



Overseas delegates peruse new porcelain products at last year's Zibo ceramics show.



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This celadon lotus-shaped zun (bottle), found in Zibo in 1982, was rated as a national first-class cultural relic of the Northern Dynasties (386-581).

Expo revitalizes age-old ceramics industry

Events schedule

12th Zibo International Ceramics Exposition

- Opening ceremony, Sept 6 Zibo International Convention & Exhibition Center
- Modern celebrated ceramics and glazed glass show, Chinese silk show, Sept 6-9 Zibo International Convention & Exhibition Center
- 2012 Zibo porcelain products auction, Sept 9 Zibo Rongbaozhai Mansion
- Eighth World Ceramic Tile Purchasing Fair, Sept 6-9 Zibo International Convention & Exhibition Center
- Shandong ceramics brand promotion forum, Sept 6-9 Shandong Qisheng International Hotel

11th Zibo New Materials Technology Forum

- Zibo International Science and Technology Investment Fair, Sept 6-8 Zibo International Convention & Exhibition Center, Shandong Qisheng International Hotel and Zibo Hotel
- Technological innovation symposia, Sept 7 Shandong Qisheng International Hotel
- Experts tour of Zibo, Sept 6-8 Shandong Qisheng International Hotel and local enterprises
- Signing ceremony of cooperative projects, Sept 8-9 Shandong Qisheng International Hotel

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The 12th China International Ceramics Exposition will open on Sept 6 in Zibo, a city in Shandong province long renowned as the "capital of ceramics" because of its close association with the porcelain and ceramics industry.

The four-day event will feature a modern celebrated ceramics and glazed glass show, a porcelain products auction, a Chinese silk show, a ceramic tiles fair aimed at the international market, an investment and trade fair, and a series of cultural and tourist activities.

It is expected to draw thousands of leading ceramic manufacturers around the world to showcase their premium products at a 20,000-square-meter exhibition hall, including high-tech ceramics, porcelain for daily use, building ceramics, glazed glass products and ceramic crafts.

An international new materials technological forum will be held at the same time, which will attract more than 200 academics and industry professionals from China's top research institutions, including the Chinese Academy of Engineering and the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

They will visit the local ceramics-related enterprises and share their opinions on the latest technological innovations in the sector.

The annual event is jointly sponsored by the China Ceramics Industries Association, the Chinese Academy of Engineering and the Zibo municipal government. It began in 2001 and has grown into an important international gathering of the ceramics industry for technical

exchanges and business opportunities.

Long history

Zibo is widely regarded as the birthplace of Chinese ceramics. Today, visitors to the city may still view dozens of well-preserved ancient kiln sites.

Actually, the city's connections to the porcelain industry dates back more than 10,000 years, according to discoveries made at an archeological dig in a cave of Yiyuan, a county of the city.

Its porcelain sector began to boom in the Three Kingdoms period (AD220-280), and had its heyday in the Song Dynasty (960-1279), when Zibo was the largest porcelain production center in northern China.

During the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), thousands of people were still involved in porcelain production in the city.

Despite its historical reputation and time-honored traditional skills, what has really given the city a boost was its efforts to continuously experiment with the use of new materials and innovative technologies.

This has greatly improved the quality of the products and brought several major awards to the city.

Its soapstone and high-purity quartz china won third prize in the National Creation and Invention Awards, while its synthetic bone china secured the second prize in the National Technological Innovation awards, the highest prize ever achieved in the ceramics industry.

With the superb quality and high artistic value, Zibo-made ceramics have been used in the Great Hall of the People, the Diaoyutai State Guesthouse and Zhongnanhai, the central government complex, for

several years. They have also been frequently presented to foreign guests as state gifts.

Its high-tech porcelain products have even been introduced in the aerospace, defense and electronic information sectors, which opens up a number of new opportunities for its ceramics business.

Today, Zibo is home to 278 ceramics enterprises with more than 100,000 employees, including more than 3,000 advanced craftsmen and 14 state-level art masters.

They have produced at least 6,000 different kinds of porcelain products, covering the sectors of household porcelain, ceramic crafts, building ceramics, ceramics for high-tech use, and ceramics machinery.

Last year saw its ceramic sector generate 21.3 billion yuan (\$3.35 billion) in revenue, a year-on-year increase of 25.6 percent.

Its products have now been exported to more than 80 countries and regions, which bought in \$330 million last year, up by 16 percent.

PAST, PRESENT CONVERGE IN ZIBO

Located in the center of East China's Shandong province, Zibo is an important business hub in Shandong because the city is included in the Shandong Peninsula Economic Zone as well as the Yellow River High-Efficiency Economic Zone, two zones approved by the State Council as national strategies for regional development.

Zibo administers five districts and three county-level cities, covering a total area of 5,965 square kilometers, and it is home to a population of 4.23 million.

