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## Group information

If you would like further general information about WPP, its companies or any of the programs, publications or initiatives mentioned in this report, please visit our website, [www.wpp.com](http://www.wpp.com), or contact:

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## About the artist

José Francisco Borges, whose woodblock prints illustrate this Report, started work at eight in the fields of north-east Brazil. It was, he says, “a place where telephones were shouts and medicine, tea from weeds”.

He went to school at 12, learning to read and write in 10 months, before going on to be a herb seller, bricklayer, carpenter and potter. In his early 20s, however, he started trading *literatura de cordel* – a move that would lead him from Brazil’s backlands to exhibitions at the Louvre and Smithsonian Institution.

*Literatura de cordel* are pamphlets of popular poetry, the name deriving from twine used to display the booklets in markets. Distinctive art accompanies the verse, whose subjects range from legend to current events.

At 29, Borges wrote and illustrated his first, selling 5,000 copies in two months. He has created 200 more. Originally, cordel illustrations were small and in black ink, but in the 1960s Borges and others started producing folio-sized prints from their woodcuts, transforming them into a free-standing art form.

Borges’s bold, naive compositions, inspired by politics and folklore, have titles such as *The Hillbilly’s Honeymoon*, *The Woman Who Put The Devil In The Bottle* and *The Monster Of The Backlands*. They are prized by collectors and shown in exhibitions around the world, including the Stähli in Zurich and Santa Fé’s Museum Of International Folk Art. In 2000, Borges received a UNESCO cultural award and two years later he illustrated the UN calendar.

Woodblock art is often a family affair.

Borges’ nephew Marcelo Soares, whose pieces are on pages 30 and 90, and his brother and sons also work in the medium.

Borges, who at 73 shows no sign of retiring, still lives in Bezerros, the city where he was born. He retains a plain view of his inspiration, saying: “I carve what I see.”

In recent years, WPP Annual Reports have taken their visual cues from individual markets important to our company and to our clients: in 2005, India; in 2006, China; and in 2007, Africa. This year we’ve looked to Latin America, specifically Brazil. So WPP takes very great pleasure in showcasing the arresting work, in the woodcut medium, of Brazil’s best-known folk artist, José Francisco Borges.

