
your bottom line

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Photo trade shows: What's there for me?

A primary reason many professional photographers attend photographic conventions is to learn about the latest in new products exhibited at the trade show. They want to find and examine products that can be used by their studio to increase business and make their work more efficient.

As is the case with nearly every other industry, photographic technology is moving ahead at a pace so fast that you can easily fall behind if you do not make a continuing effort to keep abreast of new products.

As a result, trade shows have become an integral part of nearly every state and regional PP of A convention. The largest regular trade show specifically tailored for the professional photographer is part of the annual PP of A national convention.

Comparatively few professional photographers, however, seem to know little about two other important trade shows they should consider attending, at least occasionally. The largest photographic retailer trade show in North America is the PMA show, held yearly—usually in Las Vegas. The largest international photographic trade show is Photokina, held every two years in Cologne, West Germany.

While both of these shows are primarily held for photographic product distributors and dealers, neither show is closed to professional photographers. In fact, there is a great deal you can learn by occasionally attending one of these "super" trade shows.

Until recently, neither show actively "courted" attendance by professional photographers. However, because of many changes in the photographic industry, the orientation of these two trade shows has changed considerably during the past ten years, increasing the attendance of professional photographers.

Originally, PMA was a show specifically organized for photo dealers and wholesale distributors. However, today the show is much more oriented towards photographic processing, including the new one-hour industry, as well as an

ever-increasing array of products for studio photographers.

In the past, photographers could see or at least learn about most new products from their local supplier. Today the photographic industry offers so many products that dealers are able to stock, much less know about, a comparatively small percentage of what is available.

However, you will be able to survey an almost unbelievable variety of photo products that you can purchase directly from manufacturers or have your dealer order for you.

Likewise, at Photokina, you will see a worldwide display of products, some of which are not yet available in the United States, and may not be for a while.

PMA will be held again this year at the Las Vegas Convention Center, February 13-16, 1986. The show usually draws more than 500 exhibitors and 18,000 attendees. Speakers will be giving talks for the photographic dealer and processor, rather than the professional photographer. So while attending the trade show, don't expect to find any programs that apply to professional photography.

The international-class Photokina is described as the "World's Fair of the Image," and in 1984 attracted 1,267 exhibitors and 120,000 visitors from all over the globe.

It's said that anyone who manufactures any photographic product of any value anywhere in the world, exhibits at Photokina. I would have to agree. Even the Soviet Union had an exhibit of photo products they produced. You cannot begin to imagine the variety and number of products you will find at Photokina. The show is gigantic—scattered over twelve huge connecting halls, many of which have two floors—with a mind-boggling number of products and exhibits.

If you go, bring comfortable walking shoes. I estimate that if you began walking through Hall No. 1 on Monday morning, and spend eight-hour days continually walking and looking, (not stopping or talking to anyone very long), you might

be able to complete visiting at the last booths by Friday afternoon! It sounds impossible, but it is true. Photokina makes PMA look like a small regional show.

Cologne is a delightful German city that is easily accessible from the United States. Many major cities now have direct flights serving Frankfurt, and Cologne is just a short flight or train ride away (I recommend the train). Photokina is scheduled for September 3-9, 1986.

If you are thinking about attending, by all means have your travel agent make hotel reservations for you now. Or you may find yourself staying 60 miles away from the city, having to commute to the show by train each day.

When you are there, make sure to schedule some additional time to tour the area. But even if you go only for the trade show, I can guarantee you will find it to be a very worthwhile experience. (For more information on Photokina, contact: Hans J. Teetz, German American Chamber of Commerce, 666 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10103; 212-974-8836.)

It's a fast-paced, rapidly-changing world we live in. If you don't keep up, you fall behind. Photographic trade shows, such as those sponsored by the PP of A, PMA, and Photokina, can help you keep pace with the latest photographic breakthroughs. By applying a selected assortment of these innovations in your studio, you can help insure that your bottom line will continue to grow. 