

# A Visit to Drupa 95 with Scitex

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*While there, it starts to seem that everyone in the world is at Drupa. It was crowded, exciting and overwhelming. Of course, only a small fraction of the world's population was there but it seemed that most of them were standing in the Scitex booth. For those that were unable to visit Dusseldorf this year, I offer this tour of Scitex's Open World of Color.*

Envision the largest exhibition of printing equipment in the world. Fifteen halls of presses and paper and electronics until you can't believe that the world can hold this much sheer stuff. Everywhere you go, people are speaking in a blizzard of different tongues. The variety of dress styles is outdone only by the nuances in culture and appearance. The first day of Drupa, you come to understand the meaning of being able to play on the world's stage.

One corner of Drupa is different from the rest. Instead of the smooth gray and teal and silver of the common exhibitor's booth, you are taken in by a bricked-over, graphiti-ridden street scene. It's stylish enough to arrest your eye, to be a photographer's backdrop. A juggler is doing his thing, somehow keeping track of his toys in the crush of humanity and the noise, while a photographer snaps his picture. Spray painted in the graphiti is a Scitex logo.

A smooth, european tram-conductor voice floats through the crowd, in french, then german, then english, "Please enter the theatre for the Scitex Express. It will be shown in english in a few minutes." As people stream into the Scitex private auditorium, you edge closer to the street scene. You see that the photographer has a computer at the edge of the stage showing pictures of the juggler. The strobe lights flash again and

another picture appears on the screen—you realize that you're seeing *action* photography with an *electronic* camera, immediate access to imagery for productive use.

The still life camera back is somewhere nearby, shooting jewelry and packages and... It doesn't exactly matter now. You realize that you have wandered into the most amazing display of graphic communications technology in the world, into a display area so big and so cool that you are engrossed before you realize it even exists.

It is hard to tell what you would see as you comprehend and move on from the street scene. It is so hip, so urban that most tend to linger there for a while. Later, you'll find that the reason that it is so graphically arresting is that the thirty foot tall street scene backdrops are inkjet output. They are so nicely designed and so detailed because someone got to work them out as art on a Macintosh and then print—to the Outboard.

The street scene is one part of the input segment of the Scitex display area. The underlying idea of the exhibit design is conceived as three concentric circles, wheels within wheels, input/output-applications-data management. Filling the longest circumference, the

outer circle, are input and output devices—a vast group by any standard. In the littlest circle is the smallest product line, but the one that is central to everyone's business and the key to the future: production data management tools. The circle in between is the application section that shows how these things can be used to push the envelope of the future.

The list is huge: Catchlight, Lumena, Immix Turbocube, System Brunner, Outboard, DoPlate 800, Improof 650c, SIMS, Quickcopy, Catalogic, Impresario, Realist, Smart 342, Impack PS (no apologies needed anymore), Packhand, GMG Colorproof, Ripro Server, Archiver, P.Ink Press, Smart 720, Prismagic with Pentium, Span/Pro, Savannah, Dolev 4Press, and Spontane. Each of these is of course joined in harmony with a ton of smaller products that make it all play together.

The booth is entirely networked, miles of cable, four Ripro Servers, switched hubs galore. Photoshop opens a production sized image (small tens of megabytes) as fast as it would otherwise do. Want a Catchlight image for an Impresario demo? No problem. The whole system works together in a display of technical integration that is completely stunning.

There is a production demo area. The demo center of Scitex Europe has been reconstructed on a huge scale in the back of the booth. They publicly offer to take all comers. Bring me your jobs for production benchmark—no preparation needed. Why? because they can, because Scitex has assembled an array of technology, a variety of integrated workflows that make it possible to do a job without fear, jobs brought from anywhere in the



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world without warning.

But that's the way of this business isn't it? Challenges presented without warning to be overcome, profitably, in the least possible amount of time. Flexibility is the key and that is why you leave the urban street scene to take a ride on the Scitex Express.

Almost immediately, you notice a television picture of a woman talking and then the picture collapses in on itself, pulling a new one onto the screen as it goes. The Immix Turbocube, non-linear video editing system is the latest company to be added to the Scitex group. You watch the demo, not sure why it is there until the demonstrator mentions Quicktime—video on disk, Macintosh video files and you start to think that video is sort of like moving pictures, just another part of the marketing plan. If an agency client is doing personalized direct mail, elaborate brochures, then probably will be doing interactive cd-roms and other electronic presentations. Then you will probably need to be able to digitize their tv ads and reconfigure them into video segments for interactive use.

