

WCAF Starts the Year Off Right

This year's West Coast Art & Frame Show surpassed almost everyone's expectations and provided proof that there is a lot of positive energy in the art and framing industry," says Show Director Rob Gherman. "The attendees' outlook demonstrated not only that the WCAF Show is the industry's favorite, but that it also filled with great people looking for new ideas and the latest products."

The WCAF Show, now in its eleventh year, took place January 25-27 at the Las Vegas Hilton, with the National Conference starting a day earlier, January 24. Total attendance was close to 3,000 from throughout the U.S. and Canada as well as from many other countries. Exhibitor booths numbered almost 500, with more than two dozen new companies.

Attendees and exhibitors alike seemed filled with a renewed sense of optimism, with virtually everyone at the show looking for new ideas and products that would improve their businesses.

"This year's show was very good," says Pamela Giovannini, owner of Jazzbabies in Olympia, WA. "We bought everything we came to buy, including a list of equipment. We met many other framers and got a lot of key ideas from classes and the show floor, especially from the moulding companies. I talked to a lot of people, and everybody said the show was very good for them, too. It's the only trade show we'll ever go to."

"For this time in the economy and our business, we needed a lot of ideas and we found that at the show," adds

The 2010 West Coast Art & Frame Show and National Conference was an upbeat event that offers real optimism for the industry

Roylene Cuttress, co-owner of Pomona Frame House in Pomona, CA. "We learned new marketing ideas, how to use equipment to its fullest, and saw new moulding that would appeal to our customers. We also exchanged information with other store owners on how they're getting through these times. We came away refreshed and rejuvenated and felt traveling to Las Vegas paid off."

"The show was upbeat, and people were on a positive note," says Virginia Snell, owner of Myrtle Tree Picture Framing in Colorado Springs, CO. "We walked away with a lot of information we can apply, especially on marketing and pricing. We were also looking for an underpinner and visualization software, and the show gave us a chance to see those products firsthand. It's really good to have one place where you can tap into all the classes and get new product information because it's really critical for us at this time."

Exhibitors also had plenty of praise about the show and visitors to their booths. "We were particularly impressed with the quality of the show and the attendees this year," says Paul Thomas, president of LifeSaver Software. "They came with a determination to make a positive difference in their businesses. The framers were not just

the survivors of today's times, but the fighters. It was wonderful to see."

"WCAF is a great way to kick off a new year," says Dave Calhoun, president of Larson-Juhl. "We are always pleased with the education at the show and believe it helps



There was a lot of added interest in new prints at the show, with attendees looking for new images from publishers to frame for their customers.



The National Conference featured almost 90 seminars and workshops, including Paul MacFarland's fabric wrapping workshop.

attract framers who are investing in the future. WCAF gives us a venue to inspire framers with ideas and new products that we can show them firsthand.”

“The show was extremely busy,” adds George Barnes, vice president of Galaxy of Graphics. “The overall buzz of the show was very positive about the industry and the economy; there was clearly more optimism than a year ago.”

The National Conference proved to be popular and useful for attendees. It hosted almost 90 lectures and workshops, and it remains the largest educational venue in the art and framing industry by far.

There were several new workshops at the Conference along with almost two dozen new seminars, such as Websites that Work, FAQ’s at the Front Counter, PFM’s Complete Guide to Traditional Frames, and Merchandising & Marketing for Your Shop.

The Production Pavilion, which was opened to the show floor, featured demonstrations of the latest production equipment and practical use of new technology and management techniques.

The annual Successful Retailing breakfast, held on Wednesday morning, featured a lively exchange on making innovations in your approach to business. Moderated by PFM’s business editor, Jay Goltz, the panel included Rob and Barbara Markoff, owners of Artrageous! in San Diego, CA; John Raney II, a regular contributor to PFM’s Mat Doctors column and owner of the Frame Workshop of Appleton, WI; Paul Thomas, president of LifeSaver Software; and Jared Davis, an international sales consultant and writer based in Australia.

There was also a special tribute to the late Vivian Kistler on Tuesday morning in what would have been her classroom at the



There were an abundance of new moulding styles on display, including those at the Valley Moulding booth.

show. A number of speakers offered their stories and feelings about her many contributions over the years to the framing industry.

With an emphasis on providing frame shop and gallery owners with practical techniques to improve their businesses, attendees came away with lots of

down-to-earth ideas that will prove especially valuable in these times. Kim Fitzgerald, owner of Frame Fitz in Bloomington, IL, says, “The classes provided us with inexpensive and extremely practical new ideas that will increase the number of our customers and revenue.” Ken Nolan, owner of Orchard Lake Framing and Gallery in West Bloomfield, MI, says, “I found lots of ideas to think about

and try to help grow business in these times.” And Sherry Pearl, owner of Newburyport Frames in Newburyport, MA, adds, “I loved the many design ideas I saw and will definitely add them to the designs our shop offers.”

National Conference Director Deborah Salmon says, “The enrollment remained strong, with more than 3,500 seats filled over four days, almost 10 percent more than last year. All the attendees I talked with—from individual shop owners and franchisees to chains and suppliers—said they were very happy with the entire schedule of seminars and workshops. The attendance and the enthusiasm definitely exceeded our expectations.”

Next year’s show will again be held at the Las Vegas Hilton, January 24-26, 2011. It will be the ninth time the show will be held in the hotel, an added convenience for attendees. Classes begin a day earlier, on January 23. For more information, call 732-536-5160. For trade show information, ask for Rob Gherman. For education, ask for Deborah Salmon. ■



Brian Wolf talks to attendees about mat cutting techniques using the new Wizard SwitchBlade Technology.

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Attendees were enthusiastic about innovative displays like the one for Crescent Select Impact Colors, which featured a football player running out of a frame.