
With and Eye to the US Market Brazil's Glasart Reinvents Household Accessories

Contributed by Isaura Daniel
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Mirrors with typical Brazilian adornments, such as buriti straw and banana tree fibre, aimed at pleasing the Americans. Shoe racks with golden ornaments to appeal to the taste of the Arabs. Glasart, a maker of furniture, utensils, and decoration objects based in the southeastern Brazilian state of São Paulo, is adapting and recreating its products so as to increase exports.

The company has already been selling sporadically to Portugal and Spain for about two years, and now it wants to enter other foreign markets as well, especially the Arab countries. "We are determined to enter the Arab market," says one of the owners of Glasart, Wagner Carlos Ribeiro.

Glasart has already participated in a fair turned to the hotel sector, The Hotel Show, in Dubai, in the United Arab Emirates, and in business roundtables held in Brazil with Arab importers. The company has just sent a price quotation for its mirrors to a Saudi businessman who came to Brazil to attend a business meeting organized by the Arab Brazilian Chamber of Commerce, in São Paulo, last May.

Glasart should also promote new actions turned to the Middle Eastern and North African markets until the end of the year. Currently, exports answer to approximately 10% of the company's sales.

The factory manufactures approximately 12,000 pieces per month and, according to Ribeiro, it is capable of producing more. Glasart makes items ranging from mirrors and shoe racks to trays, picture holders, frames for panel insertion, shelves, pictures and CD and DVD racks.

The mirrors had their design reformulated in March this year, with the insertion of typically Brazilian raw materials in the frames. The work was coordinated by company designer Sonia Harrell. The shoe racks were designed in 2006 and received more luxury elements, like details in gold, early this year.

Last year, the company also developed heated trolleys. They are used to serve dishes and have heated surfaces. The idea is to keep the food warm while serving it at home, at hotels or in restaurants. Around a year and a half ago, Glasart had already developed heated trays.

Some operate connected to power outlets and others have batteries. For the time being, they are only being sold on the domestic market. Glasart developed the product mainly thinking about selling it in gift shops, but has found a large market in hotels and restaurants.

Glasart works with solid wood and MDF (medium density fiberboard). All of the wood comes from certified reforestation areas. The company also occasionally uses other material, like ecological leather, imitating crocodile, for the bottom of wooden trays.

The company soon plans to launch a stainless steel line of heated trays with lighting. The idea is for the food to be heated from below, from the tray, and from above, by the lamp. Glasart cuts the wood and makes the products at its workshop. The company currently employs 38 people.

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