



Rational Molding

NOTES FROM THE ROAD



A Quick Tour of the China Pavilion at the World Expo Site in Shanghai

It is always interesting to visit China. I can't say that I love the food and it is usually good for my diet when I go there. While my hosts are always generous and try to accommodate me, somehow I'm always thinking about that next long flight and how I don't want a case of gurgling tummy slowing me down!

I'm happy to report that Shanghai is almost complete. It seems as though they have been building frenetically forever but the center is a modern, glistening world city that feels as cosmopolitan and open as any other major center. It is very definitely China but a walk downtown in the business and entertainment center felt almost like walking through a European city with many foreign visitors, international boutiques and restaurants and bars. Even the new Disney site has at last started construction and the World Expo in 2010 left the city with a new tourist attraction in the China Pavilion and a collection of amazing buildings. Massive construction for the Olympics in 2008 created new infrastructure and transportation networks that have improved the flow of traffic and people around this 23 million strong powerhouse. The

strength of Shanghai is clear and I am sure that there is more to come.

On the other-hand, while long-standing rumors of a real estate bubble have not yet played out in China, the signs of over construction and empty buildings are also clear. The superhighways leading away from the airport are suffering from hurried (corrupt) construction and show signs of degrading just a few years after they were hurriedly installed - high speeds are a risk as potholes appear every few kilometers. Rising fuel costs drove truck drivers to strike enmasse for three days recently, wages are climbing for the average worker, commodity prices are driving costs up and the yuan has been somewhat devalued against the dollar to bring it gradually in-line with its true value. The country is still growing at above 8% annually but there are signs of slowing and rising inflation - the cost of doing business in China is growing.

On this occasion, I met a group of around 40 rotomolders and suppliers for a seminar organized by Robert Bao of the

local rotomolders association. They were enthusiastic and clearly hungry for as much knowledge as they could handle - it was a lively event and there was no shortage of questions on topics from materials to molds to machines. I had a fun time converting my seminar materials into Chinese as the Chinese rotomolding community does not generally speak English but it was worth it in the end. This was necessary as much of the literature and teaching that has been available for the rest of the world for a number of years has not fully penetrated (yet). We are hoping that this will be an on-going process that can be repeated in a number of locations where rotomoulding is strong (the industry has somewhere between 120 and 300 active molders, mainly along the east coast and southern areas). It was also nice to see that local material suppliers are taking an interest and it will be interesting to see what they come up with in terms of a range of suitable grades for the industry. Molders and suppliers were also very interested in process control and even indicated that local versions of Rotolog may be out there...



Shanghai Molders Seeking Knowledge

A visit to local molder, Terrui International, with my very kind host Wang Kai offered an opportunity to see local equipment and molds in action. The essence of modern rotomolding was there and while the quality of equipment is still developing, it is clear that they are paying attention to international design and approaches to processing. The main equipment suppliers are already exporting their machines and molds and it may not be too long before they appear somewhere near you.

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