

***Digital Photography
Reviews***

***Digital Camera
Equipment***

PHOTOKINA 2012



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Best photo-related exhibit: Samsung. They had a huge booth and several remarkably clever exhibits. Although I prefer Apple iPhone, Apple iPad, and definitely Apple computers, I could not help noticing that the Samsung exhibit was innovative in a way that was truly impressive.



Best exhibit item (which was not a photograph). A model of a typical European cathedral made with building blocks. I did not have time to see what the actual physical building blocks were. I do not think it was Lego.



Favorite product so far: telescopes for birdwatching which can also be used as telephoto lenses. The ones of interest to me are the new ones from Swarovski, Hall 2.1.



Favorite product for Sofia (a photographer at FLAAR who attended Photokina with me): Canon EOS 5D Mark III, because it can do HDR and can do video well (better than earlier models).

What would we like to evaluate?



Medium format digital backs, especially for mid-format cameras



Large-format lenses for medium format digital backs



More macro accessories!

Macro lighting,

More options for experimentation with macro



3D photography (true 3D, not faked)



Special equipment for panorama and landscape photography



Lighting with which to photograph the enormous sacred Maya caves of Guatemala (the entrance to the Underworld for the Maya).



Lenses capable of photographing tiny tropical flowers high in a tree plus photographing birds which are part of Maya cosmology and symbolism



Silvestri cameras to hold medium-format digital backs.

Additional innovative digital photography products we would like to evaluate:

TechTable from Savage Universal Corp.

I never would have expected this kind of product from the able producer of backdrop paper, but it's great to see innovation. Since we do our photography in remote areas, it would indeed be helpful to have a portable computer table. I thank Hayward Richard Pressman for showing me this useful product in his booth.



Savage exhibited backdrops and a portable computer table for location photography

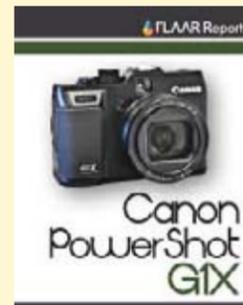
Products we are evaluating presently:

Tall tripods: since we specialize in photographing tropical flowers high up in tall jungle trees (in the rain forests of Guatemala), we need really tall tripods. We have evaluated several from Gitzo and have written a recent report.

There are two more tripods we would like to evaluate: the absolute tallest Gitzo



Our review of the Canon PowerShot G1X has just appeared. This is one of the few reports in the world which honestly lists all its weaknesses as well as shows some of the absolutely gorgeous photos this camera is possible of.



We continue to evaluate fluorescent lighting for digital photography studios, especially Spiderlites from F. J. Westcott.



What FLAAR photographers have evaluated recently:

We wish to thank the following companies who have provided equipment to FLAAR Mesoamerica so that we can evaluate the gear during our research projects to photograph the remarkable tropical flora, fauna, and eco-systems of Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador.



Manfrotto tripod heads

Gitzo tripods



Savage Widetone Seamless background paper from Savage Universal Corporation



Mid-format cameras from Cambo



Hoodman memory cards



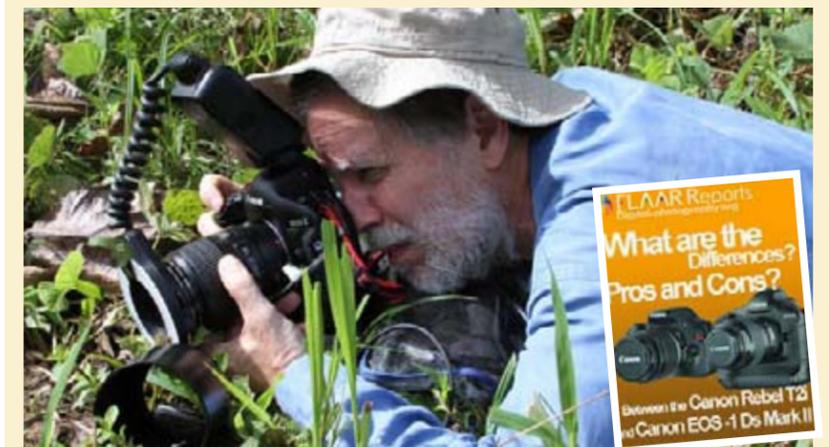
Tungsten studio lighting from Lowel-Light Manufacturing



Digital fluorescent lighting from F.J. Westcott

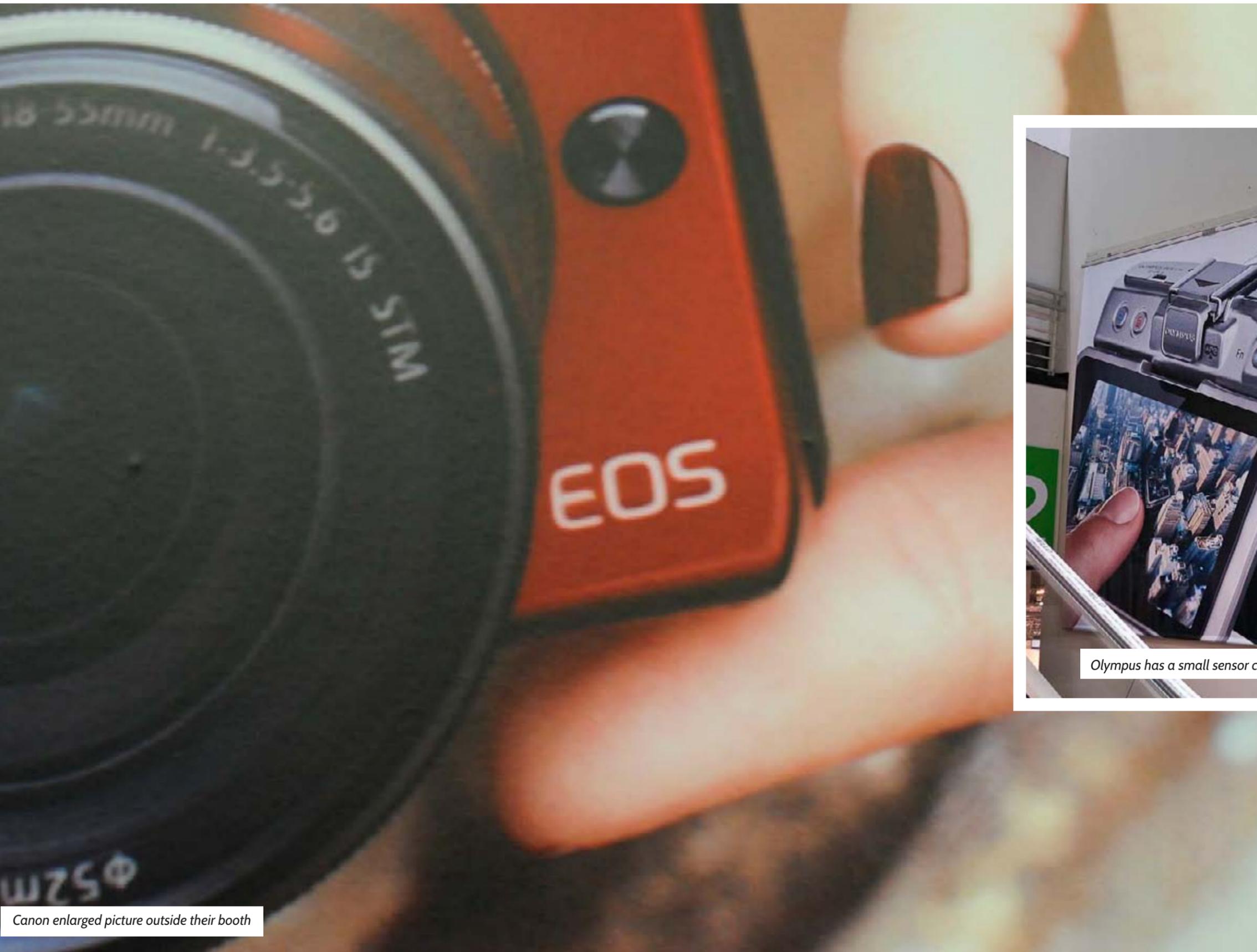


Phase One medium format digital back from Global Imaging



Canon EOS 1Ds Mark III and lenses from Parrot Digigraphic

Why are some enlarged photos so awful?



