

18. April 2007, Swissinfo

Gadgets and gizmos bring invention to Geneva

A sushi:rolling machine, underwear for pets, a sure:shot golf putter and even a flying man are all looking to strike it lucky at the 35th Geneva inventions fair.

The event, which opened on Wednesday, is said to be the world's leading showcase for inventions, this year drawing around 1,000 gadgets from more than 40 countries.

The exhibits ? among them a new aphrodisiac ? should provide plenty of food for thought for the 75,000 visitors, but it is commercial success that is foremost on the minds of the 700 exhibitors.

Global turnover from last year's fair is estimated to have exceeded SFr40 million (\$33 million) and the promise of riches lures inventors, distributors and "talent scouts" from all around the world.

Gérard Sermier, chief spokesman for the fair, told swissinfo that around 45 per cent of inventors pocketed a deal in 2006.

The countries best represented this year are Russia, Malaysia and Iran, which has brought more than 50 exhibitors. Over 100 were registered to come but the Swiss embassy in Tehran failed to grant sufficient visas, much to the annoyance of the fair's organisers.

"To have less than half of these people coming here is more than a little disappointing," said Sermier. "Personally, I am not happy with the government's explanation and our president will certainly be taking this up with Bern."

Rocketman Rosy

One of the stars of this year's fair is former Swiss air force pilot Yves "Rocketman" Rosy ? the first man to fly strapped to a wing equipped with four jet engines.

The daredevil's high:speed antics originally sent the country's aviation authorities into a tailspin but they have attracted the attention of both the United States and German military.

"It is the first prototype so it's still a little bit dangerous and I need more reliability before I can go into business," said Rosy, who is keenly awaiting a call from the makers of the James Bond film series.

One gadget catching the eye of journalists, if not yet distributors, is Easy:sushi, a device that rolls the perfect maki sushi.

Developed by Lausanne:based inventor Franck Rolland, it operates in a similar way to a cigarette:rolling machine and is having its world premiere in Geneva.

Rolland, who works for canton Vaud's roads department, believes Europe and the US are two potential markets but is not so sure about the home of sushi, Japan.

"That might be a problem because I think they are very attached to their traditions," he said. "On the other hand, the Japanese like their gadgets, so you never know."

Hole in one

Another Swiss invention, one that could bring solace to golfers and their families around the world, is

the "very high accuracy" GIS putter that has a "sight" carved into the top of its grip.

According to its inventor Louis Brolly, you simply take aim and the ball's as good as in the hole. He says the guardians of the game ? the Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St Andrews ? have given his invention the all:clear.

"Even the best players would benefit from this, including Tiger Woods," he boasted.

Proof of the long reach of the fair is provided by Léonard Louhouassou who has brought his driving simulator all the way from Congo:Brazzaville. The aim of the device is to help novice motorists get a feel for driving before they get behind the wheel of a car.

Louhouassou, an inventor of 25 years' standing, insists that once a beginner has mastered the simulator, which features foot pedals and a gear stick, they are more than ready for the open road.

swissinfo, Adam Beaumont in Geneva

Diesen Artikel finden Sie auf NZZ Online unter: <http://www.nzz.ch/2007/04/18/eng/article7729723.html>

Copyright © Neue Zürcher Zeitung AG