FLAAR Trade Show Reports

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Printable Textiles, Printable Metal, Printable Art Material, Signage Substrates

What to Expect at APPPEXPO 2015, March 11-14, in Shanghai.

Nicholas Hellmuth and Pablo Martinez
Graphic Design by María José García

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Introduction to printable materials

When you see media with a Swiss brand name, it is logical to assume this is made in the EU. Yet some of their media is really Made in China.

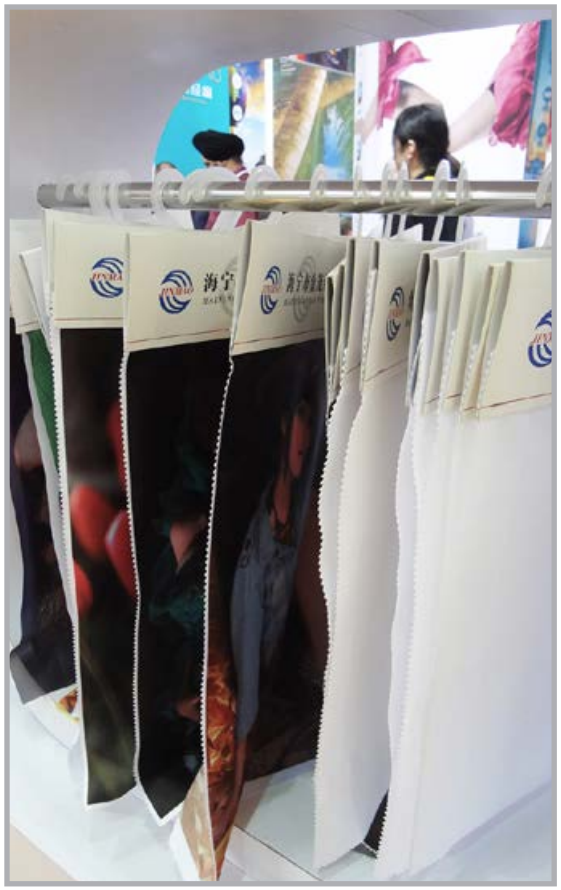
The top Fortune 500 brands of media with USA brand names, most is Made in China.

Yes, there are media factories in Taiwan, Korea and some still in Japan, Europe and USA, but most is Made in China. So if you want to learn about media, substrates, and printable materials, you can see more brands and more kinds of media at APPPEXPO in Shanghai than any other expo in the world.

We tend to designate media and substrates into the following categories:

Media = a printable material with a chemical layer on the top to improve the acceptance of inkjet ink.

Substrate, or material = a printable material with no chemical layer to improve inkjet ink, but the material is none the less printable.



Some common media, classified by chemistry and by application

- Signage and advertising media, outside: billboards, building wrap, car wrap
- Signage, advertising material, inside: POP, airports, malls, building lobbies, etc.
- Reflective media: highway signs, some vehicle wrap, special uses
- Photopaper, giclee: papers, canvas, etc.
- Wallcovering, murals, wall paper
- Reprographics printing, GIS, CAD
- Foam core, thermoplast, corrugated Plastic (Coroplast and copies), etc.
- Aluminum composite panels (ACP)
- Media for sublimation (polyester based), flags, soft signage, etc.
- Curtains, upholstery

Most media is for traditional signage; most media from China is Vinyl (PVC). There are dozens and dozens of Chinese manufacturers of PVC in every tweaked version you can ever desire: one way vision, tarpaulin, frontlit, backlit, etc.

Other manufacturers make primarily or only foam core PVC plastic board or comparable.

Other manufacturers make primarily or only ACM (aluminum composite material, also called ACP, aluminum composite panels). These are printable with sublimation inks when the panel has a polyester coating.

Advertising material

A good example of what a single company offers is 20 varieties of technical knitted textile, frontlit, backlit, mesh. This is from C.R.D. (Haining) ChenGrudan Reinforcement Fabrics Co., Ltd. There are over 100 other brands with booths of printable materials at APPPEXPO. A normal expo in your own country may have 15 to 25 booths with media: so you can expect perhaps 400% more at APPPEXPO.

What material is best depends on what ink or printing process you use. Some inks require specific kinds of coating. So be careful in selecting an appropriate media. And of course where the sign will be hung (inside, outside, frontlit, backlit, etc) determines what kind of material to consider. Here are just a few of the options

Backlit film, PET
Backlit, PP
Coated backlit (some inks require coating).

