

PRESS RELEASE

Skopje, May 29, 2003

In a reception held at the United States Embassy Residence yesterday at 6:00 pm, Aid to Artisans Steering Committee Chairperson Linda Butler and US Ambassador Lawrence Butler congratulated the winners of the first annual "Made in Macedonia" Design Competition. This competition was sponsored by Aid to Artisans, a United States Government-funded project for the promotion of Macedonian handicrafts. Co-sponsors include the Macedonian Ministry of Culture and the Macedonian Ministry of Economy.

Sixty seven Macedonian designers and producers applied for the competition. Of these, three received an honorable mention award and three were selected as the winning designers. The Grand Prize winner, Jovica Baru, won for his line of wooden children's toys. The other two design prizes were given to Jovan Petrovski, for his line of children's winterwear, scarves and accessories with traditional Macedonian accents, and Biljana Klekacoska, for her innovative silver and enamel filigree collection.

These three designers were awarded a \$1000 3-week contract to design a line of products for the local market, which will also be reviewed for inclusion on international gift fairs. Contest winners will also have the opportunity to "shadow" and collaborate with ATA designers. The Grand Prize Winner will also receive an invitation to attend a two-week Market Readiness Training in New York City.

Three other designers received Honorable Mention Awards, and a \$300 contract to develop a small product line for Aid to Artisans. They are: Biljana Stefkovska-Savic, for figures in paper mache; Julijana Savic-Dineva, whose drawings will form the basis for a line of embroidered pillows; and Tome Dzambazovski for his line of embroidered accessories.

"We are very pleased to have the opportunity to recognize Macedonian designers. The high number of applicants is a testament to the design talent in Macedonia, and I know that selecting winners must have been a big challenge for the members of the jury. I am looking forward to seeing the wonderful Macedonian products that are developed as a result of the collaboration between these winning designers and Aid to Artisans," says Linda Butler, Chairperson of the Aid to Artisans Steering Committee.

The purpose of this competition is to encourage and recognize talented Macedonia product designers, and identify new designers to work with Aid to Artisans in the development of new home and gift products that can be made in Macedonia for the local and export markets.

The winners were selected in a blind competition by a 3-person jury of local and international experts, including Dijana Tomic-Radevska, a local artist, home furnishings designer and retailer; Lynda Grose, a product designer whose past experience includes many years as a product designer for the American fashion brand Esprit; and Maurice Schillinger, the owner of a retail chain of six large home and garden stores in Switzerland.

Submissions were judged on:

- Product Marketability
- Cultural Value
- Innovation and Creativity
- Practicality of Design
- Sustainability

The three-year “Made in Macedonia” project, sponsored by the United States Agency for International Development through the U.S. Embassy, is designed to foster local and export markets for handmade craft products from Macedonia, thus generating employment and increased income for artisans.

Aid to Artisans Mission Statement

Aid to Artisans, a nonprofit organization, offers practical assistance to artisans worldwide, working in partnerships to foster artistic traditions, cultural vitality, improved livelihoods and community well-being. Through collaboration in product development, business skills training and development of new markets, Aid to Artisans provides sustainable economic and social benefits for craftspeople in an environmentally sensitive and culturally respectful manner.

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