

# APPEXPO 2014



## UV-cured, Eco-Solvent, Textile, Water-based Printers, Inks, Media Cutters & Laminators

Nicholas Hellmuth, Pablo Lee & Maria Renee Ayau

It is natural for each printer expo to claim they are "the largest." Sorry, none of them are that large. Yes, fortunately several expos are growing (the impressive FESPA in Europe and the successful SGIA in America). But if you read the PR releases most expo's claims are blown a tad out of proportion.

We have been attending the APPPEXPO Shanghai expo five or six years. Plus we have attended one of the expos in Beijing, and we have attended three expos in Guangzhou about five years. So we have a tad of experience in China (we also visit printer factories, ink factories, media and substrate factories throughout China).

FLAAR is a prime consultant for the organizers of APPPEXPO, for the organizers of Sign Istanbul, and for the organizers of Sign Middle East (aka SGI Dubai). We have been attending Sign Africa for many many years and look forward to FESPA Africa 2015 (their show this year, 2014, was the same days as APPPEXPO, so I had to skip the nice Johannesburg expo to be able to get to Shanghai two days before the expo opened and then stay the entire four days). After the Shanghai expo was over two of us flew to assist the opening ceremony of Panama Expo Grafica. So when we write about one expo we have experience with key expos elsewhere around the world (we have been to printer expos in UK, Italy, France, Germany, Mexico, Ukraine, Taiwan and Japan as well).

So let's look at the reality of APPPEXPO in Shanghai.

FIVE large halls with printers, media, substrates, and inks.

### How many halls did the other expos have?

APPPEXPO had more brands of UV, more brands of solvent printers, and more brands of water-based printers than any other expo (actually had more brands of UV than all other expos around the world put together).

In addition to the FIVE halls of printers, inks, and media, then there were

- One or more halls of endless brands of CO2 laser engravers and CNC routers.
- Of these halls for engravers, also tons of booths of acrylic materials for signage
- Then several halls of traditional (offset and flexo) printing equipment
- And SIX or SEVEN MORE HALLS of traditional signage (LED lighting, channel letters, etc) and then digital signage (LCD monitors and LED screens)

Ironic that this Chinese expo complex is partially owned by Drupa of Messe Duesseldorf Germany but the Shanghai expo is significantly larger than Drupa for media and substrates, and is dramatically, substantially, and noticeably more significant than Drupa for signage printers, especially UV-cured and eco-solvent. (APPPEXPO is totally independent and has no association with Drupa whatsoever; indeed APPPEXPO is leaving this convention center and for 2015 is moving to a newer larger expo center elsewhere in Shanghai).

We all select APPPEXPO to learn about printers, inks, media, substrates, RIP software, laminators, and traditional signage products. The booths with all these products are what has made this the largest single printer & signage expo in the world.

Yet another of the most rewarding aspects of attending APPPEXPO (for us at FLAAR) is that total strangers come up to FLAAR team and introduce themselves. They then thank us for making available the FLAAR Reports.

These print shop owners and distributors say that they get tired of ridiculous press releases and silly claims that a product is perfect and can do everything for every need. So people switch over to reading the FLAAR Reports, since they notice that we visit factories, demo rooms and R&D labs (so we know the trends of what's coming next). Print shop owners and distributors tell us when they see us in the aisles, that they want to tell us that they really appreciate the effort that the FLAAR Reports teams put into our studies around the world.

Plus FLAAR is totally international, multi-cultural, and we cover the entire workflow of wide-format inkjet printing.

Since APPPEXPO is international, we meet people from all around the world: Eastern Europe, Western Europe, Dubai, Iran, Egypt, Latin America and many parts of Asia.

We feature Dilli on the front cover to emphasize that APPPEXPO has (already several years ago) reached the status of being a multi-national exhibition event. APPPEXPO has diverse brands from Korea, Japan, Switzerland, Canada, USA, Europe, Asia, and even has two international halls. PLUS you get over 80 brands of Chinese printers also (and all the ink, media, substrates, CNC routers, etc.).



Opening Ceremony



Ms. Eveline Luo & FLAAR Team



Maria Renee Ayau



Andres Morataya



Jennifer Lara



Nicholas Hellmuth



Pablo Lee



Ievgenia Nemirova

Seven years ago many Chinese factories used old Encad-like Lexmark-like printheads to make pseudo-Encad printer clones, for water-based inks. There were actually at least two factories making printheads for water-based printers. By 2013 the number of Chinese brands of water-based printers had withered considerably.

Today water-based printers do still exist, but are rare. But precisely because they are rare, we at FLAAR are now taking notes on every water-based printer at every expo in the world.



**Aiifar AF-1301**



**HP Designjet Z6800**



**Polygon HZ-1806GS**



**HP Designjet D5800**



**SinoColor-SJ-1260**

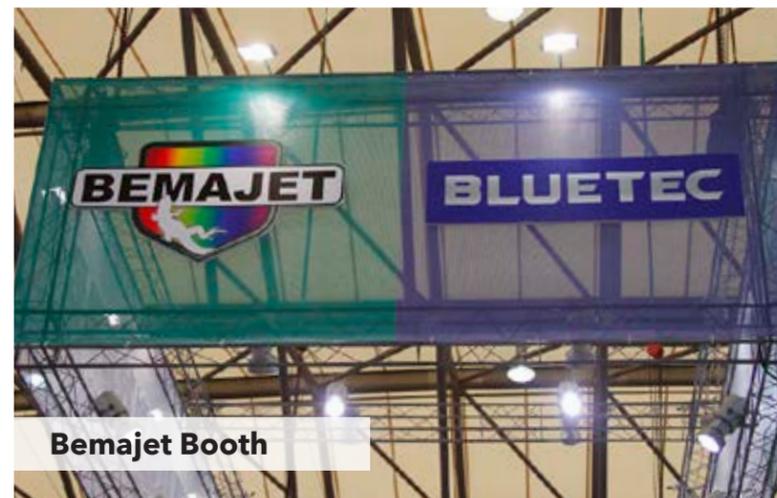
There were enough solvent brands of solvent printers to provide for every price range and every need. Even with a team of six people at APPPEXPO 2014, there were so many unexpected UV-cured printers that we will need an additional staff person to handle solvent ink printers in the coming year (2015).



**Colorjet Polo HQ**



**Colorjet Booth**



**Bemajet Booth**



**Bemajet 1612S**



**Colorjet Acura**



**Skyjet SDE3300**

Latex ink is a mixture of solvents with a lot of water. So most ink chemists (outside HP) do not accept it as a "water-based" ink, but rather as a solvent and water-based ink. But this ink is now in at least its third generation. All aspects of HP latex ink are better today than either of the two earlier generations.

