

Wide-format Inkjet Printers

You have never seen



Beijing Sign Show 2012

Introduction

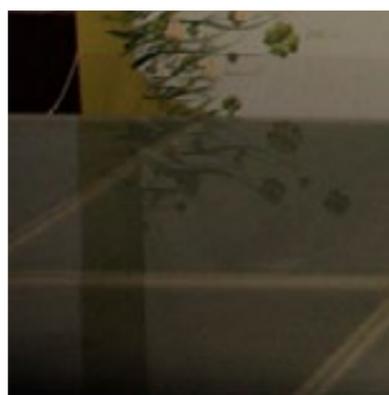
A brand new inkjet printer, advertising, and signage expo opened its doors recently. FLAAR was there for three days. The following pages introduce this new ad and sign trade show in Beijing.

Over the last three years the organizer of the original Beijing sign expo (in April) and the large international distributor (Sign-in-China.com) invited me to the Beijing printer expo each April. But there was always either another expo or meeting somewhere else in the world that same week, so I never got to the Beijing signage expos in past years.

Now, for 2012, there is a new organizer. They split off from the April expo company and created a brand new expo for March 10-13, 2012. This time I was already in Beijing the same month as the new expo (Beijing Sign Show), so finally it was possible to attend.

The organizer, Chen Dazhi, asked Dr Hellmuth to be with the CEOs and top managers of the Chinese printing associations, Chinese, Korean, and Japanese manufacturers, and other industry executives from the printhead manufacturers to cut the ribbon to open the expo.

I was driven to this expo three days in a row by the kind folks of Sign-in-China.com. A team of four of us at FLAAR are working on projects with this multi-national distributor. Sign-in-China had a double-width booth at the expo.



Opening ceremony: dance of the dragons

It is traditional at many Chinese expositions to have a traditional dance by dragon-like creatures. The dance team did an excellent job.

Since my background is in Classic Maya art and iconography, I often notice how many features of some (other) Chinese dragons, and especially water lily and water bird iconography that I see on Chinese temples and palaces, are very similar to dragons in the 2nd to 9th century art of Guatemala, Mexico, Belize, and Honduras. However the particular dragons on this dance at the Beijing Sign Show were a style that is 100% Chinese. Plus Maya dragons are a different color.



Opening ceremony: cutting the ribbon

The traditional manner of opening a Chinese expo is to have the CEOs or high managers of pertinent companies all be invited to be up on the stage, and then all simultaneously to cut the proverbial ribbon.



Which brands were present with a booth?

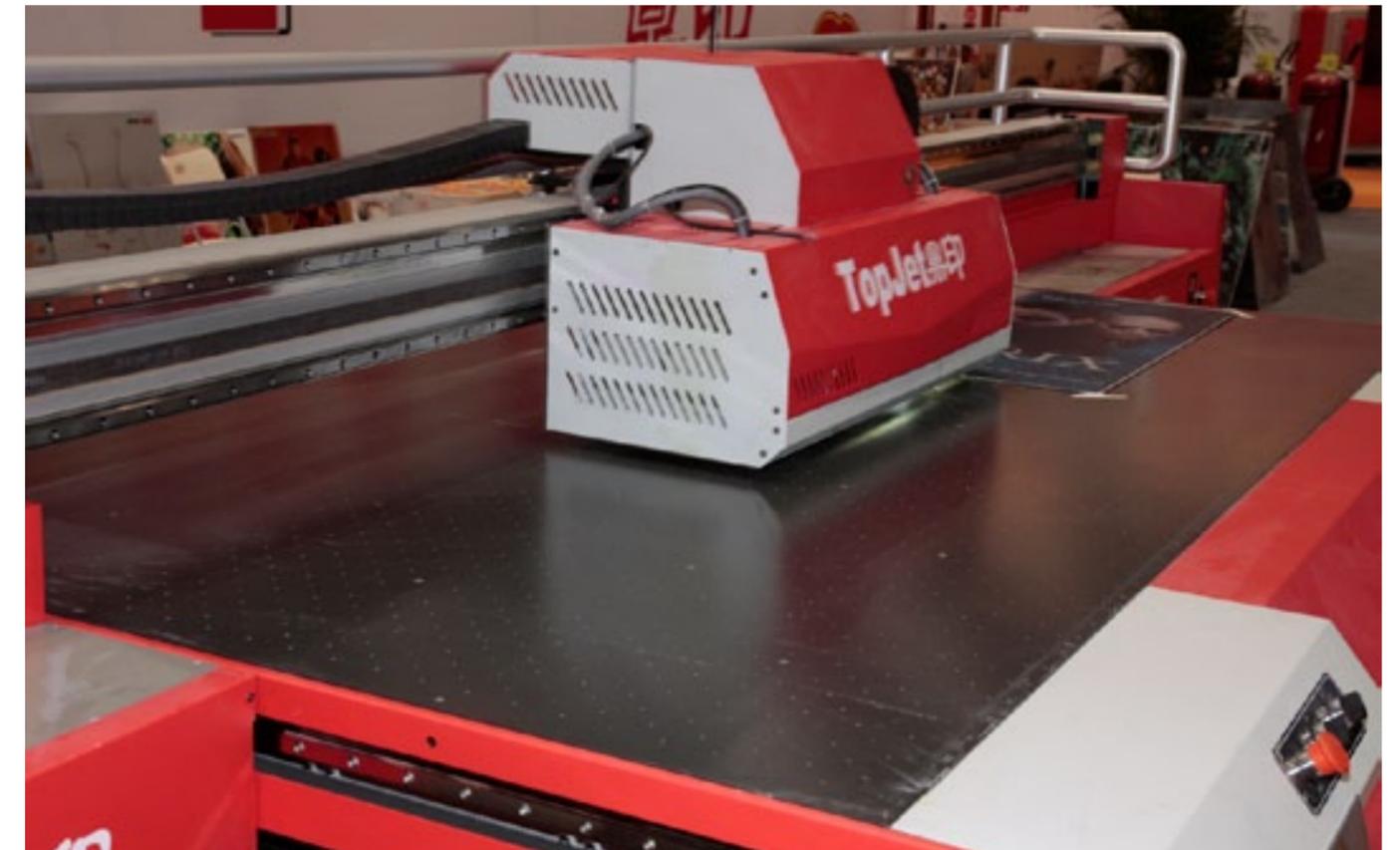
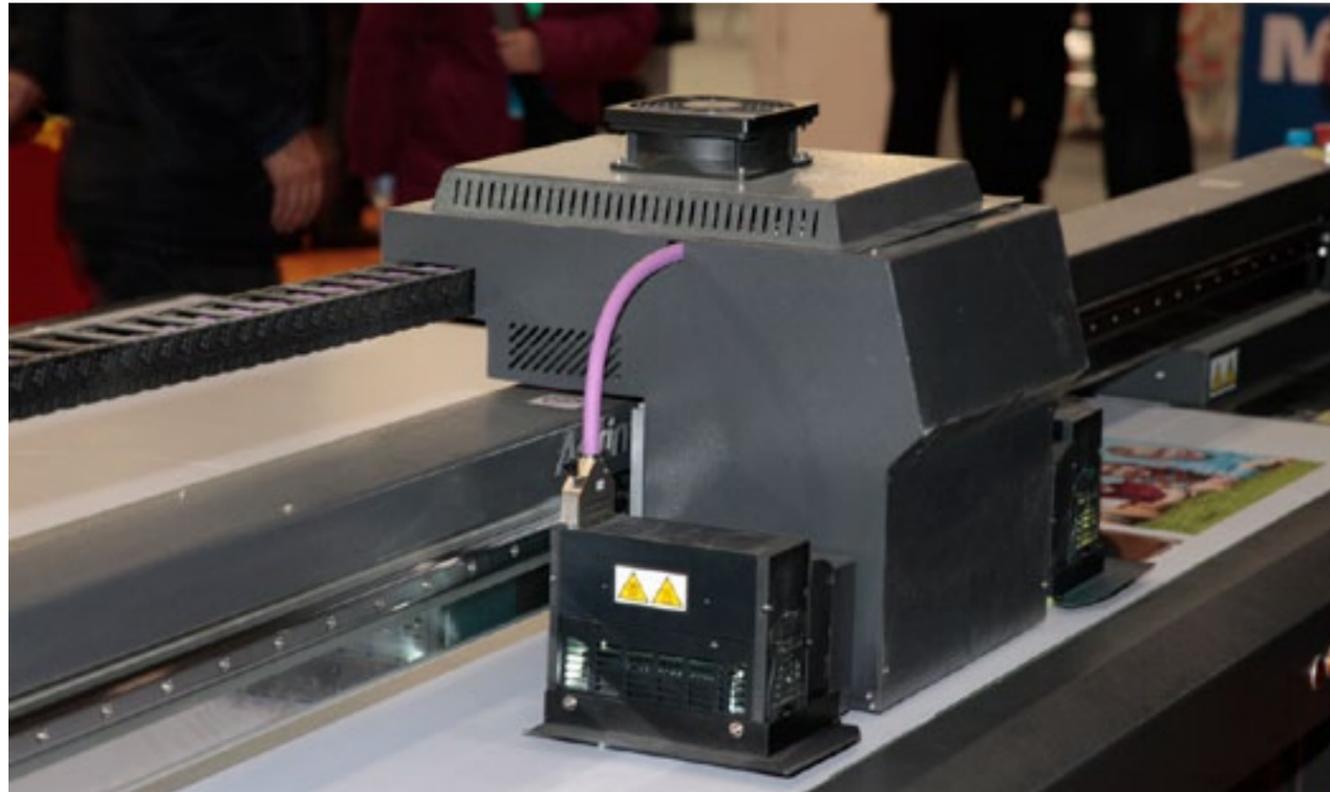
Who was missing?
Mutoh well represented at the Beijing Sign Show

