

## GLASS'S GLOBAL TRADESHOW

For all its fame in product lines and functions, glass itself hardly ever gets a chance in the spotlight. Leave it to the Chinese to find a way. On May 16-19, the Shanghai New International Expo Centre hosted the 18th annual international glass exhibition. The Centre was built in 1992 in the Pudong region of Shanghai to accommodate the growing need in China for international business exchange. With nine indoor/outdoor halls covering about 20,000 meters<sup>2</sup> (the arena at Madison Square Garden is 1,949 m<sup>2</sup>) the Centre is one of the premiere exhibition spaces in the world.

The city of Shanghai itself could be called a "glass wonder of the world," with its unimaginable skyscrapers and oddly-shaped glass buildings. It seems apropos that the city would draw nearly 600 exhibitors from over 95 countries who pride themselves on their innovative glassworks.

Fenestration fittings might not seem like exciting demonstrations, but the massive bubbling furnaces and mixing machines on display brought in over 30,000 professional visitors in 2006. According to spokesman Joe Zhou, there were 460 booths this year that feature new technologies from around the world, including advancements in fire-proof and antibacterial glass. But there's something for everyone — the expo also highlighted glass-made-possible commodities like the 3.5 inch LCD screens developed this year by NEC Technologies in Tokyo.

"Both environmentally friendly and energy-saving glass products will be another highlight," announced Zhou in a press release. "Cullet<sup>1</sup> technology and its recycling system will be another hot topic."

The allure of the Shanghai Science and Technology Museum for glass aficionados is one reason Shanghai hosts the expo this year (it was in Beijing in 2006). Commissioned in 2001, the museum is a glass monstrosity, at over one million square feet. Its five major halls are constructed to represent Heaven, Earth, Life, Wisdom, Creativity and



the Future. At the heart of the museum, a glass globe boasting a 65 foot-diameter symbolizes the universe and its creation. Inside the globe, dancing robots maneuver around dinosaur fossils that reflect on the entirely glass walls of the museum's façade. This façade, however, isn't made from normal glass. The museum is made from clear Butacite, a laminated glass that is much more energy efficient than standard window panes. Because of the natural light that the building lets in, the central hall is a testament to the power energy saving technology.



Butacite is one type of glass that Zhou mentioned will be showcased at the expo. However it's not just because of the museum, or just in Shanghai, that China's glass market is booming. Construction sites are sweeping in the nation, with two billion m<sup>2</sup> of development completed each year. As we all know, the manufacture of cars in China is also expanding, at about 20% per year according to the Ceramic Society. All this advancement is good news for the glass industry, but potentially straining on the environment. The Expo is a

good place for foreign investors to share technologies that make the industry less straining in China.

The China Glass Expo is put on each year by the Chinese Ceramic Society. The society was created in 1945 to promote the science and technology of inorganic, nonmetallic materials, and boasts 33,000 members. In addition to glass, the Society fosters a forum to discuss the making of cement, ceramic and enamel- including what we westerners reckon to be our "prized" china dinner settings.

1. Cullet glass is made from shards of scrap glass that are re-melted and reused.