

## A Fashionable Brazilian Way of Facing the Global Meltdown

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In the corridors of Fundação Bienal, in São Paulo, in the Brazilian Southeast, where the 26th edition of the SPFW (São Paulo Fashion Week) is taking place people are saying "Crisis, what crisis?" This is one of the most repeated sentences and also one of the most common in brochures and pamphlets.

A way of facing the economic crisis with glamour and "Brazilianess" is the theme of this season. And, inside, with 40 Brazilian brands on the runways - and foreign ones represented in the handbags, shoes and glasses, it really does seem that the global financial tie up is far from Brazilian fashion.

This year's edition should cost 7 million Brazilian reais (US\$ 3 million) - last year, investment totaled 6 million reais (US\$ 2.5 million at current exchange rates).

Outside, greater business may also be closed. At Sofitel hotel, in São Paulo, the Buyer Project, a partnership between the Brazilian Export and Investment Promotion Agency (Apex-Brasil) and the Brazilian Clothing Designers Association (Abest), brought together 25 brands to present to 31 buyers from 19 shops in countries like Kuwait, England, the United States, India, Italy and Singapore.

In Brazil, the program of foreign buyers is to see the parades in the fashion week, to meet the exhibitors and, if they like any brand, to make direct contact with the company showroom. The results have been very positive. Last year, Brazilian fashion exported US\$ 16 million, half having gone to the United States. The rest was shipped to Japan, Italy, France and also the Middle East.

In the long line for entry into room 1 of the SPFW parades, on January 19th, the second day of the event, in São Paulo, an angry voice warned those standing around in their sunglasses and handbags: "I need to get in quickly, my husband is going to go on the runway."

Those waiting paid little attention, after all, it was a lady in her 60s, excited, trying to know if she had entered the correct line (there were at least four) to see the parade of stylist Ronaldo Fraga, from Minas Gerais. As she was speaking non-stop, those around her tried to help, believing that it was either an excuse to cut the line or that Fraga was going to have a special entrance.

Correct were those betting on the second option, but with much more style. Ronaldo Fraga took to the runway 27 senior citizens, over 65, and 10 children. No models. The fast and luxurious steps of Gisele Bündchen and company made way for slower, more discrete steps, but no less elegant.

In the front line, Mrs Neguinha, a pretty lady who came straight from Montes Claros, in Minas Gerais, joyously applauded her mother, Lia, one of the 70-year-old models. The parade took much longer than the usual 10 minutes.

And Ronaldo Fraga was widely praised, receiving a standing ovation by an overwhelmed audience, with tears in their eyes, thinking about time, the barrier that the stylist had just broken. It was on the verge of sentimentalism, with a calm soundtrack that stimulated thought, and Fraga knows how to create this situation with poetic fashion. The result filled the eyes. With joy.

The collection was inspired on spectacle Giz, by artist and playwright Álvaro Apocalypse, who passed away in 2003. Apocalypse became widely known nationally for the creation of theatre puppets Giramundo, whose replicas, made in white fabric, were part of the scenery of Fraga's parade. The models, elderly and children, were also chosen due to Apocalypse's work.

Giz spectacle talks about the new and the old, as written by Fraga in the items of the parade: "from the start to the end of design, all try to improve the design eternalizing the errors." And the poet-stylist once again showed his brand, the one that fashion is not simply clothes.

And he added: "fashion with memory." Fraga has already taken to the runway the music of Bossa Nova singer Nara Leão, the poems of Carlos Drummond de Andrade and so many other themes. Always bringing together generations, telling stories.

The SPFW parades began on Sunday (18), with the presence of top model Gisele Bündchen parading for brand Colcci, and they end on Friday 23. Heavyweight names in Brazilian fashion are still going to present their collections, among them stylist Glória Coelho, who will show her collection on the last day, as well as André Lima, Simone Nunes and Reinaldo Lourenço, among others.

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