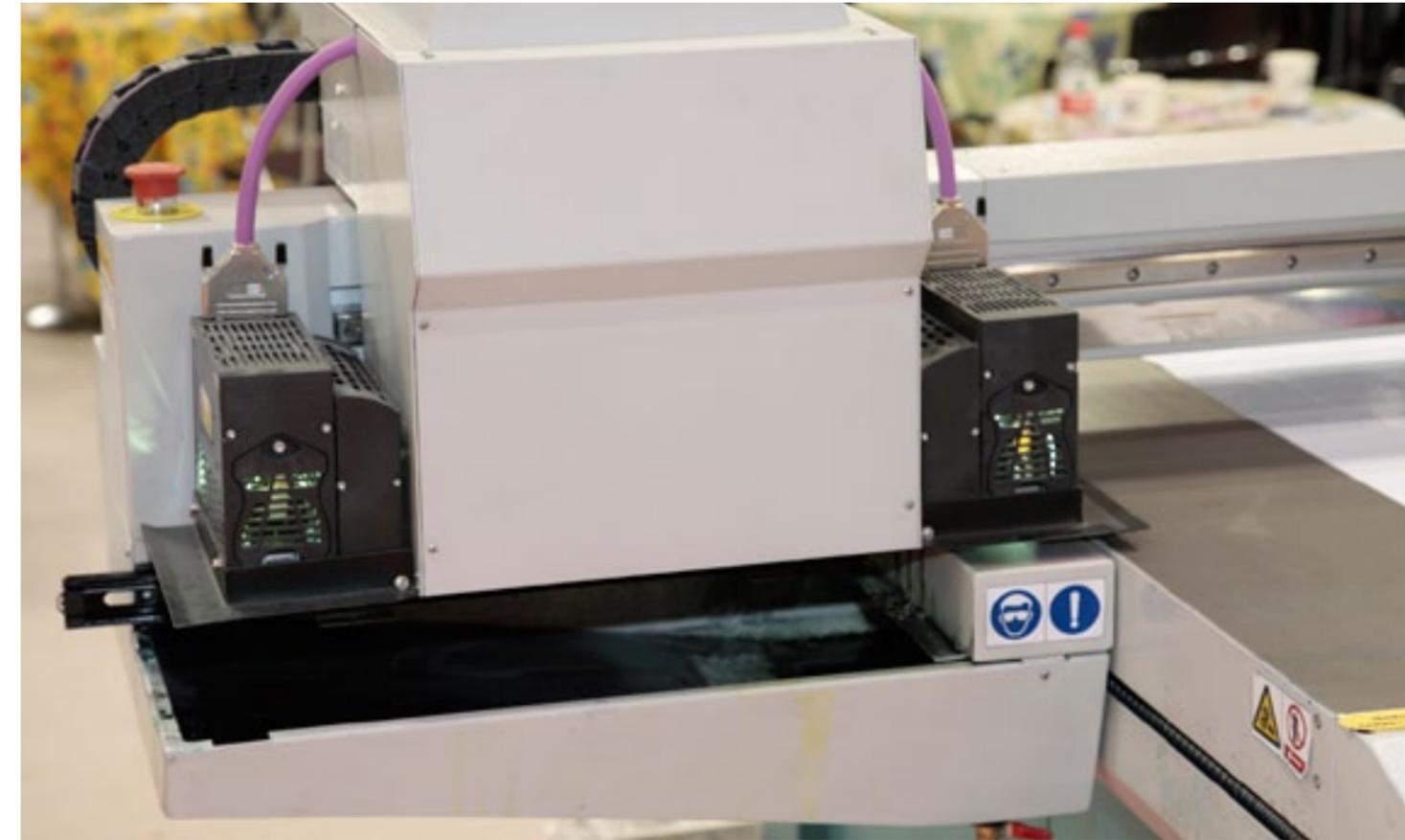
Mutoh is reported to do a good business in China. This is a compliment to their ValueJet line of primarily eco-solvent printers. Mr Seiji Hirose, Managing Director, Mutoh Hong Kong Ltd was in the honorary opening ceremony group. I also chatted with him at the D-PES expo the previous month.



UV-cured printers everywhere

The most common printers at all Chinese trade shows are still solvent: full solvent, mild-solvent, and eco-solvent. But the second most common are UV-cured printers.







