

Brasil! Brasil!**Brasil!**

Graphic design in South America's colorful powerhouse

BY ROBERT L. PETERS, FGDC

As billions on the planet know, Brazil is 'Campeao do mundo'—the reigning world champion of futebol (soccer)—itself the world's greatest sport. In fact, Brazil has held the coveted World Cup more times than any other nation, a matter of great pride for rich and poor alike, and across vast differences in Brazilian social and political strata.

Few, however, know that Brazil is the world's fourth largest democracy, fifth largest country and ninth largest economy. It covers nearly half of South America and shares borders with eleven of the continent's thirteen countries (only Chile and Ecuador are not immediate neighbors). By every measure, Brazil is the regional giant—with a population of 170 million citizens and GDP of \$503 billion (2001).

As the nation's futebol team and economic market presence both gain attention in the world arena, Brazil's graphic designers too face new opportunities—as well as challenges, of course. What surprises does Brazil's dynamic creative community have in store? Will a 'Brazilian voice' emerge as a collective design identity? Will individualistic expression prevail? Will Brazilian design gain the respect and recognition its practitioners feel they deserve?

Massive land, massive contrasts

Brazil is a nation of almost unbelievable contrasts, contradictions and cultural diversity. At the same time 'Third World' and 'First World,' this heterogeneous country is home to the most disparate mixture of peoples imaginable—from hunter-gatherers in Amazonia, to sophisticated urban socialites in Sao Paulo, one of the world's largest cities. At 8.5 million square kilometers (3.3 million square miles), Brazil is slightly larger than the U.S.A.'s 48 conterminous states. Straddling both sides of the equator, it enjoys inverted seasons within its own borders. The land itself ranges from sparse to densely populated, with a full 70% of Brazilians living along the nearly 8,000 km (5,000 miles) of coast.

Although Brazil is one of the world's largest producers of food, a quarter of its population suffers from hunger. Social imbalances abound, with more than 50 million people living below the poverty line, many crammed in *the favelas* (slums) that dot the urban landscapes. Large gaps are apparent everywhere—average

per capita income is more than ten times higher in the business capital of Sao Paulo than in the impoverished northeast of the country. And, though Brazil can boast the world's greatest amount of forest, it has also faced international criticism in recent years for its annual destruction of 15,000 square kilometers (5,800 square miles) of forest per year.

Nature's child

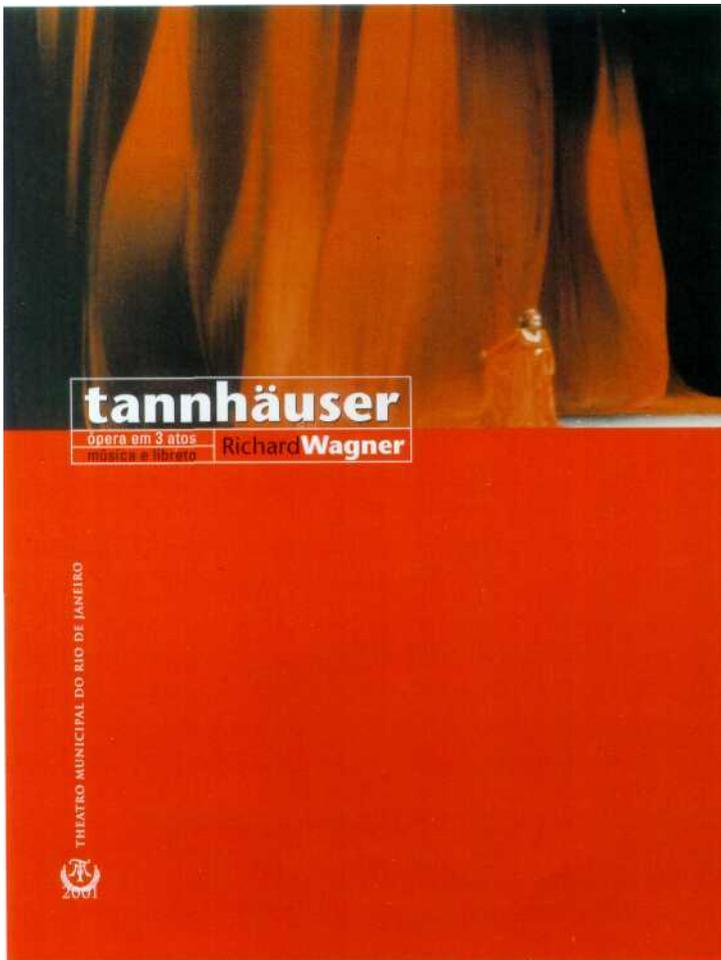
The world's most bio-diverse country, Brazil is blessed with an extraordinary natural and biological heritage. Geologically stable and ancient, Brazil is a land shaped by time, water and wind. Nearly 60% of its landmass is covered in lush forest. Infinitely varied landscapes, explosions of unexpected color and an unending trove of flora and fauna have made Brazil the land of explorers' dreams—from flat pampas, to Sertao backlands (inland areas), to the annually flooded Pantanal, to coastal rainforests, to vast Amazonia. It's easy to see why a palette of verdant hues, sky blue, shocking pink and scalding yellows have come to typify this tropical paradise.

