



McGRATH

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Fink and Co founder and creator Robert Foster is an inspiration to young designers for his innovation, dedication and gutsy hands-on approach to creating beautiful objects.

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06 Property of the week

In a prestigious waterfront address, this contemporary architect designed home spans two spacious, sunlit levels overlooking the magnificent Hastings River.



Cover image: Robert Foster and Gretel Harrison of Fink and Co.

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\$250,000	\$7,525	\$1,000,000	\$40,775	\$1,750,000
\$300,000	\$9,275	\$1,050,000	\$43,525	\$1,800,000
\$350,000	\$11,525	\$1,100,000	\$46,275	\$1,850,000
\$400,000	\$13,775	\$1,150,000	\$49,025	\$1,900,000
\$450,000	\$16,025	\$1,200,000	\$51,775	\$1,950,000
\$500,000	\$18,275	\$1,250,000	\$54,525	\$2,000,000
\$550,000	\$20,525	\$1,300,000	\$57,275	\$2,050,000
\$600,000	\$22,775	\$1,350,000	\$60,025	\$2,100,000
\$650,000	\$25,025	\$1,400,000	\$62,775	\$2,150,000
\$700,000	\$27,275	\$1,450,000	\$65,525	\$2,200,000

XXX Office locations

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Designer inspirations from concept to completion

Fink and Co founder and creator Robert Foster is an inspiration to young designers for his innovation, dedication and gutsy hands-on approach to creating beautiful objects.

By Tony Borwn



EACH ARTICLE in the Fink array has a story of evolution and development. The iconic Fink water jug was originally commissioned by a Canberra restaurant in 1993. Now it can be found in restaurants around the world, the Australian National Museum in Canberra, the Powerhouse Museum and MoMA in New York. Gallery shops stock it and households globally use it to impress dinner guests.

But this is just part of the jug's story. Scratch beneath the surface and it becomes clear that Foster is not only an innovative designer with an eye for form and function but an adept manufacturer in industry. Together with partner Gretel Harrison, Fink and Co form a powerful team that has survived, grown and prospered for over a decade in a notoriously fickle field. "It was one thing to come up with a design that was unique, aesthetic and utilitarian", explains Foster. "But we then had with work out a way to manufacture it, both cost effectively and to a high level of quality."

Both Harrison and Foster, a trained silversmith, soon realised that outsourcing the manufacturing process was cost prohibitive. "It's not very affordable to get other companies to

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do small run items", explains Harrison. "There were also heavy transport costs but most importantly, we weren't getting the quality we needed."

That led Foster to invest in some start-up manufacturing equipment. "I spent \$3,500 on a hydraulic press and didn't have a clue how to use it", he laughs. "We then bought a lathe, a mill and a huge sandblasting compressor. All of which we had to learn how to operate. It opened up a whole new world."

“The thing that inspires me most is problem solving.”

Robert Foster

The Fink workshop located in Queanbeyan's industrial district is now a veritable factory. Commercial-grade machinery clunks and clatters through a production line that literally goes from concept to completion, right up to an on-site anodising room and dedicated quality control section. In fact, the Fink range resurrected the use of anodised aluminium for designer tableware.

"The thing that inspires me most is problem solving", explains Foster. "Not only was I creating design concepts for pieces but I then had to design and build some of the equipment to manufacture it" And then there's the happy accidents. The eyebrow raising 'squashed' storage vessel was the product of a process gone wrong. The pressing technique used to create this vessel resulted in a unique contorted pattern that resembles a face of a clown. The domed lid continues the

theme as it mimics a clown's hat. It's now a hit with households that have a sense of quirkiness. Other products in the Fink range include the 'soft as butter, hard as steel' butter dish, the sleek tapered body wine chiller and the sensual heart brooch to name just a few.

Due to the handmade nature of the process, no two Fink pieces are exactly the same. Every design is a work of art and none is mass produced. Each article is created in relatively small batches of 20 to 100 units at a time, and each is individually hand finished in the Fink studio/workshop.

Robert Foster's vision is to stimulate the Australian design industry and to this end he is actively mentoring and advising young designers in the ACT and beyond. The Fink workshop opens its doors to emerging artists to trial the manufacture of designs. Harrison says "It allows us to have fresh designs and experiment with new materials. And it's a great opportunity for artists to get hands-on experience with the equipment" By keeping his hand in the making of the tools, Foster is able to inject more personality and humanness to the work. He continues to dedicate time to the creation and concept of innovative and stylish products that have form and function.

After nearly 20 years conceptualising, creating and producing, Foster's mantra remains the same: "Every product should display technical and aesthetic innovation." ✨

Fink and Co
finkdesign.com

