
A Postcard from Atlanta – Profile Magazine October 2006

Things are changing...

I recently had the opportunity to visit the famous Décor-Expo Framing show in Atlanta, Georgia USA.

Décor-Expo Atlanta has long been regarded as the biggest framing show in the industry, so I was really looking forward to seeing just how big this show was, however I was slightly disappointed, as I found out that this year, there were more than 50 fewer exhibitors than last year, which is a “sign of the tough times” for our industry. The “buzz” from this show was that the West Coast Art Fair in Las Vegas is getting closer to taking over from Atlanta as the biggest annual industry show in the world from next year. Why? Is it the fact that Las Vegas is more easily accessible by flights, a more desirable location, or is it just time for a change? I think all of these reasons are possibly true.

Considering this, Décor-Expo Atlanta 2006 was still an impressive event, and a big US show like this makes you realize just how small our local market is back home in Australia really is... and in some ways though, I think I prefer our small market as well.

Once again, I was given the privilege to travel to this show on behalf of Gunnar, to help represent their CMC's (Computerised Mat Cutters) at the show. Apart from working on the Gunnar stand, I also had the unique opportunity to be part of the Décor-Expo “*Art & Framing School*” educational seminar program. This year, Décor-Expo feature over 55 separate seminars by 26 different presenters, including Vivian Kistler, John Raney, Brian Wolf, Tim Framer and also a humble, relatively unknown sales guy from Australia called Jared Davis!

For the first time ever, I was also given the opportunity to perform a couple of my popular educational seminars, and both were both well received. I think I also managed to gain a few more “fans” with my new “entertainment-styled” seminar called “*Selling Mats & Design on the Front Counter*” which I was fortunate to have almost 50 people in the audience. I recently received the Décor customer feedback survey results from my seminars (which they conduct for each seminar), and I was pleased to be informed that I happened to be the highest rated presenter at this years show, as no other presenter had a higher score! (I think my Aussie accent was working for me!)

From a tourist point of view, Atlanta is a typical big American city, and offers unique attractions such as a tour of the Coca Cola headquarters and also CNN headquarters, both of which conduct tours. Atlanta also offers a huge Aquarium. As a city located in the deep south, it certainly has its social issues to deal with, but the people in generally are warm & friendly. On a trivial note, it was interesting to discover that Georgia is one of the few states in America where you can buy as many firearms in one transaction as you want, and if you choose to buy an automatic weapon, then you only need to sign a release to approve authorities to

search your house if they wish to in the future. Although I was “tempted”, unfortunately I did not avail myself to this opportunity (this time!).

The day before I left for Atlanta, Steve Irwin tragically died, which shook the world. When I arrived in Atlanta for the show, because I was Australian, everyone wanted to know the exact details of how Steve Irwin died, as if coming from Australia meant that I had to be an “expert and authority” on the topic, as if I must have been right there when it happened, because I’m from the same country!

In speaking with many different US picture framers at this show I noticed that the biggest reason they attend these tradeshow is now more for the educational seminars, rather than the show itself. This was also the trend at the WCAF in Las Vegas, and more recently our own Profile Magazine Framing Conference in Melbourne. Because of recent changes and challenges affecting our industry, many framers are now “looking for answers” and trying to source more education & information on how to improve their business, thus the demand for seminars. Because of this, all the exhibitors on the floor of the Atlanta show would notice a dramatic decrease in numbers on the floor during popular seminar times.

The keynote speech at this show was presented by Gene Eichner, the Chairman from Framera, a big US based moulding supplier. The theme of this speech was “Be Your Best”, and the message conveyed was that as an industry, if we all strive to “be our best” at what we all do, our market will grow, and thus our industry will grow. We all have something we could be doing better in our business, and it’s these small steps we can take that help make the biggest difference in the long run. His complete speech can be downloaded from the Décor-Expo website.

If there’s one thing that can be said about the last 12 months, is that we have witnessed some major changes in our industry, both locally and overseas. My feeling now is that this change is going to continue for a while longer, both locally & worldwide, before we reach stability again. I would recommend that some of us use these changes as a sign to recognise what is happening around you, and ask yourself, is it time to change too?

For those who want to learn more about the Décor-Expo Atlanta, you can visit their website at www.decor-expo.com

Jared Davis CPF, GCF



With over 15 years experience in the framing & graphics industry, Jared Davis CPF, GCF has covered the wholesale, commercial and retail aspects of the business. His previous sales, marketing & training experience gives him an understanding of the changing opportunities for retail businesses, and he offers an up-to-date approach on new methods and techniques now required by today’s business owners, to be able to successfully market, merchandise and sell their services to consumers. Jared is also a featured educator at major international industry tradeshow & conventions.