
A Postcard from Vegas #2 – Profile Magazine April 2007

Welcome to Fabulous Las Vegas Nevada! Once again, I had the privilege to travel to the West Coast Art Fair in Las Vegas, in my part-time job role as a sales consultant for Gunnar, the Swiss based company that make Australia's most popular computerised CMC.

For those who have never been to Las Vegas before, this city would have to rate as one of the biggest "Artificial Wonders of the World"! Where else in the world can you enjoy a gondola ride in an Italian canal (The Venetian), marvel at the Eiffel tower (Paris Casino), ride the world's fastest rollercoaster (Speed at the Sahara), visit King Tut's tomb (Luxor Casino) and see an Elton John concert (Caesars Palace) all in one day? Enjoying the "natural wonders" of the Las Vegas Strip is certainly a memorable experience.

Since my previous visit 12 months ago, the rapid changes and development in this city were very obvious. Currently boasting the top two biggest private construction developments in the US (one is called "City Centre" on the strip, which is a 7 billion dollar development) this town is booming. It is easy to see why it is the fastest growing city in the US (4000 people move to Las Vegas every month!). Even though Las Vegas offers over 133,000 hotel rooms, the hotels are always at 90 percent occupancy all year round. So, what better place to have the world's fastest growing picture framing tradeshow & convention.

Once again, the West Coast Art Fair was held at the famous Las Vegas Hilton (the home of Barry Manilow, and previous home of Elvis Presley!) Compared to last year, the show has now grown so much that every inch of possible floors pace was completely sold to exhibitors, and next year's show is already sold out with 84 exhibitors in queue waiting to claim a spot should someone choose to drop out. The attendance of this years show was also noticeably more than last year, with a lot of international visitors.

Apart from the appealing location, the biggest draw card for framers to visit this show is probably not the show itself, but the actual convention side of this event, which featured over 100 educational seminars covering numerous topics from *"How to Create a State of the Art Production Facility"* to *"How to Apply Gold Leaf to Difficult Profiles"*. This year, for the first time, even I was asked to conduct my educational seminar on *"Selling Mats & Design on the Front Counter"*, which was both well attended and well received.

As far as where the industry is heading, the one thing that really stood out at this year's show is that technology is driving our industry forward. The most popular products this year were computerised matcutters (once again), point of sale software, visualization software, and wide format digital printing. In a survey recently conducted by Décor magazine, I was surprising to see that 66% of picture framers in the US rely on a computerised matcutter? Wow! This now means that if you don't have a CMC, you are actually in the minority, thus it is an exception not to own a CMC? I can remember 10 years ago installing the first Gunnar CMC's in

Australia, wondering just how many framers would eventually embrace this technology? Just like the underpinner revolutionized our industry in the early 80's, the CMC is definitely the new "industry revolution" of our decade.

Further to note, regarding technology, I attended an educational seminar with over 100 other framers, and the crowd was asked to indicate how many did NOT have Point Of Sale (Pricing) software in their shops. Only 4 framers put up their hand (and all four of them had only been in the industry for less than 12 months!). This meant that over 95% of framers in this room had POS software. Furthermore, most of these people are now looking to upgrade to new visualization software as well. There's no doubt that computers are changing the way we do business, and in our industry now, having POS software or a CMC is now an expectation, not an exception.

Overall, this show is both an eye-opener and a jaw-dropper. Not to mention the enjoyable location of Las Vegas itself – it is really hard to try and be bored in a place like this! If you do ever get the opportunity to visit this show, try to include a trip to see the Grand Canyon. It is only a quick (and affordable) 30 min flight away from Las Vegas, and it is simply a breathtaking experience.

If you were considering traveling overseas to see a framing tradeshow, there are many to choose from across the globe, but if your choice was limited and you could only see one, then West Coast Art Fair in Las Vegas would have to be it.

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 tradeshows & conventions.