UV-Cured Flatbed & Roll-to-Roll Printers at Beijing Sign Show 2012

One thing you learn after spending time in China is that many different brands are manufactured in the same factory. So in our TRENDS level we help you understand which brands are produced in which factories (keeping in mind that brands often switch factories quickly, and if we are under NDA we are not able to identify the factory). But you do not need a PhD to know whose factory makes the Agfa :Jeti nor whose factory makes the Agfa :Anapurna printers (fortunately in both instances, each of these factories have plenty of experience and capable engineers).

We list 100% of Chinese UV-cured printers in our many other reports, see both www.FLAAR-Reports.org and www.wide-format-printers.NET.



New Manufacturers (of UV-cured printers)

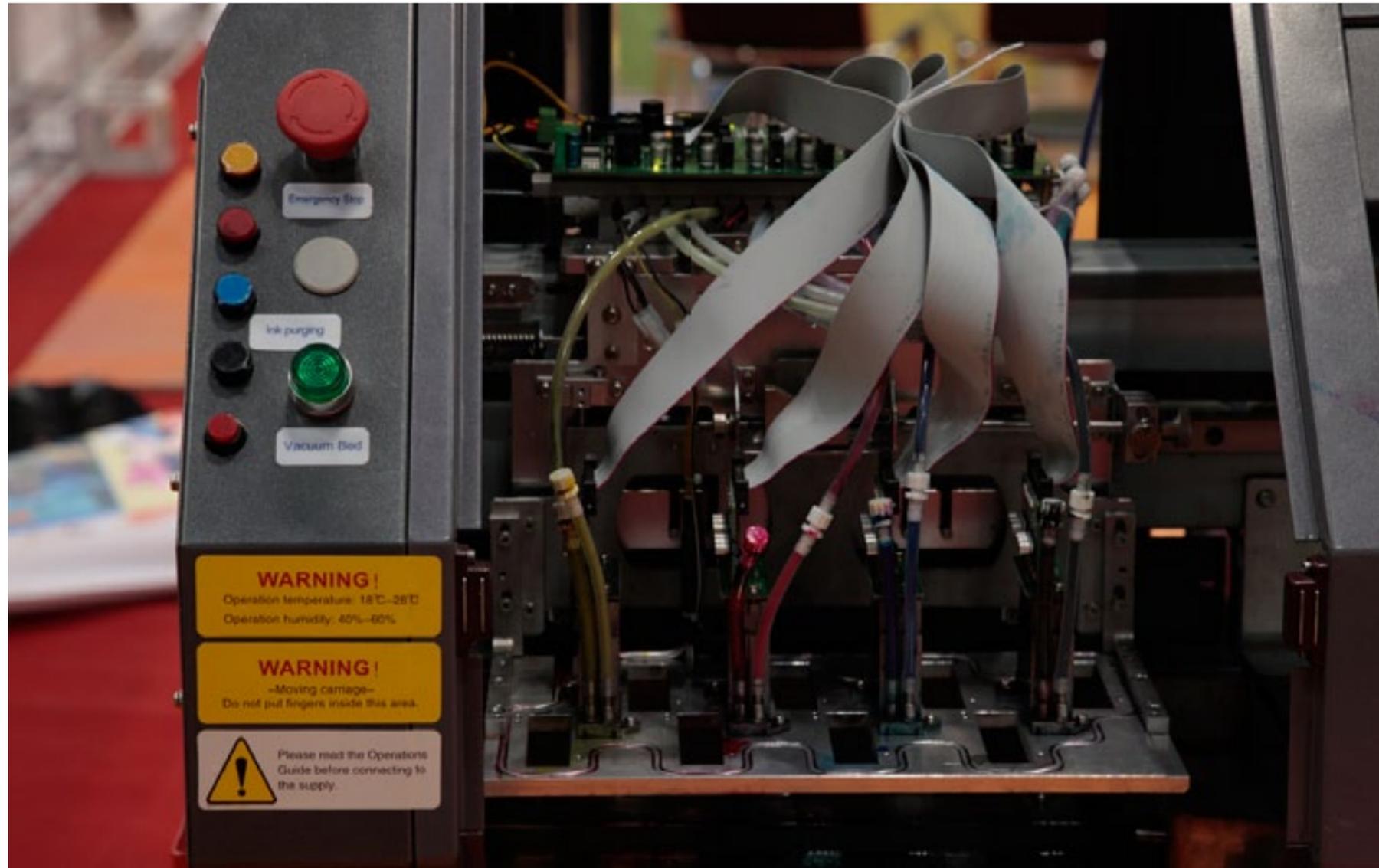
Because the world of UV-cured printers in China has been occupied by the major players such as JHF, Kincolor, Liyu and a dozen others, it is a challenge for other manufacturers to become noticed. But since FLAAR is a research institute, and because our goal is to provide information around the world, we also want to be sure to mention the up-and-coming UV-printer manufacturers, in this case the one we picture above.



Flatbed printers but not UV-cured

There were a few dedicated flatbed printers which were not UV-cured. This is a market that persists even though almost all non-UV cured manufacturers have dropped solvent-based flatbeds, there are many Chinese manufacturers still producing eco-solvent flatbeds. What is ironic is that they are not taking advantage of the new inks (inks that are for printing on thick and rigid materials).

We discuss this in the TRENDS version of our coverage of everything we saw at Beijing Sign Show.



Solvent, Eco-Solvent, Mild-Solvent Solvent printers everywhere

Seiko printers were not prominently featured. But Mutoh and Mimaki were in several booths. There were Roland printers also (though Mutoh was prominent). This is interesting, since in other expos nowadays Mimaki is usually the most visible, Roland second, and then Mutoh. In Italy it is Roland with a really large booth, Mimaki with a really large booth, and not as much for Mutoh. Each world area has a different focus. The market share has shifted over the past three years. Previously the brands were relatively equally, but in the last two years one brand has fallen visibly, and another brand as moved noticeably ahead in market share.

We discuss the rise of market share, and the fall and loss of market share of each of the major Japanese printer manufacturers in our TRENDS level reports.

Epson DX5, DX6, DX7 Printheads in non-Epson printers

Every year (over the last three to four years) there has been a rise in the number of Chinese manufacturers of eco-solvent, textile, and even UV-cured printers using Epson DX5 printheads, in rare occasions Dx6 print-heads, and increasingly DX7 printheads.

This year (2012) there were so many additional brands and models with Epson DX printheads that we will have to wait for time to process all the information. We have tons of notes from D-PES, Sign China (Guangzhou) and will be taking notes at Shanghai APPPEXPO in July.

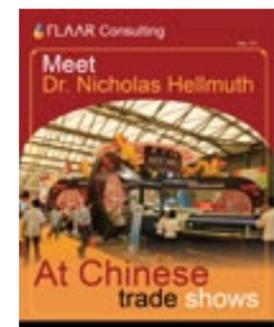
- We are FLAAR Reports are studying market potential for
- DX printheads for textile printers
- DX printheads for water-based inks
- DX printheads for latex and resin inks
- DX printheads for normal range of eco- or lite- or mild-solvent inks
- DX printheads for UV-cured inks

Our market survey will explain which kinds of products and applications have good potential, and which kinds of inks may function but the market potential outside China is simply not significant (meaning that some markets require printheads with abilities different than (usually better than) what an Epson DX head can produce.