Sort of like an image retouching and composing terminal for pictures to be used interactively, video. But what about page assembly? You look around expectantly. In the immediate area you see a Maskcutter demo, the Realist 5015, Catalogic... Finally, tucked in next to the Catalogic system is a 'technology demo' called Impresario.

The operator is dragging a thumbnail out of a Catalogic database list into a window. He double clicks on the picture to change its control parameters. Using a series of pop-up menus, he specifies what will happen when someone clicks on this picture with a mouse! He previews the piece. It turns out that the picture is a Quicktime video. Drag a rectangle onto the screen, fill it with a picture and, using the pop-up control menus again, tell it to stop the

video. Another rectangle, a simple product shot from the Catalogic demo; another gets text from the Catalogic database, another gets a price. It is all linked and updated when the database changes. This guy is creating a full-featured interactive catalog without doing any programming.

He tells you that he is an artist with no engineering or programming background and that the point of this little bit of technology is to show that interactive project design must include the control processes that make it interact but must also be easily driven by an artist. It also hopes to make clear that the future of marketing communications extends beyond the static catalog and brochure applications to the electronic world. You start to think about the Internet and the World Wide Web and hope that this technology demo is showing something that we can hope to use quite soon. It looks pretty good already.

Scitex has realized that the world of prepress is changing. Desktop prepress is allowing customers to accomplish more of their own work while changes in the marketing world are making new demands on them. The trend toward shorter runs, more complex layouts and new distribution strategies is unambiguous. Electronic prepress offerings have changed in response.

Now Scitex products focus less on workstations and more of the ability to change graphic information into different forms, more on the broadening of the prepress portfolio to accommodate new functions supporting new services in support of the graphic communication needs of customers.

After browsing Catalogic and Impresario, you are likely to walk up the ramp into the center of the circle. An awesome silver tower studded with computer screens dominates the area, each screen a demonstration of another facet of production data management technology. The one facing the

entrance causes a second look... it's a Microsoft Windows display of a peak into the storage of the Scitex Ripro Server placed here to emphasize the broad integration skills of the Ripro product line. Another screen shows a demonstration of the Media Manager, part of the client software for the Ripro Server.

The demonstrator clicks on a picture of a jukebox and it opens up and shows the names of all the cartridges it contains. Select one and it is mounted. Since the jukebox at the show has several readers in it, several are mounted. They just show up on the Mac desktop, same with a DAT tape jukebox, same with everything. The routine of Chooser, Appleshare, device for all of the storage in your system is gone, just use the selection and translation strategies of the Media Manager.

Don't like to think about all that storage, confused by the idea of different devices all of your network and daunted by the thought of trying to keep track of where everything is located? Then step over to the Ripro Archiver demonstration.

There you see an operator using pop-up menus to question the database: show me all of the pictures for page #99 for job #123. A list of files appears, click!, it's a spread of thumbnails, double click! it's a full size display of the preview. Then watch while the operator selects one of the pictures and drags it out of the Archiver window and over to a Quark page. Voila! he has just placed a picture and he doesn't have any idea where it is stored.

The possible locations are endless. It could be on an optical cartridge, in the RAID system, on a disk on one of the Intel tracks, on a tape cartridge in the basement. The page assembly operator doesn't care. He is working with the database. The database knows where it is, the operator just has to know how to use it not keep track of it.

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He chooses a menu option in Quark labelled 'Collect for APR'. In a second he is looking at the list of pictures in the Archiver. The list says 'online' for some and 'offline' for others. Someone has to go to the basement to get the ones labeled offline but the database tells them exactly which optical cartridge to mount or tape to read. There is no confusion, no searching around. The database makes it all clear. Once all the pickups are gathered, the files are copied in a stroke, into the APR path and are ready for the PostScript RIP to do the job.

It dawns on you, as the demonstrator shows some of the security features, that this machine is intended to support access by customers over phone lines for the placement of images into Quark. The drag of pictures into Quark should be done by a designer. Given that, the production step is to review the database, gather the pickups and make film for billing.

It seems clear that Scitex has invented a wonderful new way to work with production information of all kinds. New tools will allow designers to do all of the work that they should do. New tools allow prepress services to manage the underlying data, the libraries of images and videos and other information types, to integrate them into new forms of communication, to offer customers the new services that they need to keep ahead as the future unfolds.