Amazonia, the largest remaining tropical forest in the world, holds an estimated 30% of the world's genetic database. In spite of this immense bio-diversity, it is also estimated that more than

Right: Linha Flora packaging. O Boticário, the biggest franchise in Brazil, required a solution that went beyond aesthetics and communication, involving large scale handling and storage issues. The theme evokes Brazilian flora and the company's motto: Natural from Brazil. Karine Kawamura/Silvio Silva Junior/Vanessa Knorst, designers; Lumen Design (Curitiba), design firm.

Visual identity and collateral for the Wagner opera recreated by Werner Herzog at the Teatro Municipal do Rio de Janeiro. Legibility was a main concern due to the limitations of the environment for which it was designed. The project needed typography that could translate the contemporary approach of the Herzog reading. The use of a deep red color added drama. Evelyn Grumach, design director; Tatiana Podlubny/Fernanda Garcia, assistant designers; eg.design (Rio de Janeiro), design firm.

Signage to create a visual reference for a furniture store located on a street with a high concentration of competitors. By creating a graphic sculpture as a tribute to the neighborhood, the store achieved success in promoting their brand without visually polluting the landscape. Marcelo Afalo, designer; Claudia Eccard, assistant designer; Univers Design (Sao Paulo), design firm; Arredamento, client.



Brasil! Brasil! Brasil!

8,000 species are lost yearly. Amazonia has the capacity to extract carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, and acts as one of the world's filters. It pours the equivalent of twenty percent of the earth's rivers into the Atlantic Ocean.

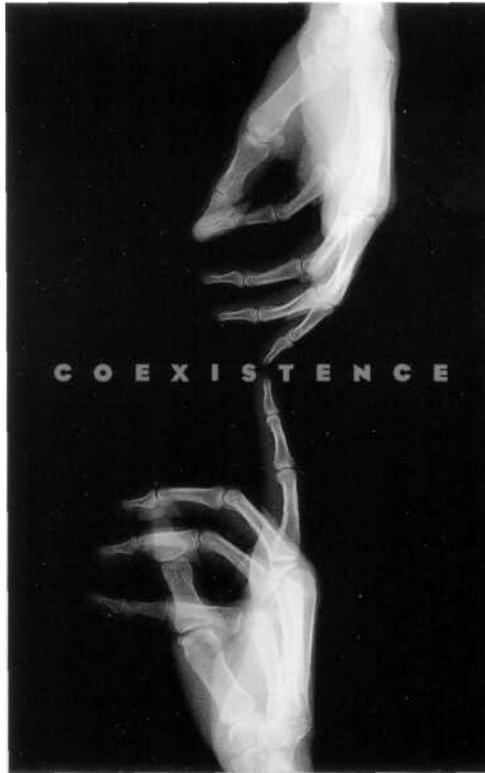
A growing awareness is apparent in Brazil of the importance of keeping alive the bonds that link humanity to nature. In 1999, an environmental crime bill was put into effect, which now defines pollution and deforestation as crimes with stiff fines and jail sentences. Amongst designers I met, I was impressed with their concern for sustainability, particularly in the face of daunting obstacles and economic pressures.

Checked history

When Christopher Columbus first touched South American land in 1492, an estimated five to ten million indigenous people lived in Brazil (ten times the population of Portugal at that time). Early descriptions of the native inhabitants, misnamed 'Indians,' painted them as handsome and innocent, speaking hundreds of separate languages, and living in a paradise filled with colored birds and exuberant vegetation. As throughout the Americas, the imperialist invasion from Europe took a devastating toll on original peoples—through violence, seizure of land, disease, slavery and the subjection of those conquered to new religious structures. Today, only an estimated 200,000 Amerindians remain in Brazil.

As author Ana Augusta Rocha describes in *Brazil Terra Virgem*, the Portuguese brought with them: "...one travail, one boss, one God. For the plurality and freedom of the indigenous universe this was the same as death." In contemporary Brazil there is acknowledgement and "infinite sadness" over this remarkable loss of original cultures and the "lost innocence" this represented—resulting from the nation's annihilation of 600 distinct indigenous peoples.

Greed has always been a leitmotif of imperialism—for sixteenth-century Portugal, wealth was of far greater interest than the well-being of its colonies. Harvesting sugar, gold and coffee was labor intensive, and demanded manpower. As Indians died victim to epidemics, Brazil's new sugar barons brought in four million slaves from Africa—on ships named, profanely, after saints—before the slave trade was finally abolished in 1850. (Historians



estimate that another four million slaves died en route at sea over the course of 300 years.) Brazil's Black history is as tragic as that of its First Nations. However, a living legacy infuses the country's culture today—hypnotic music, sensual dance and movement, overt physical affection, spicy food—all these and much more were rooted in African heritage.

Ordem e Progresso

Following three centuries of church-and-state colonial rule by the Portuguese, Brazil became an independent nation in 1822. Rubber, mining, cattle and industrialization continued to fuel its economic growth into the twentieth century. More recently, Brazil overcame half a century of coups, dictatorships and military intervention in the country's governance to further pursue its industrial and agricultural development. By the 1970s, Brazil had become Latin

America's leading economic power.

Brazil's flag signals the federative republic's aspirant credo by means of an equatorial band bearing the words **ORDEM E PROGRESSO** (Order and Progress). A bright green field with a large yellow diamond in the center bears a blue celestial globe with 27 white five-pointed stars (one for each of the 26 states and the Federal District) arranged in the same pattern as the night sky. Green, yellow, blue and white—the distinctive colors of Brazil.