Canon enlarged picture outside their booth

The worst photo so far is one of the Canon advertising photos of an entry level camera, enlarged near one entrance to their booth. The text on the camera is fuzzy. Clearly this is an inadequate resolution.



Olympus has a small sensor camera but their advertising poster was still ten-times better than that of Canon.

Can't Canon camera corporation, a billion dollar Fortune 500 company, even take a simply product shot with adequate resolution? Someone in a PR department knows zero about camera resolution and printing resolution.

It is ironic that a comparable photo for the Olympus booth was significantly sharper and better quality than the Canon photograph.



1

Medium Format Stays Ahead

I still smile when I remember what Canon bluntly bragged about four to six years ago: that their 35mm cameras would beat medium format. But the Canon enlargement in their own booth embarrassingly documents how unsuccessful Canon has been in displacing medium format.

I discarded the first two Canon EOS cameras that I evaluated because they were inadequate (even a basic Nikon D200 was better than them). Only when I began to test the Canon EOS 1Ds Mark III did I find a camera from Canon that was professional (lots of fully professional photographers use other models; in their cases it is the photographer who is producing the pro level results: the lower range Canon cameras are not offering as much as they should).

35mm DSLR is optimal in macro range and telephoto range: medium format is ironically too large a format for photographing ants (and definitely too heavy and unwieldy to carry into remote areas). So I am fully content with Canon and Nikon for macro photography.

Same with bird photography. There is no medium format lens which can come close to a bird lens from Canon or Nikon. But for architecture, flowers, landscapes, panoramas, and portraits, I still prefer medium format. Plus, Phase One software beats the firmware in any Nikon or Canon. And MegaVision has museum-oriented medium format solutions which beat anything that 35mm could conjure up.

In summary, medium format is better than DSLR for most applications. The best DSLR cameras (Canon EOS 1Ds Mark III and comparable; and Nikon D800E and D4 and comparable)

Medium format digital was still alive and also advancing in technology at Photokina.

1. Hasselblad had a popular booth as always.
2. Phase One had a well-visited booth as always.
3. Sinar is the brand which was a pleasant surprise to see back
4. MegaVision also had its own booth.
5. Leaf had been bought by Phase One and had its own Leaf booth.



2

Kodak medium format and Fujifilm medium format disappeared years ago. We expect to seeing Hasselblad, Leaf, MegaVision Phase One, Sinar continue into the future. I look forward to seeing all these medium format brands in the exhibitor list for Photokina 2014.



3



5

Analog film limps forward



AGFA and Polaroid exhibit at Photokina 2012

Polaroid and Agfa film are each still exhibiting, though the original Polaroid went bankrupt years ago. Agfa film division either went bankrupt or probably their brand name was bought by someone else. Ilford film division evaporated and their brand name for media evolved to inkjet (and was probably bought and sold several times). Kodak is also bankrupt.

Fujifilm is the only original 35mm film company to have survived. They still offer cameras (though their medium format division was not successful and their 35mm DSLR department had to use Nikon to

actually build their cameras). Since Fujifilm is not in a position to make serious lenses, we do not pay any attention to Fujifilm cameras any more.

Lomographic Society used 150,000 film-based prints to make a map of Germany in front of the cathedral. Even if this cost only \$1 per photo, that is a huge sum of money. It's amazing that a film-based camera has a market any more.

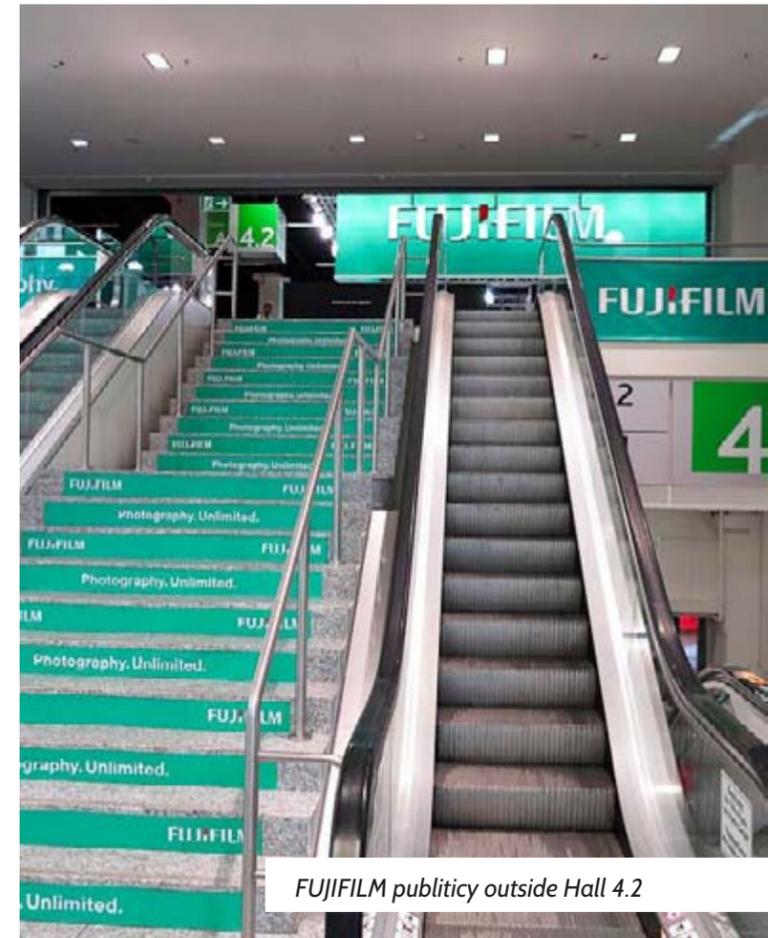
I used 35mm slide and B&W film for decades. Then I moved to 4x5 and 8x10 large format film photography. So FLAAR has plenty of experience

in all this (there are still 50,000 negatives in our photo archive from the 1970's through 1990's). I can still remember when all the universities still taught darkroom processing (because the aging professors at that date were still clueless about digital photography).

But using film today is, at best, cute. I can do everything better and faster with a digital camera. The cost for developing film and printing contact sheets is probably astronomical nowadays anyway.

Plus, when you publish nowadays it has to be digital sooner or later. Using antiquated film suggests that the individual does not handle Photoshop or Nik software adequately.

But if you prefer to use film, there is plenty of used equipment at low price on e-Bay. Rather obviously we do not evaluate anything related to film.



FUJIFILM publicity outside Hall 4.2



The cost for developing film and printing contact sheets is probably astronomical nowadays.

Large Format Digital still alive

Large format digital cameras are alive, but barely. The “barely” classification is because Kodak gave up making large-format scanning sensors already two years ago.

Then one well-known large-format digital back manufacturer retired (Mike Colette of Better Light). Anagramm scanback company engineers separated from Linhof.

So for a while it appeared that this genre of high-end studio digital photography would gradually fade into history.



