

## Soheil Mosun Limited— A 'Design-Build' Company

**STATS**  
Soheil Mosun Limited  
Etobicoke, ON,  
Canada

**President/owner(s):** Darius Mosun, CEO; Jack King, president; Cyrus Mosun, vice president of sales.

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**Specialty:** high-end custom architectural manufacturer and design-build company

**Philosophy:** "Where craftsmanship is an art, a science, and an attitude, when nothing but the best will do."

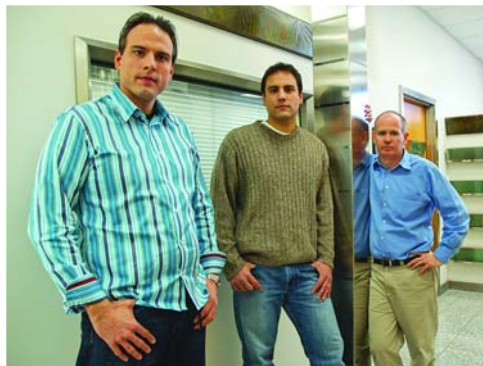
**Five-Year Business Goal:** Do more in the design-build end of our work.

**What ARA has done for us:** "It's a phenomenal resource for what our competition is doing, and also, as a Canadian company, it shows what incredible opportunities there are in the United States."

**Greatest Success:** "Being able to have such a wealth of experience and knowledge in our people, and to create an environment where people feel they're appreciated and respected and are contributing to the goals of our organization. To do that with my brother and father is especially gratifying."



▲ The Soheil Mosun Limited facility from Greensboro Road.



▲ Darius Mosun (chair and CEO); Cyrus Mosun (vice chair and VP sales); Jack King (president).

Perhaps the only constants at Soheil Mosun Limited are change and the desire to take on higher-end projects that no other company can do.

Founded in 1973 by German immigrants Soheil Mosun and his wife, Brigetta, in the Toronto suburb of Etobicoke, the family-owned company has gone from making scale models of proposed developments to offering a wide range of services for developers and designers.

Early on, the company's ability to convert two-dimensional designs into three-dimensional designs and assist in their fabrication got Soheil Mosun into the award business. Today, awards are still a part of the business mix, and the firm has a reputation for manufacturing

truly unique recognition pieces.

While the company's goal is to extend itself further into the design-build area in the many markets it touches, the Mosuns' son and current CEO, Darius Mosun, says awards and recognition will continue to be a niche the company will fill for discerning clients.

### **Wanted: Opportunity**

The Mosun story is one that proves this country doesn't have a lock on what many people consider the "American dream." It's a tale of two people who came to the New World looking for opportunities and found them. "My mother and my father emigrated independently, both from Germany, in the 1960s," says their proud elder son, Darius. "What they brought with them was an education and a very strong work ethic. They had very little money and no friends or family in Canada."

Darius Mosun explains that his father, Soheil, is a mechanical engineer by education. However, being in need of money, he took a job working as a scale-model technician, an important job in



▲ The Academy of Canadian Cinema and Television's Genie Award is made of mirror-polished and gold-plated stainless steel.



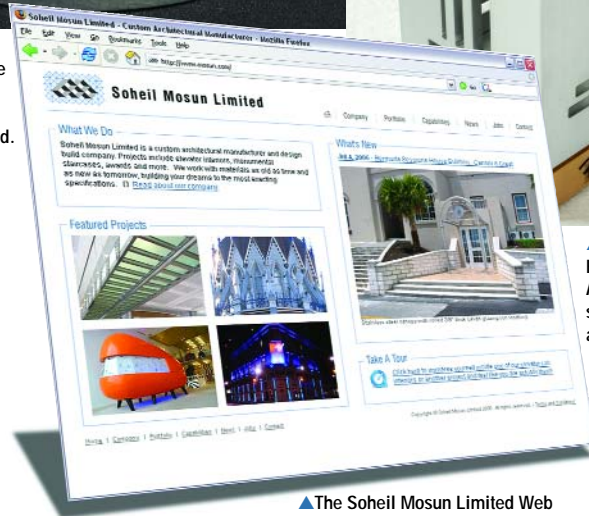
▲ Mosun was contracted to make this one-of-a-kind 25th anniversary Logosbrands award.



▲ The Retailing Hall of Fame Award is made of solid bronze and aluminum.



