

2015

by Kendall Turchyn



One of the many special events at the WCAF Expo.

The vitality of the framing industry was more apparent than ever before when the 16th annual West Coast Art & Frame Expo hosted an impressive turnout of industry professionals, vendor booths displaying exciting new products, and top-notch National Conference sessions that filled the lecture halls. Diversity among the attendees was a testament to the growth of the industry, with representatives from all 50 states and attendees that traveled from 48 countries.

What the Expo Has to Offer

As the premier event of the art and framing industry, the West Coast Art & Frame Expo unveiled innovative new products and welcomed new exhibitors. Exhibitors outdid themselves, creating sophisticated custom booths to showcase their latest product offerings and highlight their creativity. The Expo provides an opportunity for custom framing retailers to network with other business professionals and to connect with new distributors. "There definitely were more vendors this year," said Jay Kogan, president and founder of Hall of Frames in Phoenix, AZ. "The super-hard times are over, and it's back to business. Things have gotten better in our industry."

WCAF Expo

Total Attendance: 4,094
Exhibiting Companies: 185
Number of States: 50
Number of Countries: 48

The National Conference

Total Seats Sold: 5,221
Number of Sessions: 136
Free Sessions: 40
New Sessions: 30



Jane Boyce, president of Tru Vue, with PFM Mat Doctor and National Conference speaker John Ranes II.

A New Year Another Great Expo!

"The Expo has always set itself apart from other shows in the industry," said Greg Perkins of Larson-Juhl. "It's very education driven. People are there to learn something in order to succeed in business. There was a noticeably younger audience this year, which was exciting. It brought a vibrant energy to the show."

New this year were expanded registration hours, a food court for attendees, and state-of-the-art touch screen check-in stations. "The show was great, people were excited. I loved the way you scan your barcode and you were on your way," said Ron Singer, owner of Ron's Frames in Los Alamitos, CA.

Sold Out Sessions at The National Conference

"The National Conference was an amazing experience," said first-time attendee Sonja Scharf of Toronto. "We feel rejuvenated and can't wait to put some of the ideas we took away into practice."

Over the span of the four-day National Conference, framing retailers, gallery owners, and custom picture framers attended over 100 informative sessions presented by leading industry experts, with over 5,200 seats sold. Year after year, The National Conference exceeds expectations.

The National Conference at the West Coast Art & Frame Expo is the largest educational event in the art and picture framing industry, where attendees filled sessions staying up-to-date, informed, and most importantly, ahead of their competition. "I thoroughly enjoyed my time at the Conference. I attended three classes that will benefit my knowledge of framing and will enhance my customers' products," said Karen Coburn of Nine Mile Falls, WA.

This year, The National Conference had numerous brand-new sessions and, back by popular demand, the best from previous years. The seminars and workshops covered improving profitability, merchandising, retailing strategies, gallery lighting, store layout and design, marketing through social media, framing techniques, art identification, color trends, and creative designs. New sessions included Canon USA's "Printing Fine Art



Michael Lifschultz, president of PostersWholesale.com, with attendee Paul Summers of Poster Emporium, of Lee's Summit, MO.



Nielsen Bainbridge showcases new products at their booth.



Meg Glasgow and Ken Baur's 'Total Business Makeover,' sponsored by Tru Vue, was well attended.



Boris Smorodinsky of Striving Artists Picture Framing in Chatsworth, CA, holds up his PFM mug.



Jay Goltz, PFM business editor, presenting 'The Goltz Standard: Pricing Strategies,' at The National Conference.



PFM Editor-in-Chief Patrick Server with Mira Bishop of Oliver Brothers, of Beverly, MA.



Designer Bonnie Palizzi leads an informative lecture, 'Designing at Another Level.'



John and Laurie Chester (left), owners of Wild Apple, with Andrew Cohen, owner of PI Creative Art, at the Wild Apple photo booth.

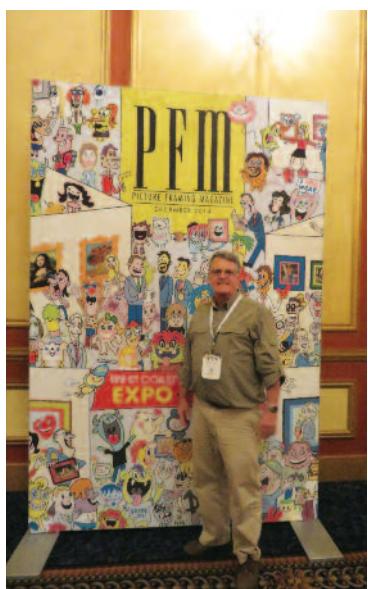
Courtesy of Canon USA.



This grand prize-winning photograph was taken by Letha Drury of South Hill Gallery in Lexington, KY, an attendee of the Landscape Photography session at Red Rock Canyon.



Appletinis were among the highlights of the Wild Apple 25th anniversary party.



Steve Hegseth of Direct Moulding in front of the 9' illuminated enlargement of PFM's December cover.



The National Conference presents over 100 hands-on workshops and seminars taught by the industry's leading experts.