Using Betterlight in FLAAR Studio

Not a single film scanner was visible at Photokina

If you do not scan your film now, in five years from now scanning will not be possible at a professional level. Old scanners are available on e-Bay, but the computers today use operating systems that are no longer accepted by scanners of 2000 through 2008.

But old computers can no longer be repaired. Even a high-end Macintosh, if over four years old the Apple Store calls it a “vintage” computer and they no longer have parts for these models. Even commercial Apple repair facilities don’t maintain parts for “vintage Macs.”

Maybe Epson had a scanner buried in their catalog, but most high-resolution scanner companies stopped making their pro-level scanners many many years ago.



Dr. Wirth 3D scanner at Photokina 2010



Linhof Shift 617 at Linhof booth



EPSON booth at Photokina 2012

What we studied of the Photokina 2012 exhibitor list

Here is a set of double-page essays of what Nicholas and Sofia studied at Photokina 2012

Astrophotography

I noticed two digital systems for photographing the night sky:

1 a special adaptation of a Canon EOS 60Da



2 Celestron telescopes, certain of which are adapted for photography



It was nice to see the exhibit of Celestron telescopes. Actually several other brands of telescopes are available to study at Photokina, but the telescopes of Celestron are from a company which focuses 100% on telescopes. My family background includes a tad of astronomy since my father's architectural firm, HOK, designed the Planetarium in St Louis.

Since the Maya of two thousand years ago built up a reputation as astronomers (based on what they inherited from Olmec culture before them), and since the Maya calendar is based on astronomy, I see a lot of potential to raise awareness of archaeoastronomy and astrophotography of the heavenly bodies which most interested the Classic Maya: Venus, constellations, the Moon (the Rabbit on the Moon).

Celestron Edge HD Optics

3D imaging Systems



Packshot 3D Photography

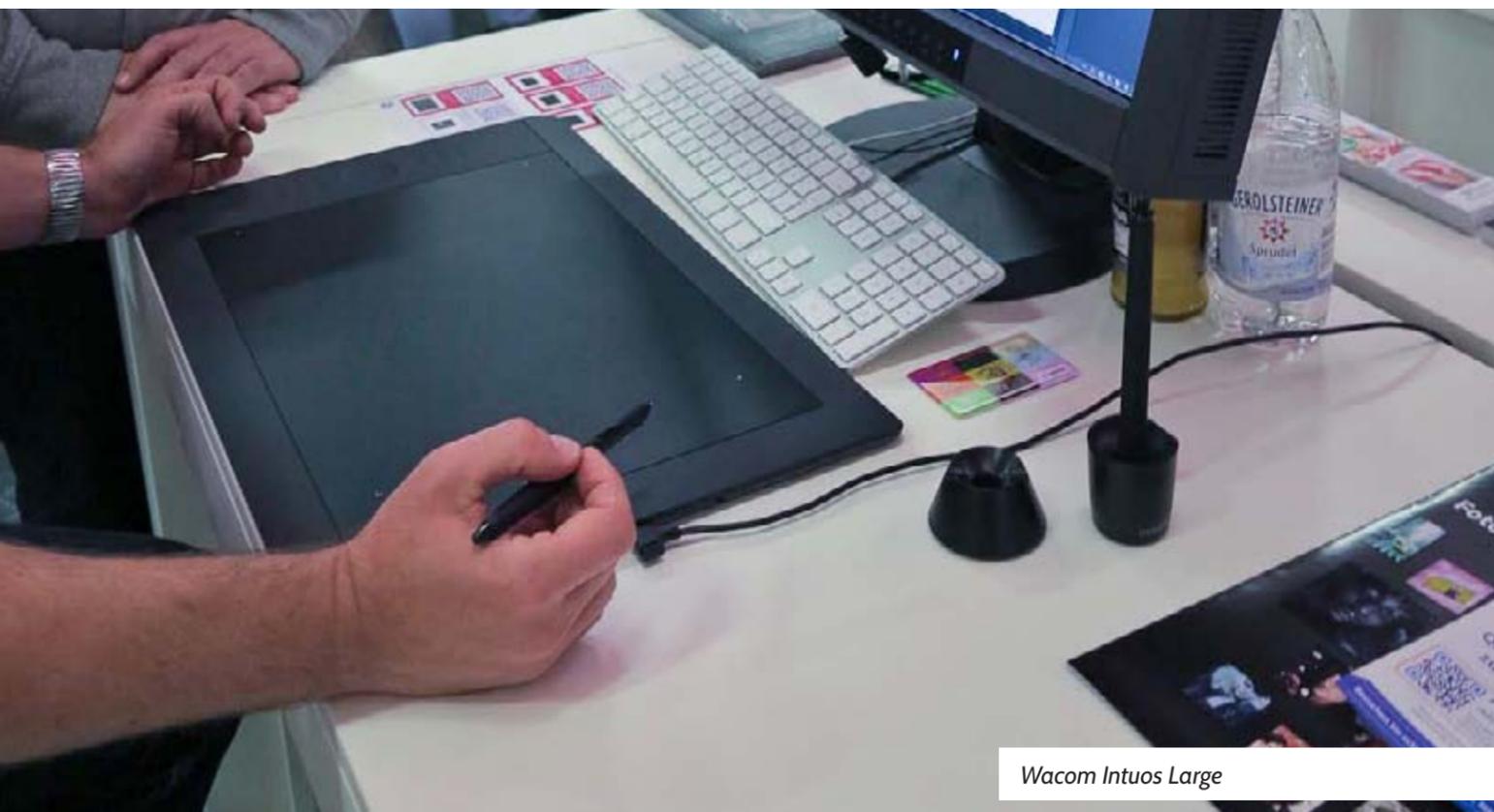


Spheron booth at Photokina

Tablets for handling Digital Illustrations (such as Wacom)