▲ The commemorative paperweight for the governor of Florida, Jeb Bush, served as a unique gift.



▲ The Soheil Mosun Limited Web site serves as a showroom for prospective customers.



▲ The Genie Award weighs 6.75 lbs and stands 14 inches tall.

the days before computer modeling.

In much the same way, Darius Mosun says, the woman who became his mother was drawn to the energy and excitement Canada offered in the mid-1960s. "She had been a technical draftsman and had worked in manufacturing and at construction job sites in Germany," her son explains. "She applied at the model-making company, and they had the German language in common, so they put the two of them together."

Over time, Brigetta and Soheil Mosun became more than coworkers. They became one of the top model-making teams in the Toronto area, and in 1973, they incorporated their own business.

As with many similar operations, it started in their basement, with a table saw as their first major piece of equipment. However, even in the early stages of the business, Darius Mosun says, his parents were always looking

for larger and more diverse projects to take on, while maintaining their eye for quality.

As for Darius and his younger brother, Cyrus (now the vice president of sales), "We were born into the company. We were always around when my parents were working—weekends, nights, summers—or going off with my dad on deliveries and installations. It's really in our blood."

Darius attended Humber College, only a few minutes from the shop, and graduated with a dual emphasis in manufacturing engineering and business management. Then it was back to work on a full-time basis. "I worked my way up to heading the waterjet cutting division," he explains. "From there, I went on to become a project manager, production manager, operations manager, and president. For the last four years, I've been chairman of the board and CEO of the company."

### New Influences

The second generation of Mosuns began exerting their influence over the company's direction about 10 years ago, or about the same time Brigetta opted to retire. Darius describes his father as being semi-retired and says, "He shows up when he wants to, but he's there when we need him, and he enjoys himself when things go smoothly."

Along with making the equipment purchases many others were making at the time, one of the brothers' first decisions was to invest in a software system that tracked every element and component of their business. "It includes everything from quotations and inquiry management to job-costing, invoicing, and preparing packing slips," says Darius Mosun. "What we have now is a war chest of project data that allows us to monitor costs and retrieve quoting formulas and

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▲ Soheil Mosun Limited's management team.



▲ The kiosks were oval shaped; made from Jatoba wood, glass, and stainless steel; and were 20 feet long.



▲ Soheil Mosun's patina department.

histories to use as similar inquiries come in. To have 10 years worth of information management at our fingertips is really priceless."

While Darius believes it's always possible to pick up a piece of necessary equipment at an auction, the company has also made significant capital investments. Along with the high-pressure waterjet, which cuts a wide range of materials using a mix of water and sand, the firm also has a German-made, three-dimensional computer-numeric controlled machining center, capable of shaping aluminum, engraving stainless steel, or etching acid. While these two machines definitely assist in the company's awards business, Darius Mosun explains that Soheil Mosun Limited is first and foremost a custom architectural fabricator, manufacturer, and design-build company. "Basically, we're an extension of the architect or designer or owner," he says. "We act as a go-between between the owner's budget limitations and the architect's or designer's design aspirations."

Typically, that means the company is contacted very early in a project to determine if and how a particular aspect of a project can be achieved. Not only does the staff understand manufacturing design—how things

are made and built—but the company has a workshop in which technicians still make prototypes.

"A typical general contractor—if faced with a profound technical issue—might not be able to figure it out, let alone manage the suppliers and subcontractors through the intricate knowledge required to execute the work," Mosun says. "That's what

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***Among Soheil Mosun Limited's recent projects have been the creation of the benches and kiosks used in Bosque Garden, in New York's Battery Park, and the design of a bronze window system for the Library of Parliament in Ottawa.***

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we do; we subcontract work to other subs, because we know how to do the job itself." That might mean breaking a manufacturing process down to the last washer, then figuring out how it can best be done to meet the company's quality standards. Or it might

mean designing and building specialized architectural projects.

For example, one of the firm's specialties is elevator interiors, and it has done high-end jobs from San Francisco to London. It's also the sort of work that makes good use of the company's acid-etching capabilities.

Among Soheil Mosun Limited's recent projects have been the creation of the benches and kiosks used in Bosque Garden, in New York's Battery Park, and the design of a bronze window system for the Library of Parliament in Ottawa.