With a history dating back 3,000 years, Zibo was the capital of the Qi Kingdom (386-221 BC). Throughout its long history, the city has given rise several national-class intangible cultural heritages and relics, such as the birthplace of football and the Qi Kingdom ancient city.

In addition to its ancient cultural wealth, the time-honored city seeks industrial development through innovation. Zibo now hosts national-class bases

for new materials, biological medicine, advanced ceramics and colored glass products.

While developing industry, the city is also working to green its landscape. The city's forest area reached 3.2 million hectares, covering 36 percent of its total area, and its urban green coverage rate has reached 42.6 percent.

The gross domestic product of Zibo reached 328 billion yuan last year and the local fiscal revenue hit 20.3 billion yuan.

City honors

- National Civilized City
- Renowned Ceramic City of China
- New Material City of China
- History and Culture City
- Excellent Chinese Tourism City
- National Model City for Environmental Protection
- Top 10 Harmonious Development City
- Excellent Chinese City in Public Safety

ZHAO RUIXUE / CHINA DAILY

City renowned for long silk tradition

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As the capital of the Qi state for more than 800 years during the Western Zhou Dynasty (1100BC-770BC) and Warring States Period (475BC-221BC), Zibo has long been an important silk and textile production center in northern China.

According to historical sources, Zhoucun, a district of Zibo, used to be known for its handicraft industry and eventually developed into one of China's most booming marketplaces in the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911).

The silk and slurry-dye industry has become Zhoucun's main business in 1890s, when it held more than 40 slurry mills, 70 dyeing mills, and four silk mills, which introduced 600 advanced reeling machines from Italy.

By 1930s, Zhoucun was home to more than 10,000 workers who worked for 3,000 silk and textile mills. Around 63.2 percent of silk products from Shandong province were made in the district.

Today, there are still dozens of century-old silk stores on the ancient Silk Street of the district that sell fine silk and cotton cloth.

One of them is the Dong Laisheng Silk Mill, which was founded in the Qing Dynasty. Visitors to the shop can see the well-preserved spinning wheels, weaving machines, a dye tank and piles of colorful cloth.

With Zhoucun as its main production and trading center, Zibo has now established a complete industrial chain that includes silkworm breeding, silk reeling, weaving, printing and dyeing, silk product processing, and trading.

The city is now the largest silk production base in northern China, with an annual production of 1,200



ZHANG HONGXIA / FOR CHINA DAILY

Girls dressed in silk cheongsam stand on an ancient street in Zhoucun, a district of Zibo known for its silk industry.

tons of silk cocoons and 18 million meters of silk goods. Its renowned silk is now available in fabrics, scarves, ties and other products that are also sold across the country and in international markets.

According to a survey made by the China Silk Association, the local Da Ranfang Silk Group has become China's largest silk producer both in output and sales revenue. About 80 percent of its products have been exported to more than 50 countries and regions, including the United States, Australia, Europe and Southeast Asia.

Ancient colored glass legacy alive in Shandong

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Zibo, a city famous for ceramic products, is now setting its sights on developing another time-honored resource, colored glass, to diversify its local industries.

Last year, the output from Zibo's colored glass industry surpassed 3.5 billion yuan, an increase of 32 percent compared to the preceding year, making the city the largest production base for colored glass in China.

Zibo's connection with glass dates back to as early as the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368) when the area around Boshan, now a district administrated by Zibo, was one of the major production areas for glass.

Boshan's glass products were further enriched during the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), when glass products were glazed with gorgeous colors and sold across China. This period also saw the popularity of colored glass grow among royal families and businessmen, which led to the formation of four colored-glass groups across China. One of them was the Lu Group, which derived its name from a short form name for Shandong

province and was represented by Boshan.

Now Boshan has around 57,000 artists and technicians working in the ceramics and colored-glass industries. They now produce 15 categories of glass products, covering more than 10,000 colors and shapes, and these products are sold to more than 30 countries and regions, including the United States, South Korea and Japan.

The glass products made in Boshan can be seen at China's renowned buildings, such as the Olympic Stadium and the Beijing National Aquatics Center.

Due to Boshan's achievements in colored glass, the China National Light Industry Council in 2006 named Boshan the Hometown of China's Colored Glass Industry.

In 2009, the colored glass products made at Boshan earned the national geographical trademark from the State Administration for Industry and Commerce due to their quality and rich styles.

To date, some 40 painted glass products have won gold prizes in international competitions, and thousands of products have been on display in countries overseas, including Germany, Switzerland, and the United States.



A fine ceramic bottle at last year's Zibo international ceramics exposition



Made in Zibo, this is a copy of a plate once given to former US president George W. Bush as a state gift.



Fine ceramic products made in Zibo



A glazed internally painted bottle made in Zibo. Internal glass painting is an artistic skill that only exists in China.



A carved porcelain plate



Fine ceramic products made in Zibo