But clearly, some inks and some applications are excellent for DX printheads.



So if your company (manufacturer, distributor, or end-user (print shop) wishes to have a reality-check on any or all the above markets and applications, FLAAR can provide your company consulting services, in China, or in your country anywhere in the world.



We can visit your office, or assist you at the next major international printer expo in China, Europe, Korea, Taiwan, Japan, or USA.



Textile Printers at Beijing Sign Show 2012

There were plenty of basic dye sublimation printers, mostly disperse dye ink (direct to fabric). For entry level this means that this class of printer has a dye sublimation unit immediately below the printer.

The alternative way to print polyester is via transfer paper. So it also helps when you can see the full-scale dye sublimation option, namely printing to transfer paper and then using a heat transfer press.



Thermal printheaded machines

I actually saw more printers with Encad-like clone technology at the Beijing Sign Show than I did at D-PES 2012. But at D-PES 2011 and D-PES 2010 there were many thermal printheaded machines. There are at least two manufacturers of thermal heads: we discuss all this in the TRENDS level reports.



Thermal printheaded printers are an aspect of market share within China, but I almost never see these printers outside China. We at FLAAR Reports are interested in considering doing projects on this unique kind of printer, as the image quality is often very nice.



After-Market Inks, Media, and Substrates

There were about four ink companies, perhaps six to ten media and substrate booths (plus distributors who had something of everything). So we will group all the inks, media, and substrates into a single upcoming report.

It is very important to understand the difference between an accepted brand, and "Brand X" which is of unknown origin and unknown chemicals.



Laminators at Beijing Sign Show 2012

Most printers claim their products don't need lamination. This is because they understandably wish the print shop budget to be spent primarily on printers (and not divided between a printer and a laminator).

But laminators are still useful, and we at FLAAR Reports still cover laminators. Nowadays probably half the laminators are made in China. The question is which brands are the most reliable.





Lots of flatbed cutters

CNC routers, CO2 laser cutters, plasma cutters: there was about 25% of the hall dedicated to these. Fortunately (and intelligently) they were all in one end of the hall so the carcinogenic smoke and odor of incinerated plastic did not make everyone ill in the front part of the hall (where the printers were). The odor of UV-cured ink and solvent ink you can get accustomed to. But burning plastic is tough on your nostrils and lungs.

Because of the odor, and because of the sparks flying, and because of debris being spun outside the booths, I did not have much inclination to walk the aisles in this part of the expo. But I did not see any digital cutters, though I would estimate that perhaps there could have been one or two somewhere.

It would be good if more Chinese companies develop entry-level digital flatbed cutters. We at FLAAR Reports would enjoy working with Chinese flatbed cutter manufacturers.

There will be no report on flatbed cutters since we did not find enough digital cutters at the expo: only CNC routers and laser cutters. For the Beijing sign show, our comments on flatbed cutters will be included in the UV-cured printer TRENDS report.



Chinese trade magazines

There are several Chinese trade magazines which cover the market. Most are 100% in Chinese characters. We show the booths of the Chinese trade magazines that we noticed.



LED and LCD

Beijing Sign Show is more a wide-format signage printer expo and (fortunately) not a LED and LCD expo like Sign China in Guangzhou. But there were a few booths of traditional sign material.



Innovative booth decoration

Chinese manufacturers and distributors often create complex booth designs. In general the booth designs are more imaginative in China than even in fashion-conscious Italy. At this particular expo, however, it was not the manufacturers who exhibited but primarily the local Beijing distributors. So their booths were more straightforward: usually a basic rectangular design.

Some booth design may not meet everyone's taste, but I single this out as definitely innovative: a wall made of ink cartridges.



Lots of children attend

I saw more children at this expo than any other expo elsewhere in the world. I was so busy photographing printers, inks, laminators, and media that I did not have time to photograph all the children, but one child definitely was in a situation where a photograph was humorous.



Chinese expos always have toy helicopter vendors

You can expect two things at a Chinese exhibit: the girls who sell electronic shoulder massage units, and the helicopter vendors. Frankly avoid them; the electric aspect of the massage equipment is not enjoyable. If you want a good massage, have the woman do it with her hands! not with a \$5 gizmo that will wear out the week after you buy it.

And for the helicopters, wow, these are impressive. The vendors can make them fly in any flight path. They can land the chopper on their wrist (just like a trained falcon). But the blades can also knock out the eyeballs of your children, your pet dog, and your neighbors. The lawsuits and medical bills could cost more than your home mortgage. So I enjoy seeing these choppers in flight, but I would never bring one home.



TRENDS

There were two models of a printer of a top major international brand which have never been shown outside China. What about these printers makes them get a different name?

So the TRENDS report on Beijing Sign Show will feature photographs of the unexpected printers that I saw. Plus comments on all categories of printers, inks, media, and everything else.

The TRENDS report on the Beijing expo is estimated to cost \$1200 and can be ordered by writing Front-Desk "at" FLAAR.org.

To attend the Beijing expo would have cost you several thousand dollars in airfare, hotel, and meals, Now you can receive the FLAAR Reports on this expo, delivered in full-color electronic format, to your home or office as a PDF for substantially less than it costs to fly so far (not to mention that it would take you five days: a day each direction lost to jet-lag, then actually travel time; plus time at the expo). We hope you attend in 2013 but for this year, it is much easier simply to purchase our report.

Plus, once you buy this, you can telephone or Skype Dr Hellmuth and ask questions about visiting the Beijing 2013 expo next year, or ask FLAAR about what we saw and experienced this year in 2012. We do not put everything in-print: much of the TRENDS information is verbal, and delivered directly to you personally by Nicholas.



TRENDS Especially in UV-cured Printers

Plus, Unexpected Printers
Never before noticed elsewhere

Beijing Sign Show 2012

The conference on printheads

Chen Dazhi, of the organizing company for Beijing Sign Show, had a clever idea for a conference on printheads. He had a good list of topics already and asked me which printhead brands did I suggest. I recommended the printhead brands I know the best since either I have visited their company headquarters (Xaar) or I see their hospitable top managers at trade shows all around the world (Konica Minolta, Fujifilm Dimatix) or I am curious about their printheads precisely because I have not yet been to their company (Seiko).

Originally I was asked to give a lecture but I suggested it would be better if I were moderator, so that all the attention could be focused directly on the four different printhead manufacturers who were featured this first time around. So I did the opening comments, and after all four printhead presentations, I did the closing comments (that what is crucial is being able to print lots more than just signage).

I also hope that printhead manufacturers can work with lots more innovative ink companies. Epson cuts off those ink companies and does not cooperate with them; the result is that printshops around the world do not get access to printers with the innovative new inks from start-up companies. Staedtler Lumocolor ink was blocked; and Sepia ink also.

For 2013 it would be nice to consider the four additional printhead manufacturers, especially including MemJet.

Here is Nicholas introducing the conference.



