

*Inauguration of the  
Renovated Room C  
The "Brazil Room"*



WTO OMC

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As part of the overall renovation of the WTO headquarters, the Centre William Rappard, the Brazil room has been renovated and is being re-inaugurated by Director-General Roberto Azevêdo.

The renovation will return the room to the precise configuration of the original design.

While still acting as Permanent Representative of Brazil to the WTO, Director-General Azevêdo played an important role in coordinating efforts to ensure the authenticity of the renovation.

The Brazilian Government offered, as long ago as 1937, the necessary funds for the decoration and furnishing of one of the three new committee rooms built when the International Labour Office (ILO) headquarters in the Centre William Rappard was expanded in 1937.

At that time, it was the practice of governments and institutions to provide to the ILO gifts in the form of art work, books, furniture, decorations and other donations for the Centre William Rappard which was the first Geneva building specifically designed for an international organization.

The Swiss government was the first to provide such a gift by offering the land for the construction of the original building in 1922.

But the Brazilian proposal ran into several technical difficulties and it was not until 1949 when the decoration of what was to become "The Brazil room" got under way.

The first complication was to obtain sufficient quantities of the right kind of leather for the walls. The original plan was to panel the walls with different kinds of Brazilian wood but, eventually, the material chosen was leather made from goat skin.



After the walls were panelled with durable leather, the designers needed to put in place two other important elements for the room; the coat of arms of Brazil and a map of the country.

The coat of arms, which still rests above the door to the room, was carved in wood following a mould obtained through the Brazilian Consulate in Geneva. The map of Brazil was made of glass ornamented with gold leaf. The map, which decorates the north wall of the room, was designed by Jean Desnos, an *art deco* furniture artist from Lyon. All this decoration work was completed in 1951.



One of the peculiarities of the map is that the location and the name of the current capital of the country, Brasília, is not featured, since the city was planned and developed only in 1956 and did not replace Rio de Janeiro as the capital of Brazil until 1960.

The furniture for the room was supplied by the Brazilian employers' associations respectively the Confederação Nacional do Comércio and the Confederação Nacional da Indústria.

The material supplied consisted of an oval committee table of Brazilian wood, curtains coloured in the same green which is prominent in the Brazilian flag and armchairs made of wood with leather dyed a similar green.

When the ILO moved to its current headquarters in 1975, some of this furniture was taken to the new premises and never returned to its original setting. But it was decided that the map, the leather panelled walls and the coat of arms would remain in the room.



As for the present “Salle du Brésil”, its refurbishing was part of the renovation of the overall WTO building which began in 2008. Given that the original furniture could not be recovered, the Brazilian National Confederation of Industry stepped in and decided to offer a replica of the original furniture.

The furniture includes an oval table made entirely in Brazilian wood, and a set of wooden chairs upholstered in green leather – one of the colours in the Brazilian flag. The design of the new table is a precise reconstruction of the original table designed by M. Epitoux . The furniture in the room is made from Brazilian wood that is certified as being harvested from sustainable forest.