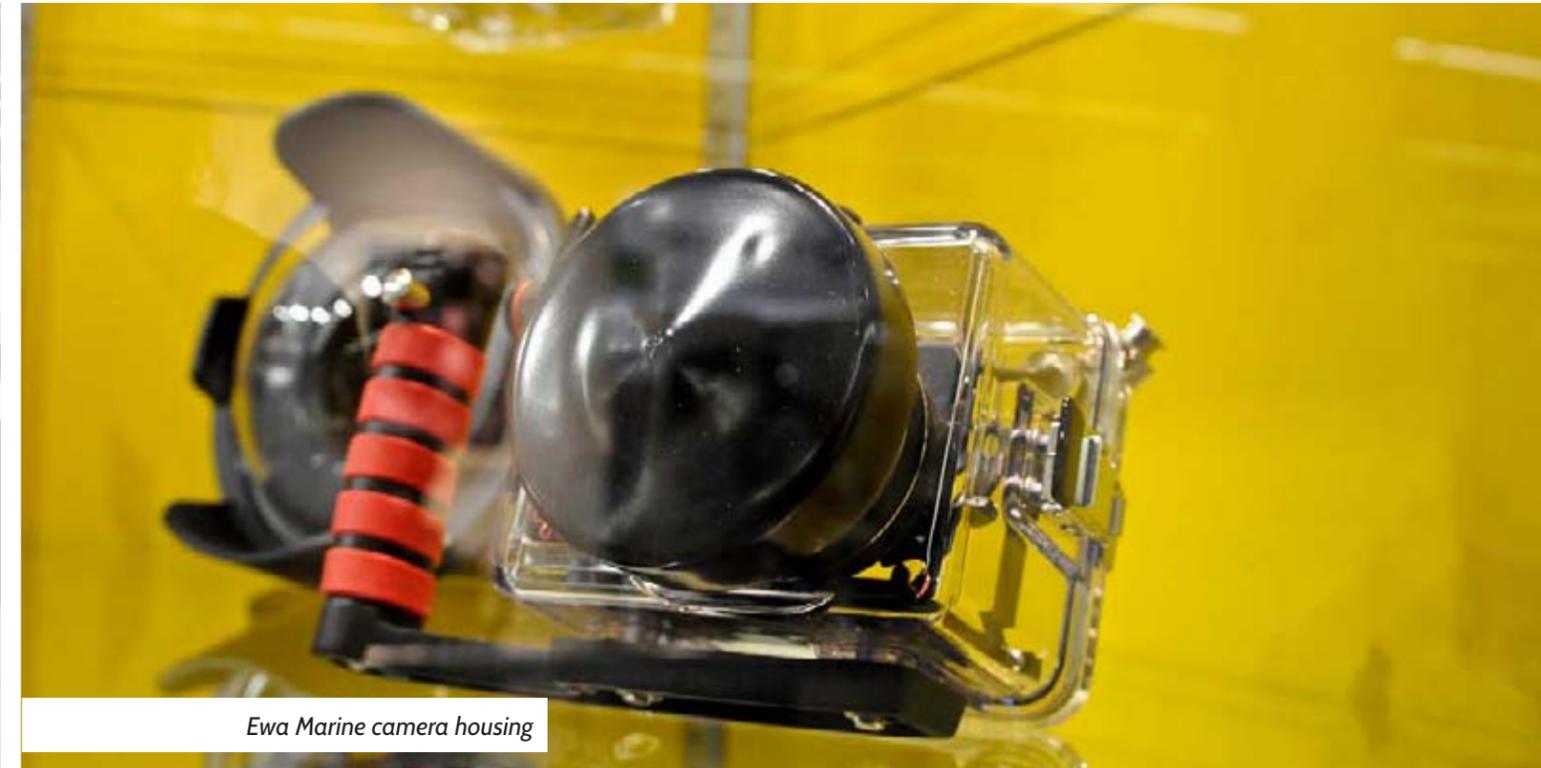


Wacom Cintiq 24X HD



Wacom Intuos Large

Underwater cameras and housings



Ewa Marine camera housing

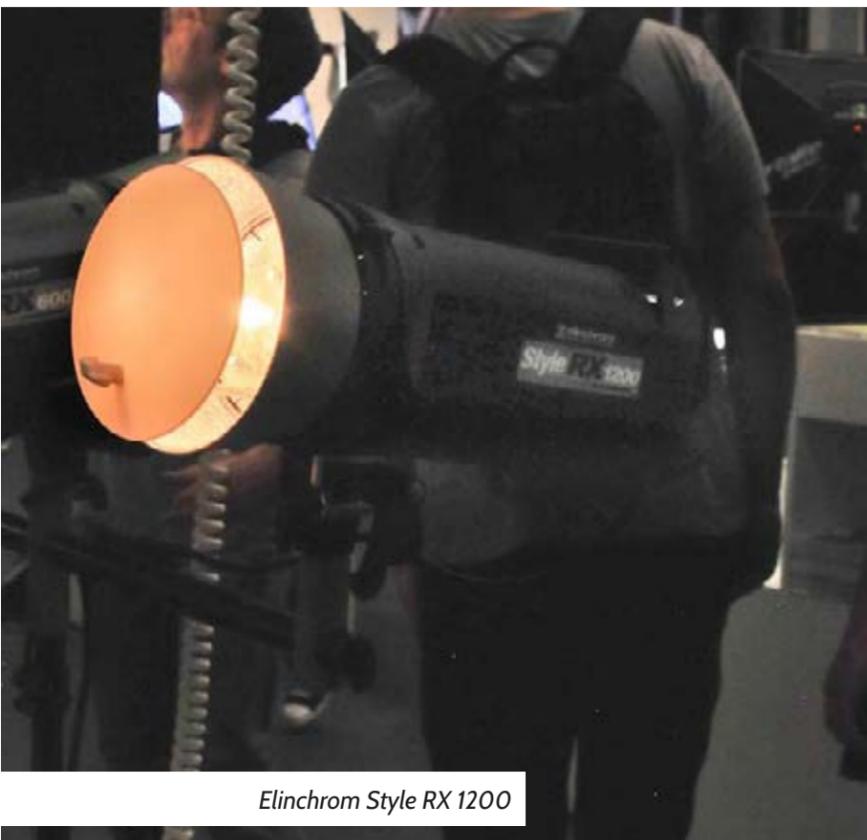


Nauticam underwater camera

Studio lighting for Digital Photography



Elinchrom booth



Elinchrom Style RX 1200

Elinchrom is the brand I know the best, but all the major brands of traditional studio flash were present. But digital fluorescent was not seen as often, but you can see F.J. Westcott at PhotoPlus in New York every year. I skipped PhotoPlus because Photokina filled my photo travel budget for the entire year.

Portable Flash outside the Studio (out on location)