Moderator makes closing summary and general remarks

At the end, I decided since all four lectures were good, it was not needed to repeat what they said. Instead I mentioned the highlights of each speaker and then I offered my own comments, namely that the future of wide-format printers is in far more than merely signage: printing on any and all materials (for any and all applications) is the future. And more than just textiles and ceramic tiles (though printers for ceramic tiles were the main driver of growing printhead sales in the last three years).



Awards for speakers and associates

It is traditional at most industry conferences for recognition to be given to industry personalities. So the printhead VIPs were given awards after each presentation, and at after the summary presentation..

End of the conference

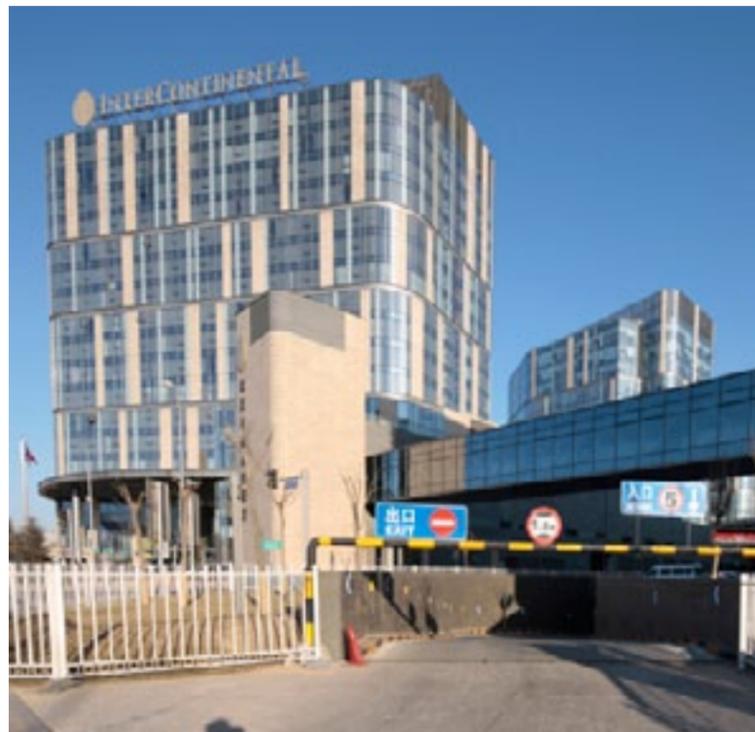
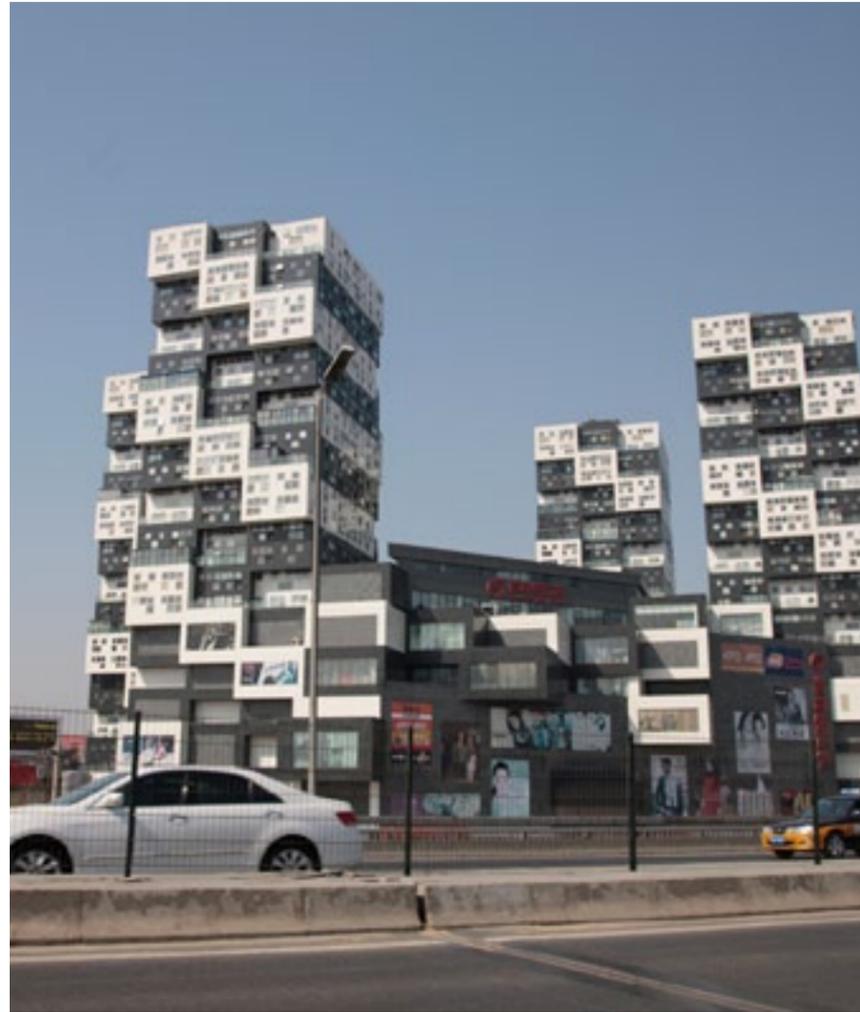
At the end of the conference, all the speakers, executives, and moderator are brought together on the stage. FLAAR is the only North American present among the CEO's and top managers of international manufacturers and Chinese associations.



Beijing as a venue

There are major trade shows in Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Beijing. Each city has its advantages; each city (and each event) has its disadvantages. If you are a manufacturer, distributor, or printshop owner or manager, and wish to learn which trade shows we recommend, we can assist you to make an informed decision. We are also familiar with the printer expos of Taiwan, Korea, and Japan: each country's printer expos are totally different. So be sure you request consulting services.

For expos in China we also provide tips on getting your visa, where to find a hotel, etc (these services are exclusively for consulting clients; however we are not a travel agency; just that we have a few years experience traveling in, living in, and attending printer expos in China).

