



## Perspex® celebrates 75 years of inspiration

2009

For those who are closely involved in the plastics industry, in design, in signage, in shop fitting, in retail, in architecture, in exhibitions, in glazing, in manufacture.....in fact in a whole host of industries and markets, it will be hard to believe that this year, the Perspex® brand celebrates its 75th birthday.

It's hard to believe because Perspex® always has been and continues to be, at the very forefront of all that is new and exciting in plastics technology, innovation and of course inspiration.

It was a slightly different story back in 1934 when ICI, the "new kid" on the chemicals industry block, invented and registered Perspex® as: "synthetic resins sold in the form of sheets, rods, tubes and other shaped pieces", although you could say their invention would inspire generations to come.

### The early years

The name Perspex® comes from the Latin for "to see clearly" or "see through" and it was this superb clarity that gave Perspex® its early success. Perspex® was not only clear, offering great visibility, but it was also extremely tough and hard wearing, making it ideal for use in aircraft glazing during World War 2 and in building applications in post war Britain.

### Fashion leader

The addition of colour to the cell-cast production process meant that Perspex® coloured sheet exploded onto the market and was an instant hit in the hip and trendy, psychedelic 60's. The Perspex® business was transformed and expanded rapidly from a largely UK business to become an international operation, with sales across Europe and worldwide.

Perspex® was now not just an industry leader, known and respected for its technical excellence and exceptional product performance it also became a household name known as much for its fashion appeal as its technical prowess.

### A revolution

The 60's and 70's also saw a significant new development in the Perspex® product portfolio. From its manufacturing base in the North West of England, the technical experts, some of the best in the country, found that as well as adding colour to the product they could also add other materials to even further improve and fine tune the performance and functionality of the product.

From technical developments made some years earlier, more work was done to create a new grade of Perspex® sheet designed specially to hold water - and in a single stroke the bathroom industry was revolutionised with the creation of the light weight, high performance, hard wearing acrylic bath.

### Signs of the times

But it was in the area of signs and fabricated products that Perspex® stood head and shoulders above the rest. Its unique combination of proven technical capability and desire to develop innovative and inspiring new products and effects allowed Perspex® to take a creative lead.

The explosive growth in the industrial and retail sectors in the 80's and 90's saw a steadily rising demand for a whole host of products for which Perspex® was the perfect solution.

The World's leading brands were being promoted on high streets and shopping malls across the globe through their bright, evenly illuminated, weather resistant signs, perfectly colour matched in Perspex®.

And inside the shops, offices and retail outlets the brand was further consolidated through POS displays,

in-store shop fittings and interior design features, all colour coordinated in Perspex® and guaranteed to last.

## Inspiring Innovation

Today it is this guarantee of product performance and quality combined with a continued desire to inspire that keeps Perspex® at the top of its game.

New colours, new effects, new applications - all these feature in the Perspex® game plan for the future. Being 75 years old allows us to reflect on where we have come from with a real sense of pride - but more importantly it inspires us with the exciting possibilities that the future holds.

For Perspex®, new products, new technologies and new challenges lie ahead - and we look forward to the next 75 years of inspiration.

## KEY DATES - in the Perspex® story

- 1934 - Perspex® discovered by ICI scientists Crawford and Hill and the name is registered as an official trademark
- 1936 - Commercial production of Perspex® as an alternative safety glass begins
- 1940 - During the war demand for Perspex® soars
- 1947 - New opal grades for lighting are developed opening up new domestic and commercial markets
- 1948 - The first ever Perspex® bath was created; originating from an Australian bath producer who found that these lightweight, hardwearing baths were easier & considerably cheaper to transport across Australia.
- 1950 - Perspex® is extensively used in illuminated signage. The Perspex® colour range expands and the Perspex® colour lab begins matching customer colours for corporate brands.
- 1959 - The market for Perspex® baths begins to develop in the UK and Europe
- 1962 - New production techniques allow Perspex® cast sheet size to increase to 3000 x2000mm
- 1965 - An underwater house is made using Perspex® for the International Boat Show. Perspex® storms the fashion scene, being used in dresses, shoe heels, bags, jewellery.....
- 1970 - Designed by renowned sculptor Dr Arthur Fleischmann, a spectacular Perspex® fountain is installed at the entrance to the British Pavilion at the Japan Expo
- 1972 - Perspex® VA/VE grade is used to protect the world famous gold mask of the Egyptian boy king Tutankhamun when it is exhibited in the British Museum
- 1987 - Perspex® is used in the 1st ever completely transparent squash court for the World Squash Championship
- 1991 - Chapels Park- a new state of the art Perspex® production plant doubles sheet capacity at Darwen
- 1990's - New grades of Perspex® are developed including Perspex® Glass Look for interior design and the enduringly popular Perspex® Frost.
- 1997 - Leading fashion designer Alexander McQueen stuns the fashion world with a Perspex® catwalk at London Fashion Week
- 1999 - BoBo Design use Perspex® to create a unique installation in London's V&A as part of the London Design Festival Millennium celebrations
- 2002 - Perspex® Pearlescent grade specially developed for use in retail/POS is launched at Euroshop - Europe's premier retail design exhibition. Later that year, architect and designer Liam Gillick is short- listed for the prestigious Turner prize with his Mondrian-inspired illuminated ceiling made from Perspex®
- 2004 - Swiss sign maker Burri use new sign product Perspex® S-Lux in the spectacular architect designed Zurich airport
- 2006 - Perspex® is used to create an outstanding external LED lit sign for the Fort Dunlop shopping centre which wins the British Sign Association Sign of the Year Award
- 2009 - Perspex® celebrates 75 years of inspiration

Mitchell Plastics is the authorised Australian and New Zealand Distributor for Perspex® from Lucite®. As such we carry extensive stocks and service Melbourne and country Victorian markets personally whilst looking after other states through a network of Sub-Distributors and Resellers.

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