

OUTSTANDING INTERNATIONAL PRESENCE AT PIEDRA 2006

By: ifema - 20/06/2006

fair welcomed some 31.744 professionals, a 17% increase compared to the last edition

The sixth edition of the International Natural Stone Fair, PIEDRA 2006, closed its doors last 13th May. This event presented an especially strong international dimension and achieved some highly favourable results. The fair, which featured the participation of some 936 direct exhibitors and represented companies and presented a net exhibition area measuring 26,267 square metres throughout Halls 4, 6, 8 and 10 at FERIA DE MADRID, welcomed the largest number of visitors in its history, 31,744 in all. This figure represents a 17% increase compared to the last edition and confirms the considerable interest that this event generates among professionals from the industry.

This overall figure includes visitors who exclusively visited PIEDRA, which on this occasion came to 17,407 professionals - a 6.2% increase with respect to PIEDRA 2004 -, as well as groups of students, guests and a percentage of visitors from VETECO who, given the coincidence and shared exhibition contents of the two fairs, also attended PIEDRA.

. Portugal, Italy, France, the United States and the United Kingdom were the main countries of origin of the foreign buyers who attended the fair.

Another of the characteristics of PIEDRA 2006 was its outstanding international scope, both in terms of supply and demand. In this respect, we might highlight the fact that 41% of the exhibiting companies at this edition were of foreign origin and that the attendance of foreign buyers accounted for 11.5% of the total visitor figure, which represents an 8.3% increase compared to PIEDRA 2004. All of this was backed by a number of promotional campaigns, return trade missions organised by regional export bodies and the fair's International Buyers Programme, organised in collaboration with the Chamber of Trade and Industry of Madrid, which, once again this year, proved to be a highly effective tool.

On this occasion, the Buyers Programme focused on the United States, the countries of the European Union, Mexico, Korea, Japan and the Persian Gulf countries, all priority markets due to their status as leading importers of natural stone throughout the world. In this respect, due to the selection of buyers carried out by IFEMA in conjunction with the Marble Institute of America (MIA) and the Hudson Economic Group, this edition witnessed an almost threefold increase in the number of professionals from the United States.

For these visitors and for Spanish companies interested in doing business in new areas, a 'Welcome Meeting' was organised on the first day of the fair, where the participants were given an opportunity to discover the new trends and characteristics of both markets, through the presentations delivered by a number of renowned experts in the field, such as the following: Manuel Regueiro, on behalf of the FDP; Gari Distelhorst, on behalf of MIA, and Lloyd Henry, on behalf of the Hudson Economic Group.

The countries that played the most prominent role at PIEDRA 2006 included Portugal, Italy, France, the United Kingdom, Turkey and Germany. Furthermore, we might highlight the increasing number of professionals from Andorra, Argentina, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, the United Arab Emirates, India, Ireland, Japan, Morocco, Mexico, the Czech Republic and South Africa, among others. In total, the fair recorded buyers from some 76 countries, 13 more countries than at the previous edition.

With regard to the Spanish visitors, whose total number witnessed an increase of 6.21%, we might highlight the professionals who travelled to the fair from all the Spanish regions, the majority from Madrid, Andalusia, Castile-Leon, Galicia and the Valencian Region.

. Importers, building companies, architects and decorators were among the largest groups of professionals at this edition.

According to sector of activity, all areas significantly increased their attendance at the fair, especially professionals from import companies, who doubled in number and accounted for more than 5% of total attendance, as well as professionals from the world of construction - building companies, engineering companies, developers -, who accounted for 13.4% of total attendance.

The fair's promotion of specific measures aimed at architects and the staging, for the first time, of the International Architecture Congress at PIEDRA, organised by the FDP, the Stone Association of the Madrid Region and the Department for Economic Affairs and Technological Innovation of the Madrid Regional Government, significantly boosted the presence of architects at the fair. Alongside this group, we might highlight the professionals from the decoration and interior design sector, as well as professionals connected to the fields of art and handicrafts, all of whom were attracted by the extensive variety of products, ideas and new materials at PIEDRA, as well as the presentation of two unique exhibitions: Photosculpture: R + D + art in Relation to the Work 'IKONOS PÉTREOS: A Proposal by Ricardo Santonja', developed by the Higher School of Architecture of Madrid and the lecturer, Ricardo Santonja; an exhibition of the winning sculptures and projects entered for the First International Stone Sculpture

Competition, IDEA.

In order to mark the staging of PIEDRA 2006, the fair also hosted the presentation of the PIEDRA 2006 Architecture Awards, an initiative undertaken by IFEMA and the Spanish Natural Stone Federation, FDP, with a view to promoting the use of Spanish natural stone and promoting a greater awareness of its richness, quality and decorative qualities within the building sector.

This awards presentation, which took place at the North Convention Centre at IFEMA at the end of the International Architecture Congress, featured the participation of the following figures: Manuel Fernández Blanco, Chairman of the Organizing Committee of PIEDRA and President of the FDP; Antonio Lamela, Chairman of the Awards Jury; Ricardo Aroca, architect; Sergio de Miguel, the Congress Organizer, and Carlos Gonzalez, the Head of Marketing at IFEMA.

Out of the 33 projects that were entered for the competition, the Jury presented the award to the Rehabilitation of the Wall of San Miguel Alto in Granada, a project carried out by the architect, Antonio Jiménez Torrecillas. The following projects received Honourable Mentions: the Court Building at Cervera de Pisuerga (Palencia), carried out by Rubén Picado Fernández and M^a José de Blas Gutiérrez, from the Architecture Studio, Picado de Blas Arquitectos; the New Headquarters at the Municipal Council of the Retiro, by Rafael de la Hoz Castanys, from the Architecture Studio, Rafael de la Hoz Arquitectos; and the Measures Undertaken on the Medieval Bridge of Poteledesma, in La Coruña, a project undertaken by Elisabeth Abalo Díaz and Gonzalo Alonso Núñez, from Abalo Alonso Arquitectos.

PIEDRA 2006 also provided the setting for the staging of the Second Congress on Funerary Art, organized by the National Association of Marble Dealers for Funerary Art and Related Fields, ANMAFA, as well as for various different activities, trade meetings and presentations.

Madrid, June 2006

For further information:
Marietta Vázquez, International Press
Tel.: +34 91 722 51 74
Fax: +34 91 722 57 93
E-mail: marieta@ifema.es
Internet: www.prensa.ifema.es