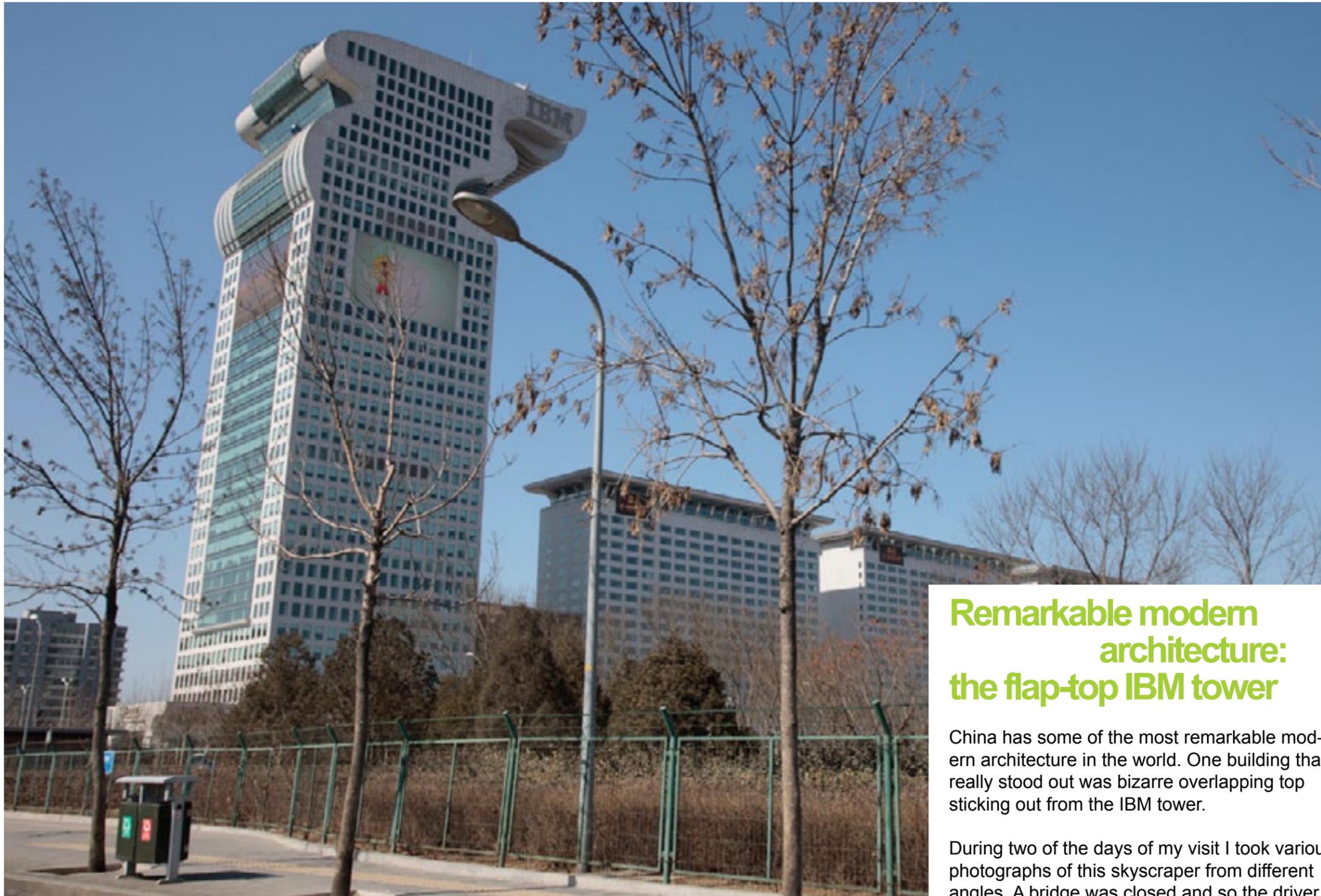


Remarkable modern architecture: what you see along the highway

The office where we worked for six weeks is in the southwest part of Beijing, in the Fengtai area. To get to the China Convention Center was about 45 minutes (when there was minimal traffic). There are a lot of interesting buildings en route.

I particularly liked the unique architectural façade concept on this enormous mall. I would assume that the upper floors are residential or for offices.





Remarkable modern architecture: the flap-top IBM tower

China has some of the most remarkable modern architecture in the world. One building that really stood out was bizarre overlapping top sticking out from the IBM tower.

During two of the days of my visit I took various photographs of this skyscraper from different angles. A bridge was closed and so the driver had to circle around to try to get across all the expressways to the other side where the convention center was. So I got lots of opportunity to shoot out of the car window.



The expo center is in the middle of the former China Olympics 2008 area

With all the fences it was not realistic to get a good photo of the Bird's Nest (Beijing National Stadium). But I did get a snapshot from a distance. I was so curious to see what printers, inks, and media were exhibited at the expo that I did not have time to sightsee in the Olympic area.



The expo center is enormous outside

To really get a good shot of the outside I would have needed to be in a helicopter! But from ground level I tried to capture at least some basic architectural views.

