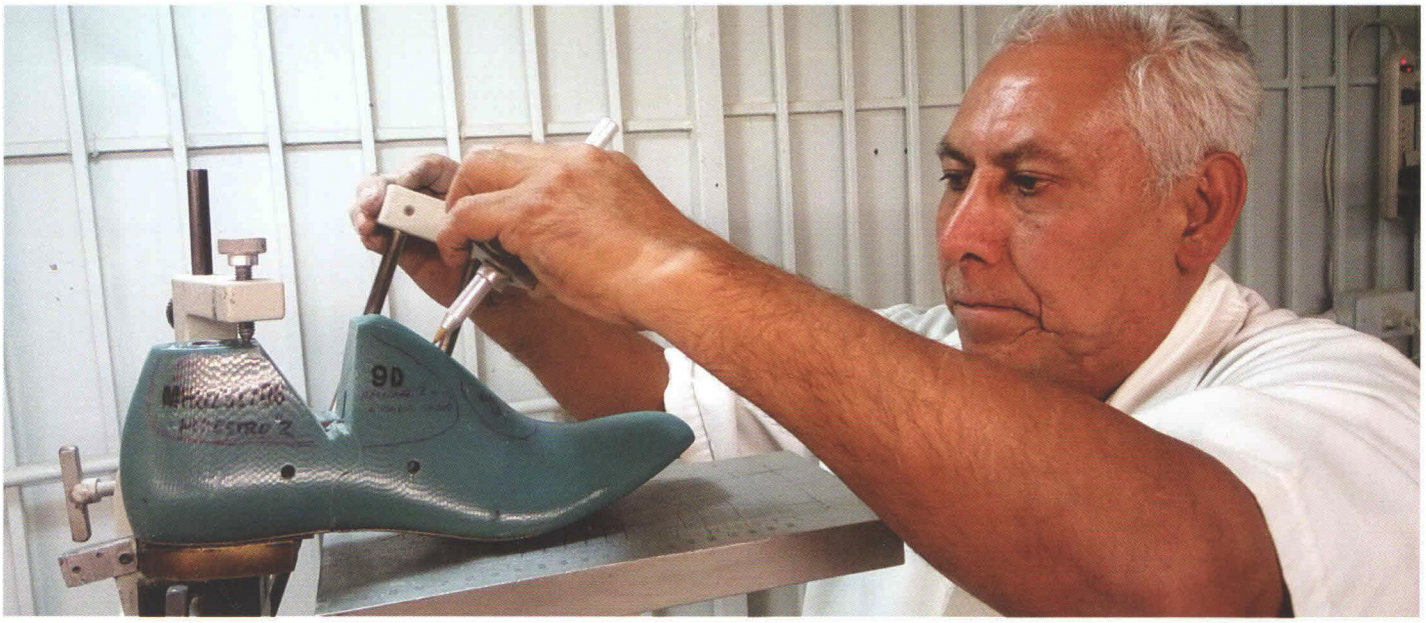
Working at the heart of Mexico's shoemaking industry

Visiting Hormas El Árbol – a Mexican company with a long history of last production.



Shoe last designer Fidel Meléndez Gómez

Hormas El Árbol was established in Mexico City in 1935 as a manufacturer of wooden shoemakers' lasts. Some thirty-three years later, it reportedly became the first organisation in Latin America to manufacture plastic lasts in high-density polyethylene. Then, in 1981, Hormas El Árbol relocated to León, the largest city in the state of Guanajuato, which is considered to be the capital of Mexican footwear manufacturing.

According to a company spokesperson, Hormas El Árbol is today striving to position itself as being at the cutting-edge of fashion and technology, by carrying out research trips to Europe, North America and Asia. It offers support to customers through technical courses on last development and fashion trends. The company is said to have developed alliances with Mexican, Italian and Spanish manufacturers of soles, heels and lasts – a strategy that is intended to help Hormas El Árbol stay on the cutting edge in last development.

Product range

Hormas El Árbol states that it designs and manufactures shoe last models in line with customer needs, by combining cutting-edge technology with over 60 years of experience and its team's knowledge of fashion trends. Today, the company produces high-density polyethylene blocks, plastic lasts, last bottom, last profiles and mouldings. The technology used includes 'numerical control technology', based on the 'Easy Last3D' system for last design and grading, in addition to the creation of compatible digital files for worldwide use.

The company offers a number of services, including laser scanning, which involves taking readings of the last model's surface through an optical device to generate a digital file that can be used in the production of plastic shoe lasts. Its laser 'digital pattern' process is used to



The company's digital laser scanning machine

obtain the last bottom and its profiles in 2-D plane. This allows for the verification of last dimensions in critical zones, as well as last grading. Another of the company's services – called 'last bottom' is provided to verify shoe last length, and is carried out to guarantee accuracy and quality in its shoe last production.

Manufacturing techniques

Computerised numerical control (CNC) technology is used to turn high-density polyethylene blocks during the last production process. Hormas El Árbol reports that this technology allows for shoe lasts to be manufactured from a digital last model at high speed in a wide range of sizes.

According to the company, its shoe lasts are made through close collaboration between the in-house last model designers and customers' design departments. This is claimed to achieve the perfect mix between the industry knowledge built up over the years by Hormas El Árbol's last model design team and the shoe designers' creativity. Over the years, lasts have been produced for a number of footwear styles, including fashion, sports and casual (for men, women and children), as well as special shoe lasts to meet medical or security standards and specifications.