

A Brazilian Company Dedicated to Green, Sustainable Products

Contributed by Regina Mamede
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The skate conceived by Rio de Janeiro-based company Fibra Design Sustentável is elegant, well-finished and features modern design. The product also has the irresistible appeal of being made using eco-friendly material.

Named Folha Seca (Dry Leaf), the skate is made of layers of pupunha laminate and organic bamboo, layers of natural and synthetic fibers joined together using vegetable glue. This layered material, named Bioplac, was developed by the company managed by the partners Thiago Maia, Bruno Temer, Pedro Themoteo and Bernardo Ferraciolie.

"We believe that the product's appeal is not restricted to the young crowd, because its proposal combines sustainability with health and well-being. It is a conceptual product, therefore we only intend to make a limited series," explains Thiago Maia.

The product has been hailed since its inception. In 2008, it competed in the Volvo SportsDesign finals, and was the material that won the iF Design Awards. Sponsored by the International Forum Design in Hanover, Germany, the contest is known worldwide as one of the most important in industrial design.

With the skate, the company also made it into the select group of 42 Brazilian designers that participated in the Rio + Design exhibition, in Milan, Italy, as part of the 48th Salone Del Mobile, the world's largest decoration event, held in late April this year.

The exhibition was promoted by the Secretariat for Economic Development, Energy, Industry and Services of the State of Rio de Janeiro (Sedeis), in partnership with the Brazilian Micro and Small Business Support Service (Sebrae/RJ) and other organizations.

Fibra Design Sustentável was established in 2005, based on a proposal made by designer Cláudio Ferreira, who wanted to develop a layered material made of pupunha. At the business incubator of the Higher School of Industrial Design (ESDI), linked to the Rio de Janeiro State University (UERJ), found the infrastructure and the partners.

At the ESDI, young professionals are able to develop prototypes and experiments. Thiago says that the business incubator has been an ideal space for the company, whose proposal was always to do research on new materials, and stresses that this option was "a natural reflection of the lifestyle of the group, which was naturally transported into the professional field." Their work caught the attention of Oskar Metsavaht, the director of Style and Creation of Rio de Janeiro-based brand Osklen, with which they develop projects.

Another great display of the company's profile is a bicycle made of bamboo laminate. Named 'Chico,' the product, which was Temer's final graduation project, has an important feature: it accompanies the development of the child.

"A mechanic system adjusts the handlebar and seat angles, allowing the bicycle to be used until ten years of age. We want to spread out the concept of sustainability and the reduction of consumption, starting in childhood," says Thiago.

Now, the company is investing in making the 'Banana Plac' commercially viable. The idea is for the laminate panel made of banana tree fibre and biodegradable vegetable glue made using castor oil may be used as facing.

The technology has already been transferred to Genilda Morais, an artisan from the Ribeira Valley region of the state of São Paulo, whom they met while doing research in the region. Influenced by the designers, she formalized her profession, and then they were able to close a partnership.

The company provides technical support to the artisan for manufacturing the panels, and operates as a representative in her sales.

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