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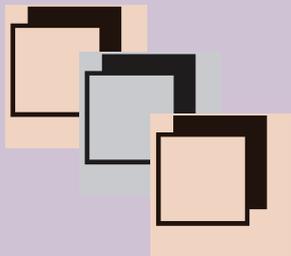
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Comment

At one point the long hot summer felt like it would never end. In the middle of October the temperatures were still hitting 20+. But it's November, suddenly it's all change and we are decidedly in autumn. For me November is defined by some fixed points: the Roto Frank international press conference, the National Home Improvement Council Awards and, at the end of the month this year and always a high point for the window industry, the G18 awards.

This year the Roto conference moved to Graz in Austria. Roto has been manufacturing in nearby Kalsdorf since 1979 where it makes systems for tilt/turn, tilt only and turn only windows as well as a range of other components.

With the exception of some South American markets, the global picture looks buoyant across the board with Roto once again outperforming the market trends. The audience, around 60 journalists from across Europe, wanted to know what Roto's predictions are for the future of hardware and how ready it is to provide components for 'smart' homes. I picked up a mood among my colleagues that we are in the end-game as far as opening windows and, therefore, window hardware is concerned. The idea of having to have fixed windows to meet thermal standards (document L) with an air exchanger to provide ventilation (document F) has been around for years, almost as long as I can remember, and it hasn't happened yet. Roto doesn't expect its products to become redundant any time soon and, as my European colleagues gnawed at that particular bone, I felt that, some of them at least, were in that journalistic zone where you don't want to let the facts to ruin a good story.

And so to the NHIC awards which, of course cover the whole gamut of home improvement products. This year, for the first time, the winners were announced at a dinner rather than, as previously, at a lunch. In the window categories sponsored by QANW, SEH BAC, previous winners with a community project, and Guardian Warm Roofs both took trophies.

The NHIC was set up to advise on ways to improve the housing stock. It is not well enough known to the public or the trade for both of whom it should be a useful resource. This year the architect and TV presenter George Clarke has become involved inaugurating the George Clarke Medal. Clarke presents several TV programmes on property and property development so must be useful for the NHIC to have on board.

We have to await the results of the G18 awards which are on 30th. This year the event host is comedian and author Mark Watson. Watson has appeared in a string of television shows ranging from Celebrity Pointless to Have I Got News For You.

And, as the December diary starts to fill up, I always look forward to the Glassman's Christmas Luncheon an event that began with a few guys having lunch together and now attracts around 100 people from the trade. For me it nicely kicks off the Christmas season.

John Roper

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