

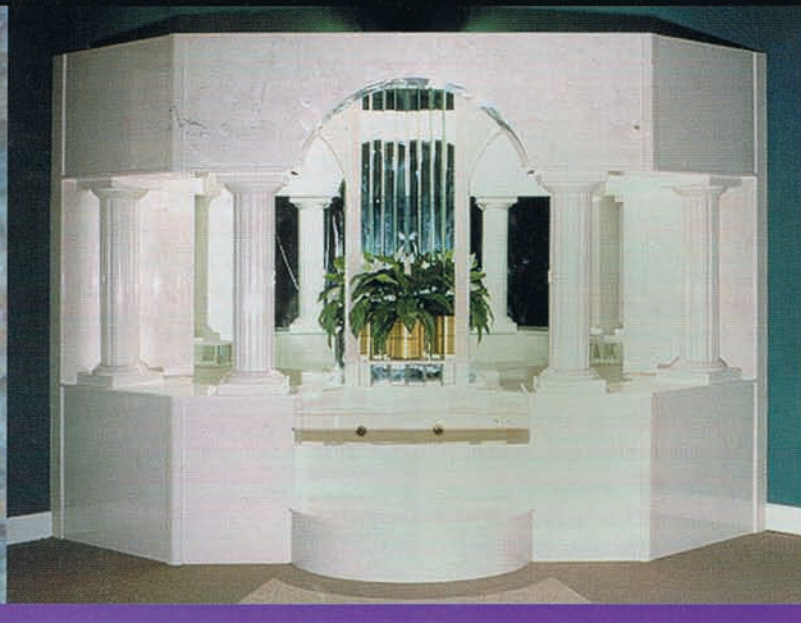


INTERPLASTIC CORPORATION
Thermoset Resins Division

CASTING

CASE HISTORY

Caveat Emptor Proven by Marble Masters



It's rare not to have competition fighting hard to steal every customer you've got. Darren Suggs, Marble Masters co-owner and operations manager, describes the classic sales tactic of luring customers to buy products strictly on price. They decided it was time to make sure consumers made an informed decision.

"Customers would stop by one of our showrooms and tell us they'd just visited with another local or regional cultured marble manufacturer and were told, 'we make the same products as Marble Masters; we're just ...a lot cheaper,'" explains Suggs. "We knew those products weren't as good as ours and proved it."

In 1980, Neil and Darren Suggs bought their business and renamed it Marble Masters. It didn't take long for them to decide that quality and durability would be the words their cultured marble business would live or die by. A few commercial jobs in the early '80s had them scrambling to find a resin that would withstand the endless wear and tear their products would endure in hotels. "We immediately began testing different resin brands. Then

a Silmar® representative brought in their 585 resin and it settled our concerns about durability and quality. We've continued to test other resins through the years but we've built our reputation on Silmar resins."

Suggs believed that ignoring the competitions' claims certainly would cost him a few customers in the short run but long term, he was even more concerned about the damage all the reputable manufacturers would face if some action wasn't taken to educate the consumer using hard data. So, Suggs identified four regional competitors with comparable products. He ordered and paid for two lavatory countertops with bowls from each manufacturer. Then, he opened his wallet further and contracted the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) to put each of the pieces, plus two of his own, through the NAHB's long and short series tests. The NAHB is an independent, not-for-profit, accredited testing facility. They tested in accordance with ANSI Z124.3, which primarily describes the minimum standard a Type 5 lavatory countertop and bowl system should meet.





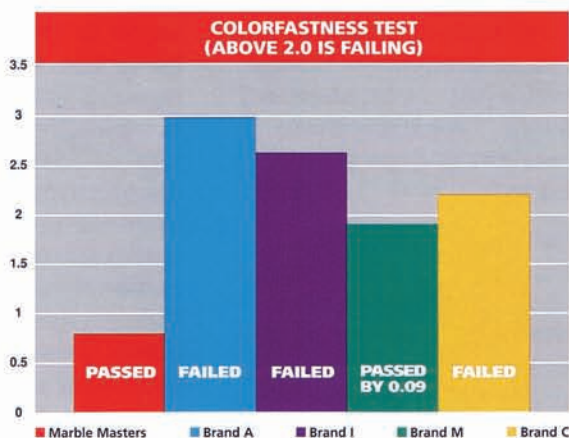
however this manufacturer's other test specimen failed thermal shock. Suggs' opinion is that some manufacturers select inferior raw materials, aren't as technically capable in their manufacturing processes and/or have inadequate quality control. "These things keep their prices lower but it's just not worth it for the homeowner spending thousands of dollars on a new home or remodeling project. They end up owning a fairly new vanity top that has cracked or quickly shows signs of color fading or stain." Marble Masters offers a five-year, written warranty.

Long series tests are typically done annually at the manufacturer's request and are quite thorough. They include identification of materials to ensure the product is a Type 5 system, a surface test to identify any existing flaws before testing, thermal shock, color fastness, wear and cleanability, a check for dimensional tolerances on drain sizes and faucet spreads, subsurface tests to identify any voids or flaws, point-of-impact test, load test, stain resistance, cigarette burn test, chemical resistance test, the presence of a manufacturer's ID, care and maintenance instructions and installation instructions. The tests took approximately two weeks to complete. Suggs says he likes using the NAHB for manufacturing validation, because they don't just test the product. If there's a failure, they determine how it happened and that helps us manufacture better, longer-lasting products."



Marble Masters is located in Warner Robins, Georgia and primarily manufactures cultured marble lavatory bowls, tubs, showers, counters, panels and related accessories. They also use Silmar brand resins to manufacture a line of solid surface products primarily for residential construction.

Both of the Marble Masters' products sailed through testing with significant margins ahead of the nearest competitor. In fact, in the two key performance areas – colorfastness and thermal shock – only one product from the manufacturer's passed the colorfastness test;



Interplastic Corporation is a specialty chemical company with its headquarters in St. Paul, Minnesota. It is focused on the production and distribution of unsaturated polyester resins, vinyl ester resins, and gel coats and colorants for the composites and cast polymer industries. Its Thermosets Resin Division manufactures Silmar brand resins.



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For more information, call or write to

1225 Willow Lake Blvd., St. Paul, MN 55110-5145 Phone (651) 481-6860 Fax (651) 481-9836
www.interplastic.com