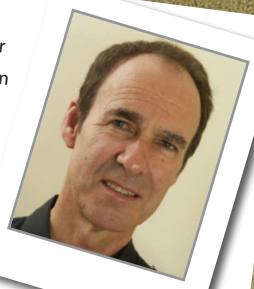


EYE ON DESIGN

NICK HOLLAND



Name: Nick Holland

Job: International product designer

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About: With a specialisation in cutlery and dining, Nick Holland is one of the most experienced and successful international product designers in tableware. Nick graduated from the Royal College of Art, London, with a Masters Degree in product design with a distinction and the rare honour of the Royal College Silver Medal. Nick's first design for tableware was producing a range of cutlery for Habitat. Nick started his own business, manufacturing designs for tableware and housewares products, all made in England, which led to setting up his own product design consultancy, Nick Holland Design, in 1997, which continues today. During this period, Nick was design director for the prestigious Portuguese group Vista Alegre Atlantis for 13 years until 2011. Nick has studios both in Porto and in the UK and clients include manufacturers in England, Portugal, US, Italy, Germany, France, Korea, China, Taiwan and Vietnam. Nick has served on many design organisations in England, including the Design Council, the Design Business Association and the Royal Society of Arts. He is a visiting professor at Staffordshire University in Stoke on Trent, England – the centre of the British ceramic industry. Nick has recently created an exclusive range of stoneware tableware, Olson, for leading retailer Crate & Barrel and is now part of the retailer's external Designer Programme.

Clients: Habitat, Crate & Barrel, John Lewis Partnership, Auratic, Tognana, Spal, WMF, Hankook, Elia, Boots, Minh Long I, Pimpernel, T&G Woodware, Tesco, Le Creuset, Atlantis Crystal, among others.

Each issue we cast the spotlight on a designer in tableware. This time, we chat to one of the most successful international product designers in tableware, Nick Holland

What exactly do you do?

In business terms, I am the creative director and managing director of my own design company – Nick Holland Design Ltd. In practical terms, I run the company, undertake all the creative design, and work closely and personally with all my clients internationally.

How would you describe your design aesthetic?

I prefer modern but timeless design. I think my new Palladio cutlery for Elia International (pictured right) is a good example of this. However, I also admire and appreciate excellence in beautiful traditional or historic designs.

What are the main elements of good design?

The function of a product is essential and the design should evolve from this, not be forced or gimmicky. In tableware, the functional requirements are important, but are far less demanding than, for example, an electric food processor, so the aesthetics play a key and decisive role in a product´s success.

Describe a typical day in your design life.

There is no average day – that is the fun of it. I usually start by answering emails from my clients in Asia because of the time difference. I will then review any urgent tasks in the studio, and only then can I concentrate on new creative work. I need peace and calm, and time to think, to concentrate and develop my best creative designs, although many initial ideas come to me on trains or planes or in the street. I always carry a little notebook and record them for future use.

What have been the highlights of your career?

There are many: Dining with the Queen at the Royal College of Art when it received the Royal Charter in the year I was President of the Student Union; being design director of the prestigious Portuguese porcelain and crystal manufacturer Vista Alegre Atlantis for 13 years; working on projects with exceptional and well-known designers, such as Robert Welch, Sir Kenneth Grange, Alan Fletcher and architect Alvaro Siza Vieira; becoming visiting Professor of Design at Staffordshire University, the cradle for design in the British and international ceramic industry.

From a creative perspective, what are your views on the tableware industry?

In recent years dining, eating and cooking at home has undergone a quiet revolution; while formal dining at home and bridal tableware continues to decline, except for the wealthy, there is the rise of well-designed casual tableware. Home cooking has become a favourite occupation due to the many culinary TV programmes. The result is that formal dining tableware has become more traditional or classic in design and more expensive, more of a niche market, and casual tableware has become even more casual and creative. Another strong trend is the growing preference for individual or handmade items, or pieces that look handmade, even if they are made by machine. These factors have polarised the design scene in tableware into two areas – the expensive luxury market for formal tableware and the creative casual market.





Which designs or collections are favourites?

I have collected ceramics for many years, and have a very large collection mainly of teapots and tea sets, mostly from the 1930s – a period that produced some wonderful and innovative designs. My favourites are from the Shelley factory – the most beautiful bone china ever produced. I also have design classics by Finnish design legends Tapio Wirkkala and Timo Sarpaneva and, of course, the Walter Gropius tea set for Rosenthal.

What is so exciting about being in the tableware industry today?

It is an industry that combines art and traditional skills to make some wonderful products. Although it would seem that everything has already been done in tableware in design terms, it is always possible to find something new and fresh. This is the challenge for a designer in our business. And, as Charles Eames said, "The details are not the details. They make the design."

Calling all designers – would you like to be featured in a future 'Eye on Design'? If so, email our Editor, kate@lempublishing.co.uk