



4 Astoria chair
by Carlos Motta,
\$4,250,
espasa.com

► Classics
Tropical cushions
by Fernando and
Humberto
Carpasso,
\$490-\$500,
espasa.com



4 Cabaça doll,
2160/2175,
stivroyla.com



► Concrete light
by Claudia
Moreira Salles,
\$3,600,
espasa.com

Carioca craftsmanship

Interest in high-end interiors is booming in Brazil, reports *Kate Watson-Smyth*

In recent years Brazil has enjoyed something of a design boom thanks to increased economic prosperity and a government programme which has seen the number of design schools double since the 1990s. The country is now the focus of increasing global interest as Rio de Janeiro gears up for the World Cup and the 2016 Olympics. The Carpasso brothers, Fernando and Humberto, and Jay Weitzfeld appear regularly as international lists of best designers, while ratings Brazilian furniture, by the likes of Sergio Rodrigues and José Zanine Caldas, regularly sells for more than \$100,000 at auctions in London and New York.

Rising house prices have led to an increased interest in interiors as people have more money to spend on their homes, and the country's trade shows are focusing on the high end of the market with great success. "Internally, the country is booming in the economy, under successive presidents [Fernando Henrique Cardoso, Luís da Silva] and Dilma [Rousseff], improved and insured that people have more money to spend on their

homes," says Claudia Moreira Salles, a furniture designer with homes in Rio and São Paulo.

There is not a new phenomenon: Brazil's last design heyday was in the 1960s when the architect Oscar Niemeyer designed the country's futuristic capital, Brasília, as well as some of the world's most famous modernist buildings – many of which were situated at a table in Rio overlooking the famous Copacabana beach full of the women whose curves, he said, inspired his work.

Craftsmanship and the use of wood were important to the modernists, rather than industrial production, says Salles, an attitude which remains prevalent today. "Contemporary design was shaped in the early 2000s and now two trends are clear: the use of sustainable wood, inherited from the modernists, and the exploration of unexpected materials and objects."

Daniel Kozlitz, whose company Intary is based in London, but who



4 Bruno Johann's Mesquita cabinet,
£4,999, brunojohann.com

grew up in Brazil, says the rise in house prices has led directly to an increase in spending on interiors. "It doesn't make sense to have one without the other and the wealth is more evenly distributed than it was," he says.

One barometer of the country's interest in interiors is the trade show Casa Cor, the most important event in Rio's design calendar. At the most recent show last November, 41 teams of designers and architects gathered to showcase chandeliers, balcony balustrades and giant televisions.

Patricia Querrel, one of the organisers, says that "Cariocão" like residents of Rio have their own particular style when it comes to interior design and Casa Cor has played an important role in the shaping of their tastes.

Patricia Mayer, who together with Querrel opens the Rio Casa Cor branches, says the Carioca taste comes from living in a city with a beautiful view at every corner. "A city that combines beaches and mountains in an urban area has led to an originality which is unusual and is now a trademark in our homes and architectures."

Traditionally, wealthy Brazilian families tended to live in neoclassical or modernist houses set in large grounds, but many more live in

apartments, which are often high rise (up to 12 storeys). Spaces tend to be open plan, with a separate kitchen and doors opening on to a balcony.

"Living is an important part of life and there may be space to eat in the kitchen for the family as well as in the large living space when entertaining," says Kozlitz.

"Interiors are often quite neutral and pared back. There's a lot of colour outside in Brazil... so people want their interiors to be calmer in contrast." The tendency is to introduce splashes of colour against a neutral background.

"There's a trend for Brazilianism at the moment, which is taking traditional pieces, such as contemporary, and using it as a piece of art or furniture," adds Kozlitz. "It's the kind of thing the Carpasso brothers do with their furniture made from waste products and scrap. There's lots of different wood, such as acacia, wenge and jatoba, which might be either lightly lacquered or rustic."

Nicolau Vergastio, of Raposo, a store specialising in contemporary Brazilian furniture with branches in New York, Los Angeles and London, says wood has always been an important element of Brazilian design. "Brazil has some incredible native trees. The name of the country comes from Tupi (Brazil) or Tupac (wood) – a native tree which was one of the very first, if not the first, exports to Europe."

"Other natural materials such as stone, marble, cotton, linen and leather are also common. Rattan is used a lot; many households have cane chairs and in Rio it is still possible to see cane chairs and reworking chairs on the streets. A typical cheap and popular Brazilian fabric is the "Chita" or Chitão – colourful, light, mostly floral, cotton that date back to the Portuguese level."

Dylan O'Kane, founder of homeware group A Sun Below, travels across South America looking for artisan pieces to sell in the UK. He says typical Brazilian patterns involve natural materials and bold blocks of colour. "This makes the colours distinct from each other and gives more emphasis to an individual shade. The natural colours of green and yellow are ever present, along with orange, red and an aqua or turquoise-blue."

A number of high-end interiors shops, including Baccarat, Christian Lacroix and Patricia Fryn, have all recently opened in São Paulo.

Vergastio believes that Brazil's high profile, thanks to the forthcoming sporting events, will ensure the arrival of more specialist stores. He says the country's distinctive design ethos – providing a refreshing counterpoint to the more familiar European and US design – will only grow in popularity as it becomes better known around the world.