

Brazilian Touch in Design Gets Respect in Europe

Contributed by Marina Sarruf
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Brazilian companies are investing more and more in product design. A proof of this is that, for the first time, a Brazilian company won a gold award, in the lighting category of iF Product Design Award 2005, the main international design award that takes place in Hanover, Germany, every year.

Apart from the gold, 14 Brazilian products received awards in lower categories, permitting them to use the iF stamp.

"One of the indicators of growth and maturity of Brazilian design is the expressive Brazilian participation in foreign awards. This participation has received surprising award levels in various sectors," stated Antônio Sérgio Martins Mello, the production development secretary at the Ministry of Development, Industry and Foreign Trade.

The Brazilian gold trophy was also the first Latin-American gold in the 50 years of the award.

So as to promote international recognition of the design of products developed in the country, the Brazil-Germany Chamber of Commerce, the Brazilian Export Promotion Agency (Apex) and the ministry established project Design Excellence Brazil, in 2003.

The project, at its second edition, consists of offering logistic and financial support to all companies interested in participating in iF Product Design Award.

According to information supplied by the German Chamber, each year the number of Brazilian companies interested in enrolment rises. Last year, over 200 products were sent for pre-selection.

Of that total, 123 competed and three received silver trophies in different categories. This year the number reached almost 300, however 105 were enrolled for participation in the competition.

"Brazilian companies are starting to invest in design. On the foreign market, design is very much sought after, especially in Europe. Here, design is only starting to gain importance," stated Fernando Prado, the designer of the light fixture that won the gold award.

Golden Luna

Prado started developing the Luna line of light fixtures, of which the winning item is part, for Lumini, the company he works for, in the southeastern Brazilian state of São Paulo, in 2002. It was ready last year. In 2004, the professional also received an awarded in Germany, for having created light fixture Giro, for the same company.

According to the designer, what makes Luna different is the turning shade, that has black finishing on one side and white on the other, and the lighting control made possible with the use of a dimmer. The fixtures may be used both on ceilings and on floors. "Luna is for decorative residential use," he said.

According to Ricardo Gutfreund, the Lumini marketing director, the award winning light fixture is already on sale in Germany, where the company has a distributor for Europe. In all, the company exports to five countries: France, Uruguay, Mexico, the United States and Germany.

A total of 15,000 light fixtures are produced per month, with 10% going to the foreign market. "Even before winning the award, we already exported the fixture. The award is the undersigning of the quality and opens doors to other markets," stated Gutfreund.

Lumini was established in 1979 and stood out due to the design of its products. Apart from the showroom and a factory in São Paulo, the company also has branches in Rio de Janeiro and Germany. The company industrial unit covers an area of 4,000 square meters and employs 150 people.

Electronic Bathtub

Another Brazilian company that received the iF Product Design Award in another category was Ihouse, specialized in technological equipment for houses, hotels and apartments. Smart Hydro, a completely electronic hydro massage bathtub was one of the award winning products. Developed by Guto Indio da Costa, Eduardo Azevedo, Camila Fix, Augusto Seibel and Felipe Bicudo, the bathtub may be programmed by land or mobile telephone or by computer.

"Design has become a fundamental quality for any product," stated Fernanda Miziara, the commercial representative of the company from São Paulo. The product will be released in the second half of this year, but the company products are only sold to construction or real estate development companies. Ihouse plans to enter the foreign market this year.

Designers Marcelo Gonzaga and Juliana Faria, partners at office OD Design, in the state of Rio de Janeiro, also in southeastern Brazil, created a plastic kit for offices, including a pencil and a paper holder, and a wastepaper basket. They work for Coza, a company from the city of Caxias do Sul, in the southernmost Brazilian state of Rio Grande do Sul, which produces household appliances.

"The great characteristic of this kit was the combination of injected and laminated plastics, which make the product very light and make them easier to clean," stated Gonzaga. According to him, injected plastic is an expensive product and laminated plastic is much cheaper.

Among the Brazilian products that won awards are lighting fixtures, wooden cutting boards for kitchen use, dishes for foods, a bag that becomes a barbecue grill, a motorcycle trailer, enquiry terminals, a ring and a fan remote control.

Plans for Brazil

According to secretary Mello, the Development ministry wants to increase the number of design awards received by the country so as to generate recognition of the work among businessmen and consumers.

For this year, the government is organizing the Brazilian Design Biennial, a project that may take place at any time between November 2005 and January 2006, in the city of São Paulo, the largest business center in South America, where a total of 1,500 products should be exhibited.

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