Since all the companies in China are moving to UV-cured, there was zero latex printers from Ricoh or Mimaki. Only one single isolated company making latex ink printers other than HP had a booth: Meijet.

There were OVER 90 different UV-cured printer brands at the expo; and only 2 brands of latex ink printers (total of 8 models of latex; of UV over 200 machines). So clearly UV-cured and eco-solvent (and textile printers) are still the mainstay of signage and graphics printing around the world.

I mention this since several trade magazines around the world have asked me to write about "when will HP latex ink become the mainstay of the worldwide printing industry." You see the answer at every printer expo (not just here in Shanghai, but at other expos: UV is king and eco-solvent is still a powerhouse). And true water-based still exist: Canon, Epson, and even HP Designjet)



Meijet Booth

But it is nice that the HP latex ink gets better every 18 months. I have met print shops who bought early generation HP latex printers; they said they threw them away because they did not perform as promised nor as assumed they should.

But I have also met print shop owners who really like their HP latex printers and went on to buy many more of them.

It is ironic that the more HP latex printers people have, the more likely they are to ask about after-market latex ink. Currently there are two options: one after-market ink from Sam Ink; and a latex ink available from STS Ink.

The more that print shop owners learn about the availability of after-market latex ink, the more likely they are to be willing to buy an HP printer (no after-market yet available for Mimaki latex printers since not enough people own them yet).

HP latex ink has a future, but will be better received (and better perceived) when the exaggerated claims are toned down a bit, at all levels. Fortunately the new generation technology and improved ink chemistry makes it easier to reformulate the advertising claims. Would be a good time to simply drop all the nonsense and focus on what HP does well: they have done the industry a service by developing a relatively new kind of ink (certainly better than the ink used by the Encad VinylJet of circa 2001!).



HP Booth



HP Latex 3000

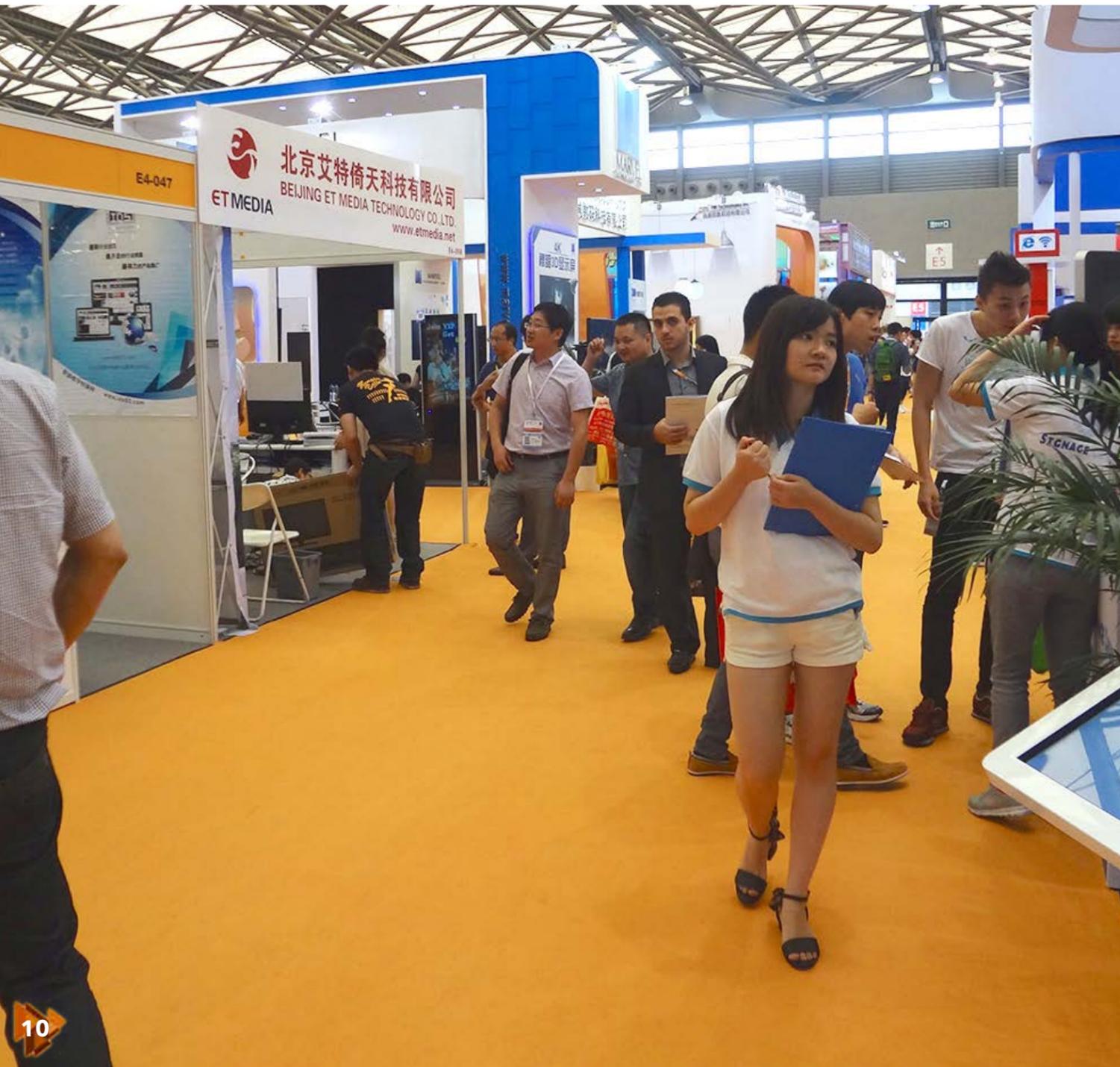


HP Latex 310

## RESIN INK PRINTERS

Zero Sepiax printers were noticeable; if one was present, it was well hidden.

The only way for an innovative ink to be successful is to be visible all year every year in each and every expo. Otherwise people forget an ink very quickly.



## SUV (means Solvent UV-cured)

SUV is a new category. But zero SUV printers from Mimaki here at the expo; and since there were OVER 200 different UV printer models to inspect, there was not time to see whether any SUV printer was in the Fujifilm booth.

But we did notice another SUV printer, but not using SUV ink from Sericol (Mimaki, Fujifilm, and all other companies which offer SUV ink all get it from the one same identical ink company: Sericol).

We identify and discuss the new SUV ink in our separate FLAAR Reports at TRENDS level.