Today, Brazil's economy outweighs those of all other South American countries. It is a production powerhouse, rapidly expanding its presence in world markets. Rich in natural resources, it is also highly industrialized and exports large quantities of lumber, chemicals, cement, iron ore, tin, steel and manufactured goods. Major Brazilian industries include textiles, shoes, aircraft, motor vehicles and parts, machinery and equipment. Brazil is also a fertile land—its agricultural production includes coffee, soybeans, wheat, rice, corn, sugar cane, cocoa, citrus fruit and beef. Brazil is the world's largest exporter of coffee and orange juice (to the chagrin of Floridians), and can boast the biggest cattle herd (vexing to Texans). Heavily urbanized, the majority of Brazil's labor force is occupied in service industries.

In late 2002, former metalworker and veteran leftist Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva (known simply as 'Lula') became president in a



Left: Museum exhibition poster. Through the use of artistic media. The Museum of the Seam, in Jerusalem, promotes peace, respect and non-violence as a solution for political, ethnic, social and religious conflicts. The project uses an image that transcends Christianity. The gesture, seen as an x-ray, goes beyond skin differences showing that we are essentially the same. Andre de Castro/Sergio Liuzzi, designers; Andre de Castro, design director; Sergio Liuzzi, assistant designer; Raphie Ergar, curator.

This page: Multicel stationery identity. Ruth Klotzel, designer; Estudio Infinite (Sao Paulo), design firm.

Petistil packaging. Brandgroup International Design Partnership (Sao Paulo), design firm.

Brasil! Brasil! Brasil!

landslide victory (with three million more votes than George Bush received in 2000). His first act as president-elect was to create the Secretariat for State Emergencies, with a view to end hunger and malnutrition among Brazil's twenty million poorest citizens. Lula's election bodes well for the Brazilian people, though some I spoke with were skeptical about his ability to improve the economy, and others have voiced concern that Lula may face interference from powerful rightist forces in the U.S.A. A consistent advocate for increasing productivity, Lula states: "Brazil is a great country. It has enormous resources that we have not even begun to turn to the benefit of our people."

Multicultural mosaic

Today's Brazil enjoys a diversity of ethnicities, a veritable patchwork of peoples. The typified 'face of Brazil' is of mixed-race origin, exotic, bronzed and sensuous. Statistically, 55% of Brazilians are White (Portuguese and other European origins), 22% are Mulatto (mixed Black and White), 12% are Mestizo (mixed Amerindian and White), 11% are Black and 1% are Amerindian or 'Other.' The population has increased ten-fold in the past century alone.

Reflecting the religious influence imposed by its colonists, Brazil is a predominantly Catholic country (nearly 90%). Its official language is Portuguese, which sets it apart from its Spanish-speaking neighbors. Apart from its primary Amerindian, Portuguese and African roots, today's Brazil has also integrated influences from other past imperial powers—the Spanish, Dutch, French, Italian, German, English and Japanese. This results in a richly varied visual vocabulary from which Brazilian designers can draw inspiration.



Passion, exuberance and generosity

Faith and festivity—they appear both hand-in-hand and face-to-face in Brazil—in concert and in contradiction. Devout worship overlaps with carnal abandon, contrite penitence with lusty excesses. A plausible explanation I heard was that this bizarre land is held together solely by the sustaining and passionate belief of its people (in the face of all odds), the common denominators of futebol and Carnival (both great



equalizers which cut across barriers of class, race and economic status) and an inherently generous nature (everyone sins during Carnival, so, 'forgive and be forgiven,' or so goes the logic).

Gaps, inequities and imposed guilt aside, Brazil appears to be a land of mostly happy people. Humor and laughter is apparent everywhere, as of course is irony. Brazil is also joyously exuberant in a sensuous, exotic way (at least to foreign eyes) and has developed quite a reputation as 'party central.' One sunny day followed by another and tropical playground settings don't hurt in this regard, nor does Brazil's nearly 8,000 kilometers of beach (5,000 miles long, and home of the diminutive thong).

State of design

Graphic design is growing and healthy in Brazil. An estimated 50,000 professional graphic and industrial designers are practicing in Brazil today (as compared to over 80,000 Registered Architects). Graphic designers in Brazil trace the profession's origins to the creation in the 1950s of the Instituto de Arte Contemporanea Sao Paulo, to the first design offices which opened 40 years ago and to the opening in 1966 of the country's first focused design school in Rio, the Escola Superior de Desenho Industrial, or ESDI.

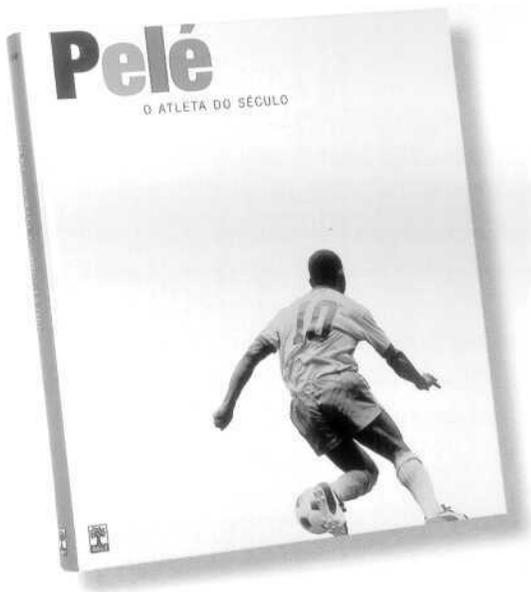


Only since the mid-1990s have graphic design programs been offered; more than 75 schools now teach graphic design as a focused discipline. Many established graphic designers therefore have a background in architecture, or studied graphic and environmental design within faculties of architecture. This accounts for numerous multidisciplinary firms around the country. The architectural influence is also evident in the high caliber of facilities design, environmental graphics and signage. While it's dangerous to 'paint with a big brush,' I would say that, generally speaking, identity, branding, packaging and retail/advertising design appear to be quite strong in Brazil—while information design, publishing, typography and design for the Internet may be somewhat underdeveloped compared to Europe and North America.