The data management area is gray and polished like most of the rest of the Scitex booth but it is also raised several inches above the floor level to provide a good perspective on the rest of the booth. There is a row of new machines across the front of the booth. The Iris Realist 5015 is pretty with its 14x22 inch, auto-paper feed and new IQ-pro software. The Dolev 4Press is one of the most striking bits of industrial design at the show with its emphatic cylindrical film drum shape, new larger

image format and decorative turquoise inserts

But inkjet and imagesetter, these things are easy to understand. Its nice to know that Scitex is still improving the basic technologies but there is something else in the row. An unprepossessing machine about the size of a large office copying system with a PowerPC sitting next to it. The clue you pick up about its function is from a brochure sitting on it. It shows a pretty color picture and some slogan announcing it to be Spontane. Backing away to look it over, you get the idea, it is the new digital printing press from Scitex. You look it over and see another pile of output from this thing.

This brochure is a four-page, full color piece with text of all sorts and graphics. You come to understand that this printer is based on xerographic technology and, as you absorb the brochure, you realize that it automatically prints on two sides of the paper—that this four-page brochure was printed in one command from a Mac.

After two or three tries in a variety of languages, a Scitex rep that speaks your language (literally!) starts to talk. You learn that the Spontane delivers forty single-side A4 pages each minute or sixteen two sided or eight two-sided A3s; it does electronic collation so that you don't have to shuffle pages to get books—so that you can actually print forty *different* pages each minute!

Then you notice the PowerPC that is driving it. The demonstrator displays the PostScript file on the disk. Then he tells it to RIP. It is unbelievably fast. It has Full-auto-frames, too. That's nice, but the speed.

You inquire and find that it fits into a normal Scitex workflow. It will mingle PostScript and CT/LW on a single sheet. It will mingle all of that with originals scanned on the copier-looking platen on the printer. The Scitex Rep volunteers

that, shortly after they finish it for delivery at year-end, they expect to deliver the ability to personalize each piece that comes off the page. Catalog mail-merge, direct mail, brochures each labeled with a target client name, who can imagine the variety of uses!

But then you look across the way and there is another 'technology demo'. This one is from the Scitex inkjet company in Dayton. It looks like a large printing press, a roll of paper feeding a complex looking machine and a take up roll consuming pictures that are in color. You look closer, scitex doesn't usually make printing presses, now we have Spontane which is about as close as you can get to a printing press with no ink. Looking closely at this machine, you see another dazzling display of technology.

This machines is a printing press but it has no printing plates. It is a four color inkjet system that sprays pages at press speed, each one different than the one before, a couple of thousand each second! the color is a bit vague, the inkjet heads are visible in a pattern on the image. Listening to the narrator, you hear that you will have to wait at least a couple of years before this dream comes true.

The digital press has drawn you out of the main area. Looking around to decide what to look at next you are again amazed at the huge amount of stuff. A row of new machines decorates the raised edge of the applications floor.

A quick tour reveals these to be stylish upgrades to modern machines.

The first of them is one of the new Iris Realist inkjet printers. In addition to their completely new look, they sport tremendously improved paper formats. Most importantly, the smaller version the 5015 prints on 14"x21" paper for a full 11x17 spread, including marks. The larger one, the 5030, still covers a full four page form but with completely automatic

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paper handling. Both are completely redesigned to eliminate the annoying maintenance requirements of their precursors.

The video describing all of this to you goes on to explain that the software and interface for the Realist are also completely different. These are both true Macintosh peripherals. Plug them in, install the new software and go. No extra control computer to buy or keep running. The new software is called IQ-Pro. It still contains the superb calibration functions of Classic Color but adds the ability to better manage the processing queue for the printer and has a nice random separation proofing function as well.

Next to it is the new Dolev 4Press. Like the Realists, this space-ship of an imagesetter—the film drum is emphasized in the cabinet as a silver cylinder with a control panel on a sculpted base—also sports an improved output format. At 22x28, it will actually cover a normal four-page printing plate.

The last of the showpieces on the main aisle is the new Smart 342. Described by a video of its own, the 342 has one major advantage: more scans per hour, somewhere near 16-18 of them! Running on a PowerMac, it can use its new, additional image processing hardware, to keep the 342 scanning while the operator is setting up other prescanned images.

The completely new software carefully conceals complexity from the novice while providing total control of all facets of color quality to the expert. At the surface, all descriptions in menus and buttons are in concrete terms that allow quick determination of what needs to be done to produce the ideal scan for this separation.

Wandering around the corner again, you are in packaging land. The Impak PS, a product with a checkered past, is shown, at last, to be a fully functional and truly productive tool. The demonstrator

shows you the new retouching tools and how easily one can do image cleanup and outlining. He opens a grocery store box and you are fascinated by the nearly instant redraw of the piece as it opens. He selects an object, specifies a spread or choke, and shows you that it now automatically mortices dangerous corners. Then the new blend palette, the new color definition tools, everything.

