

## Biojewels Are Not Just for Brazilians Anymore

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With talent and creativity, artisan Jander Cabral, 34 years old, transforms seeds, shells and pits, rustic raw materials of the Amazon forest, into jewels with fine finishing.

They are the so-called biojewels, which have a high added value as they join in necklaces, bracelets, rings or earrings, the indigenous handicraft art and the precision of jewelry art.

From the city of Autazes, in the Northern Brazilian state of Amazonas and 113 kilometers away from the state's capital city Manaus, Jander Cabral reveals that the biojewels have reached the foreign market. The artisan does monthly business with buyers in Switzerland, the United States and England.

In Brazil, according to Cabral, Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, in the southeast of the country, and Brasilia, in the midwest, are the cities most interested in this kind of product. "Since I started dedicating myself to the production of biojewels, I have never managed to stock up since the demand is too big," says the artisan.

The main products used by Jander Cabral in the production of biojewels are seeds of jarina, the ivory-nut palm, known as vegetable ivory.

He also uses coconut shells, Brazil nuts, tucumã (*Astrocaryum aculeatum*) and calabash, but the ivory-nut palm is preferred because as well as its use in necklaces and bracelets, it is possible to transform it into miniatures of manatees, toads, the pink river dolphin, amongst other animals.

According to Jander Cabral, the jarina seed is removed from a common palm in the western region of Amazonas state, in northern Brazil, far, however, from state capital Manaus. But the biojewels are pretty close to the customers in Manaus.

This is because the artisan, in partnership with the Brazilian Micro and Small Business Support Service (Sebrae) in the state of Amazonas, is going to release a new collection of biojewels during the III Amazon International Fair (Fiam 2006), from the 30th of August to 2nd September, at Studio 5 - Conventions center in Manaus.

The new collection counts on about 500 pieces, with prices varying between R\$ 20 to R\$ 150 (about US\$ 9 to US\$ 70). "With support from the Sebrae in Amazonas, I made contacts with many buyers and I'm sure that during the Fiam a new set of opportunities will come up," reveals Cabral.

To the coordinator at the Sebrae Programme for Handicrafts in Amazonas, Clarice Maquiné Nunes, launching Jander's new collection during the Fiam 2006 will show the public the innovative potential of Amazonas handicraft.

Currently there aren't any approximated statistics of the number of artisans working with the product. "The bio-jewel initially pleases women, but it impresses anyone interested in exotic and sophisticated jewels," evaluates Clarice Nunes.

### Entrepreneur Artist

For four years in the business of biojewels, this is the second time Jander Cabral participates as an exhibitor at Fiam. The interest of the artisan, who has the vision of an entrepreneur, is to consolidate the internal and external market of biojewels and promote his work, in a way to attract a larger clientele to his store.

Cabral regrets that the Branco e Silva Handicrafts Center, where his store is located, isn't part of any tourist itinerary of the city. "I financially sustain my activities mainly through sales to customers in other states and countries than through sales to tourists or local clientele," he says.

According to Jander Cabral, his option for working with biojewels is the result of a professional vocation and his own life story. After leaving the city of Autazes at the age of nine, the artisan travelled to Manaus to live with an aunt and continue his studies. Already at that time he was indicating some artistic talent, drawing or producing indigenous costumes for school plays.

At the age of 20 came the opportunity of working in the production of costumes for the Aparecida samba school. His good work yielded invitations to work in the carnival parades of Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo and Bahia, in the northeast. He became a successful artist. He kept himself in the business for many years, always visiting, at the invitation of clients, many Brazilian states and cities.

Jander Cabral acknowledges that it was through the experience acquired with many trips that came the idea of adapting local handicraft to the demands of a public more accustomed to the shine and glamour of fine jewelry.

"Seven years ago, when I started designing the business, handicraft in Amazonas was just beginning," he recalls.