

CUTTING EDGE

Mysterious Mirror

PHOTOS: HANS SAUTTER





In October 2007, the world's largest state-of-the-art passenger airliner, the 853-seater A380 Airbus came into service. A total of 21 Japanese corporations took part in the project to manufacture this passenger airliner, but there was only one small company—an operation with a mere 30 employees—that stood amongst these major corporations. That company is Komy Co., Ltd based in Saitama Prefecture.

Komy Co., Ltd. provided Airbus with the company's flagship product, known as the FF (fantastic flat) mirror. At first glance it appears to be just a normal flat mirror, but in fact incredibly it provides the same broad field of vision as a convex mirror—approximately five times that of a normal flat mirror. Airbus



FACING: FF mirrors being checked before shipping.

ABOVE: An FF mirror attached to the inside of a hand-luggage compartment on an Airbus A380. Approximately 200 such mirrors are used in each airplane.



TOP: Several FF mirrors used side by side reflect almost all the inside of a room in the same manner as a convex mirror.

ABOVE: FF mirrors are even used above bank ATMs.

has fitted these palm-sized mirrors inside the hand luggage compartments of their passenger airliners, a total of approximately 200 mirrors per aircraft. The wide-angle FF mirror reflects almost the entire inside area of the hand luggage compartment. Just a glance at the mirror allows cabin crew or passengers to see if luggage has been left behind, or to effectively check for dangerous objects, such as bombs.

Komy Co., Ltd. developed the FF mirror in 1986. The idea behind it was that by adding thin grooves to a flat mirror, objects to both the right and left would be reflected in the slopes of those grooves. Despite the FF mirror first appearing more than 20 years ago, Komy Co., Ltd. still boasts a 100% share of the world market.

These days, in the airline industry Boeing has started using FF mirrors, which are also used to increase visibility at banking automated teller machines, entrances and exits to parking facilities and in elevators around the world.