Professional perspectives

As elsewhere in the world, animated discussions are held among Brazilian





designers regarding the need for accreditation, with some in favor of the recognition this could bring, and others directly opposed to it. While in Brazil, I participated in a publicized panel discussion on the posted topic 'Regulation of Graphic Design as a Profession.'

Ana Luisa Escorel, an influential designer from Rio, states: "It's deeply unfair and inadequate to have 90% of Brazil's professions regulated—but not the designer." Commenting on the suggestion that designers may want regulation for protectionist reasons, she states: "I vehemently reject the accusation of protectionism. Without regulation, the profession as a whole gets vitiated, as it is presumed that everything done by a designer can be done by anyone else."

I was told that even the profession of Housemaid had been recently regulated—jarring to many graphic designers who have to fill in 'other' on census and tax forms, due to the fact that 'designer' is not even on the list of recognized professions. A point raised in the discussions was that even Childcare Workers are accredited in Brazil, and that Graphic Designers are much more 'dangerous' to human society, because they shape minds.

Danio Santos de Miranda, the Regional Director of Service Social do Comércio, State of Sao Paulo (SESC), lent a supportive voice: "Graphic Design has reached the rights and duties of a discipline, a matter of research and a challenge to artistic creativity." The debate concluded with the realization that for the time being, the Associação dos Designers Graficos (ADG) must continue to 'self-regulate' the Graphic Design profession.

While in Brazil, I was invited by Associação dos Designers Graficos to participate in a public forum examining the role of Design within Brazilian economic policy. Topics included differentiation of export products, the value of design and branding in economic development, government's role in supporting Brazil's design capacity and an examination of

potential actions to firmly imbed Design within the country's policies—as a strategic wealth-building tool.

Associação dos Designers Graficos

ADG is Brazil's professional design organization, with approximately 500 members, and another 250 student and associate members. Founded in 1989, its stated mission is clear: to make the graphic design profession more widely known. ADG engages in a wide variety of activities on behalf of its members: in the past two years this has included an initiative regarding 'memory recovery of Brazilian design,' activism against visual pollution and environmental degradation in the cities, mapping of design markets for its members, traveling exhibitions in Cuba and South Africa and the compilation of an impressive manual on professional practice, the *ADG Professional Guide*.

Ongoing activities include publishing of the bimonthly journal *Boletim ADG* (with a readership of 10,000), educational outreach initiatives to aspiring young designers, public discussions on ethics

Left: Corporate identity for a line of sport shoes including packaging, store displays and signage. Mota Design (Caxias do Sul), design firm.

This page: The book, organized as a family album, tells the story of Pele 'The King of Futebol (soccer)' through images. The vast majority of Pele's pictures are low-quality black-and-white images. The few color photos required a lot of retouching and creative cropping. The cover isolates the player, emphasizing the beauty of his movement. Kiko Farkas, design director/photo editor; Rodny Lobos, assistant designer/photo retoucher; Maquina Estudio (Sao Paulo), design firm; Editora Abril, client.

This CD for an independent production, distributed by a major company, raised a lot of conflict and miscommunication problems. Research conducted through the band's files showed a creative process in which the changes were written down using symbols or scribbles. Taking advantage of those references resulted in a booklet that represents order out of chaos (zona, in the title). Billy Bacon/Ernani Cal, art directors/designers; Arno Villenave/PLAP archives, photographers; Flavio Goulart, Brazilian Batucada graffiti; Alex Ponciano, cover caricature; Nu-De's (Rio de Janeiro), design firm; PLAP/Pedro Luis e a Parede, clients.

Brasil! Brasil! Brasil!

(e.g. designers' societal role in 'creating needs' vs. 'solving problems') and fostering of discussion and debate among its members.

Biennially, ADG also collaborates with SESC and the Service Nacional de Aprendizagem Comercial (SENAC) in the compilation, exhibition and publishing of an impressive body of juried work representing the best graphic design in the country—the *Bienal de Design Gráfico*. This is a rigorous affair involving a large team of ADG volunteers, a 35-member jury, an international program of lectures and workshops and the design and merchandising of event-branded products. The past year's motto was "Keep faith in design."

The exhibition, on display for an extended period in the publicly-accessible Sao Paulo cultural center of SESC Pompei, draws nearly 60,000 visitors. As I toured the exhibition, I was particularly impressed to see a mix of school children, university students, business people and seniors openly discussing what they found to be interesting and effective of the work displayed—a clear fulfillment, to my mind, of ADG's goal to raise the visibility of graphic design. (Much of the work shown in this article is drawn from the 6th *Bienal de Design Gráfico* catalog that showcases 300 pieces selected from more than 1,700 entries.)

