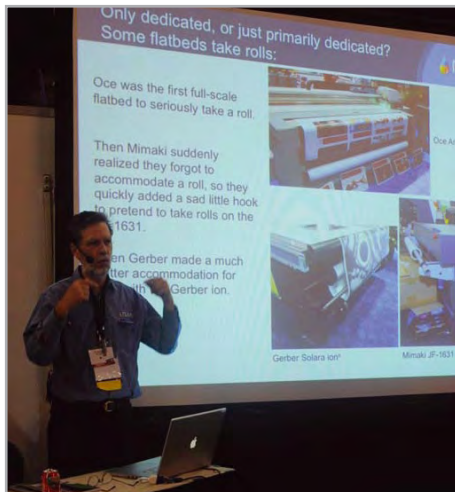
And naturally many smaller booths (the VUTEK dealer, for example). But the point is that most of the major brands seemed concentrated in four booths.

I noticed that most distributors and dealers, even though

direct competitors, visited with each other and everyone seemed friendly with each other. The organization of the lecture program was handled better than in many trade shows: there were posters showing the entire lecture program in key places all around the trade show center, and each individual lecture was announced on the PA system a few minutes before each lecture started. The result was better than average attendance at each of the three lectures that I presented.

The flooring of the lecture halls was a bit problematic in that the sections came loose; carpet is used by most trade show centers elsewhere. But if this is the only issue I noticed this means everything else went well.

Probably the best comment I can make is that I look forward to returning in 2009. I do not have time to waste time, and I would not return if I did not enjoy the venue, did not enjoy the country, and if I did not find it a good business decision to attend Sign Africa. Visitors from other continents might also wish to visit some of the famous attractions such as the safari parks. I flew in the day before and flew out the day after the trade show because of the heavy demand for consulting services back in the US and abroad. But next time I would indeed enjoy seeing more of the country, both Cape Town and the interior. However for my first visit to South Africa, I was content in all respects.



Dr. Nicholas Hellmuth was invited to lecture as part of the trade show's events.



Lecture audience.