"Right now, what we're positioning ourselves for and what excites us the most is developing a specialized piece of architecture," Darius Mosun says. "An example of that is a temple we're building just outside of Santiago, Chile. It's a glass and alabaster structure and we've been a part of the design process for the last three years."

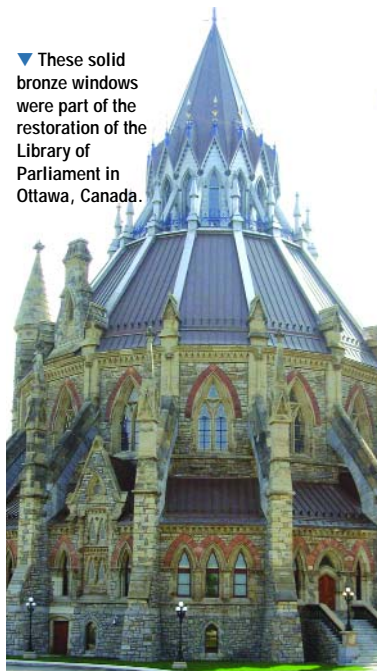
### **Awarding Experiences**

So how does the awards market fit in with the rest of the company's business mix? Quite nicely, thank you.

Not only are some of the recognition industry's more peripheral products—signage, directories, donor walls—part of Soheil Mosun's business mix, but over the



▲ Soheil Mosun was also contracted to make 14 benches for Battery Park. These custom benches were made from Jatoba wood.



▼ These solid bronze windows were part of the restoration of the Library of Parliament in Ottawa, Canada.



▲ 207 bronze windows were produced and custom tailored for each opening.

last 15–20 years, the company has helped create some of Canada’s most notable awards.

The very first award the company produced was the Canadian Curling Association’s annual tankard award, given to the winner of the curling brier, the Canadian men’s curling championship. “It’s kind of like the World Cup of curling,” Darius explains. “Then, through word of mouth, we got the contract to do the Academy of Canadian Cinema and Television’s Gemini (for television) and Genie (for film) awards. From there, it snowballed into all sorts of other Canadian awards.”

He believes the company has—at one time or another—been involved in manufacturing most of the top-tier awards given out in Canada.

As with the rest of the company’s work, Soheil Mosun isn’t involved in the initial design of the awards. Rather, as industrial and manufacturing designers, they take the design and give it life. “Typically, there’s a lot of funding available for awards, and they often sizzle for the first three or four years,” says Mosun. “Then they may have problems getting sponsors, the budget becomes limited, and we get out of the game.”

When awards customers start shopping for lower price points, he adds, it isn’t worth the company’s effort to be involved. However, Soheil Mosun does continue to create awards for clients who want high-end products. “We prefer to be involved with clients who are discerning and who want highly customized work without compromising on the integrity of the materials,” he says. “Everything we do is in bronze or brass or copper or aluminum. We aren’t going to do anything that’s plastic or plated.”

Nor are the Mosuns averse to being creative in their own right. When Florida Governor Jeb Bush visited Toronto a few years ago, Darius Mosun was disappointed by the gift that Toronto’s mayor gave to him. In response, the company created a unique paperweight for the governor. “The next time I was in Florida, I made a point of giving him a gift more befitting the governor,” he says. “I later learned through his staff that he keeps it on his desk and likes and enjoys it very much.”

A grand gesture, perhaps, but certainly typical of a company that has no real competitors capable of filling all the niches it fills, while doing business with some of the world’s fore-

most developers and architects, much of it generated by reputation and good word of mouth.

With a 35,000 square-foot facility and a core of 40–50 artists, designers, engineers, and skilled craftsmen that Darius Mosun calls his “skeleton crew,” it’s likely that any changes in Soheil Mosun Limited’s near future will be more in the markets it serves than in its nuts-and-bolts operation.

“When we’re dealing with architects who are today’s design visionaries, and they are coming up with designs that in many cases haven’t been developed yet, we have to be out-of-the-box thinkers,” Darius says. “We don’t say, ‘You can’t do that.’ We embrace these radical designs and are charged by them.”

Darius sees the awards market as one of several niche markets the company is interested in filling. “We aren’t out there with a sales force, knocking on doors,” he says. “We’re basically the Tiffany & Co. of manufacturing. If there’s a client out there who wants the best and has a budget reflective of that aspiration, then we’ll engage with that client.” ▲

*K. Schipper is a freelance writer who lives in Palm Springs, CA.*