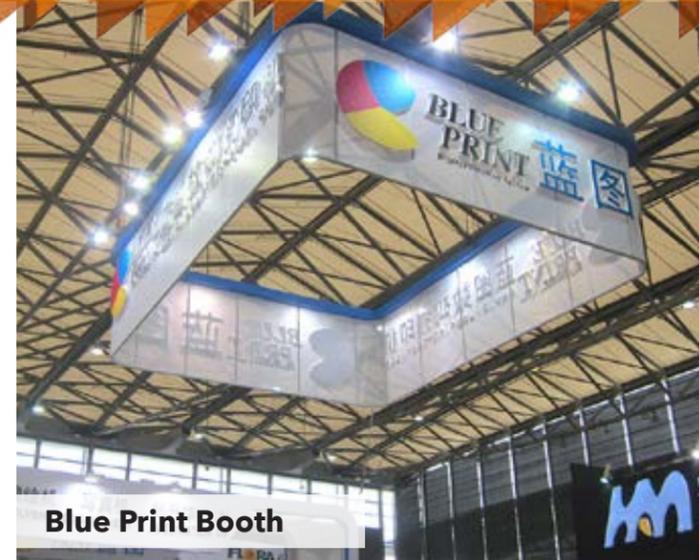
NT-JET



AGFA Booth



Jeti Titan HS at AGFA



Blue Print Booth



V2 at Blue Print



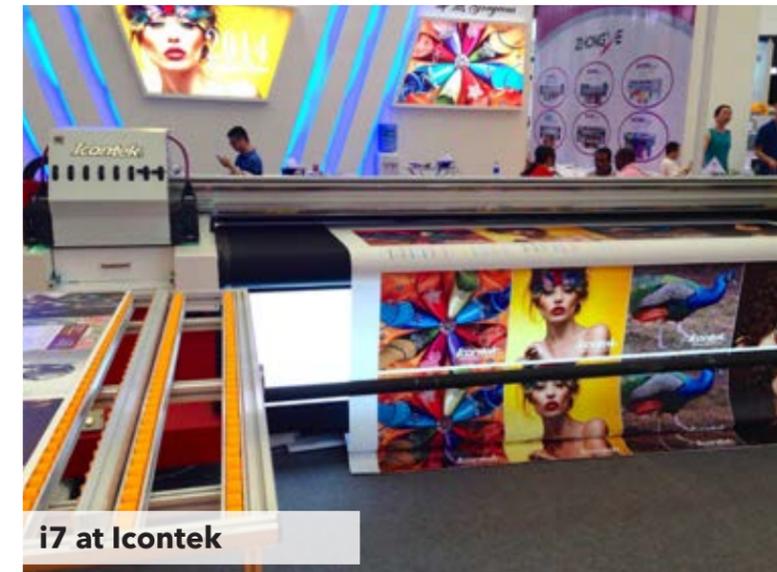
Fujifilm Booth



Onset Q40 at Fujifilm



Icontek Booth



i7 at Icontek



Human Digital Booth



QU-Jet at Human Digital



Wit-Color Booth



UVIP 3313J at Wit-Color

EFI VUTEk did a nice product launch here. We will be updating our web pages on the many EFI VUTEK models that they exhibited.

With over 90 models and over 200 individual printers this was the largest display of UV-cured printers in the world. APPPEXPO 2014 broke every record. Quite amazing.

We will have separate FLAAR Reports with photos of many of the brands. Several brands were new, so we do not yet know those companies (the only way we can really know a brand is to have them bring our team to their factory).



**EFI VUTEk Booth**



**GS5500LXr Pro**



**H1625 LED**



**HS100 Pro**

So for SMATCH (UV-cured printers), we know the key people in the booth, such as Mark Ma. We have experience with him for over five years. This is a factor which counts: continuity.



Smatch Booth



Smatch UV



Smatch 2512

Dilli is another company we know because we have visited their factory in Korea. We know the owner Dr. Choi, his family (and the brother who heads D.G.I., mainly solvent printers and textile printers). Plus we know the top managers of Dilli. Their Korean technology is definitely not low-bid.

As soon as we can visit Chinese and Taiwan printer manufacturers we can also add comments about their brands.



**NEO SUN FB2513-04DWX**



**NEO TITAN RTR 3204 DX**



**Dilli Booth**

The fact that ITMA (an expo focused 100% on textiles) was two weeks before APPPEXPO might not have affected the number of textile printers at the show. But the number of textile inks at the show decreased by 33%. It is worth mentioning that the companies that did exhibit at APPPEXPO are very well established and have been in the market for years. It is the smaller and newer companies that did not exhibit at this July show this year. Nonetheless, there were plenty of ink companies, and the ones which were not present lost many potential sales.



**Rainbow Booth**



**Ink-Mate Booth**



**Bonjet Booth**



**Ink-Tec Booth**



The number of textile printers brands exhibited this year was almost the same as last year. Maybe more models were on display last year, but the number of brands is consistent, which is notable taking into consideration that ITMA (international textile expo) was held two weeks before in the same exhibition complex.

The two main absent companies were d-gen, which was present at ITMA; and Jacland who has not been exhibiting printers since last year's APPPEXPO, they have limited themselves to exhibit take-up units and textile printer add-ons.

