

Coke Art Folk Art

The Coca-Cola salute to folk art

Jacques Lange



In the year leading up to the Olympic Games, artists from 54 countries produced original works for the exhibition. In a handful of countries, well-known artists were commissioned to create their submissions. In most cases, competitions were held to select the artistic concept best representing that country. Some of these contests were open to the public, and many involved students at a variety of schools.

The resulting exhibition represents the work of a diverse range of creative people such as woodcarvers from Belize, a toymaker from Uruguay, a Fijian high school teacher, an Irish schoolgirl and six former domestic workers from South Africa.

All of these artists started with the same basic 'canvas' - an oversized (two to 12-foot high) three-dimensional Coca-Cola bottle - and applied their local folk art traditions, the heritage of their native lands and indigenous materials to make it their own. The result is an intriguing collection of one-of-a-kind contour bottles, which continues to expand as additional countries contribute their artistic interpretations.

Thirty-six bottles from the original collection form a travelling exhibition on view throughout Europe during 1997 and 1998. Additional bottles will be added to the exhibit as the tour visits countries not originally represented in the collection. The remaining bottles, some of which are too fragile to travel, will be displayed in the United States. This article features selected pieces from the exhibition.

Coca-Cola is considered the most famous icon of the 20th century and the most successful product in the history of commerce. Hundreds of millions of times a day, people all over the globe enjoy this soft drink, transcending the barriers of race, culture, borders and class. The flowing script trademark symbol is the world's most recognised logotype and the Coca-Cola contour bottle has been, and continues to be a source of inspiration for artists around the world.

Folk and indigenous art are part of the fabric of life everywhere, and so is Coca-Cola. To celebrate this tradition, the **COCA-COLA SALUTE TO FOLK ART** exhibition was initiated to coincide with the 1996 Centennial Olympic Games in Atlanta. The inspiration for the exhibition came from the work of the renowned American folk artist Howard Finster, considered to be the 'grandfather' of American folk art, who has incorporated images and legends about Coca-Cola into his work since the 1970s.

SOUTH AFRICA

A team of six artists from KwaNdebele, Mpumalanga created this piece. The group was led by Maria Msiza. Other members of the group are Maria's sisters Johanna and Sarah, and friends Anna Ntuli and Francinah Mtshwene. Traditional Ndebele colours and 5 000 beads were used in this bottle, which took five weeks to complete.



ARGENTINA

Martiniano Arce, a self-taught artist.



AZERBAIJAN

Fazil Najafov, a professional sculptor.



BELIZE

Robert Wesby, Frederico Reyes, Carmelo Teck and Ramon Espot, woodcarvers.



AUSTRALIA

Balarinji, a design studio and a team of Aboriginal artists.



FIJI

Akuila Bokoi,
a secondary school teacher.



MOROCCO

Hassan Kdatri and
Mohammed Said Kharbouch.



RUSSIA

Victor Yaakovlev, a folk artist.



PORTUGAL

Ana Cristina Rodrigues, João Paulo
António, Maria da Conceição Sofia, Nuno
Salguero, Paulo Cruz, Rita Antunes,
Rui Leonardo, art students.



URUGUAY

Carlos Musso, a toymaker.



TAIWAN

Yiu Cheng-yu,
a multi-media art director.



UNITED STATES

Howard Finster, a world famous
folk artist who's work was the
inspiration for this project.



NETHERLANDS

Floor van Dongen, an art student.



MEXICO

Hilario Hernandez,
a professional artist.



SPAIN

Jesus Ovejero, a student.



GREAT BRITAIN

Brian Anderson, a sculptor and
animator.



EQUADOR

Mariana de Jesus Ullauri Velasco,
a ceramist.

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