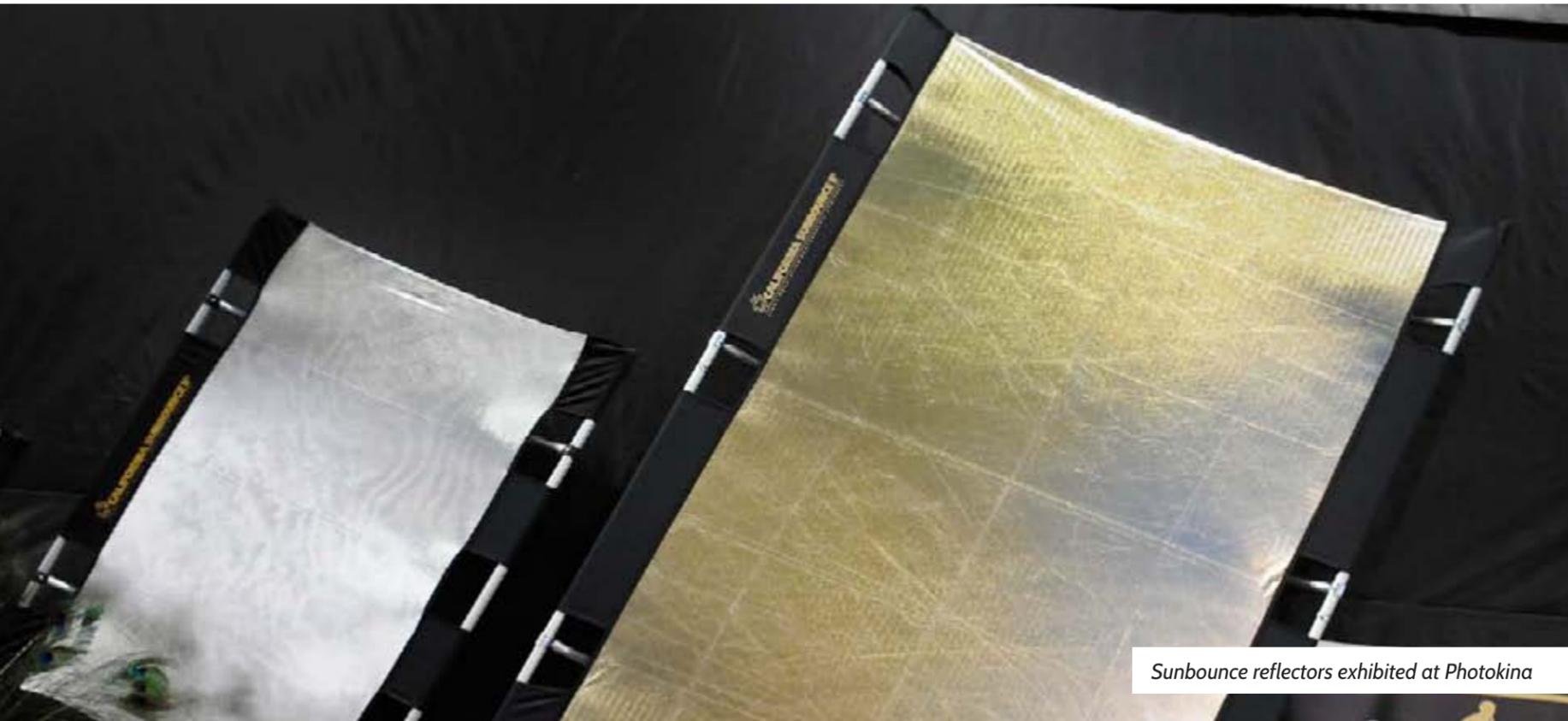
Metz 76MZ-5 and 58 AF-2 lights

We sincerely appreciate the hospitality of the Metz technical support individual, Roland Laemmermann, who patiently helped us with our questions on the five Metz 60CT4 units that we still have from 30 years ago.

Quantum flash



Reflectors: on the studio & out on location



Sunbounce reflectors exhibited at Photokina



Reflectors in Lastolite booth



FLAAR photographing catfish with Manfrotto reflectors

SunBounce and Lastolite are the two brands I recognize the most. We use reflectors from Manfrotto Distribution but they were not present at Photokina. Manfrotto and Gitzo and their associates exhibit at PhotoPlus in New York and PMA@CES in Las Vegas.

We look forward to evaluating products from SunBounce during 2012-2013.

Backdrops & Backgrounds: on the studio & out on location



Large-format Cameras to hold Medium Format Digital Backs



“Large-format” Lenses for use with Medium Format Digital Backs



Schneider ARRI

Filters



Heliopan booth



Rodenstock booth



Cokin filters



Multiblitz filters

I am not yet convinced that unknown brands from Asia are acceptable.

Telescopes as bird lenses



Nicholas Hellmuth inspecting Swarovski telescopes



Telescopes could provide better view than some lenses



The booth of SWAROVSKI was impressive. The telescopes looked great (definitely more impressive than the Chinese and other no-brand models in so many other booths).

But what I really noticed was the ability they presented to use their telescopes as bird lenses. FLAAR research institute has been studying tropical birds of Guatemala for over a decade. The Canon 100-400 tele-zoom is a defective lens (Canon admits it openly, but still sells it). Their new EF 500mm f/4L IS II USM prime lens has been advertised for over a year but was not available prior to Photokina (and the price is a tad pricey).

In contrast the digiscoping solutions of SWAROVSKI look actually potentially better than what Canon and Nikon offer. Since we at FLAAR do photography of raptors, many species of vultures, water birds (sea, lake and river species), and since we also photograph bats in caves, our projects would be a great opportunity to test, evaluate, and do write-ups of the advantages of the SWAROVSKI system as a bird lens.

Plus, we at FLAAR, since we do so much outdoor nature photography in Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador, we have a list of other applications that are not yet listed in the SWAROVSKI catalogs. In other words, we have experience in several other kinds of photography that the SWAROVSKI system would be good in.

Compare and Contrast Ring-Flash vs Dual Macro vs Normal Flash



Mecablitz 15 MS-1 by Metz

We use macro lenses on our Canon EOS1Ds Mark III and Nikon D800E as well as our older Nikon D300. The Canon EOS 5D was definitely not an adequate camera, has mechanical defects and we do not recommend that new or used.

But the Canon EOS 1Ds Mark III is truly a professional quality system, and we have both Canon ring-flash and Canon dual macro flash.

For the Nikon we have a triple-head macro flash system. We will be issuing FLAAR Reports on the pros and cons and differences in all these flash systems. Plus we are studying ring flash from companies other than Canon and Nikon.



Nissin macro ring flash

Tripod heads for Video Photography



Cambo 501HDV Tripod head

Now that more DSLR cameras can handle high-definition video, we are gradually moving towards evaluating tripod heads (rigs) for video photography. The equipment exhibited by Cambo definitely caught our attention.



Novoflex Tripod head

Memory Cards and Storage Disks



Probably 90% of the photographs taken by FLAAR are with memory cards from Hoodman.



Hoodman flash cards exhibited in Photokina 2012

Large-format scan backs



Rencay booth

It was nice to see at least one large-format scan back system still alive and available: RENCAY. They have years of experience formerly as Anagramm, associated with Linhof.

That exists perhaps on paper still but the entire engineering staff and all key people have moved off the Linhof campus and over to RENCAY.



Scanning system inside booth

“How-To” Handouts

Canon had what was camouflaged as a how-to book, but it was really just an advertisement for their stuff. Rosco had a pamphlet on photography ideas digital and stills. Admittedly it was “how rosco products can enhance your photography” but it was still nice to have. I will definitely be interested in the litepad loop from Rosco.

Frankly it would be better for an independent institute to prepare “how-to” handouts. FLAAR Reports was prepared to do this but of course with the downsized expo there were no funds to handle this request. As a university professor I have plenty of experience teaching photography and evaluating the complete range of digital camera equipment.



RoscoLab booth at Photokina

Constructive Critique of noticeable lack of features or facilities of Photokina 2012

Airport welcome painfully absent

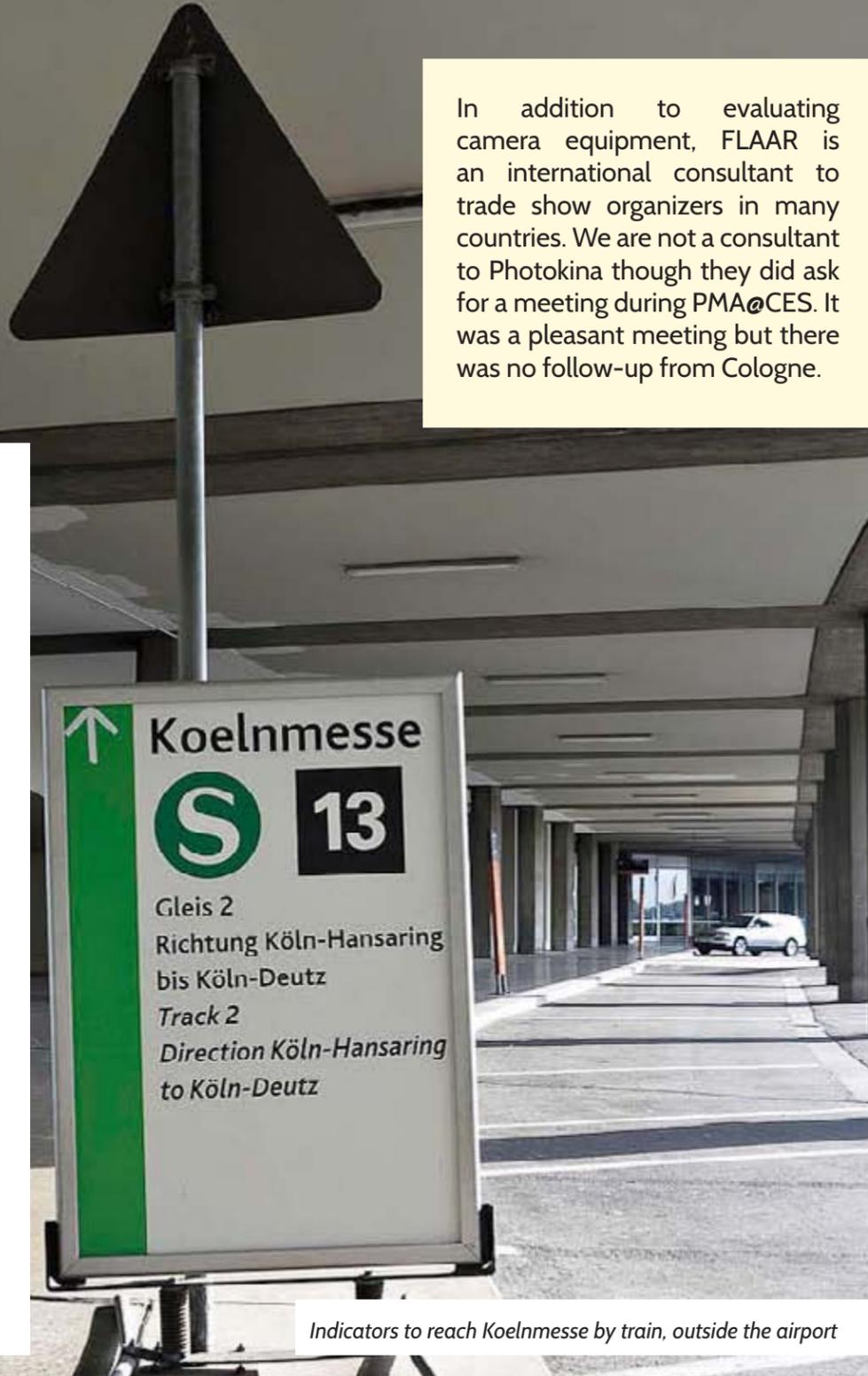
Everyone commented that no one in the Photokina or Koeln Messe expo organization made an effort to welcome people at the airport. For example, Drupa sometimes even has personnel at the airport to help answer questions.