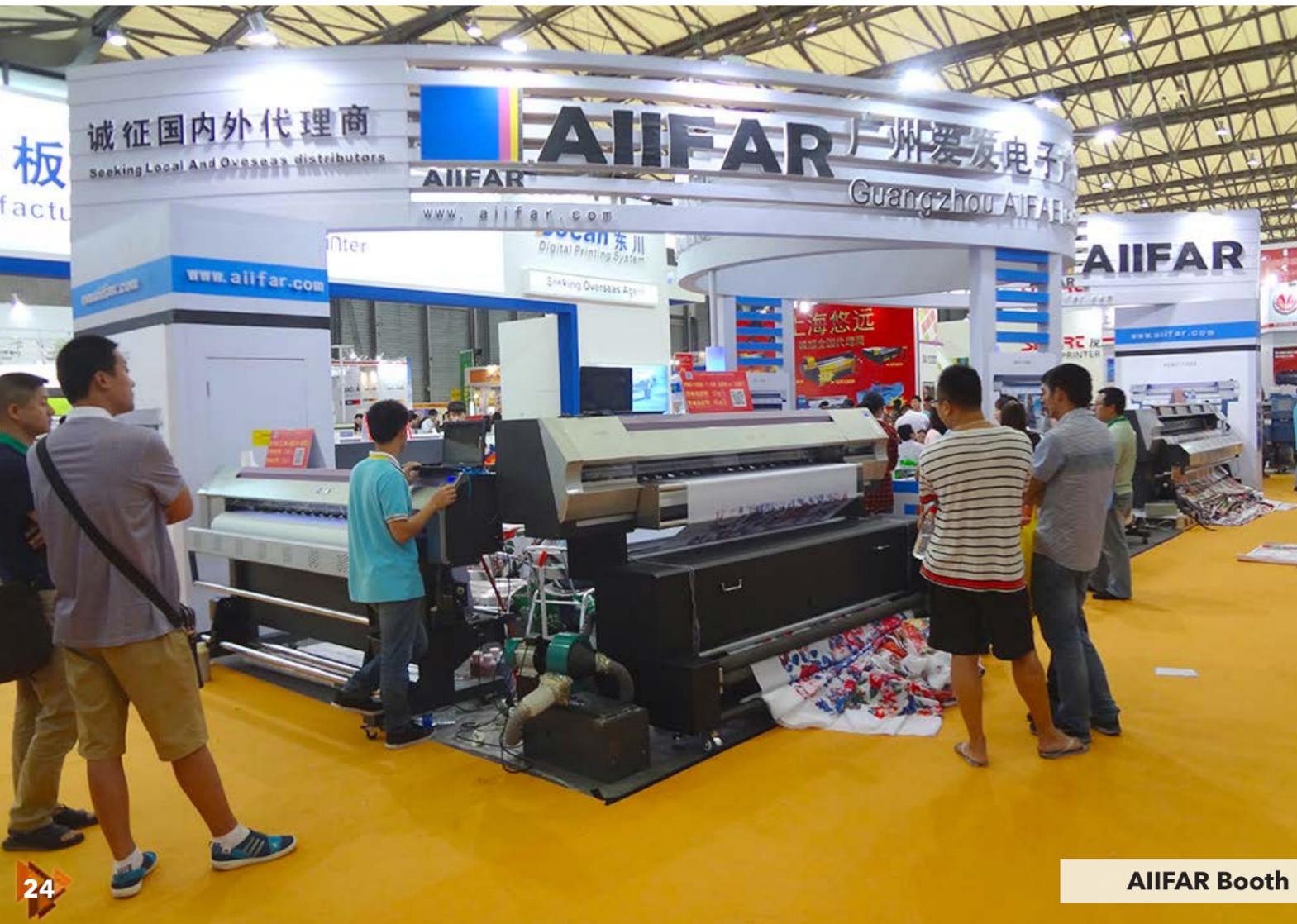
Several new companies have emerged such as AIFAR, Granto (a division of Special Color for textile and UV printers), and Polar. So two companies focused on ITMA but three other companies jumped in.



**Polar Booth**



**Special Booth**



**AIFAR Booth**



**Granto Booth**

Most laminators sold by brands in USA and EU are actually made in China. Only a few brands are made in their home countries.

Most printer ads try to suggest that "no lamination is needed" with their kind of ink. But in reality there are still many advantages to having a laminator in your print shop.



HandTop



Herald



Audley Booth



Royal Sovereign



DMAIS

Seven years ago there was only one main brand of flatbed applicator, named ROLLROLLER (a flatbed laminator table system).

Then, year by year, a new brand from Scandinavia or Germany or elsewhere was launched.

Then even in South Africa still another brand of flatbed laminator was brought to market.

About two or three years ago the first Asian flatbed laminators were introduced. There were at least two and perhaps three Asian brands at APPPEXPO 2014.

As soon as we can be flown to a flatbed laminator factory, we will write about this innovative technology.



Yingkai Booth



FY-1325



MEFU



FY-1325



Flatbed laminator

Lots of after-market ink booths at this giant Shanghai expo. Several brands I had not noticed before. We would need to see a factory before we know whether the new brands were re-branded (distributors) or were a new factory.

The booths we spent most time at were the ink companies whose factories we have visited:

**STS Inks** (visited their factory earlier this year in Florida) Our first report is now out. As soon as we evaluate end-users (print shops) using their inks, we will update our reports.

## STS INKS



STS inks Booth

Hongsam (have been to their factory; have done studies demo room in Shanghai about four times; have visted print shops successfully using their inks for textiles).

We recently tested their white UV-cured ink, pigmented ink for textiles, and have several new reports.



HJ-8495



Hongsam Booth



HJ-8490

Sam Ink (have been to their factory three times and have visited several print shops successfully using their inks). We are now looking at their inks for the new HP Designjet 5800. Later this year we will send a team to Singapore to inspect additional ink launches.



SAM INK Booth



Mr. Sam and SAM INK's Team

Still it seems this is the first time that I attend this fair, but that's already a little more than half of a decade to be attending every year without fail to this great international fair and yet I always find amazing things.

One thing I have noticed about this show is that unlike other shows and thanks to its popularity the number of exhibitors grows every year.

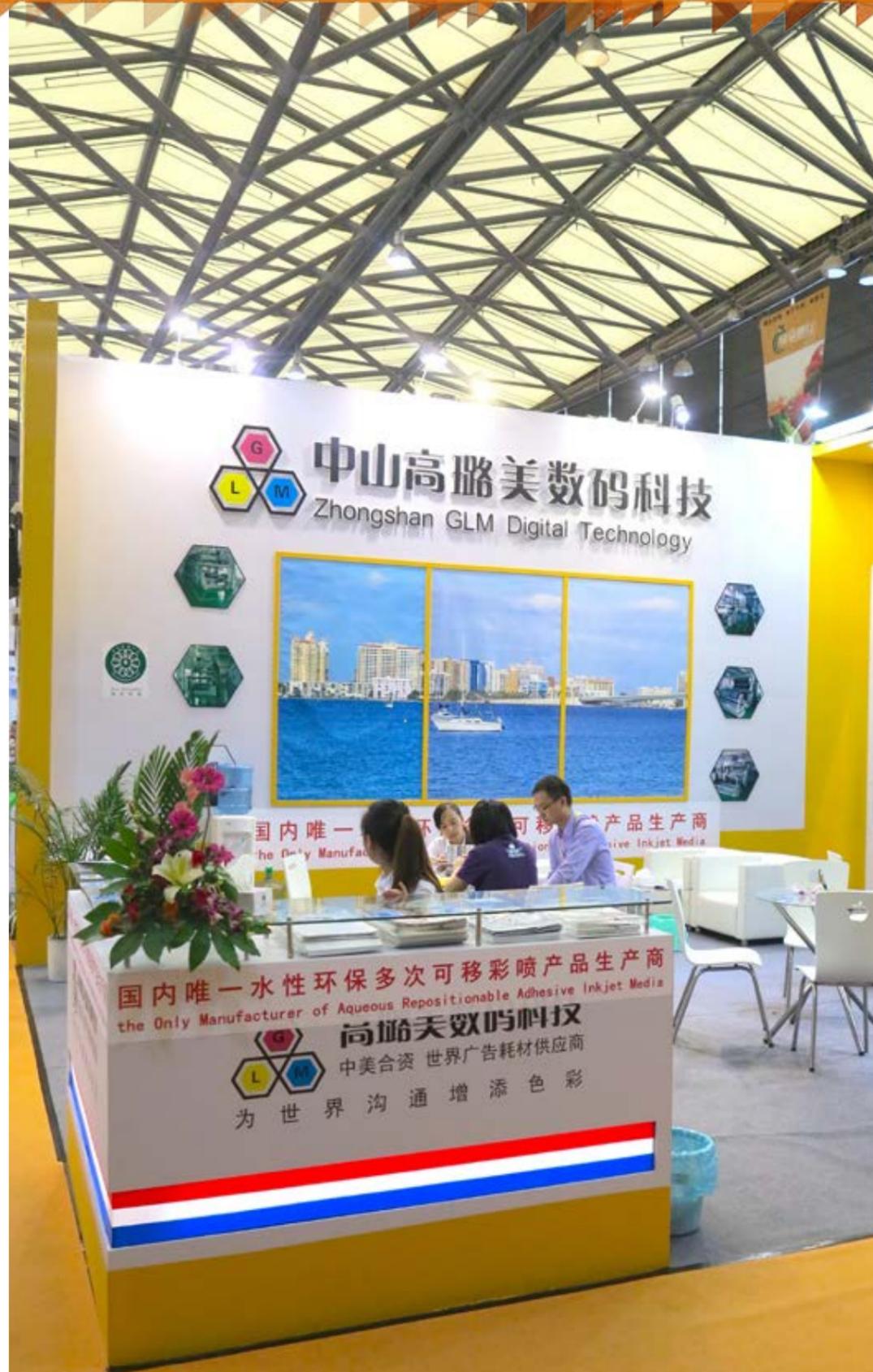
This year I can notice the increase of companies engaged in the manufacture and distribution of media and substrates for digital printing. Only between 2013 and 2014 there was an increase of 10% of these companies present in APPPEXPO; and if we compare this show with other Chinese expos you can notice an even greater contrast (APPPEXPO has about 33% more brands than all other Chinese expos put together; an APPPEXPO has more brands of media than every expo in Europe and the Americas put together).