Uniquely similar

I sometimes say: "You are unique, and I am unique—therefore, we are the same." That quip seems apt when comparing today's graphic design in Brazil to that of the rest of the world. Does anything really make Brazilian design different? Perhaps it is more colorful. The country's natural resources feature prominently in the visual vocabulary. Then there's the influence of Portuguese baroque, with its exaggerated attention to detail. And, Brazilians are certainly style conscious; a trait that fashionable Paulistas (citizens of Sao Paulo) share with the Italian architects who helped shape their built environment.

A particular visual phenomenon I noted was the preponderance of all-capital typography in signage—versus the use of upper and lower case—a very 'concrete' approach to lettering. Marcelo Aflalo of Univers Design provided an explanation. Architecture has played a large role in Brazil's graphic design past, due to the fact that many of today's established graphic designers are graduates from architectural programs. Architects have a fascination with shaping form and objects, rather than the signaling of messages and concerns with legibility, for example. Interestingly, Marcelo is an exception; after studying and practicing as an architect for a dozen years, he attended the Art Institute of Chicago on a Fulbright scholarship where he became enthused about typography. Upon his return to Sao Paulo in 1987, he then set up a multidisciplinary design office, concentrating on identity and publishing projects.

What traits does Brazilian design share with the rest of the world? Modernist influences from Europe are clearly evident, including the Swiss tradition and the Ulm school. As was the case in North America, ex-pats from Europe greatly influenced the curricula in Brazilian architectural and design studies in the past half-century. New media and its e-symbol language show up everywhere. With the ubiquitous nature of today's digital tools and media (Adobe Photoshop is hawked by bootleg street vendors for \$10) and the global equalizing effect these have, it appears that there is less separating Brazilian design today than in the past.

What of the future of graphic design in Brazil? Some express the fear that change is too rapid, and that in the 'whirlwind of globalization' a precious part of the Brazilian identity will be lost. These are the same designers who concern themselves with the importance of vernacular—the distinct voice that comes from examining inner sources and knowing one's history.

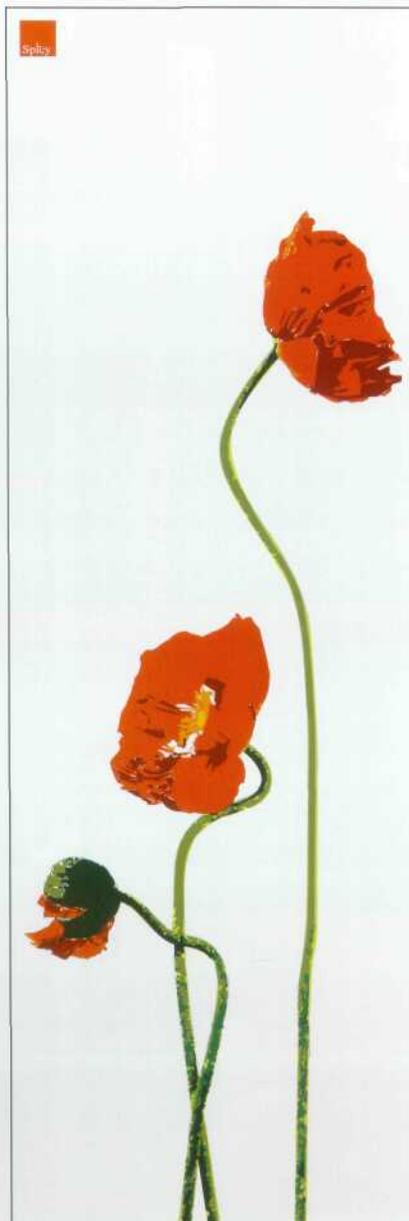
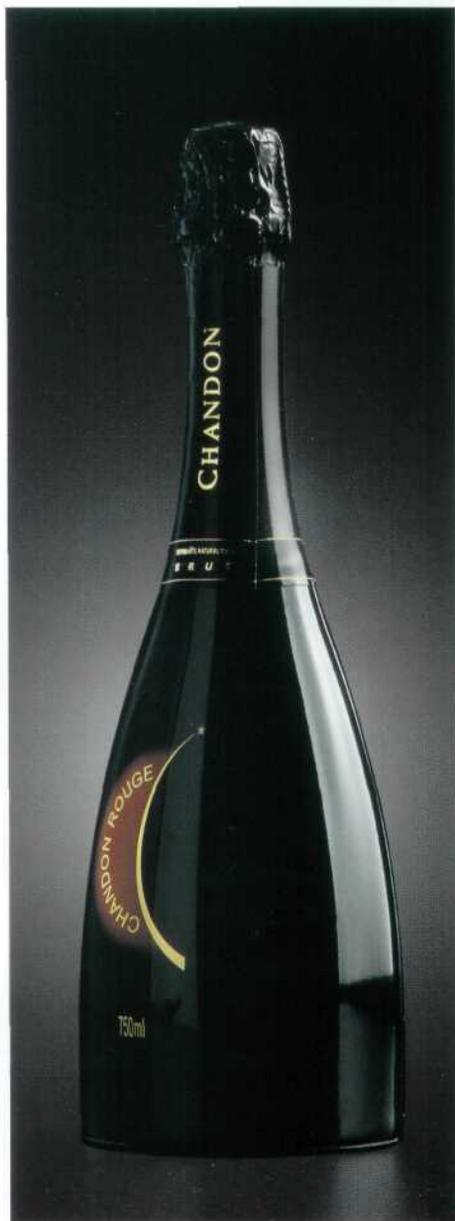
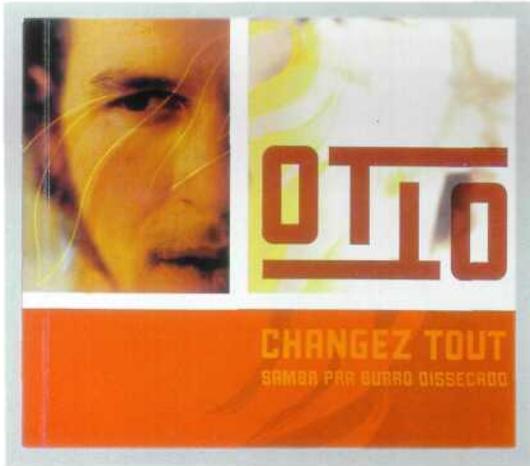
While Brazil shares many of the same competitive challenges as other nations in a globalized marketplace, it does enjoy a somewhat unique position, balanced as it is between developed and developing countries, and given its massive influence within the Latin American region. In this context, the importance of speaking a worldwide language and having a view to the outside is obvious, as is the need for sensitivity to local context. If Brazilian designers respect the differences and embrace the commonalities, I have a sense that the future will smile in their favor. •