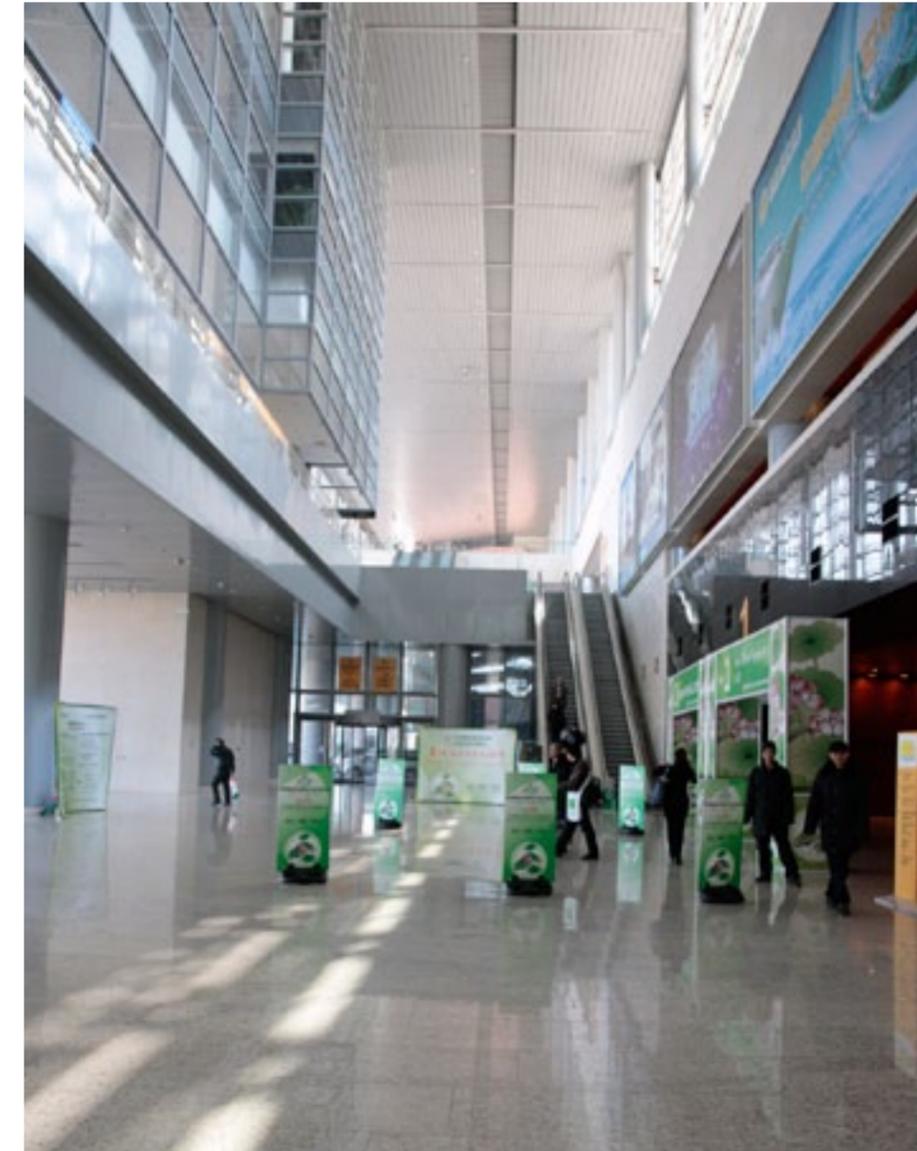


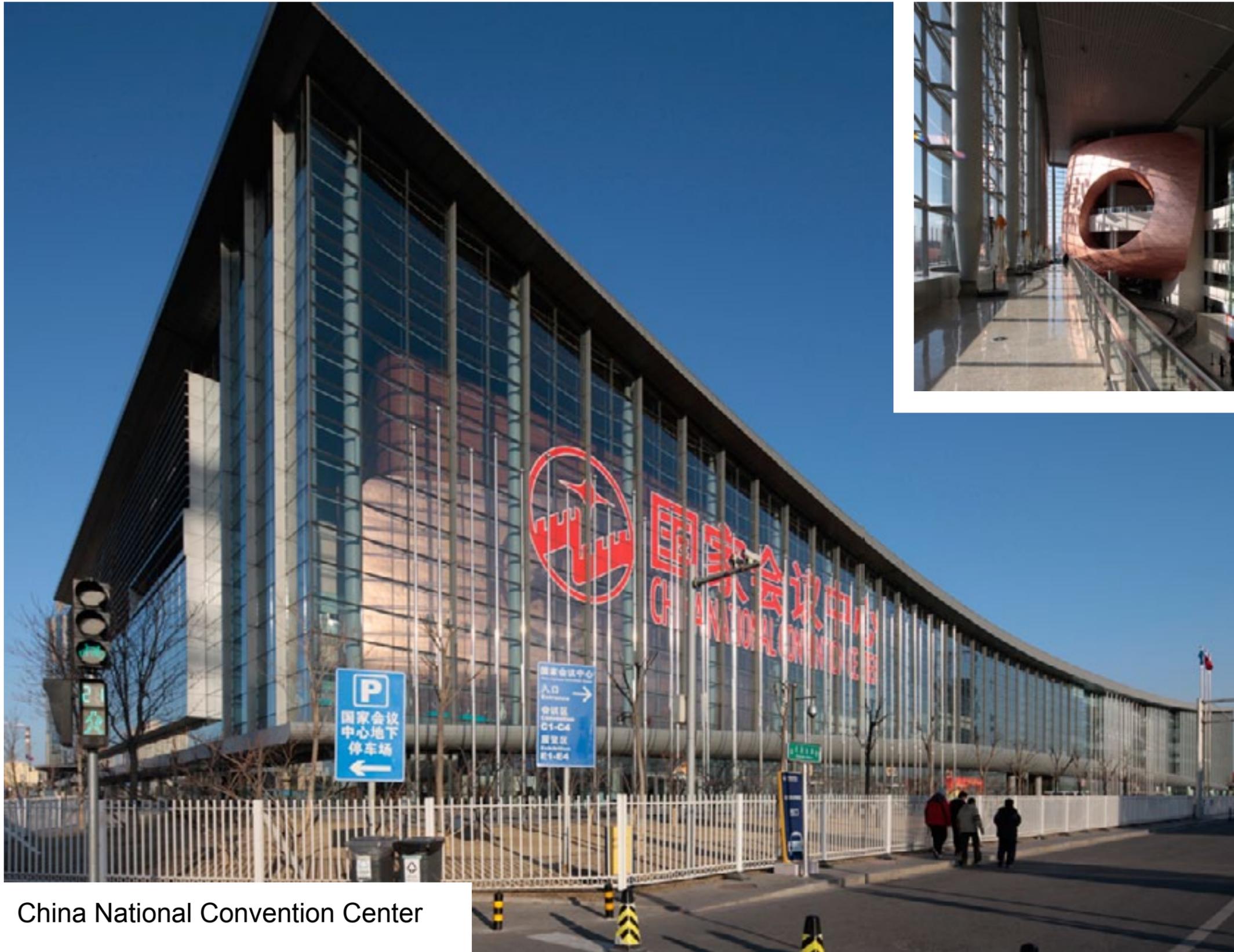
The expo center is even more impressive inside

Fortunately we have been provided an ultra-wide angle lens: 17mm, for a 21 megapixel camera (provided courtesy of John Lorusso, Parrot Digigraphic). This camera (on a Gitzo tripod provided by Manfrotto Distribution) allows us to capture professional quality views of the inside space of this remarkable China Convention Center.

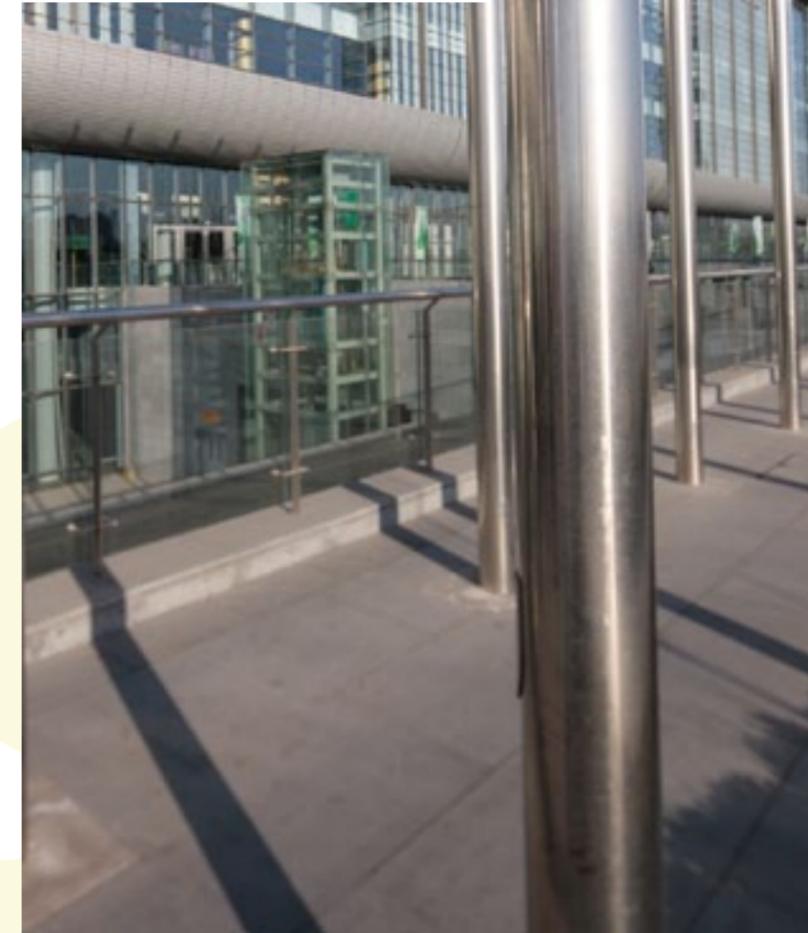
The main hall was the height of a several story building.

Then at the far right end there was a ceramic-like rounded form that was completely unique: different shape and different color than you normally see inside a modern building. Another trade show was being held in the associated hall.





China National Convention Center





Construction never stops: a monumental new tower in the distance

In every city in China scores of entire housing complexes are under construction. And in the downtown areas new skyscrapers are being built. Here is one example of another addition to the skyline of Beijing. The building seems to consist mainly of structural metal tubing.