Another thing that I noticed was the demand for wallcovering media. As I spoke with a person who traveled to China to find manufacturers of this type substrate, he documented that "wallcovering is returning the be a trend that revives after half a century;" and with this demand also comes the increased number of companies that offer this type of material. Only in APPPEXPO 2014 I could see more than 20 companies engaged in the manufacturing of this material, but we will cover this topic in a separate report.

Our interests in media are as follows:

- Thick and rigid media
- Honeycomb sandwich board
- Aluminum
- Material for fine art photography and décor
- Material for wallpaper, murals, and wall coverings
- Printable textiles.

We are aware of foamcore (and its zillion variants by scores of companies); but this is so common that we are focusing on the more unique printable materials: honeycomb and aluminum.



GLM Booth



Arlon Booth



Honeycomb sample



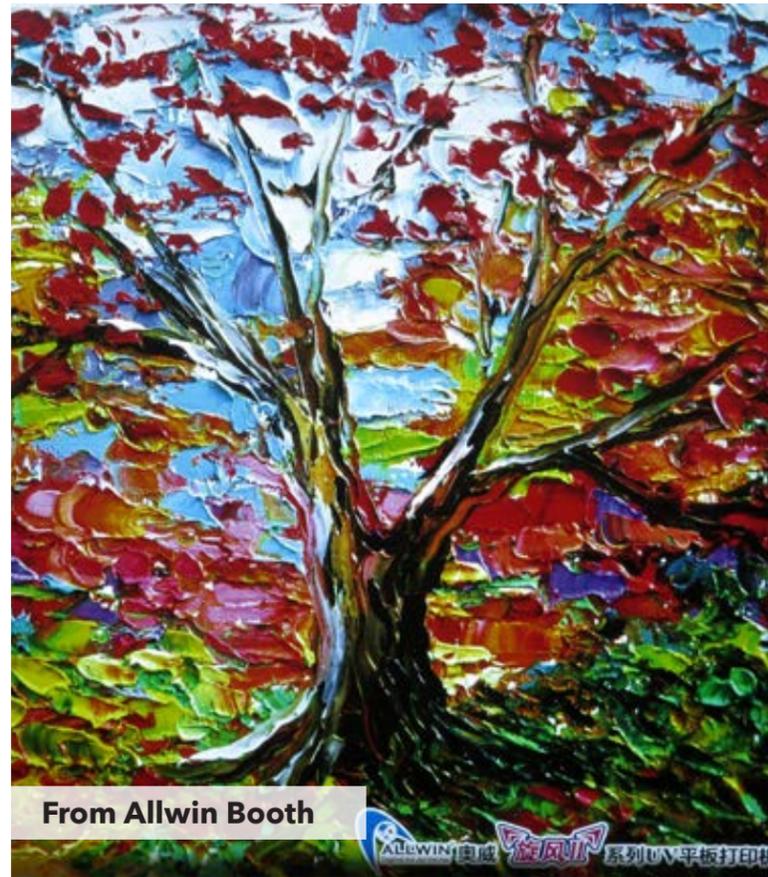
Aluminum sample

This is an entire application which had entire trade shows featuring it 15 years ago. Yet today most "signage" expos are all on advertising signage, and they forget all the other things you can print with an inkjet printer.

Because no other giclee web site is visiting all the expos around the world, we will gradually be showcasing what products at a graphics and signage expo can be used for fine art photography, giclee, and other décor for the home or office.



From A-starjet Booth



From Allwin Booth



From Canon Booth



From Canon Booth



From Canon Booth



From Dilli Booth

## Flatbed Cutters, CNC Routers and CO2 Laser Engravers



**Zund Booth**

Endless booths; a really large collection of brands and technologies of both CNC routers, CO2 laser engravers, and dedicated flatbed digital cutters such as Zund and Kongsberg.



**Yongli CO2 Laser Booth**

## Trade Magazines & Expo Booths



**ASIA SIGN Supplier Booth**

It was hard to find printer expo booths since they were not in the sold-out West Halls. But it is a courtesy for an expo to provide complimentary booths for trade magazines.

There were a few booths for other expos, but again, a challenge to find them since we were pretty busy studying printers, inks, media, etc.



## Offset, Flexo & Desktop Printers

In the many "North" halls you could find offset, flexo, and desktop printers. It is helpful to have more than just inkjet signage printers at an expo.



Mimaki UJF-3042FX at North Hall

## Traditional Signage

Acrylic materials in North Hall 1, then many East halls with traditional signage (probably more traditional signage than any expo in USA or Europe!).



I always enjoy watching animated movies on the large monitors. And in most shopping centers and hotels, much of the signage is dynamic digital technology on LCD monitors. So it's kind of disappointing to see "signage" expos in Europe with close to zilch dynamic digital signage.

Now you can see another reason why it is best to invest in attending APPPEXPO 2015 in picturesque, hospitable, and impressive Shanghai.