Author's note: Thanks to the many designers who welcomed me to Brazil and to ADG for their help and hospitality. Special thanks to Ruth Klotzel for her assistance as a guide and interpreter, and to Marcelo Aflalo of Univers Design, for providing these images and translating the captions.

Right: Following the release of the artist's first CD, the recording company released a remixed version of the CD *Samba pra burro* with no budget for new photography. Working the same way a DJ would, the designer 'remixed' the photos and reworked the old elements to create a fresh new booklet, adding new details and emphasis. Ricardo Fernandes, designer; Vava Ribeiro, photographer; Tempo Design (Sao Paulo), design firm; Gravadora Trama, client.

Packaging for a new product within a new market niche (red wine champagne). With an exclusive bottle design and a sleeve produced in France, the graphic elements suggest mystery, class and novelty. The main focus is the red logo. Roberto Kuniyoshi, designer; Bench Design Total (Sao Paulo), design firm; Chandon do Brasil, client.

Posters to promote brand awareness. The posters, depicting products or decorative images, are sold by Spicy, a table and kitchen accessories company. They are printed in several layers using metallic and iridescent inks. Marcelo Aflalo, designer; Marcelo Aflalo/Stella Ramenzoni, illustrators; Univers Design (Sao Paulo), design firm.



Brasil! Brasil! Brasil!

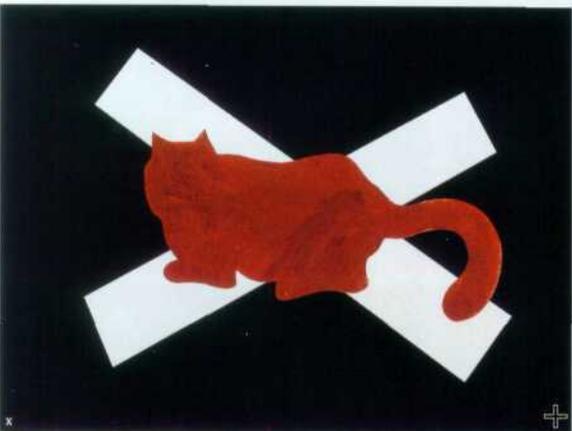
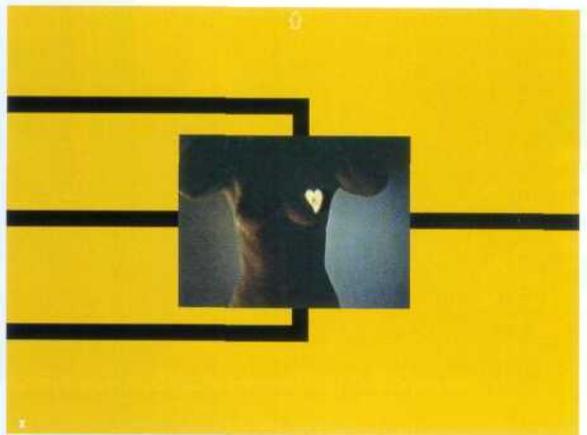
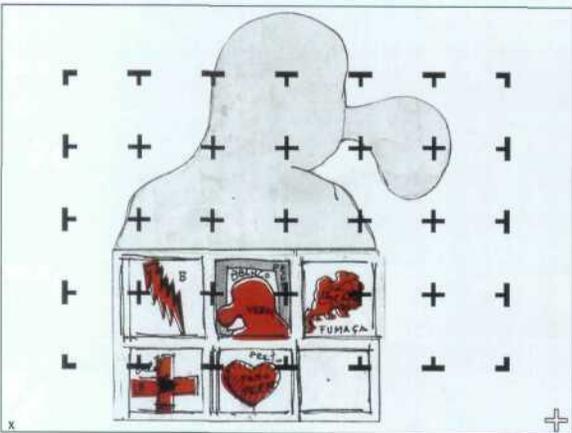
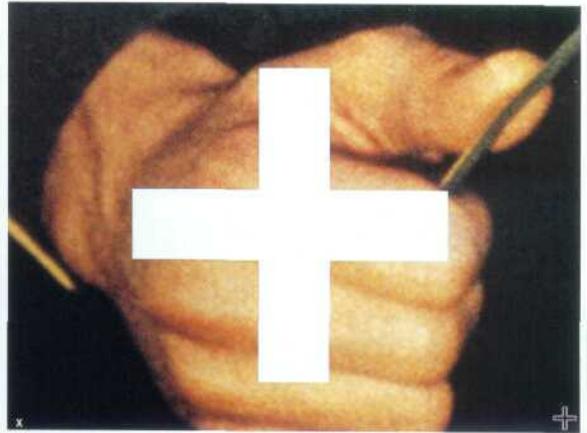
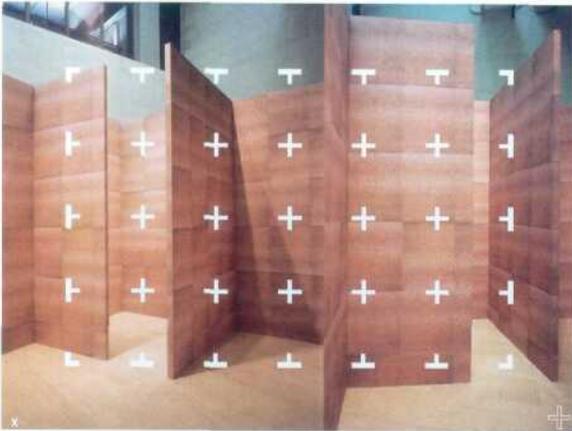
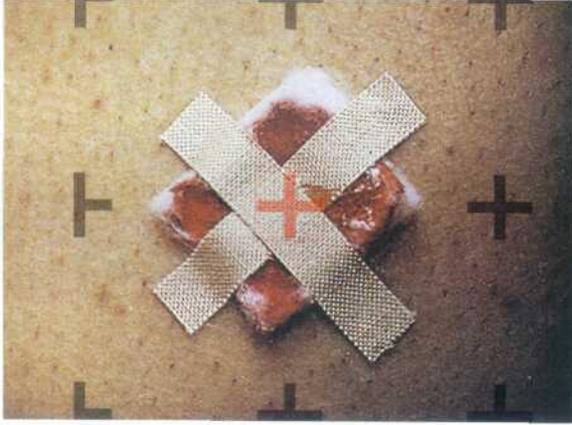