Chinese ad and printer expos

I have not scheduled a visit to the separate April expo in Beijing because for the March expo all our airfare was pre-paid (for all four of us from FLAAR). But at D-PES I have met the pleasant managers of CEIEC who are the organizers of the April expo in Beijing and we wish all organizers of all expos success for their business. But there will not be any FLAAR Report on the April expo since no budget was provided.

Most distributors say there are already too many printer expos around the world. So it makes more sense to partner and co-locate, rather than split and have separate events.

Since the FLAAR Reports are read by over one million people a year around the world (actually almost a million and a half if you count photographers and artists who print fine art giclee), we make an effort to attend as many expos as possible. But as a non-profit institute, unless a host provides airfare and hotel, it is tough to get our team to every expo.

For a trade show the size of the Beijing Sign Show, VISCOM, SGI Dubai, Sign Africa, Graphics of the Americas, Reklama Moscow, it would take a minimum of two people all the three or four days to record all the major items which are part of the wide-format inkjet workflow: laminators, coaters, cutters, inks, media & substrates, in addition to wide-format printers.

For an expo the size of D-PES and Shanghai, we really need six people, since there are also thermal printheaded machines and so many Epson printheaded machines we need one person just for those categories. The first Shanghai expo I went by myself. Second year I brought one assistant. Third year four of us. Last year again four total. It would be helpful to have at least two more Technical Writers.

FESPA (Europe), ISA, SGIA need four people minimum: five or six would be more efficient. We do not attend FESPA Mexico nor FESPA Asia due to airfare expense, but have attended FESPA Mexico twice when airfare was available.

The Brazil expo in July should ideally have a staff of three, but when an expo is four days we can try to handle the basics with a team of two.

We would also enjoy attending expos in Indonesia, Vietnam, India, Eastern Europe, Scandanavia, UK and elsewhere, if lecture or hosting opportunities become available.

Opening ceremony: confetti explosions

Here you see the yellow tubes which explode like a combination between a giant firecracker and a confetti-canon to shoot out the confetti. In one expo last year the organizers had the CEO's handle these ourselves but we almost blew our heads off since we did not know which end blew up or which end to hold. So this expo organizer carefully had the trained military-like team handle the explosives.



Acknowledgements

I thank Chen Dazhi, of the organizing company for Beijing Sign Show, for inviting me to be moderator of the print-head conference, and for inviting me to be with the executives from Chinese, Korean, Japanese, and other companies for the opening day event.

We thank Mr Liu, CEO of Sign-in-China.com, and his assistant, Rissa Xia, for organizing the FLAAR project in Beijing. We would not have been close enough to the expo to have attended if we had not received airfare from the project with Sign-in-China.com.



Sign-in-China booth

Additional FLAAR Reports on Chinese expositions

We cover all major wide-format printer-related trade shows throughout China. However there are also speciality expos, such as on ceramics. These we tend not to cover since there are simply too many (and the cost of constant back-and-forth airfare is too much). However every year we do add new expos to our list, though for now we prefer to concentrate on trade shows with wide-format inkjet printers, media, substrates, laminators, coaters, and inkjet inks.



Subscription Levels

(may include Consulting if desired; the decision is yours)

There are several levels of FLAAR Reports

Free level: this is the report you have in your hands now. These are an introduction to the exposition as well as to the city where the expo is held.

Level 1: comprehensive lists, brand name and model, of each product (by category) at the expo.

This level is important for people or companies who need to know who is exhibiting when and where.

Level 2: tabulation of basic specifications of the products. So at this level you get all the lists of Level 1, plus additional information.

TRENDS level: we have one TRENDS report per expo, which summarizes everything that was seen, heard, and exhibited at the expo. So this TRENDS discusses more than what you would see even if you had attended the expo yourself.

The TRENDS level also has comparative tabulations of what products are at different expos, or at the same expo name but over a period of years.

You can Subscribe to Level 1 or above (TRENDS are listed as "Level 5"). You can see the levels on www.FLAAR-Reports.org.

Level 1: Keeping track of which brands and models of printers and which kinds of inks, are exhibited and launched when and where...

List Price = If bought individually, **Subscription** = If all bought at once

Benefits, Coverage, Contents	List Price	Subscription
Level 1A: (USA: Graphics of the Americas, ISA, GraphExpo, SGIA) Includes lists and documentation not in any other source on these printer expos	\$140	\$62
Level 1B: (All USA + Brazil + FESPA Mexico)	\$262	\$120
Level 1C: (China: D-Pes + Guangzhou + Shanghai APPPEXPO)	\$340	\$210
Level 1D: (DRUPA) 4 days of printers of every size and shape; inks and media; we don't use lullaby illusions if that is the style of the PR releases; instead we provide a reality check	\$570	\$420
Level 1E: (All mayor printer trade shows: North & South America, Europe [FESPA + Viscom + Reklama Moscow], Middle East, Africa)	\$566	\$420
Level 1C+E: (North & South America + Europe [FESPA, Viscom, DRUPA, Reklama Moscow] + Middle East + Africa + China [D-PES, Guangzhou, Shanghai APPPEXPO])	\$1476	\$1000

If you prefer to skip this Subscription, it is easy for you simply to attend all these printer expos yourself, or send your staff: Total travel distance: only about 200,000 miles, which is about XYZ, 000 kilometers. Your wife and family will never forget you being gone this often.

The airfare cost, hotels and meals: roughly \$48,000 (economy class and economical hotels). If you need Crowne Plaza or above quality, and comparable dining level, your expenses to visit the same printer expos will be around \$60,000: or, you can have all basic trade show printer lists + distributor lists for each pertinent country for a mere \$3500. Or, trade show info with no distributor lists for only \$1000 (covers an entire year, world wide international expos).



All the above FLAAR Reports, covering the whole globe and an entire year, list price \$1476 if bought one by one, by Subscription lower price, \$1000

Beijing Sign Show

Level 2: Introductory printer lists for pertinent UV, solvent, latex printer trade shows, **plus** lists of distributors for wide-format inkjet workflow products (Printers, laminators, inks, and substrates)...

Benefits, Coverage, Contents	List Price	Subscription
Level 2A: (North and South America UV trade shows printer lists and distributors)	\$1120	\$620
Level 2B: (North & South America, Europe, Middle East, Africa printer lists and distributors)	\$3032	\$1500
Level 2C: (China: UV-cured printers in China: D-Pes, Guangzhou, Shanghai APPP-EXPO + worldwide)	\$4092	\$2100
Level 2Da: (DRUPA + Distributors of mayor countries worldwide)	\$3930	\$1200
Level 2Db: (DRUPA + FESPA Barcelona + Distributors worldwide)	\$4790	\$2200
Level 2Dc: (DRUPA + FESPA Barcelona + CHINA + Distributors worldwide)	\$6090	\$3100
Level 2D+: (DRUPA + FESPA Barcelona + China + Mexico + USA + Brazil + Europe + Middle East + Africa + Distributors)	\$6426	\$3500



Wide-format Inkjet Printers you have never seen

BSS

Beijing Sign Show 2012