**Rishang Booth**



**Hoio Booth**



**Camry Booth**



**Getron Booth**

## SPARE PARTS (for printers primarily)

Aisles along the edge tended to have long narrow booths offering spare parts. A major distributor in Latin America asked us to recommend a spare parts company and we found two:

- Beijing ZhongChengZhiYuan Tec. Co., Ltd (they attended the Sign in China lecture of Dr Nicholas).

and

- (Shenzhen) Jia Hao Technology; I noticed this booth because so many people from countries all around the world were lined up in front of the booth. The owner is pleasant and the sales reps helpful.

Until we can visit an actual company we have no way to evaluate or recommend them, but these two companies are a good start. There were probably another dozen large spare parts sources and a score of smaller ones. A distributor in a country outside Asia will probably prefer to deal with a spare parts provider who is successful enough to have a large and popular booth.

JingBao Information Technology is a company I did not meet.

Shanghai Kino Electromechanical Co. Ltd. specializes in circuit boards. But I have not yet met them.

I would also point out that more people speak English in the booths here in China than at expos elsewhere in Asia and at expos in Brazil.

We at FLAAR speak a total of four to five languages and we flew in one FLAAR team member who can now speak basic Mandarin. So we are open to discussing the world of wide-format inkjet workflow equipment and software in any of many languages. But it still helps attendees and exhibitors to realize that most students learn business English at their universities.

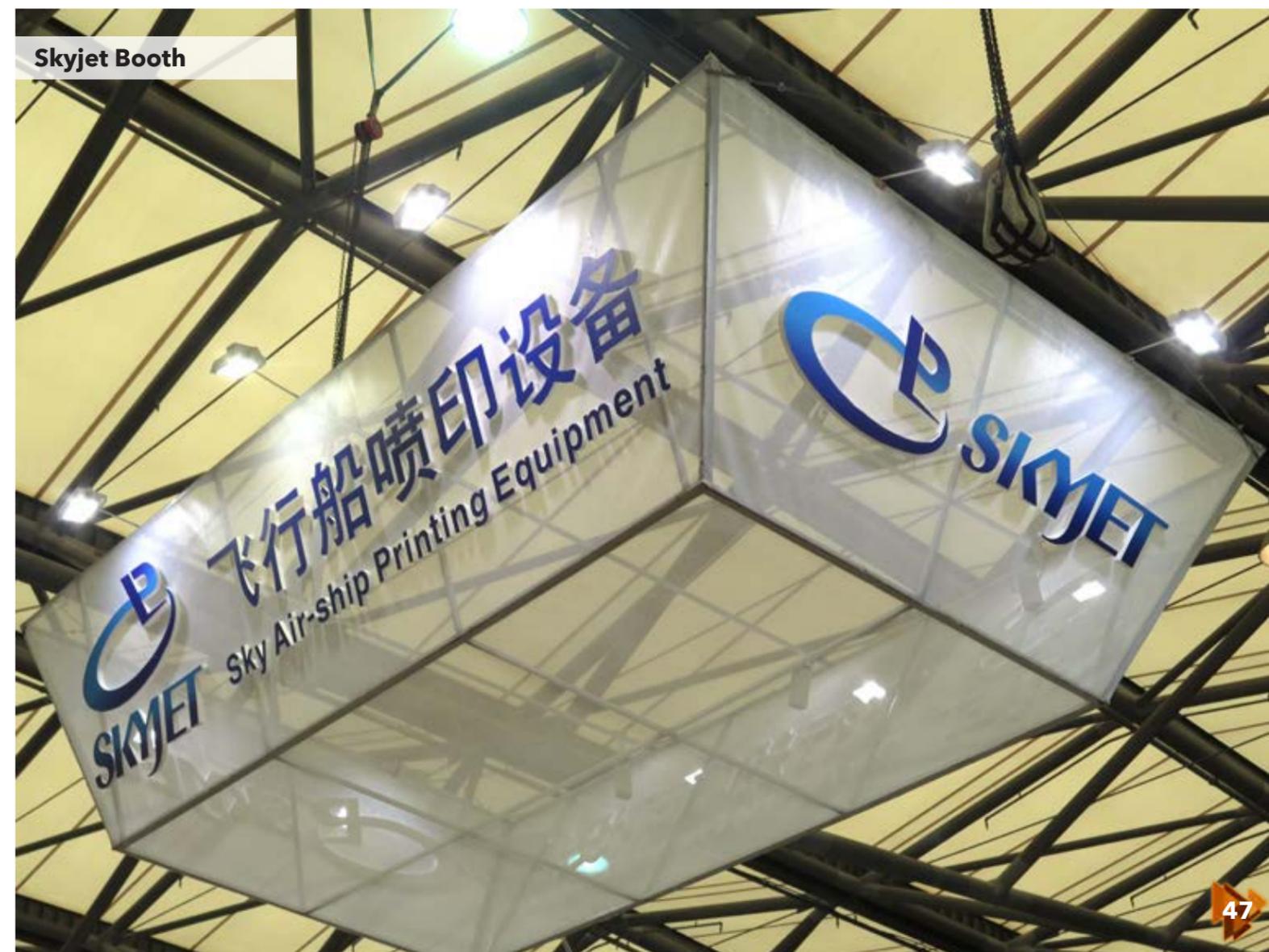
Plus the sales reps and university students in the booths are hospitable, polite, and eager to help (also they say they really enjoy having the FLAAR Reports available).

## BOOTH DESIGN

Since our background is in graphic design and in architecture, for the last several years we have been studying trade show booth design:

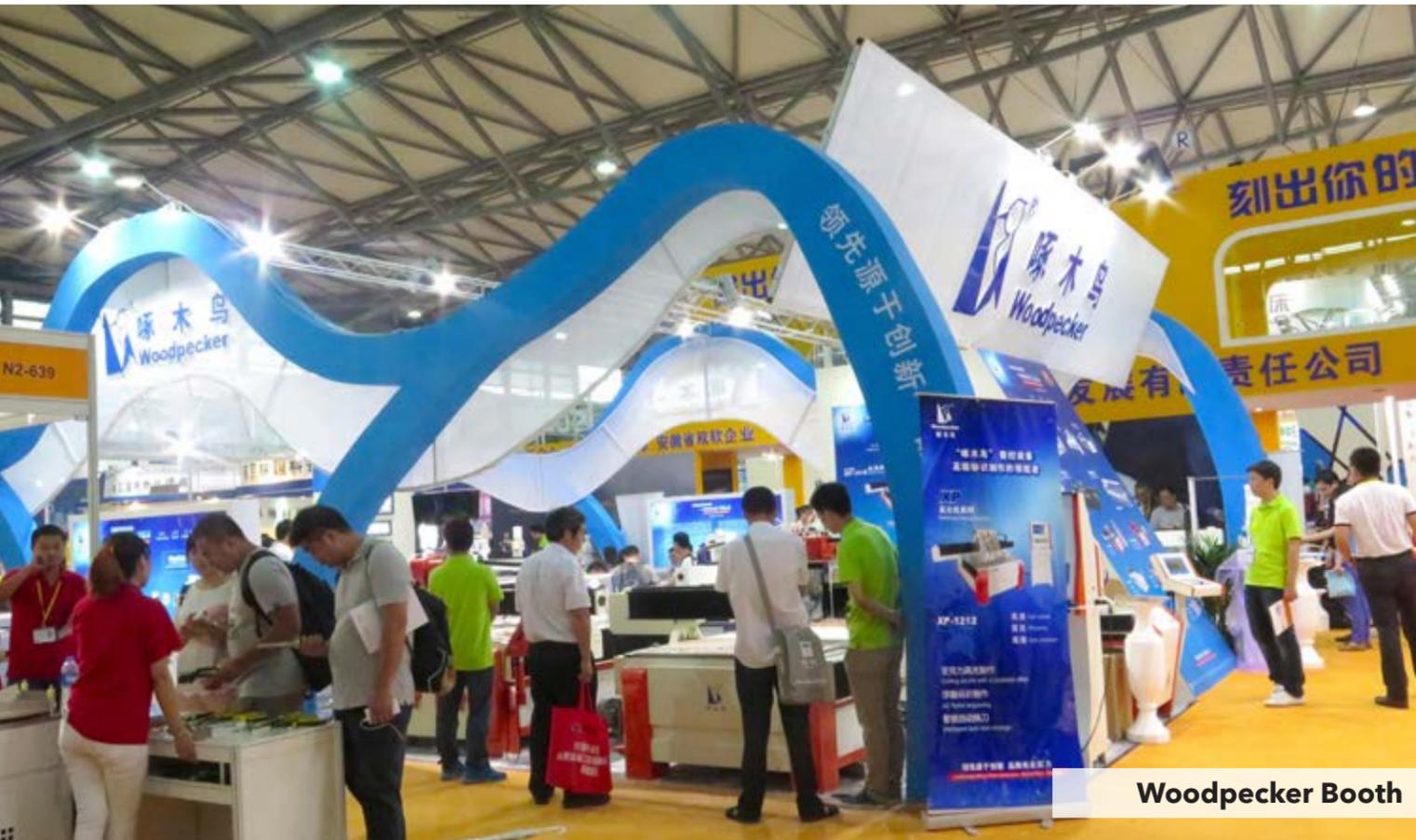
- Overhead logo banners (round, rectangular, irregular, etc)
- Booth wall design (good and bad)
- Reception desk design
- Booth decoration and samples
- Overall booth design

Here is an example of a rectangular overhead logo banner concept.



Skyjet Booth

These booths are a good example of a unique booth design.

