
Rural Artisans Are Attraction at Brazilian Gift Fair

Contributed by Débora Rubin
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Among prominent names in national design and handicraft to exhibit at the 11th edition of Paralela Gift, a fair for retailers and professionals in the sector that began, yesterday, March 16, in the southeastern Brazilian city of São Paulo, a small group deserves special attention: the artisans of project Talents of Brazil.

The undertaking was established in 2005 by Brazil's Ministry for Agrarian Development in partnership with the Brazilian Micro and Small Business Support Service (Sebrae).

Five groups that are part of the project - which counts on 12 groups from nine states in Brazil - will be exhibiting their products during the event, which ends on Tuesday, March 20.

This is the third time that the project participates in the fair. The last edition of the event, in August 2006, generated business of over 58,000 reais (US\$ 28,000) including exports to London, Brussels and New York.

"Apart from generating good business, Paralela Gift is good to generate fidelity among buyers," explained Patrícia Mendes, the project coordinator.

As an example she gives a group of artisans from Port of Sauípe, which sold on average 5,000 reais (US\$ 2,400) worth of products at their shop. After the event, the contacts generated 40,000 reais (US\$ 19,000) in business. The cooperative in question makes handbags and accessories out of piassava fiber (made from a Brazilian palm).

In this edition, three groups of newcomers will be present. One is made up of artisans from the city of Carvalho, in the southeastern Brazilian state of Minas Gerais, who are going to present their embroidery in line Maior Idade.

From the state of Piauí, in the Northeast of the country, come the artisans who make products in silver with opals, extracted from mines in the north of the state. The line to be presented is called Pedra I de Pedro II.

Also debuting is a group of artisans from Paraíba. The handbags, clothes, cushions and other articles are made following an embroidery tradition that is passed on from mother to daughter in Serra Rajada, in the interior of Paraíba.

"Here, any eight-year-old girl knows how to do this kind of handicraft," stated Terezinha Matias Cristovam, who organized

the Association of Rural Artisans from Serra Rajada.

She herself, a professional embroiderer, will be producing her articles during Paralela Gift for buyers to see how it is done. "Only those who see us doing it can understand the difficulty of making the product," she said.

The embroiderers are from five different cities in the Serra Rajada region, 95 kilometers away from state capital João Pessoa. Before participating in project Talents of Brazil, the artisans had almost given up the work.

"Our only market was in João Pessoa. I, for example, sold my products at public departments in the state capital. We now receive orders from all over Brazil and our work is appreciated," stated Terezinha.

According to Marielza Araújo, handicraft coordinator at Sebrae Paraíba, in all there are seven groups in the state that are involved in Talents of Brazil, benefiting 300 families.

The product line made by the artisans from Paraíba is called Dois Pontos and was developed by designer Renato Imbroisi considering typical characteristics of the region, with drawings that show the fauna and flora of the northeastern Brazilian savannah.

"We know how to make the products, but we don't know how to create. It was very gratifying to see the work that Renato did for us," she says.

The other two groups in Talents of Brazil who will participate in Paralela Gift are from Rio Grande do Sul, in the far south, with collection Crioula, and a group from Novo Horizonte, in Minas Gerais, which is going to present collection Linha do Horizonte.

According to Patrícia Mendes, this year the main focus of the project will be training in business management. The objective is to make the groups sustainable and to make them export more.

In a year and a half, Talents of Brazil has already been to six fairs and has just been invited by the Brazilian Foreign Office (Itamaraty) to participate in an event in El Salvador, in June. Still this year, there are also invitations to a Jazz Festival in Italy.

Paralela Gift takes place twice a year and is only for retailers and professionals in the decoration sector. The fair takes place at Ohtake Cultural Complex, in São Paulo.

There are five floors of exhibition space, being one entire floor for communities supported by the Sebrae. Around 90 professionals are going to show their items that go from furniture to textile design.

Learn more

Site: www.paralelagift.com.br

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