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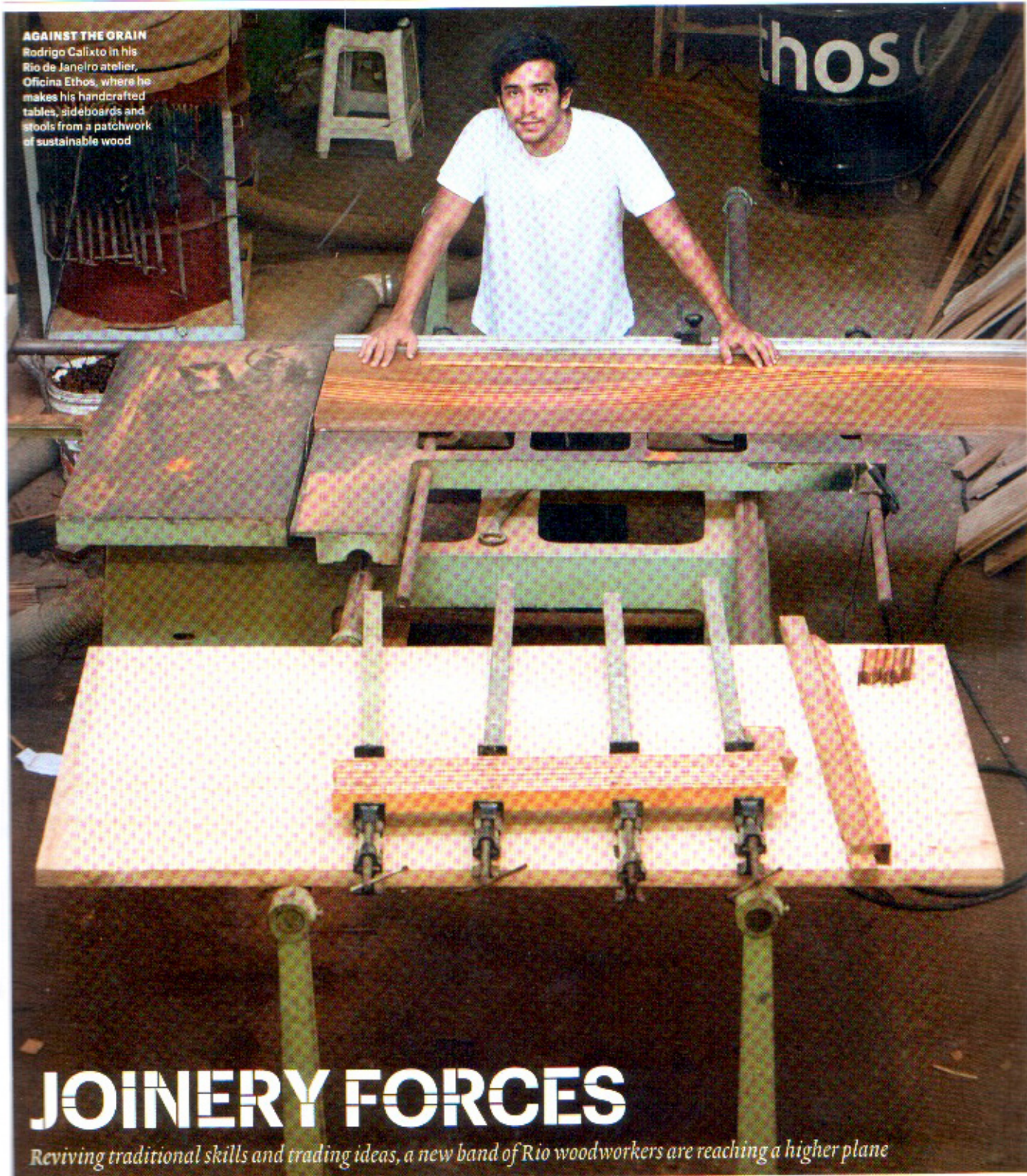
ACTION!

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AGAINST THE GRAIN

Rodrigo Calixto in his Rio de Janeiro atelier, Oficina Ethos, where he makes his handcrafted tables, sideboards and stools from a patchwork of sustainable wood



JOINERY FORCES

Reviving traditional skills and trading ideas, a new band of Rio woodworkers are reaching a higher plane

Fernando Mendes de Almeida is passionate about wood. Having worked with the raw material for more than a decade, his understanding of it is intimate. 'It is possible to touch a piece of furniture with your hands,' he explains, 'and immediately recognise whether its maker was an apprentice or a master, and to recognise whether he loved his work or not.'