Attendees networking on the show floor.

Courtesy of Francine Hackerott.



Larson-Juhl's 2015 Design Star winner Francine Hackerott of the Frame and I, in Prescott, AZ, with Larson-Juhl CEO Drew Van Pelt.



WCAF Expo Trade Show Director Deborah Salmon, Fotiou moulding designer and actress Jane Seymour, and Hobby Publications President David Gherman.



David Merzin, president of Omega Moulding, shows off the eye-catching colorful framed art at his company's booth.

and Photography," Direct Moulding's "Evolve, Diversify, and Prosper," Editions Limited/Studio EL-sponsored "Design Elements: Shades of Gray," and Tru Vue's "Total Business Makeover." There was also an increase of interest in digital printing and photography sessions. With a plethora of many different topics, The 2015 National Conference had a lot to offer.

Exciting New & Returning Events

The West Coast Art & Frame Expo was host to several exciting special events. They provided just a small taste of all that the WCAF Expo had to offer framing retailers and gallery owners.



Courtesy of Steve Lindemann.

Laura Lindemann, general manager at Linco Custom Picture Framing in San Dimas, CA, and Chad Delk, at the Crescent booth.

"Design Star: Framing Edition," presented by Larson-Juhl, is now in its third year and is a highly anticipated event of the WCAF Expo. This session sold out as attendees were anxious for the unveiling of the winners. With a record-breaking 878 entries, Francine Hackerott of The Frame and I in Prescott, AZ, won the grand prize. She created a modern-day version of the historical tabernacle frame, citing the framing of religious icons as an inspiration. She said, "The biggest shock was being acknowledged by the industry, by a big name such as Larson-Juhl, and to be singled out of so many entries. For the most part, I feel invigorated and inspired. Winning has given me a boost to want to share it within the industry."

The 2015 show also featured the first-ever off-site photography session, "Landscape Photography: How to Take Great Images," sponsored by Canon USA's Pixma Division. Led by renowned photographer Hal Schmitt, attendees visited the Red Rock Canyon Conservation



Greg Fremstad (right) bids farewell to FrameTek. In the booth with new owners Jeremy Abbott (center) and Michael Abbott.

Area, a famous national park and captured the breathtaking terrain through photography. They had one-on-one time at Canon USA's booth, where their pictures were printed out. The winner with the best photograph was Letha Drury, co-owner of the South Hill Gallery in Lexington, KY.

Picture Framing Magazine's "Lunch with the Editors," another brand-new session, enabled attendees and custom framing retailers to engage in thought-provoking dialogue with the magazine staff. Over a catered lunch, attendees were given the opportunity to offer some valuable input. "There was a very lively exchange of ideas during the session, and the staff found the perspectives of those who attended to be valuable in helping us guide the future of the publication," said Patrick Sarver, editor-in-chief of the magazine.



The Framerica booth with its nostalgic 1950s diner decor was another location for photo ops.

Food & Fun

To mark its 25th anniversary, Wild Apple hosted an appletini party at the company's booth. "It was really a lot of fun," said John Chester, company president. "There was a giant ice sculpture with the company logo carved into it, which doubled as a martini luge. You poured ingredients at the top and the appletini came out of the bottom. The photo booth was also a silly way for people to take pictures." A great time was had by all as attendees and exhibitors alike gathered together to celebrate.

There was a large turnout for Greg Fremstad's retirement party. Friends came from near and far to celebrate Greg Fremstad, the founder and former president of FrameTek. After a long and successful career in the industry, he sold his company, which will continue to operate with new owners Jeremy Abbott and Michael Abbott.



The popular Larson-Juhl booth, where buyers were previewing the new products for 2015.

A popular spot for "selfies" at the WCAF Expo was in front of the 9' illuminated enlargement of Picture Framing Magazine's December 2014 cover, featuring the art of Billy Tokyo. Other places for taking photos were at the Crescent booth, where attendees could step inside a giant frame, Framerica's 1950s diner decor, and the Wild Apple photo booth.

The café at the center of the Paris Exhibit Hall maintained the Parisian theme, with a 12' Eiffel Tower and park benches. With two other WCAF dining spots, the Paris Exhibit Hall food court and the Champagne Exhibit Hall lunch buffet, the food options made it more convenient for attendees and exhibitors alike.

Stay Tuned – Great Things Coming

"Another year and another spectacular show," said Luke DiSilvestro, owner of Legacy Art Framing, Spring Grove, IL.



Jen Gramm, marketing director of Tru Vue (right), with Sheri Wright, owner of Fourth Corner frames in Bellingham, WA, winner of Tru Vue's Total Business Makeover contest.

"Great to see the vendors that make our job not only possible but easier than ever with new products and services, other framers, and friends."

"Paris is a fantastic facility and we look forward to returning next year with another successful Expo," said Deborah Salmon, the WCAF Expo Trade Show Director. "On behalf of the WCAF staff, we are already hard at work to bring you another great event for 2016." The dates for the 17th annual West Coast Art & Frame Expo are January 25-27, 2016, and for The National Conference, January 24-27. See you next year! ■