

The Plastic That Inspires the Shapes of the Future

December 4, 2008

PLEXIGLAS® – registered trademark for 75 years

People asking for paper handkerchiefs, a painkiller or a universal glue normally say the name of the product brand. The same applies to the PLEXIGLAS® trademark, which is often used as a synonym for all kinds of transparent plastics. Yet even 75 years after its trademark was registered, this inspiring plastic proves it is far more than just transparent, with applications in architecture, automotive construction, noise control, illuminated signs, the aerospace industry, optoelectronics and tradeshow booths. And the classic, prizewinning material invented in 1933 by Dr. Otto Röhm and his team is also making a name for itself as a system solution, as shown by its most recent fields of application ranging from climate protection to the Microsoft Surface™.

The story of the strong, world-famous PLEXIGLAS® trademark is as fascinating as the inspirational plastic itself. The mid-1920s were the heyday of research into transparent plastics and their industrial manufacture. After the first high-quality but expensive acrylic materials were developed in 1928, scientists switched their focus to the chemically related methacrylates. Otto Röhm, who had already looked into the "polymers of acrylic acid" in his 1901 doctoral thesis, laid the essential foundations for this research in the early 1930s. As soon as Röhm obtained the first sample of polymethyl methacrylate (PMMA), he was convinced that it would open up a huge variety of different applications.

In 1933, PLEXIGLAS®, Röhm's name for the new, brilliant plastic, was ready to be launched on the market and won the gold medal at the World's Fair in Paris only four years later.

Owing to its continually new applications, in the following decades the material became the company's most important product. For trademark reasons, it has been sold in the Americas under the ACRYLITE® trademark since World War II.

Today, Evonik Röhm GmbH as the successor company markets the environmentally friendly plastic PLEXIGLAS®. PLEXIGLAS® offers enormous creative scope and is used wherever the most stringent

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requirements need to be met in terms of function and design. It can be colored at will, is easy to machine, can be processed by means of all thermoplastic processes in the form of a molding compound and thermoformed into almost any imaginable shape as sheet material.

Added to this, the surface of the plastic can be modified just like the material's physical properties. The incorporation of nanoparticles, for instance, enables specific adjustment of the material's impact strength, light diffusion or heat reflection. And finally, PLEXIGLAS® has stood for extremely good weather resistance for 75 years, with an unparalleled 30-year manufacturer's guarantee that the sheet material will retain its transparency.

PLEXIGLAS® is used everywhere, and Otto Röhm and his staff would probably be just as "perplexed" today as they were back then to see how their idea has developed.

More on this subject at: www.evonik.com

*The Performance Polymers Business Unit of Evonik Industries is a worldwide manufacturer of PMMA products sold under the **PLEXIGLAS®** trademark on the European, Asian, African and Australian continents and under the trademark **ACRYLITE®** in the Americas.*

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Company information

Evonik Industries is the creative industrial group from Germany which operates in three business areas: Chemicals, Energy and Real Estate. Evonik is a global leader in specialty chemicals, an expert in power generation from hard coal and renewable energies, and one of the largest private residential real estate companies in Germany. Our strengths are creativity, specialization, continuous self-renewal, and reliability. Evonik is active in over 100 countries around the world. In its fiscal year 2007 about 43,000 employees generated sales of about €14.4 billion and an operating profit (EBITDA) of more than €2.2 billion.

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