

The First International Trade Show the year



**January 25-27,
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Introduction

In this FLAAR Reports Nicholas Hellmuth comments on the first international trade show of year 2010. This is held every year at this time in Dubai, a great place to visit. This is our fourth visit to a trade show in Dubai (third to the signage show; another visit was to the print & packaging show, which is much smaller).

Agfa Gandinnovations had their booth in an optimal location: directly aligned with the main entrance. Bright colors help create a friendly atmosphere which says *“welcome to our booth.”* I compliment the designer of this booth, as it sets a tone for the entire main hall due to the central location. Agfa completed the takeover of most of the assets of the former Gandinnovations about one week before the trade show.

HP was adjacent to the Agfa Gandinnovations booth, with about equal size but several people said it was typically a corporate style booth (meaning uninspiring colors). It was a pleasant friendly booth inside, but the design, arrangement, and colors were described by one person as *“gloomy,”* by another person as *“not particularly inviting.”*

- Gandinnovations-Agfa had four impressive Jeti machines, one Agfa :Anapurna, and one flatbed cutter-router.



Gandinnovations-Agfa booth at the trade show showing their roll to roll and flatbed UV printers.

- HP had many printers (HP Scitex solvent, UV-cured, and latex).



Here you can see the HP booth, showing their UV, Latex and Solvent printers.

- EFI had two VUTEk UV printers and one small Rastek. The entry-level EFI Rastek H650 is a good choice for getting started with UV printers at an economic level.



Efi booth, here you can see an EFI VUTEk GS 3200 UV printer.

- D.G.I.+Dilli had several large solvent printers and UV-cured printer.



D.G.I. at GSS International booth.

There were more textile printers here in 2010 than I remember from the past several years. Inkwin has their textile inks and printers. The booth of Shenyang Century Star Textile dye sublimation systems exhibits beautiful saturated colors.

Solvent printers were still very much in evidence: solvent has not disappeared, neither full-solvent, nor mild-solvent, nor eco-solvent: all were present. I noticed Seiko ColorPainter models in two or more different booths. Mimaki has a strong presence (in the Sign Trade booth) compared with other brands of eco-solvent printers.



As we report here you can see one of the Seiko ColorPainter H-74s exhibited at the tradeshow.

In some parts of the world Roland is the most dominant brand (in many of these parts of the world Mutoh is barely present). In other parts of the world Mimaki is dominant with Roland having a good presence also. So for the Middle East the (separate) full-report by FLAAR will itemize which solvent printers were displayed, by which distributor, and which solvent brands dominate the Middle Eastern market.

It is nice to see many Chinese companies exhibiting their solvent printers also. I have visited several Chinese factories and have a high respect for their initiative to bring their products for exhibit to the public here in Dubai.

For the full list, itemized, by brand and by model-by-model, simply order the FLAAR Reports on all printers



There was a booth of China Sign Expo Beijing 2010 promoting this trade show that will be held on April 21-24 2010 in Beijing. This trade show will be exhibiting mostly local brands.

All UV printers at the first international exposition of the year 2010: \$210

All solvent printers, all water-based printers, all latex ink printers, and all after-market ink manufacturers (plus, who is making or about to launch an after-market latex ink printer). \$162

All textile printers, all dye-sublimation units: Europe, Korea, China, etc at the first international exposition of the year, \$120

ALL three reports: list price \$492, but if all three are ordered together, \$342 (you save \$150).

Distinctive cationic kind of UV-curing ink

The cationic ink in the Gerber ion^x offers a number of advantages in terms of adhesion. If you are thinking of a UV-cured flatbed, there are many options here in the SGI in Dubai. But for entry-level and mid-range, be sure to look at the offering of Gerber's cationic ink. You can find them in the booth of Victor Systems.

Other attractive booths and/or displays

While on the subject of professional quality booth displays, I would compliment the designers of the booth of Lelee 3D laser engraving technology company. Their sub-surface laser engraving system produced impressive results.

The full name of their company is Shanghai Lelee Laser Technology Co., Ltd.



Shanghai Lelee Laser Technology Co., Ltd. booth, here you can see some 3D laser engraving samples they showed.

After-market inks

More and more print shops are utilizing after market ink, so FLAAR Reports is interested in writing evaluations of which brands have high quality. The booth of AT Inks is one you notice because it is in a prominent location. I also mention AT Inks because I will fly to India the day after the show ends to inspect their inks. There are so many third-party inks that unless I can inspect them in person, it is not appropriate to evaluate them. Thus I have visited Inkwin factory in China, so I know about their capabilities.

The visit to AT Inks in India included visiting both their factories and then I visited a successful printshop in Delhi that was using AT Inks in their 3.2 meter solvent printers. The owner of the printing company said that "AT Inks had less clogging issues than the OEM ink from Toyo in his D.G.I. solvent printer." In a week or so, I will be inspecting printshops in Guatemala that have switched to AT Inks.

Sam Ink is another ink that I look forward to being able to learn more about by visiting their facilities in Singapore in the future.

New and innovative inks are also of interest: HP latex ink for example. I have met now three different companies that will be making after-market "latex inks." The question remains, however, whether if HP is the only company that makes a printer that can use "latex inks" whether enough machines will exist to support more than one after-market ink company.

Inks are what make the difference, and by summer there should be some new inks to compete with HP latex ink (I do not mean after-market, I mean completely new and different inks such as Sepiax, plus others that I am now yet allowed to mention).

Wide-Format Inkjet Media

In both the main hall and in the East Hall, substrates and materials for printing signage are in abundance throughout this important exposition. I met with the folks at Heytex in the morning and with Obeikan in the afternoon. A nice aspect of Obeikan is that their factory is in a nearby country. Their frontlit, backlit and other substrates can be used with solvent, eco-solvent, and UV-cured inks.



