

design & style



At Brazil Baroque

(continued)

panes. Andrea also creates the motifs for polychromatic, painted chests and sideboards inspired from 18th century designs. The paintings incorporate warm, muted, primary colors applied in the traditional manner by families of talented artisans in the state of Minas Gerais. Six layers of paint and two to three layers of varnish are meshed for a fastidiously weathered look. All of the armoires and chests feature hand-forged iron hardware as well.

"My goal is to make sure we have pieces that my clients fall in love with!" says Andrea. "And if they don't find what they are looking for in the showroom, my team and I will work with them to create exactly they are dreaming of!"

MONLLEO GALLERY

Examining a painting of his brother, sister-in-law and nephew, Brazilian native **André Monlleo** detaches himself from any self-fulfilling prophecy on the genius of his art: "I want them to feel happy seeing themselves in the picture!"

Born in 1971 in Porto Alegre, ('Happy Harbor') André studied journalism briefly in Brazil, but moved to the United States in 1991 to study drama at UCSB. While acting in various productions at the university, André taught himself English by learning "100 to 150 new words from every new scene." After painting the backdrop for a production, André realized that art was his calling and continued with his graduate studies in Art Studio at UCSB. Today, André continues to balance painting and running his own contemporary art gallery with his full time duties as general manager at Cava restaurant in Montecito. His **Monlleo Gallery**, which opened in 2001, features rotating exhibitions of Santa Barbara and Southern California artists. Proving the old dictum that 'art imitates life' André recently completed his *Restaurant Orders* series where he delicately outlines the scratchy scribbles of a waiter's notes to bring about an expressionistic and vibrant rendition of a typically inconspicuous object.

"It's my everyday life," said André, who will be showing his own work in an exhibition

entitled, *The Fish and the Sailor*, this December through February.

André's family has influenced his career as an artist. His father was a production designer for a French lingerie company in Brazil, designing sets for photo shoots and shows. His aunt was also an artist who impacted his appreciation of the arts. Perhaps this is why André is currently working on his *Family Tree* series. Inspired by the works of Toulouse-Lautrec, van Gogh and Picasso, his paintings are brightly colored, boldly outlined, photo-like images of family members living both in Santa Barbara and in Brazil. Although he uses grids in order to format his paintings, André is always changing or reinventing his images: "Paintings all change forms," he says. Describing the sensation the paintings hold for him, André explains, "I keep thinking, I'm making history with my family."

BRASIL STONE

The first thing one notices when walking or driving past **Brasil Stone's** corner lot on De la Vina and Victoria St. is the simple grandeur of granite slabs lined almost symmetrically, finished and polished, yet still natural in form. Each slab stands almost eight feet wide and six feet in the air with edges still rough and misshapen as the day each slab was cut from a mountainside in Vitoria, Brazil. Each of the 40 or so pieces that sit idly and gleaming in the brazen sun will eventually make their way into perfectly fitted (and delicately decided) countertops and tables. But for some, including Brasil Stone owner, **Haroldo Souza**, the granite is, in and of itself, a creation of nature's inherent art. "Granite for me is a hobby, everyday I learn something," he says.

Haroldo first came to the United States in 1984 at the age of 19. After arriving in Florida from Vitoria, Brazil, Haroldo simply "looked at a map" and made a five-day bus journey, with his wife Elizabeth, to Santa Barbara. His two boys (Tiago, 15, and Bruno, 11) both attend school in Santa Barbara and play football and water polo respectively. "Excellent" is how Haroldo describes raising kids in town and says that the "very nice, close families" allow Santa Barbara to live up to its name as a great community. "Whenever I tell people where I am from, they say, 'Oh! California... Santa Barbara is such a beautiful place.'"

Over the last decade and a half Haroldo has held a variety of jobs including dishwashing, newspaper delivery, working as a butler in Montecito and selling and renting used cars. Haroldo decided to go into the granite and marble business after remodeling his home a few years ago.

Although nature has bestowed its own

unique imprint on the stone, granite requires epoxy reinforcement and buffing in order to make it serviceable, durable, and most of all, attractive in the home or outdoors. Most granite and marble excavated from Brazil makes its way to Italy for this finishing process, but **Brasil Stone**, in addition to selling marble from Italy and India, offers pure Brazilian granite direct to Santa Barbara.

"Customers appreciate it. They don't have to go to L.A. to get a good price."

BRASIL BAROQUE is located at 436 E. Gutierrez Street (entrance on Olive Street), (805) 962-8868; MONLLEO GALLERY is at 3016 De la Vina Street, (805) 682-5554, open by appointment; and BRASIL STONE is at 1233 De La Vina St. (805) 965-8925.



Brazil's Pan for All Seasons

If you are old enough to have been cooking in the seventies, you may remember the Römertopf, a German clay pan that was advertised to yield the most succulent meats possible. I bought one, only to discover that trying to cook with a Römertopf was like putting lead weights in your shoes before running a race. It first had to be soaked overnight before each use, then heated very progressively, over a period of hours, and it could only be used in the oven. It took two days to roast a chicken. I used mine once.

So when **Terry Hammond** called me all excited about the **clay cooking pans** he is importing from Brazil, I was polite but skeptical. The pans are handsome, hand-shaped with pieces of coconut shells by *Paneleiras*, Portuguese for the women who make the pots. But are they usable? I wanted to know. It turns out that—yes—they are as different from my old Römertopf as Brazil is from Germany.

They are made on the Island of Vitoria, capital of the State of Espirito Santo, using a local clay that is rich in iron ore, which gives them extra strength. After initial drying they receive an open fire treatment. The pans are literally burned on a bed of flaming wood, then covered with more wood for good measure, until they glow bright red. Once removed from

the fire, they are splashed with a natural tannin solution, which gives them their beautifully burnished appearance. The short of it is, Brazilian clay pans are extremely rugged. "You can use these like cast iron pans," Terry says. "The only precaution to take is to seal your pan with oil before the first use. Just coat it with olive oil, and place it on the stove top over low heat until the oil disappears," Terry instructs. "Let the pan cool down, wash with a mild soap, and it is ready to use."

I have been using mine regularly, mostly for stewed chicken, but also for vegetarian dishes, both in the oven and on the stove. I love it. Not only do all the flavors get simmered to perfection, but the clay retains heat for an amazingly long time, so it makes the perfect serving dish.



MOQUECA CAPIXABA

Terry's Brazilian girlfriend, Ligia (owner of Brazil 2U Catering, 896-8837, www.brazil2u.com), brought this traditional dish, Moqueca Capixaba, to one of our monthly Slow Food potlucks. It was a hit. This is her recipe.

Ingredients for 4 persons

- 2 lbs. fresh **fish steaks** (local seabass is best!)
- 2 bunches of **cilantro**
- 2 bunches of **green onion**
- 2 small **white onion**
- 4 medium **tomatoes**
- Olive oil**
- 1/4 cup cup minced **garlic**
- 1 **lemon**
- 1 **lime**
- Salt and pepper** (preferably red pepper or cayenne)

Preparation

Clean the fish by squeezing lemon on both sides, rinse with pure water. Place the fish in salted water and refrigerate for about 30 minutes to one hour. In a clay pan, generously apply olive oil to bottom of pan, now place the vegetables in layers: first garlic, then white onion, then tomatoes, then cilantro. Now place a layer of your fish steaks on top, then start another vegetable layer. Now add a little olive oil on top of the ingredients and cook on medium heat to simmer. Reduce to low heat and cook with lid on for about 20 minutes, more or less. Salt and pepper to taste.

Serve at the table on decorative iron stand with side of white rice—and enjoy the praise of your guests!