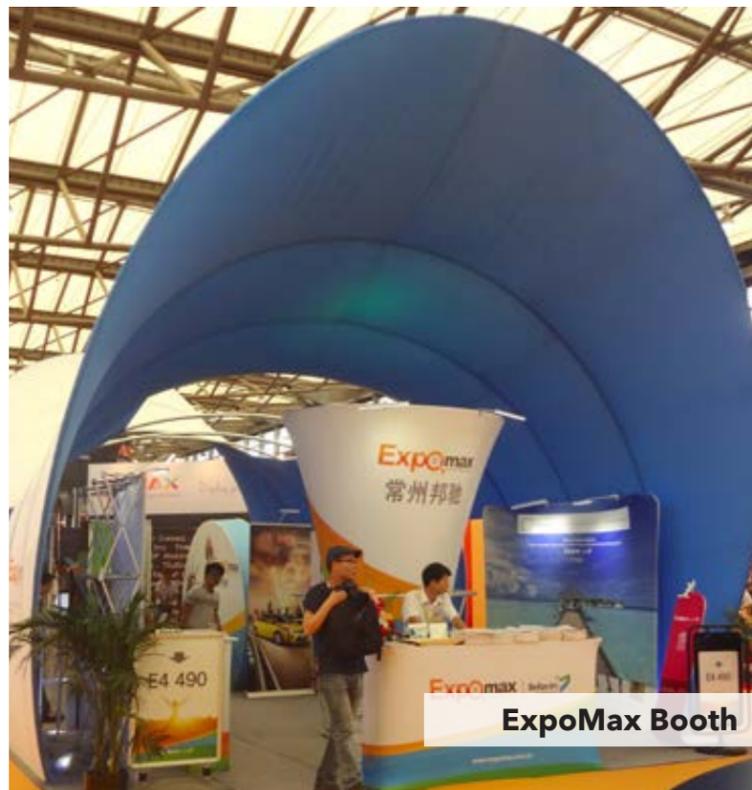


**Woodpecker Booth**

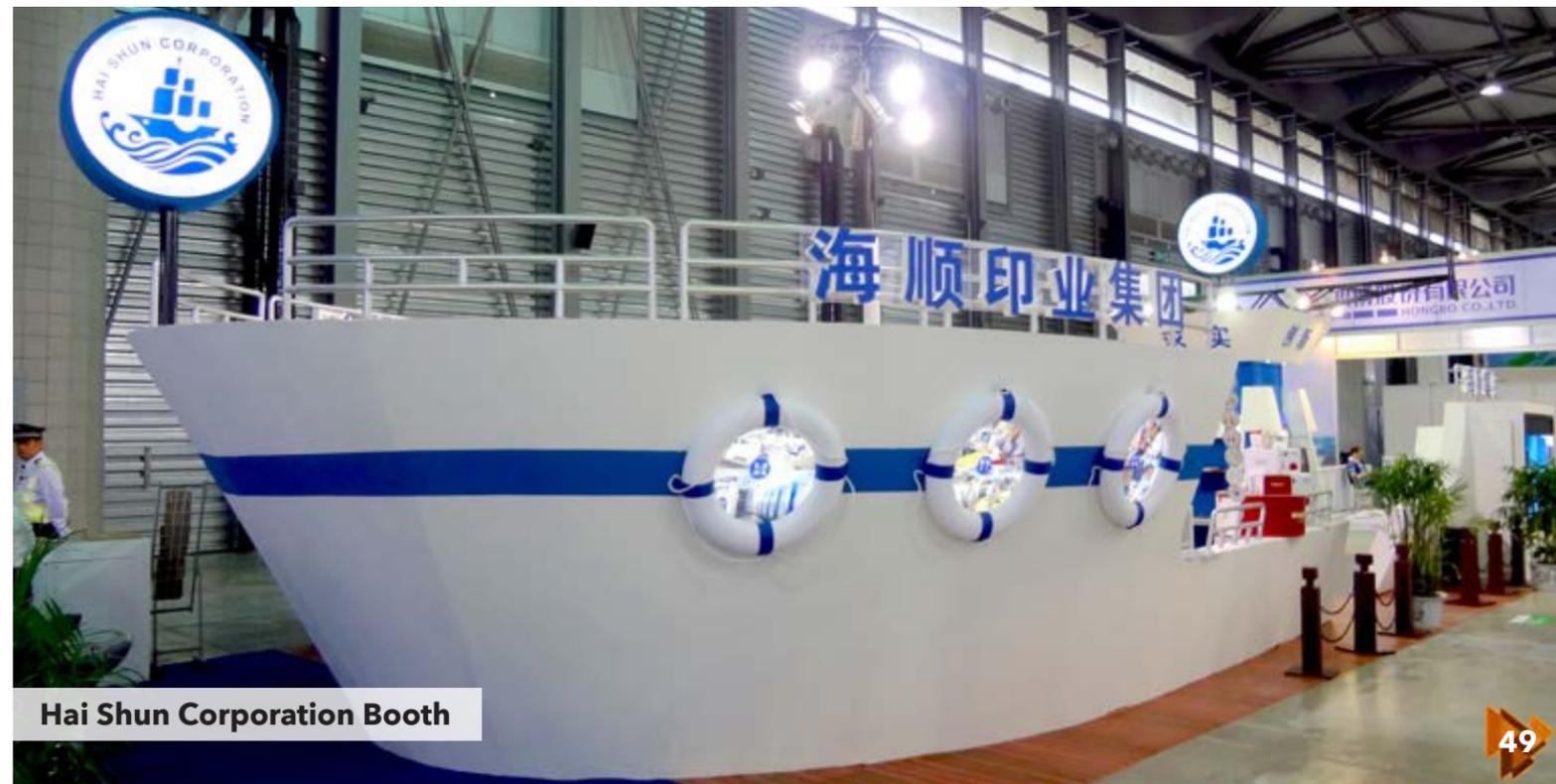
**Yuxinplastic Booth**



**Very creative and colorful Booth**



**ExpoMax Booth**



**Hai Shun Corporation Booth**

BSS is a nice printer expo in Beijing. FLAAR teams have lived and worked in Beijing (working for Sign-in-China (aka China Signs)). So we enjoyed attending Beijing Sign Show in that year. FLAAR was asked to be moderator at their conference program on inkjet printheads. There is a second printer expo in Beijing but we have never attended that one.

D-PES is a friendly printer expo in Guangzhou. I have spent time in the Gold Coast area of Guangzhou as well as printer factories and media factories in nearby cities. In the Spring the weather is bearable (summer is even more tropical than Shanghai; so all expos are in the Spring, but this year it was rather cold, even inside the halls). But Guangzhou is not recognized by most people who have never been to China before.

APPPEXPO is in Shanghai. This city is awesome. We have a separate publication on visiting Shanghai. Frankly the city is impressive enough that it is worth visiting anyway: having a giant printer and signage trade show is even more incentive.



It is worth coming to Shanghai just to see the monumental architecture. Consider bringing your colleagues, friends, and family so they too can experience this frankly awesome urban scenery.



I have also been to printer expos in Taiwan and in Tokyo (plus I have lived for six months in Osaka, indeed the first FLAAR Reports were based on our evaluations of scanners and printers during our stay at Japan's National Museum of Ethnology).

The difference is that more people speak English at Chinese expos than at expos in Tokyo. And at the expos in Shanghai the owners and top managers of each company are in their booth. At the Japanese expos the owners and top executives were not visible in the booths of their own company. Plus the APPPEXPO is larger than all other expos in all Asian countries put together.

But there are advantages in attending local expos, and we hope someday to be hosted to visit KOSIGN. We have been to Korea many times but never to a printer expo in Seoul. But for 2015, at least six of us, and hopefully seven of us, will fly to Shanghai. APPPEXPO alone is worth the trip; and actually being in Shanghai, experiencing Shanghai, is also worth the trip.



The primary issue with this nice Shanghai expo center is the inadequate air-conditioning. July can get very hot (and when it rains, very humid). Every year there was a disaster in more than one hall when the air-conditioning failed. In 2013 the venue responded by placing chunks of ice at each entrance?

Considering that Messe Duesseldorf has an office at this expo venue, and considering that a German company is at least part owner, the use of Germanic high technology of ice cubes for an expo hall larger than many entire airport buildings is frankly unbelievable. With a Germanic name, Hellmuth, the high-tech Germanic ice ploy was a tad embarrassing.

This year (2014) it rained almost every day, so the heat was significantly less than in previous years. Plus the venue had installed gigantic mid-level air-conditioning units near each entrance.

When these turned on their air blast about blew people away in the HP booth and Kongsberg booth. But at least someone in the administration of the venue heard the rain of complaints by exhibitors about the excess heat. This year the main heat problem was in Hall W5 for the first hour: the venue has the habit in past years of turning off the air-conditioning the second the expo was closed for the day. So the final minutes of every day were in a hot humid environment. This year that also was not as bad.

Nonetheless, many people are really glad the date is changed from summer July to Spring March. And if the new expo center has everything functioning adequately, both exhibitors and attendees will be happy.



## Who was responsible for ordering the expo hall aisle carpets removed at 1 pm?

The expo was supposed to continue to 2 pm on the last day. But already at 1 pm there were teams in the main West halls removing the carpet.

Was the expo organizer responsible? Or was it the expo venue owner who was responsible? I have never seen such inappropriate removal of floor carpet anywhere in the world. It is not correct to close the expo before the official hour; and even then, have some courtesy to let people exit before tearing up their walkways.



## Concluding Observations: Lots of great Graphic Design

Whoever was the artist of these characters did a great job. I wish I knew who was the artist so I could give them at least a verbal award.



# OVERALL SUMMARY

- But overall the expo was spectacular in terms of a world record for UV-cured printers.
  - Take every other printer expo in the world. In every continent: Europe, North America, South America, Asia, Africa.
  - Could how many brands and models you can see at their expo.
  - If you add 100% of all brands, all models OF EVERY EXPO, the APPPEXPO in Shanghai was #1 in the world.
  - In other words, APPPEXPO beat Drupa and everyone else.
  - Considering that a giant international textile expo had been in Shanghai just one week before, there were still lots of textile printers to see.
  - Eco-solvent printers may also have set a record at APPPEXPO 2014.
  - Inks, media and substrates were everywhere; plus plenty of cutters and laminators (plus an entire hall of CO2 laser engravers and CNC routers).
  - And: more traditional signage products halls than every signage expo in Europe and the Americas.
- In summary: it is crucial to get to APPPEXPO 2015**, in March from now on (so no more summer heat), and in a new venue (near the domestic airport on the other side of the city).

**This is the first FLAAR Report on APPPEXPO 2014.  
Lots more to come.**

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