Sign Africa TECHNOLOGY IN AFRICA CONFERENCE
10 - 12 SEPTEMBER

SPEAKER PROFILES

DR. ROSS ALLEN - LATEX INK TECHNOLOGY	INTERNATIONAL SPEAKERS
Dr. Ross Allen, an international authority on HP Inkjet technology will be flying to Cape Town from the United States for a single speaking slot on 11 September from 11:00 to 12:00. He is sponsored by HP and will be covering to detail the existing features and benefits behind HP Color Ink. This new technology offers the performance of standard ink at conventional print production for indoor and outdoor display but with significantly reduced environmental, health and safety impact.	
DR. NICHOLAS HELLMUTH - WIDE-FORMAT PRINTING / UV PRINTERS / DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY	INTERNATIONAL SPEAKERS
Dr. Hellmuth, President of FLAAR Digital Imaging Resource Centre, will also be arriving from the United States to cover the following topics related to wide-format printing: Analysis of UV-curable Inkjet/Printhead Print and cores of different kinds of UV printers. Cores vs light vs dedicated Flatbed vs dedicated roll-to-roll. Applications & Profit Potential with UV printers. Architectural and decorative materials you can print on with wide-format inkjet. Digital Photography: How to create better input for Wide-Format Inkjet Output.	
PIERRE VAN HELDEN - LED TECHNOLOGY	LOCAL SPEAKERS
LEDs are the global standard in the signage industry if you are using them for signage illumination and could be at risk of losing their competitive edge. Pierre Van Helden is head of Business Development and Co-owner of LED Lighting South Africa, which is leading developer and manufacturer of LED lighting applications. Over the past 7 years, working closely with signage companies, Pierre has been involved in over 1000 LED product installations for the illumination of signage. Choosing an LED product may not be as simple as it sounds and he would like to share some of his experiences to give you the most informed and profitable LED lighting solution for your application. Pierre's presentation will cover the advantages and disadvantages of LEDs, the most recent product applications of LEDs, utilization of a well-designed LED product and various case studies.	
JOHN PANTON - STRIVING FOR PRINT EXCELLENCE THROUGH STANDARDIZATION	LOCAL SPEAKERS
John Panton is currently the only PSD Fellow Certified partner in Africa. He continues to lead the print industry towards standardization, believing that with the implementation of ISO Standards a new level of print excellence can be achieved. In Association with ISO, PSD and the Signage Council, John Panton will introduce a new series of workshops centered around the development of printing standards in the region, where both suppliers and take users can improve themselves. Participants of ISO Standards, they can achieve higher levels of efficiency and lower their production will increase dramatically. This will allow them to be part of the PSD industry group for Print Excellence.	
PAUL GELDENHUIS - INK TECHNOLOGY TODAY	LOCAL SPEAKERS
Many questions are currently being asked regarding the difference between the variety of digital printing technologies currently in the market and subsequently which ink is the best to use and for which application? Paul Geldenhuis has been involved in the Digital Printing Industry since 1997. As an end user initially he started working with early electronic systems and products, which have subsequently evolved into the digital inkjet and today's inkjet printing, specializing in large format printing, corporate interiors, vehicle graphics and business printing. He is also involved in the development of printing standards in the region, where both suppliers and take users can improve themselves. Paul now heads up the Research & Development team in South Africa, where he applies the same professional approach to providing the best solutions for the industry worldwide.	
KEN BEZUIDENHOUT - COREL DRAW TUTORIALS	LOCAL SPEAKERS
Ken Be Zuidenhou is part of the graphics industry for the last 20 years and is currently Managing Director of Imbushu Graphics, a company that started six years ago and since grows to become one of the leading suppliers in the digital outdoor and business printing, specializing in large format printing, corporate interiors, vehicle graphics and business printing. Ken has been involved with Large Format printing and consequently CorelDraw for more than 17 years.	

Sign Africa TECHNOLOGY IN AFRICA CONFERENCE
10 - 12 SEPTEMBER

Sign Africa Johannesburg 2008 will feature the exciting new Sign Africa Technology In Africa Conference, with a host of professional international and local speakers booked for the event. The topics to be covered will focus on the technical/practical technology trends currently available in the industry, providing all visitors who attend with invaluable information and insight from field experts around the globe and locally.

WEDNESDAY 10 SEPTEMBER		
TIME	SPEAKER	TOPIC
11:00 - 12:00	Nashakelie Graphics	Corel Draw Tutorial
12:30 - 13:30	Nicholas Hellmuth (FLAAR)	Anatomy of a UV-curable Inkjet Printer: Pros and cons of different kinds of UV printers: Combo vs hybrid vs dedicated flatbed vs dedicated roll-to-roll.
THURSDAY 11 SEPTEMBER		
TIME	SPEAKER	TOPIC
11:00 - 12:00	Dr. Ross Allen (HP)	HP Latex Ink Technology
12:30 - 13:30	Nicholas Hellmuth (FLAAR)	Applications & Profit Potential with UV printers: Architectural and decorative materials you can print on with wide-format inkjet.
14:00 - 15:00	John Panton for 3M	Striving for Print Excellence through Standardization.
15:30 - 16:30	Nashakelie Graphics	Corel Draw Tutorial
FRIDAY 12 SEPTEMBER		
TIME	SPEAKER	TOPIC
9:30 - 10:30	Nashakelie Graphics	Corel Draw Tutorial
11:00 - 12:00	Pierre van Helden (LED Lighting)	LED Technology
12:30 - 13:30	Paul Geldenhuis (Technik)	Future ink technology
14:00 - 15:00	Nicholas Hellmuth (FLAAR)	Digital Photography: How to create better input for Wide-Format Inkjet Output.

MAKE SURE YOU BOOK YOUR SEATS!
Entrance is free and seats can be booked at the conference area or at the organiser office (Level -1) during the show. If you have any queries, contact Saralee on +27 (0) 82 229 4987



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