Plus the airport was so obviously devoid of any welcoming signs. The airport train station was devoid of a single assistant to answer questions. Even in Paris metro stops I have seen uniformed staff available to answer questions about what train or metro to take.

Then once you got to Cologne, nothing in the main train station either. It was as if everything was being done cheap cheap cheap (because of fewer companies booking exhibit space).

Of course if a host organizer irritates visitors, they won't come the next year. We at FLAAR wish to encourage attendance and exhibitors at expositions. But we can't do this if the host does not offer at least a polite help to visitors.

In addition to evaluating camera equipment, FLAAR is an international consultant to trade show organizers in many countries. We are not a consultant to Photokina though they did ask for a meeting during PMA@CES. It was a pleasant meeting but there was no follow-up from Cologne.



Indicators to reach Koelnmesse by train, outside the airport



Cologne Bonn International airport

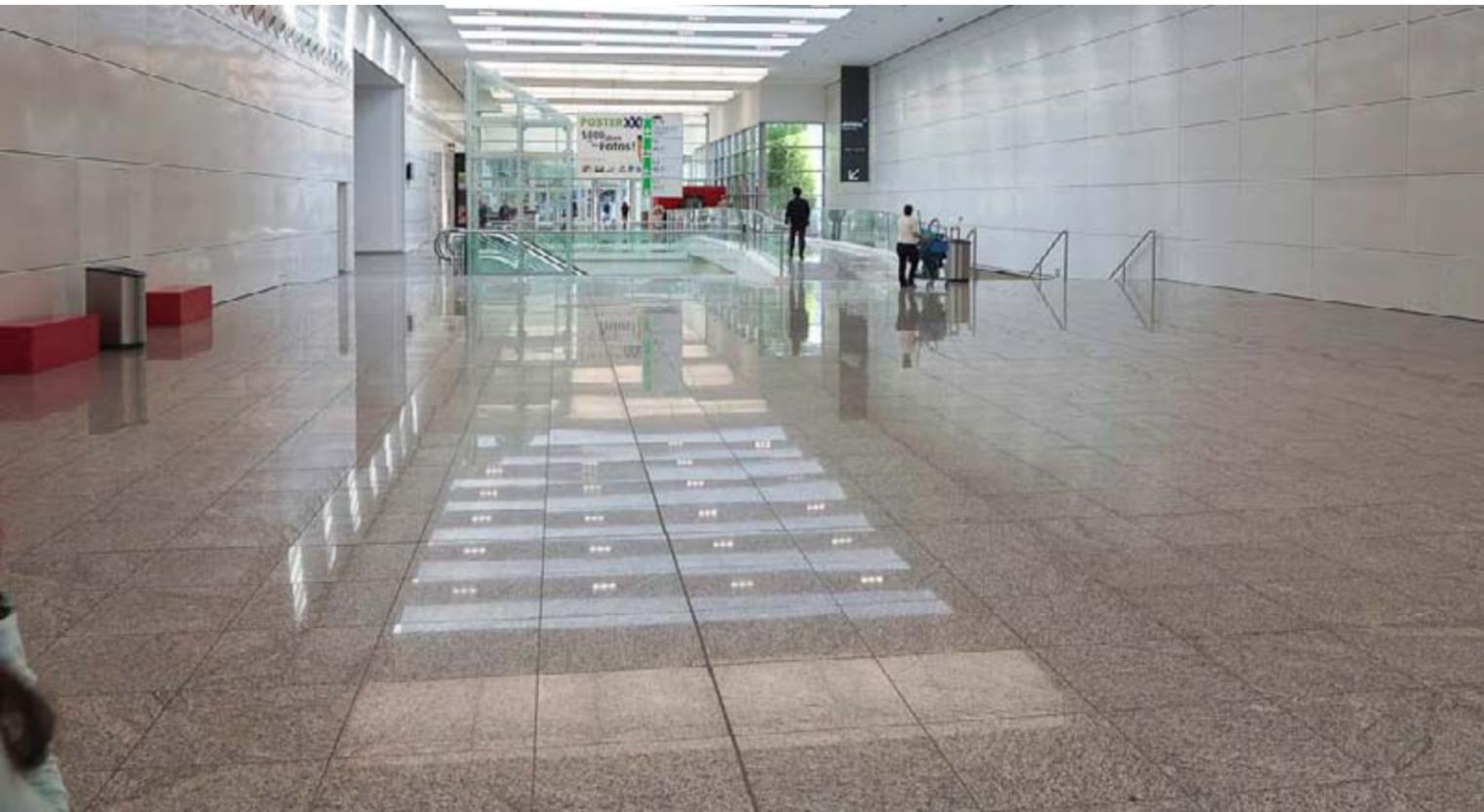


Train station in Cologne



Vast empty areas between halls sadly empty of exhibits

Although several of the wide areas between halls had nice photo exhibits, most of the long hike to the north entrance was relatively empty. The walls were naked most of the distance.



Too much empty space in Hall 6

Hall 6 was nowhere near full; huge areas were empty. And the aisles were made wider to try to make the hall look occupied. Hall 5.1 looked relatively empty also. Yes, there were scores of booths, but you could tell that it was not like four to six years ago.





Hall 5.1

varied from sad to pathetic in the end and outer areas. Hall 5.1 looked like an abandoned warehouse, or really (due to the low ceilings), like an abandoned basement. Hall 1 had only Leica and a semi-empty area with some exhibits trying to make the hall look filled.

This was the major failure of VISCOM Italia; their organizers pretend that nothing is changed and there are still two halls, even though half of each hall is now empty (filled only by "rest areas," restaurants, and super-wide aisles).