Mendes de Almeida is one half of Rio de Janeiro-based design duo Mendes-Hirth (see page 112). He is also one of a growing number of Brazilian >>

Rodrigo Calixto

Having established his atelier, Oficina Ethos, five years ago in Rio, Rodrigo Calixto now enjoys a growing reputation for meticulously handcrafted tables, sideboards and stools, and prestigious Brazilian design outlet Novo Desenho stocks his furniture. He is also gaining an online following for a series of videos that demonstrate his craftsmanship. Among Oficina Ethos' best-selling pieces are elegant games tables with slide-out chess and backgammon boards picked

out in marquetry. The atelier prides itself on using wood only from environmentally responsible sources, often reclaiming pieces from demolition sites. As a result, many of its designs feature a rich patchwork of different wood types. Calixto also avoids using screws and nails where possible, preferring traditional joinery techniques. www.oficinaethos.com.br. See films of Calixto making his 'Lotus' stools and a wooden mosaic at www.wallpaper.com ★

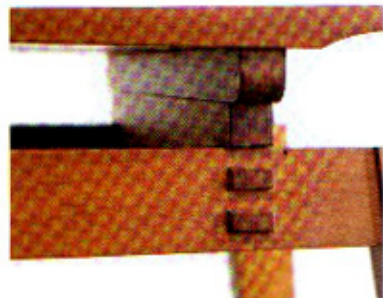
designers reviving the traditional woodworking skills that made the country synonymous with high-quality wood craftsmanship in the first half of the last century (see W*135). In an age of mass production, this new generation is working by hand, with skills learned carefully over years of diligent practice, to shape designs that are both organic and tactile. It is in this way that raw materials meet finely honed talent, to produce the smoothest seats the southern hemisphere has ever sat in.

Driven by their enthusiasm for the material, the new band of Rio-based woodworkers, along with a small number of like-minded artisans in São Paulo and beyond, often get together to share techniques. 'This afternoon we met to think about workbenches,' says Mendes de Almeida. 'I've made some six or seven over the last ten years. Since I introduced Ricardo Graham Ferreira [right] and Rodrigo Calixto [previous page, both Rio-based] to woodworkers Julia Krantz and Morito Ebine, when we visited their shops in São Paulo last month, I think they've been inspired to rethink the hardware part, the templates and processes. They are very talented.'

Ebine, Krantz and the Rio set featured here are all involved in the entire process of creating a piece of furniture, from designing it to making it. Mendes de Almeida cites Ebine – who trained in Japan and has a vast knowledge of wood hand tools, machines and joinery – as his guru and the main inspiration for the meetings. 'We don't work together, but we share our experiences,' he says. 'In a way we're competitors, but the pleasure of sharing is bigger than any other feelings.'

Ricardo Graham Ferreira

Ricardo Graham Ferreira studied his craft in Europe – Milan and Avignon – before returning to Brazil and his home town of Rio. He designs and makes most of his furniture in his own workshop on the outskirts of the city. There, surrounded by the scent of freshly cut wood, with a fine layer of sawdust covering everything, he makes each piece individually and by hand. His work is characterised by delicate curves that lend it an almost art deco feel, and although there is no traditional engraving in his pieces, he's as skilled at this as he is at joinery. He likes to work with tropical timber, such as the deep purple roxinho, which he uses to make a bold stripe in, among other pieces, his 'Trovador' bench. Graham Ferreira shares a showroom in Rio city centre with his sister Bianca, who is a fashion designer. oebanista.blogspot.com



THROW IN THE DOWEL

Ricardo Graham Ferreira, top, in his workshop. His 'Oficina' chair, left, and 'Trovador' bench, above (exhibited as part of 'Rio + Design' at this year's Salone del Mobile in Milan), showcase his use of traditional joinery.

**PLANE CREW**

Fernando Mendes de Almeida, left, on a 'Santos-Dumont' chair, named after Brazilian aircraft pioneer Alberto Santos-Dumont, and Roberto Hirth, right, in the duo's 1950s-inspired 'Aviator' chair

Mendes-Hirth

Fernando Mendes de Almeida and Roberto Hirth set up their Rio design studio in 2002. Both are trained industrial designers and carpenters, and together they have more roots than a sizeable chunk of rainforest: Hirth is a descendent of Laubisch-Hirth, the renowned South American furniture-producing family, while Mendes de Almeida (who is also a practising architect) is the cousin of Brazilian design great Sergio Rodrigues, with whom he worked for seven years on both furniture and construction projects. Mendes-Hirth's award-winning 'Aviator' chair is one of the duo's most popular

pieces and, like many of their designs, it has a distinctly midcentury feel. No nails or screws are used in its construction – Mendes de Almeida and Hirth are huge advocates of designing with dovetails and dowels. Another iconic-looking piece is the 'Santos-Dumont' chair, designed in homage to the pioneering Brazilian aviator Alberto Santos-Dumont, known for his single-seat Demoiselle aeroplane of the early 1900s. Always designed for durability, the duo's individually numbered products extend to elegant lamps and a range of knives. www.mendes-hirth.com



To see more images of all of the woodworkers' designs, visit www.wallpaper.com