This page: Logo design for an educational institution promoting literacy. Kiko Farkas, designer; Maquina Estudio (Sao Paulo), design firm.

Corporate identity to extend the brand beyond the limitations of use that the name suggests. Based on a strategic plan, a new signature synthesis was developed, Y/MAN, and largely used throughout the many items produced. Claudio Novaes/Laura Correa, design directors; Cristiano, photographer; Brandgroup Strategic Design (Sao Paulo), design firm; Yachtsman, client.

Right: CD-ROM for Antonio Dias, a well-known artist who has been working with different media since the 1960s. Since the artist had extensively published in print, a digital medium seemed to be a natural to dive into his universe without the restrictions of chronology or long texts. Rara Dias/Tatiana Cerveira, designers/screenplay; Paula Delecave, assistant designer; Rara Dias/Tatiana Cerveira/Luis Marcelo Mendes, navigation; Simplicio Neto/Bruno Vianna, programming; Dodo, soundtrack/sound effects; Zot Design (Sao Paulo), design firm; Imago Escritório de Arte, client.





Brasil! Brasil! Brasil!



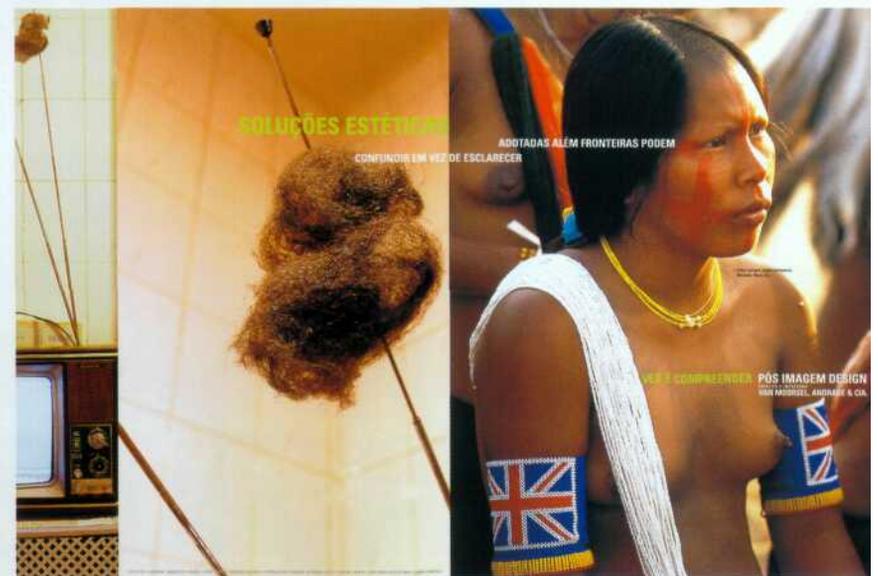
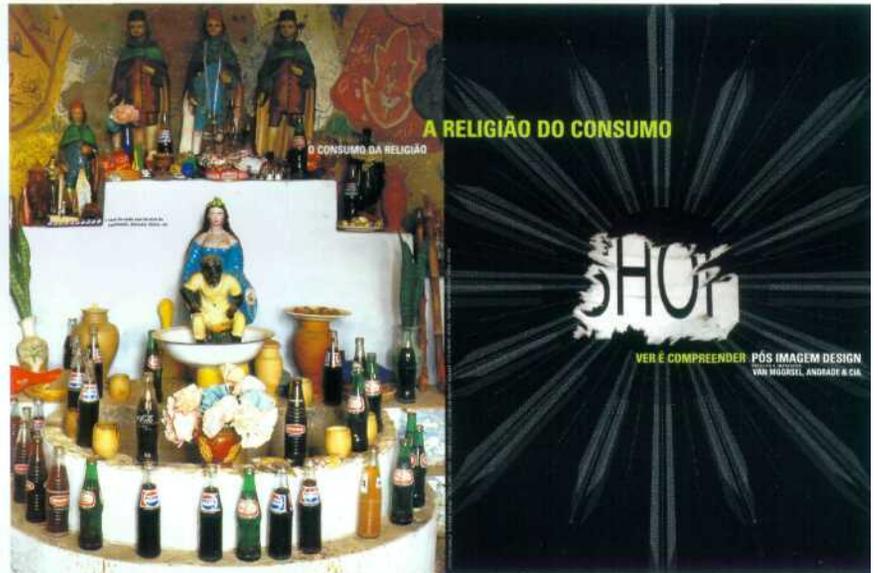
This page: Nine to Five logo. Problem: To design a versatile and contemporary identity for a women's clothing brand, translating the concept 'Always well dressed from morning to evening.' The use of numbers and graphic elements referring to a watch emphasizes the 'to all occasions' idea. Andrea Costa Gomes, designer; Angela Dourado, design director; New Design (Belo Horizonte), design firm.