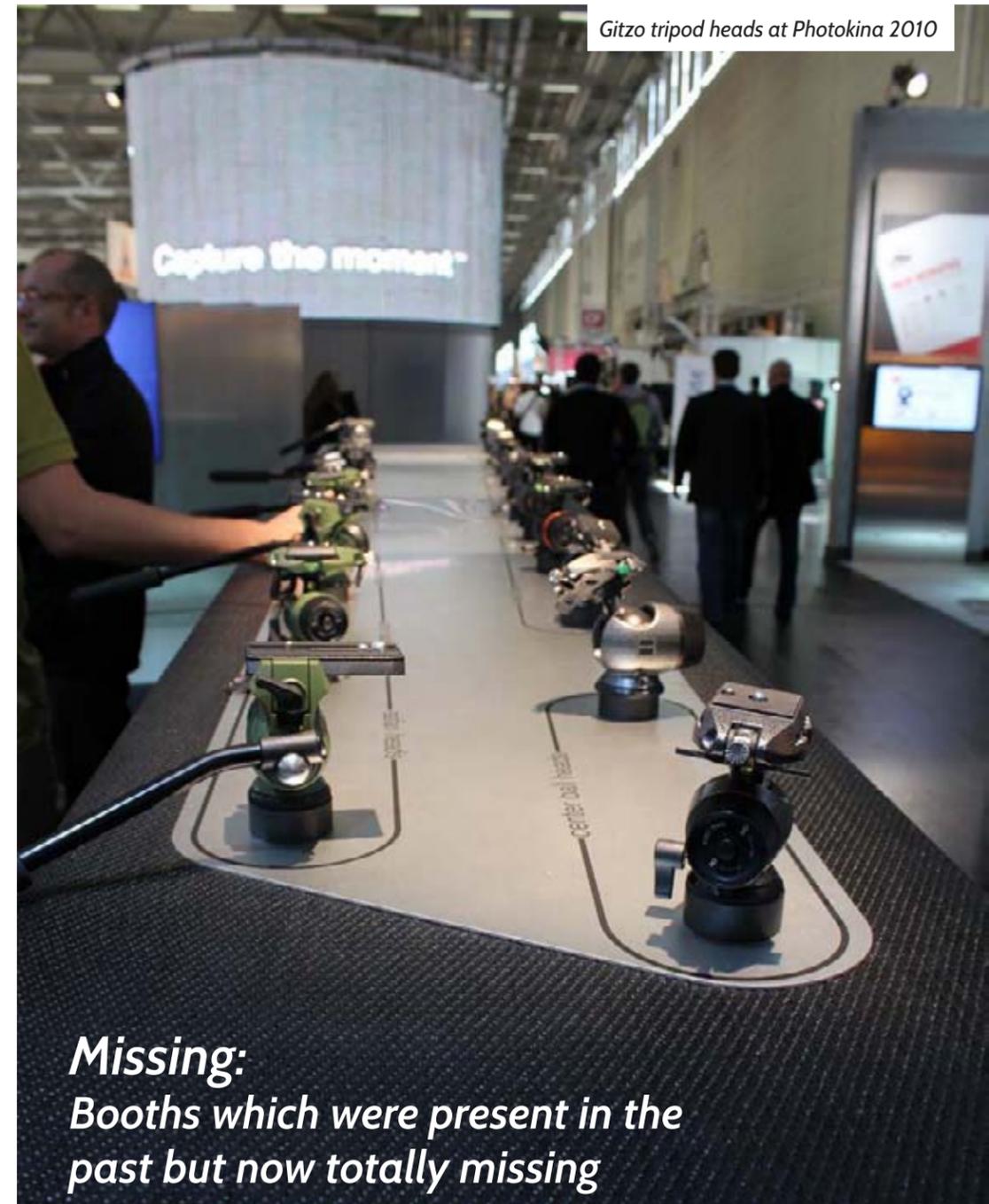
All this is fakery by the VISCOM Milano expo organizers to prop up their "exhibit space" claim. The result is that VISCOM Milano looks (and acts) pathetic and many international analysts (including myself) are not wasting our time even visiting. And this year four of the biggest Italian distributors declined to even have a minimalistic booth.

In other words, faking-it is not the best tactic. It is better to close down superficial halls and concentrate on making the halls that do still really do have occupants look healthy.

Nonetheless, Photokina is larger than PMA + PhotoPlus put together. Photokina exhibitor list 2014 will still be larger than PMA 2014 and PhotoPlus 2014 (PhotoEast) put together (I do not count the CES portion of PMA@CES; the PMA portion is about "one hall"; ten years ago it was probably four halls).

Why expo organizers don't learn from history and wake up is beyond me. Because of this lack of accepting blunt reality, FLAAR Reports now has a private report on each expo we attend around the world, to assist expo organizers who request this service from our team. Because of our experience we are consultants to printer-related expos literally around the world, and in several expos have been invited to, and featured, in their opening day ceremonies.

But we still recommend people enjoy the exhibitors for Photokina 2014. Every photographer in the world, whether hobby, weekend, student, or seasoned pro, definitely needs to attend Photokina at least once in your life. And once you attend your first time, we hope you return again two years later.



Gitzo tripod heads at Photokina 2010

Missing:
Booths which were present in the past but now totally missing

Manfrotto and Gitzo were missing. Nik Software was missing. Too many companies decided not to exhibit.

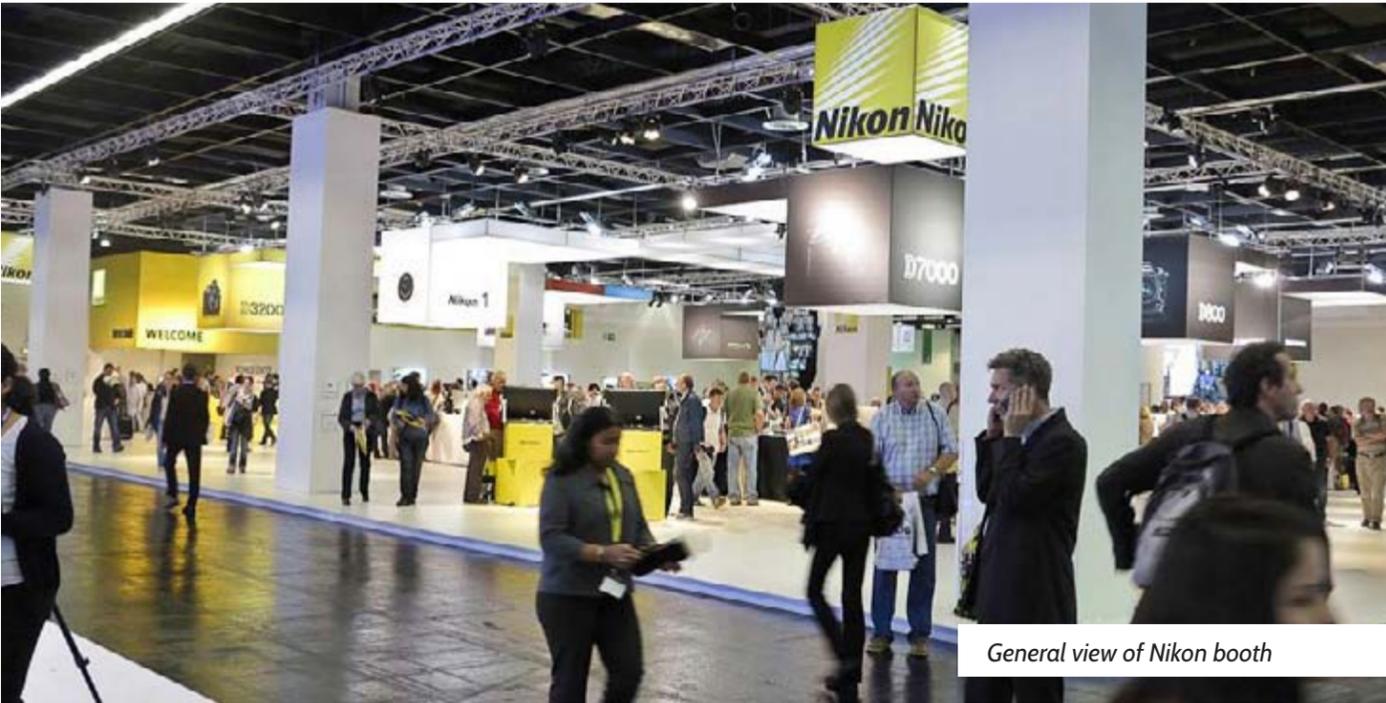
Cruse giclee scanners were missing. All other brands of repro scanners were missing.

