

Domo Gold for Vista Alegre, designed during Nick's time as design director at the company

A 40-year love affair... with cutlery

From collections inspired by a knife his mother got as a wedding present to pieces dreamt after observing an Inuit fisherman's knife, **Nick Holland** has been designing cutlery for around 40 years. Here, in his own words, he tells us about his long-standing passion for the art

"To be a successful designer of cutlery you need the following attributes – the obsession with detail and precision of a watchmaker, the knowledge of an engineer and the artistic talents of a sculptor.

My first commission to design cutlery was when I joined Danasco as design director around 40 years ago. As a recent Industrial Design Masters graduate of the Royal College of Art, London, I was lucky to get the job.

Danasco was the UK distributor of Hackman cutlery, Arabia ceramics, Ittala glass, and many other famous Scandinavian brands.

I designed a collection that was well received at the Birmingham International Fair, only to see the company unable to finance it and a whole raft of other products in ceramics, glass and melamine that I had spent two years designing!

Terence Conran of Habitat had particularly liked my cutlery design, and I decided to produce a new version myself in Sheffield, on the back of a nice opening order from Habitat. I used my own name for the company, Nicholas John, and went on to manufacture other cutlery ranges, as well as contemporary mugs in bone china, stoneware and earthenware, kitchen textiles, and other kitchen products. The company became well known for its colourful and innovative products, which sold well around the world, and eventually enabled me to set up my own independent product design company.

I now focus on designing cutlery, ceramics and glass for clients in many different countries.

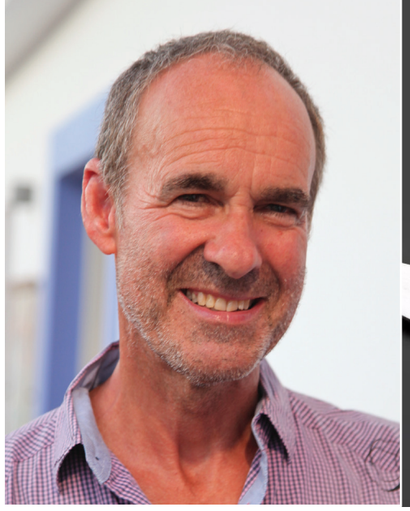
An important moment in my cutlery design work was when I met Mr Kim, the owner of Elia International Ltd. Like me, Mr Kim is a perfectionist, as well as a very astute businessman and it has been a great pleasure to work with him and his team for more than 20 years.

The first cutlery designs I made for Elia were inspired by my love of aircraft – a series I named Airstream, which has three separate designs; Mirage, Mystere and Valiant. Other new designs followed over the years, Longbeach and Sanbeach which had ultra-long, slim rectangular handles, Corvette which was inspired by the sculpted lines of a 1953 Chevrolet Corvette, Ovation which referenced an elegant bone-handled table knife that my mother had as a wedding present, Quadrio knives which were inspired by an Inuit fisherman´s knife with soft rectangular spoon bowl shapes.

A more recent design is Palladio, named after the famous Regency architect. This more deco style is now very much on trend and the collection also includes many beautiful accessory pieces. Elia International always insist on the highest quality of production and materials, working closely with factories to achieve excellent results. This is something that, as a designer, I really value and appreciate. Other companies I have been fortunate to have worked for in this area include Crate & Barrel, Eternum, Vista Alegre, Amefa, WMF, Cambridge Silversmiths, Villeroy & Boch and others.

Did you know?

Nick has designed cutlery for Elia International, Crate & Barrel, Eternum, Vista Alegre, Amefa, WMF, Cambridge Silversmiths, Villeroy & Boch and others.



About Nick Holland

Nick Holland Design is a leading British product design company, founded in 1997, with its main studio in Porto, Portugal. Specialising in the design of tableware and housewares products, especially in ceramics, glass and cutlery, its clients are high quality manufacturers in many different countries around the world.
www.nickhollanddesign.com



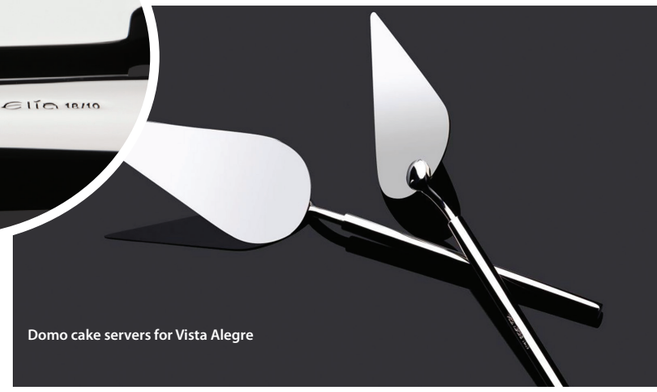
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the number of cutlery collections Nick has had in production over the course of his career.

Bach for Amefa

Palladio for Elia International





Domo cake servers for Vista Alegre

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observing things in the street. Once you are focused, creative sparks can appear at any time and in any place. I use my phone camera as a visual notebook and also make many early rough sketch ideas. Then, when I feel I have some interesting ideas, I sift through them and sketch up the ones that seem most promising. Pencil on paper – no computer!

Slowly, one or two ideas start to emerge as options, and I draw them up in more detail. This now starts to get exciting and almost obsessive, it's difficult to stop, and the feeling that something good is developing is quite addictive. Only after this initial stage do I start to draw the designs up accurately by hand, gradually improving and refining them, and only when I feel it is perfect do I then use computer software to finalise these into final 2D technical drawings. My next step is to develop the design concept across more items and to build accurate 3D models, which can then be easily converted into rapid prototypes that you can handle and feel. In the past, prototypes would always have to be made by hand, carving wood or plaster or metal, but 3D computer modelling has become a very useful process for product designers.

Designing cutlery is a very precise art. A difference of as little as half a millimeter in a dimension can make a real and visible difference. You need to have a great concept, and be a total perfectionist until the design is completed!

I like to think I am, in some way, following in the traditions well established by famous British cutlery designers, such as Robert Welch and David Mellor, and continued by their descendants. Designing cutlery gets into your blood – a kind of love affair with stainless steel."

The creative process

It is not an easy thing to design and develop a successful new cutlery collection. To start with, so many designs already exist worldwide and almost everything has been done before in design terms. So, how do you get inspiration for a new design that is both original and can be successful in an overcrowded market?

For me, inspiration can come from so many random sources – nature, architecture, art, a random object,



Miles for Crate & Barrel stores, USA



Mystere for Elia International. The first of three designs in the Airstream series