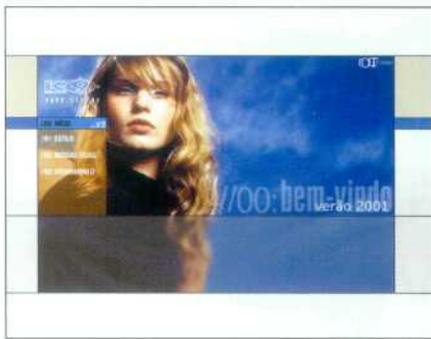
Self-promotion posters to stimulate curiosity about a book, *Ver e compreender* [to see is to understand] to be released during the office's tenth anniversary. Four posters, with excerpts from the book, explain the office philosophy. Ricardo Leite, designer; Ricardo Leite/Rafael Ayres, design directors; Carol Santos, assistant designer; Marcelo Correa/Ricardo Azoury/Ricardo Leite/Photodisc, photographers; Cadu Tavares, illustrator; Pós Imagem Design (Rio de Janeiro), design firm.

Right: Web site for K9 Fashion's Summer 2001 collection, using photography as the main information. The goal was to achieve a light and pleasant navigation without sacrificing information. This project won a bronze medal at the Clube de Criação de Minas Gerais in 2001. Alexandre Estanislau Silva, design director/creative director; Weber Padua, photographer; Bolt Interativa (Belo Horizonte), design firm; K9 Comercial de Moda, client.

Packaging designed to promote the Coca-Cola Internet site. Oz Design (Sao Paulo), design firm.

Corporate identity for a new cellular phone company entering an extremely competitive field. The graphic element used refers to the act of speaking and the cleanness of the applications, to ease of communication, as well as proximity. The project won two prizes at the New York Festival in 2001. Luciano Deos/Valpirio Monteiro/Jorge Muniz, designers; Gad'Design (Sao Paulo), design firm.





Brasil! Brasil! Brasil!



Left: Brasileiro typeface based on popular graffiti in order to convey the impact of this popular expression on Brazilian culture. The type was drawn on top of various hand-lettered signs collected from the urban landscape. The variation found on a single typeface, both upper and lower cases, added to the simulation of realistic handwriting. Crystian Cruz (Sao Paulo), designer; Tipografia Brasilis 2 Show, promoted by FAAP, client.

Corporate identity for a traditional restaurant, O Gato que ri (the laughing cat), that was losing image awareness, but was still well-rated foodwise. Along with the new identity the project included the 50th anniversary invitation. The solution was based on the "cucina paulistana" created concept, borrowing from the Italian cantina (family-owned small Italian restaurant) and also to be part of Sao Paulo's history. The cat illustration demonstrates a good sense of humor, without being childish. For the opening party a three-dimensional sculpture of the cat was given as a raffle prize. (*Cucina = Italian cooking; paulistana = from Sao Paulo City.) Simone Mattar/Marcos Milet, designers; Julio Souza, three-dimensional design; Mattar Design (Sao Paulo), design firm.

This page: Havaianas Mam packaging. A special model of a very popular sandal was created for the Museum of Modern Art of Sao Paulo. The museum's colors, and the outline of a sandal filled with the repetition of the Museum logo, were applied to the packaging. This led to product development changes and the application of the logo repetition on the sandal itself, a major innovation. Eduardo Foresti, designer; Superbacana Producao e Design (Sao Paulo), design firm; Sao Paulo Alpargatas, client.

Corporate identity for Rio Grande Energia company. Gad'Design (Sao Paulo), design firm.