Obeikan Technical Fabrics (OTF) booth

Remember that your Printer will work better with a capable RIP software

If you are considering a heavy-duty printer (3.2 meter solvent or wider, or any UV-cured flatbed printer) you should definitely look at a capable RIP software. Here at the Dubai exposition you can find RIP specialists from Caldera. Their RIP software can also help you place cutting marks for a flatbed cutter or CNC router.

Plus, since color management is essential, Caldera also offers color spectrophotometers. A printer, on its own, needs software to properly print, so in some cases the choice of software can be more important than the select of which brand of printer hardware.

Caldera RIP company was the only major international brand of RIP software that had their owner and pertinent staff from their main home office actually present at Dubai to assist their distributors and interested end-users.

Dubai Sign & Graphics as a venue

The trade show center is large, well designed, and within 2 km of the airport. There are hotels of every price range from \$100 on up within a few kilometers (so much better than DRUPA, where hotels are scarce and grossly over-priced). Downside is that the hotel selected for me had no shuttle.

There is also another trade show center that is used by a competing trade show later in the year, but that trade show is for packaging mainly, so not very many exhibits of signage printers. I recommend the Sign & Graphics event in January over the other.



Dubai 2010 Dubai Airport Expo 2010.

Dubai city as a locus

Dubai is a nice friendly city. If you like family-style entertainment there is plenty of that, indeed I was told the airport alone had as many shops as many big city shopping malls. If you like more adult entertainment, I hear tell that plenty of infamous places are available, but I am too cheap to frequent that style of entertainment (plus I can't write the FLAAR Reports if I am spending my evening hours being entertained).

Another place worth visiting in the city is the Dubai Mall, adjacent to the (momentarily) world's tallest building. There is a small lake-like water area here also. You can dine at any of dozens of restaurants. The shopping mall reputedly has space for about 20,000 cars, so be sure you know what level and section you left your car in (or take a cab).

No visa is required for US or European citizens. The airports is one of the largest in the world, yet they are completing another gigantic terminal a hundred meters away. Someone said they are breaking ground on an even larger airport on the other side of the city (typical oil-revenue excess).



Dubai airport from Premier January 2010.

In general hotel, taxi, and restaurant prices are acceptable. I found that during SGIA '09, the restaurant prices in New Orleans were outrageous (and the food you got at those prices was not worth half of what they charged). In Dubai at a modest hotel I received a good evening meal for a reasonable price.

In past years people stayed at some of the four-star hotels around the city (there are many five-star hotels also). For 2010, more people had moved to more modest hotels, and within short cab rides from the venue. Premier Inn was popular this year; it is within 1 km of the airport and about 2 km from the trade show center. Premier Inn is more sophisticated than Travelodge (Heathrow Airport Terminal 5) and comparable to many modest-priced chain motels around the world.

In Dubai you are well received, people are pleasant, and it is a truly international city.

Best airfares are probably via Emirates, which fly giant Airbus planes; mine held almost 600 people. The stewardesses were from every nation around the world; service was professional level, beer and wine was free (which beats American Airlines international flights).

I recommend that you consider attending the year 2011 Sign & Graphics exposition in Dubai next year. You will enjoy the large-format inkjet printers and the hospitality of the people who work in Dubai city.

Additional Reports for 2010

FLAAR List of Distributors for Dubai area of Middle East, 2010, \$310

FLAAR List of CNC Routers, Laser Cutters, Flatbed XY Cutters at the first exposition in 2010, 2010, \$240. Includes European and Asian manufacturers who exhibited at the first international trade show of 2010.

UV Printer Trends: Dubai Middle East

Compares the companies and models that were exhibited in 2010 with what was exhibited in 2009: which brands disappeared? Which brands survived.

Hazards at trade shows

CNC Routers should not be allowed to have their noise, sparks, and shot all over the aisles and bothering people in adjacent booths. CNC routers should be in their own hall and be required to limit themselves.

Same with CO2 laser engravers: if they are cutting hazardous materials, they should be required to use air purifiers.

Excessive noise

PA systems within a booth were few at the Dubai show. At other trade shows, including FESPA and sometimes in the US, "lectures" inside a booth disturb everyone within several aisles. Broadcasting a skill-like lecture should be prohibited during normal visiting hours.

Music (live music) was not a major problem at the Dubai trade show center. But in general, no booth should be allowed to disturb people in the next adjacent booth(s).

Concluding remarks on the Dubai venue

This is the third Dubai sign and graphics exposition that I have attended, and every year I am glad that I came. It is a nice exhibition center, friendly people, and a really diverse range of products in the two spacious halls.

Be sure to explore both halls because you will find great products in every aisle. There are many knowledgeable and capable individuals from companies around the world here in Dubai and many industry specialists as visitors also. So the Dubai show is definitely worthwhile all three days.

In the area of the trade show with Chinese products and Chinese people, it is so nice how they come out of their booth to say hello and say how much they enjoy reading the FLAAR Reports. The same happened in the aisles: total strangers came up to introduce themselves and to indicate that the wide-format printers that they had purchased were because of a FLAAR Report.

As a final thought, realize that although this trade show is appropriately devoted to signage and graphic display, that most UV-cured inkjet printers can also print on glass, ceramic tiles, wood, and metals. However realize that special primers and post-treatment may be necessary. For printing on ceramic tiles, for example, GCC from Taiwan has professional experience with the primers and workflow.

Also keep in mind that cationic kind of UV-cured ink has better adherence characteristics on some materials than normal UV-cured inks. Cationic UV ink is currently available only from Gerber ion-series of UV flatbed and roll-to-roll printers.



Gerber solara ion^x at their booth.