The thing that is most apparent is that the Impak PS is ready to go. It works—it drives imagesetters and integrates with the Ripro. Its development period is finally over. Then the demonstrator tells you about the next feature under development: a function that allows the conversion of a separation from process to special color inks, and then back again for proofing.

Next to the Impak is a small demonstration of a product called GMG Colorprint. This machine is an alternative for driving an Iris proofer from a piece that has special color inks. When it receives a page from either an Impak PS or a Mac, its PostScript RIP collapses the extra color inks into process match. It includes a colorimeter that allows the measurement of a sample of the special ink and automatically proposes a process match. The demonstrator thinks this is a machine for the packaging business but the other applications are too obvious to be overlooked.

This walk of technology has lead you to the new computer to plate machine. Your first impression is that it is huge. Upon learning that it is self feeding, in-line processed and creates plates up to 32x44 in only eight minutes (including plate handling time), it seems only reasonable since it is a complete platemaking factory in a box.

The imposition demo area nearby shows the newly functional Scitex imposition management system. This little wonder is the backbone of the DoPlate (one

comes in every box) and is also the epitome of Scitex's workflow conscious product design. Not only does it take advantage of the benefits of the totally cool Scenicsoft Preps form design software but it optimizes the function of the DoPlate by doing everything at once, plot, impose and prepare for the next form. Using an additional cpu, it can rotate pages to fit the form, compose them with marker files and plot while another cpu searches the network for the pages needed to complete the next form. That way, the DoPlate never stops making money.

The DoPlate scene is made complete by the new form proofer, the Improof 650c. This surprisingly inexpensive color printer sports a 36" web. Driven by the exact same files and software (SIMS) as the DoPlate, it shows the form accurately and provides confidence that the form you proof is the one that will show on the plate.

There is a small four-color Heidelberg press in the area, cranking out Scitex promotional materials and the booth's daily newsletter but once you start thinking about printing, you can't help but being distracted by the big gun of the imaging business, the Outboard. We have all heard of the Outboard but who among us has ever seen it work. We have all heard that it can't run for any great length of time without serious maintenance but if you have patience to sit there long enough, you will see that it can keep going for a very long time. This thing is just cranking out the posters. It is awesome. A display of Outboard samples is nearby and you can't help but think that this is a money making enterprise just waiting to arrive in your life. It is so big and inspiring.

Actually, there is a demonstration to go with the Outboard. The software that drives it runs in some sort of microcomputer and makes the function totally automatic. Basically, you get a TIFF file into it any way you like and then

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tell the software how big you want it printed, how much overlap you want between printed segments and go. It just makes posters, displays, bus pictures, backdrops and who knows what else. You finally realize that it is a large format, short run printing press. It fits.

As you wander back into the center of the booth, you consider going upstairs into one of the two catered cafes Scitex provides to comfort your tired feet and to give you an opportunity to chat about the products with one of the over three-hundred fifty Scitex people supporting the booth. If you do, you will find a lot of energy.

The thing is that, with all the new products, the developing maturity of the old products, the emphasis on workflow, data management and workflow, even the most cynical anti-technologist would be swayed to consider that maybe there is a future in this business. Scitex has worked so hard in this booth and in its product line to counter the perception that the desktop has won, that soon there will be nothing but printers and designers. The truth

that is revealed during your walk through this display and, maybe, your chat with a scitex enthusiast, is that this business has grown beyond category.

Soon, it is clear, the prepress company will be supporting image libraries for its customers, wondering how to deal with the integration of video into interactive products, working with your customers to devise new business and marketing solutions to problems that are only being recognized today. Looking down on the rest of the Scitex area, you realize that you have only examined about half of the products on display and that this is a developing situation. With luck, the combination of futuristic concepts, new products and enhancements to old ones has made you realize that doing business with Scitex is not merely the partnership we all try to make it. It is also a process.

By allying yourself with Scitex, its products and its R&D organization, you put yourself in a position to see the future and take advantage of it in an orderly way. Whatever else you can say about

Scitex, it has not been trapped by its past and the things you buy today will work with the things you buy tomorrow. The clean system design that allows this booth to connect video editing systems, with Whisper workstations, with a billboard printer, with... well, you get it, with just about anything—allows you to grow your Scitex system in ways yet unforeseen, in ways that allow you to respond to almost anything that your customers' might need.

As you walk out of the Scitex display area, past the street scene and the juggler, the most striking thing is the relative quiet outside this little world of chaos. The other booths are busy, lots of companies make good products. But the Scitex booth is not just busy, it is jammed. It is not just big, it is full. The slogan, "You select. We connect." is not just a philosophical commitment to open systems, it is a demand that everyone be included.