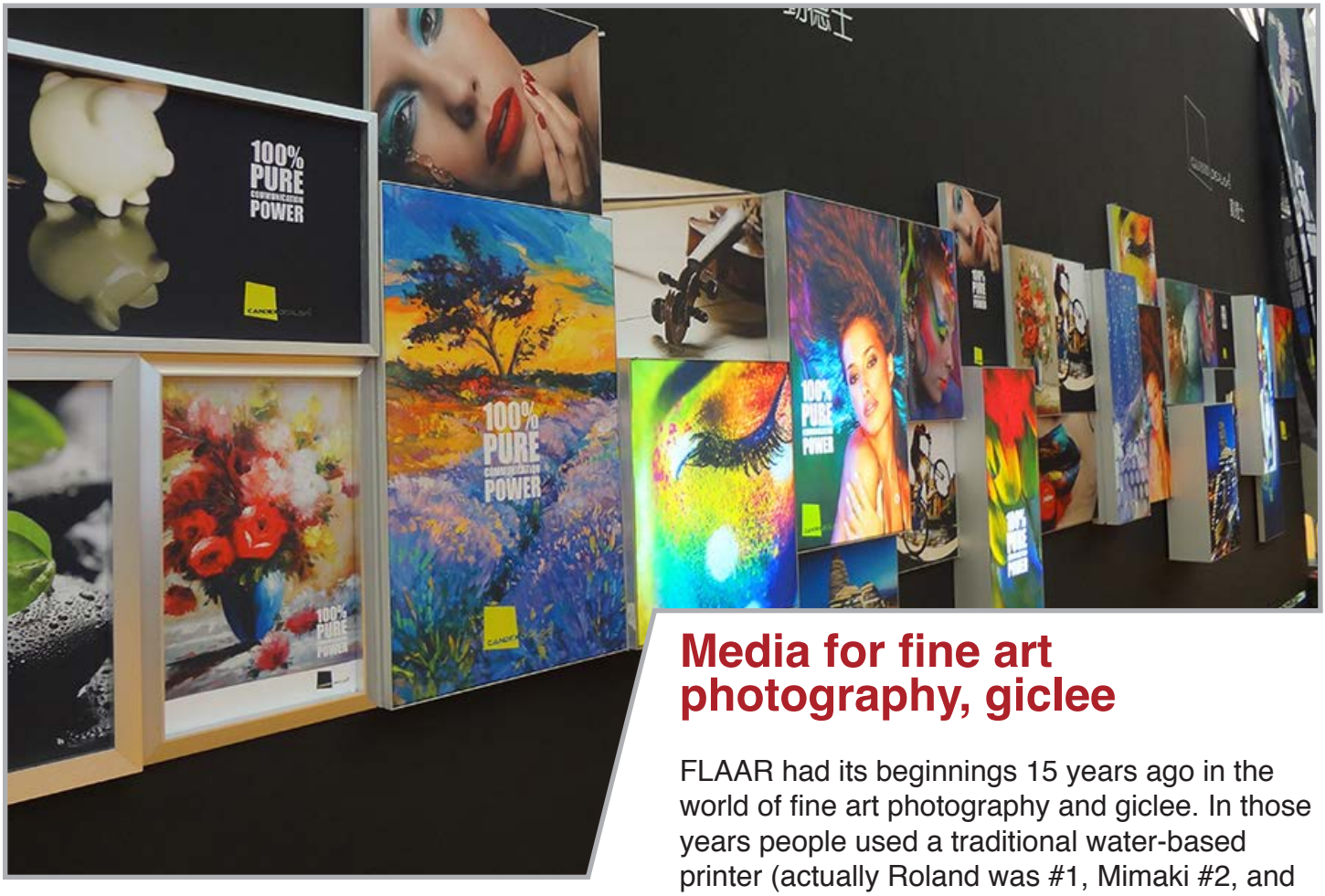
PVC can be cast or calendered, monomeric or polymeric (we are updating our glossary for later this year).

Some clients want simply a low-cost result (naturally they want it to look nice too). Occasionally you will have a client who wants a higher quality result. But where you can win more clients is if you offer them innovative material. Every imaginable kind of material, of every weight, can be found at APPPEXPO in March 2015.

Reflective media: highway signs, some vehicle wrap, special uses

Mutoh focused its first UV-cured printer directly on the market for printing reflective media for highway and other safety signs. Plus some vehicle wrap is best if reflective. Another UV-cured company also studied the market for printing on reflective media, but their specialized printer was never finished. So out in the real world, it will be a normal UV-cured printer for printing on reflective media.

At APPPEXPO you can find every color, every kind, of reflective media.



Wall covering, wall murals, wall paper

One of the fastest growing applications the last three years has been wide-format inkjet printing for customized wall covering. Just be realistic if you try to use solvent ink, UV-cured ink, or any other ink which uses really hot curing methods (like latex ink). The curing heat will cause many materials to issue a fetid smell. Plus, some brands of UV ink and most solvent inks have a rancid odor by themselves. But once you find an appropriate ink, there are lots of remarkable materials now available for wall coverings.

