

On the Boil!



RPC-CPPIA 2018 Conference Attendees – Xiamen, China

Orla's world tour continues – we've just completed events four and five on her list. Here's the latest.

During a tour of a supplier after the recent RPC-CPPIA event in Xiamen, China, one of my hosts described the Chinese people as 'boiling'. A very apt description of the pent-up energy and drive that exists in their millions of budding entrepreneurs, it captures the image of Chinese companies who excel at aggressive, in-your-face, competitive, do-it-at-any cost business. If they can find a way to enter your market space, they will. Rotomolding has long assumed that distance and the cost of shipping air would keep long-distance molding out of local markets but there are now dozens, if not hundreds, of molders supplying products to US and European markets. With the almost exponential expansion of the industry from almost zero in 1980 to hundreds of molders today and the proposed One-Belt One-Road initiative connecting China to Europe along the old Silk Road routes, it is likely that it will rise even further. They also have 20-30 machine makers active now. Europe be forewarned.



18th Century meets 21st Century Style

The RPC-CPPIA is one of two associations representing molders in China. With around 120 attendees and a decent array of papers presented, the conference in Xiamen on April 20-21 was well worth attending – many thanks to Paul Lam and Mr. Shi, the association secretary, for their assistance in making our arrangements. The large increase in molder numbers (albeit most of them

small) means there is a huge demand for information and support. Much of the history of rotational molding research is inaccessible due to language and official barriers to sites such as Google so there are considerable opportunities for providing support and services to the industry. More cooperation with international associations may be helpful.

After the event, we took a trip via high speed train to Shanghai to attend Chinaplas. The Chinese rail network is now fast, modern and efficient, rivaling anything in Europe or Japan and connects a large portion of the industrialized east. It shows the incredible progress of the country in the last couple of decades as they have invested heavily in infrastructure. They are also investing heavily in cashless systems – senior citizens receive training on the use of cellphones for payment and it is amazing to see even small road-side stalls accepting mainly phone payments. Combine that with the advent of citywide visual recognition systems in some regions and government control of the internet and you have centralized control like nowhere else.

The Chinaplas event was huge. 4000+

exhibitors and a new national exhibition center, miles upon miles of aisles and tens of thousands of people. Reportedly it will exceed even the K-Show in Düsseldorf in a year or two and the fact that it occurs every year rather than the three-year European cycle indicates the interest in plastics in general. As always, the participation of rotational molding companies is small and you have to search hard (and walk far) to find the familiar and new. For the future, though, it may represent a terrific forum for promotion of rotomolding if the right platform can be found.

New for Old

The Polish association, ROTOPOL, held their annual event at the eco-friendly retreat of Olandia near Poznan and close to the German border on May 10-11. The attendance was very good with over 90 people, mostly from Poland but also from Germany, UK and the Czech Republic.

Abyly organized by Ann Walorek of Valor, the event was chaired by Professor Marek Szostak of Poznan University, who also happened to celebrate his 60th birthday on the second day – he was happy to be able to share it with 90 friends! His work currently focuses on the use of hemp and flax for reinforcement in rotomolded materials – the results presented showed some initial success when added at low levels.

Rotomolding in Poland has grown very rapidly in recent years with 84 companies now in operation. About half of these are subsidiaries of companies from other European countries enjoying the lower cost of operation in Poland, the other half are indigenous. Some are very advanced, such as the RPC Promens operation in Miedzyrzecz (go ahead, try pronouncing that) where they operate Smart technology with a lean approach and supply high-end products for the German and other markets. Machine suppliers, consultants

and local material production from companies such as Matrix Polymers ensure good support for the industry and as the government offers support for new operations further east towards the Ukrainian border, it is clear we will see more growth in the future.

Warsaw was a nice stop during our visit and a couple of highlights included a visit to St. Anne's church which largely survived the bombing of World War II (and still hosts daily renditions on the ornate baroque organ inside) and the new Jewish museum displaying the 1000-year history of Jews in Poland – a very emotional journey through time. The rest of Warsaw's center was almost completely destroyed by the Nazi's and had to be rebuilt using historical images and records – a proud point for the Polish people showing their resilience and determination to recover.

At press time, we are onward to Belfast and Fiji! Day 974. 



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