Not much RIP software available to study at Photokina

Ten years ago a dozen wide-format printer manufacturers had booths at Photokina. Today not still another wide-format printer brand pulled totally out. We have a separate report on wide-format printers at Photokina 2012. You can order this publication for \$42 by writing FrontDesk "at" FLAAR.org.

Hall 4.1

was okay. The halls with Canon and Nikon were popular. Hall 2.1 was great. Hall 6 and Hall 9 were worth visiting for the front half; back half was primarily Chinese exhibitors. All were pleasant but no one recognized these brand names (and no one knows their unproven uncertain quality).



General view of Nikon booth



Sinar booth



General view of Canon booth

It was nice to see Sinar back on exhibit. It was good to see Leaf looking healthy. In general medium format seems to be doing okay despite the wish of Canon to take away all that market.



Leaf camera back



Mamiya Leaf booth

What will the Photokina 2014 exhibitor list be like?

It will be interesting if Koeln Messe lists how much the exhibitor list for Photokina 2012 dropped from Photokina 2010. So the logical question is, what will the Photokina 2014 exhibitor list be like?

We have made a list of all the product categories which should have been better organized at Photokina 2012. We offered to assist Photokina 2012, indeed had a pleasant meeting with three or four of their personnel eight months before the expo.

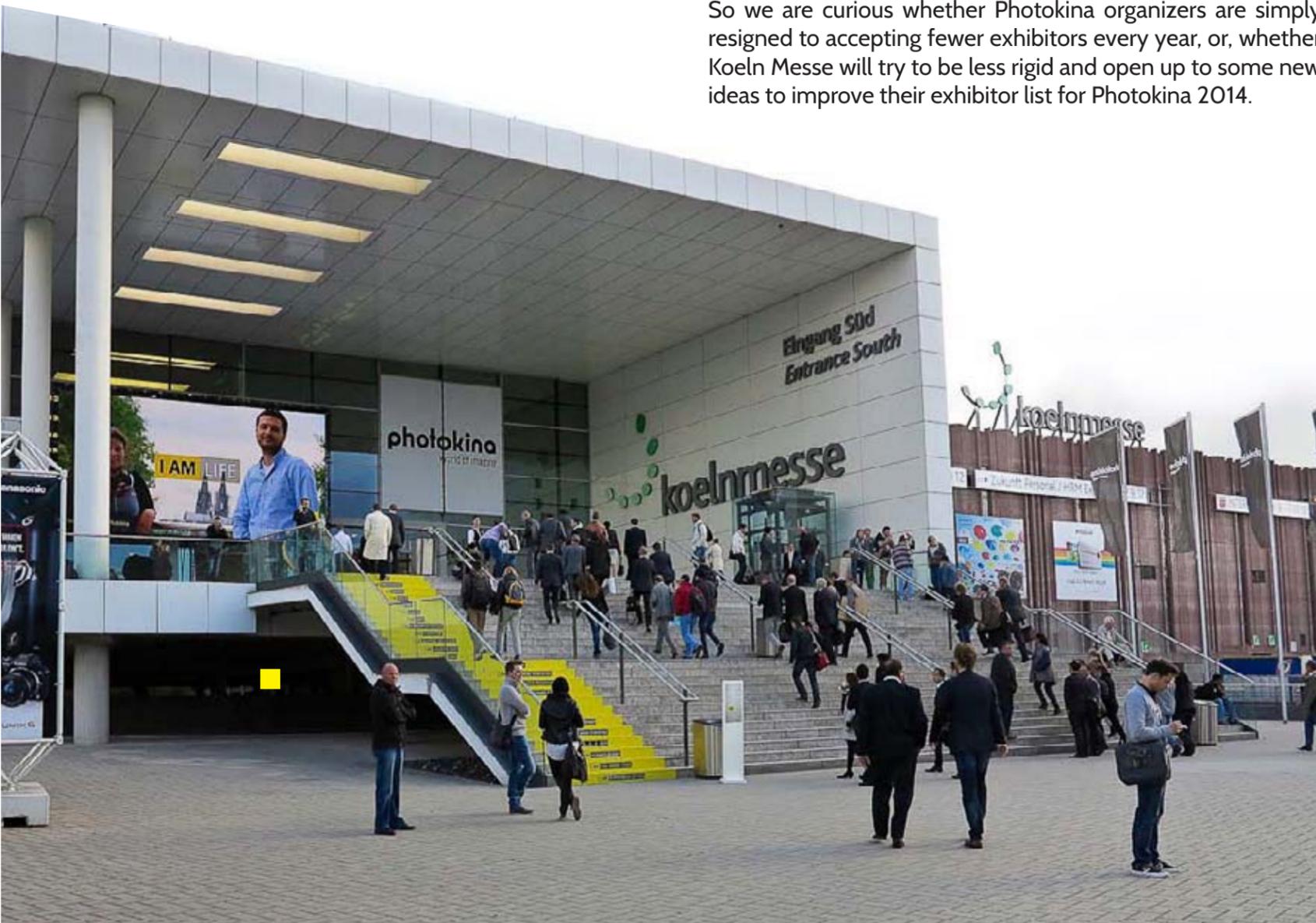
But there was no response when we followed up, zilch. FLAAR Reports is a consultant for digital imaging trade shows in China, in the USA, in Latin America, and in the Middle East.

We travel each year up to 450,000 kilometers to visit trade shows and end-users around the world the entire year. This gives us a tad of experience. But, if Koeln Messe wishes to keep to their traditional Photokina style we sure hope they don't end up like PMA or Seybold or the other enormous expos of circa 2000-2004.

PMA shrank so much it was not even able to stage an exhibit in 2011.

Several other once-giant, once-famous, once best-in-their-industry expos in Las Vegas went bankrupt...

So we are curious whether Photokina organizers are simply resigned to accepting fewer exhibitors every year, or, whether Koeln Messe will try to be less rigid and open up to some new ideas to improve their exhibitor list for Photokina 2014.



Summary

Here are the front covers of FLAAR Reports that we are preparing.



Our original goal was to have prepared and issued these on the first day, so that the hundred-thousand-plus visitors could enjoy these. But this proposal never got answered, so we sent only two of us (it would have taken a team of four of us, arriving three days before the expo opened, to have completed these to make them available during the expo).

Then they could have been licensed to Photokina to use for the two next years to encourage photographers (and exhibitors) around the world to attend 2014. But that never happened, so these reports will be independent FLAAR publications, not available on Photokina-related web sites.

DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY EQUIPMENT REVIEWS

FROM  FLAAR Reports