If you come to APPPEXPO 2015 in Shanghai you will be in paradise for all aspects of interior décor.

Media for fine art photography, giclee

FLAAR had its beginnings 15 years ago in the world of fine art photography and giclee. In those years people used a traditional water-based printer (actually Roland was #1, Mimaki #2, and Mutoh #3; Epson was not a factor nor was HP in these years; and Canon did not come on board for several more years).

Today Epson has long ago encouraged Roland and Mutoh and Mimaki not to use Epson printheads in offering water-based printers to the photo and giclee market. So for the last many years giclee printers are from HP, Canon, and Epson. But the media is mostly from China.

Normally a photo studio or giclee atelier will use photo papers and canvas. Yet today there are so many new varieties of canvas (from China). And lots of remarkable other kinds of media. A good example is the sample booklet of Guangzhou Huiding Image Material Co., Ltd. So if you wish to offer new and different options to your art or photo clients, it is a clever decision to attend APPPEXPO in Shanghai.

Printable Fabric

When you think of dye sublimation, you naturally think of polyester (since to sublimate you normally need polyester). But even a modest-sized Chinese fabric factory will produce more than nine kinds of polyester.

You can have contented clients if you can offer dye sub printing on the kind of polyester that best suits the job (and best appeals to the client).

So if you are doing now, or thinking of doing in the future, dye sub, you can learn a lot here at APPPEXPO about printing on diverse kinds of polyester.

3D & lenticular media

Some time you may need some extra spice to have your images stand out, and here in APPPEXPO it's the right place to find the solution.

There are a wide variety of pseudo tri-dimensional printing media that would pop out your prints. You can print direct to it or put on it like a cold lamination and would give a tri-dimensional look.

Lenticular is another avenue, but many people complain that lenticular images given them headaches or close to nausea. For this reason the pseudo 3D lamination material has been invented. We call it "bubble wrap" though sometimes the structure is squared rather than spherical.

Rigid Materials

Aluminum Composite Panel (ACP, also known as ACM. Aluminum Composite Material) is both for architecture and others are printable. Both kinds are exhibited at APPPEXPO.

Foamcore, Foam board, comes in dozens of different names since some are trademarks so can't be used by competitors.

One company in USA, United Industries, makes an "Aluminum Face Foam Core Panel" so it is a combination of ACP and Foam Core (www.ultraboard.com). You can probably find comparable material at APPPEXPO 2015 in Shanghai since any good material will be manufactured by more than just one factory.

An advantage of aluminum composite panels is that they normally do not bend or warp (but be sure to see if the cheaper, low-bid brands are also this sturdy). So a well made ACP will not bend or warp as do most foam boards. Foam boards can also chip, can be dented, etc.

One of my favorite thick materials is honeycomb sandwich board. We have several FLAAR Reports focused on this innovative material.

Due to the sheer quantity of factories which exhibit at APPPEXPO you can find lots more than just ACP, corrugated plastic boards (Coroplast and copies), foam core and honeycomb sandwich material. As with other media, if your company offers something new and different, you can win new clients.

Non-printed materials are also on exhibit at APPPEXPO

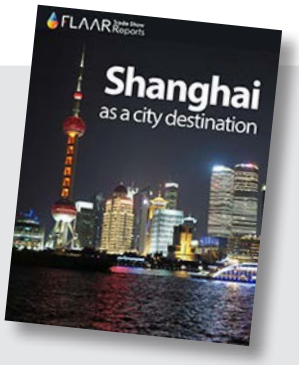
Vehicle wrap is often created out of colored vinyl which requires no printing to make its effect. There are plenty of booths at APPPEXPO for all this traditional advertising material.

Cold lamination film we mention in our separate PDF on laminators and coaters.

So just about any signage material that you can dream of is available and if it's not you will find many companies willing to manufacture just for you, only here in Shanghai in March 11-14.

Summary on over 130 reasons to attend APPPEXPO 2015

- Three companies offer honeycomb (one of my favorite materials)
- Eight companies offer pseudo-3D material (we call it bubble-wrap effect)
- Ten companies offer Aluminum (ACP, also known as ACM)
- About 15 companies offer media for giclee and fine art photography
- Over 100 companies offer traditional banner, signage, vehicle wrap, building wrap materials.



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Contact Info for APPPEXPO 2015

Ms. Jiang Yan

Tel: (86)-21-6328-8899

Fax: (86)-21-6374-9188

Email: lillianfeng.china@gmail.com
evelinelxf@apppexpo.com

Website: *www.apppexpo.com*

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www.apppexpo.com/2/EN/showArticle/24

Or you could consider airport hotels (but not the Pudong International Airport; the new expo center is near the other airport of Shanghai).

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