

Vista Alegre: fusing Asian purism and western metropolitan influences

Portuguese manufacturer **Vista Alegre** will be using Ambiente 2011 as the platform to launch their new collection 'Silk Road' to the international marketplace. The new collection, designed by Carsten Gollnick is very much intended to appeal to a global audience. Tableware International spoke with the designer and also the Vista Alegre team to ask about their hopes for the launch of the collection at February's show.

Carsten Gollnick
the Designer

Tell us about your background in design. Has your work historically always been linked to the ceramics industry, and how has it led you to this recent collaboration?

"I have worked for over 15 years as a industrial designer in tabletop, furniture and interior design accessories and of course Hotel and Restaurant related products and concepts. I always loved to work for the ceramics industry, mainly porcelain companies. I observed there a deep and fundamental understanding of the necessity of design and the collaboration with designers in general. I appreciate the long cultural imprint of the ceramic industry in the arts and crafts and design culture."

How did the collaboration between yourself and Vista Alegre come about?

"Nick Holland, the Design Director of Vista Alegre Atlantis carefully surveyed my design projects and career for some years now. In the spring of 2010 he decided to contact me for a new premium porcelain retail collection for Vista Alegre.



And you can be sure that I felt honoured and had great respect for this task."

Talk us through the new concept and the inspiration behind the new range for Vista Alegre. What are the design concepts and features of this range and what makes it unique design?

"The range 'Silk Road' is my interpretation of a premium table top concept for Vista Alegre. The Collection tries to tell the story of cultural integration of Western and Asian aesthetics into the 'arts de la table'. The name speaks of the long traditions of Portugal in trade and cultural exchange with the Asian world. The 'Silk Road' products are in a fine balance between Asian purism and western metropolitan elegance.

"Porcelain collections should be the perfect compliment for the food and for the social occasions of enjoying dining together. All the Silk Road items create an amazing flat and broad rim area, that surrounds the food like an elegant frame. All the plates, platters and bowls have crisp and sharp edges to give a feeling of precision and quality. The range also has soft and deep spherical centre food areas to enhance the functionality and to provide contrast to the plane and flat areas."

What would you say encapsulates your style of design and how does this translate into your work with Vista Alegre to date?



"I am not a designer that follows every trend. I always try to give each of my projects a timeless quality and durability. My products should appear calm and harmonious, maybe contemplative sometimes. A common thread in my design work is always to use high quality materials and I try to treat these materials and resources with the highest amount of respect and dignity. Therefore it is vitally important for me to have the right manufacturing partner who is able to understand my vision and is capable of transforming it into excellent products; and that is exactly what I found in the quality and craftsmanship of Vista Alegre!"

What kind of products feature in the 'Silk Road Collection' and what are the reasons behind the product choices?

"Silk Road should give the customer the freedom to express their own style of contemporary table setting. It is a highly aesthetic "kit" (...building set) for creating beautiful and exceptional table settings for all occasions. It provides a great variety of 'mix and match' combinations without losing its clarity, purity and elegant appearance. I designed items for the collection in porcelain, hand blown glass, walnut wood and textiles."



Nuno Barra
*the New Products
and Marketing
Manager, Vista
Alegre*

Vista Alegre are understood to be the oldest and largest Tableware supplier in Portugal. Talk us through the brands history in relation to where the company stands today

"Vista Alegre was founded in 1824 and along its history, has always worked with the very best designers and artists. Combined with the extremely high quality of the porcelain, created its international reputation from very early times. Meanwhile, Vista Alegre bought other companies and is now one of the largest tableware groups in Europe, producing porcelain, earthenware, stoneware, premium handmade crystal and glass products. Vista Alegre (porcelain) and Atlantis (handmade crystal) are international renown brands, with sales over more than 60 countries, in a premium/prestigious positioning, maintaining all production in four plants in Portugal."

Being your country of origin, Portugal is obviously an important market for you. How has the company managed to build its reputation as an internationally famed brand? What would you say are the key export markets for the company globally?

"Vista Alegre has been an international brand almost since its beginning. Not just because the principal production technicians were foreigners and made part of the best professionals in the world in this area, but also because the company was always open to the international markets, creating partnerships with clients and with designers and artists from all over the world.

"Nowadays, the company is strongly investing in some strategic markets as Spain and Brazil. In Spain we opened last June a 600sqm own store in the most prestigious avenue of Madrid and we are going to open other stores in other cities, to reinforce our presence in the 40 Department Stores of El Corte Ingles spread all over the country. In Brazil we created a company to improve our presence rapidly, with the development of partnerships, and the opening of stores in some of the principal cities.

"Vista Alegre has a comprehensive range of products that meet the needs of various segments: traditional, neo-traditional, modern, artist and glamour. It's a very wide scope of product development, but is something that make us one of the most prestigious brands in the world."

In 2010, the brand had already 36 stores just in Portugal, Spain, Mexico, Macau, China, Angola and Dubai. 2011 will be a year of investment in other new markets too. We have 2-3 years to become definitely a global reference in tableware, hotel ware and decorative industries."

The new concept will be launched at Ambiente 2011. What value do you place on international trade shows and in what ways do they allow the company to reach the international marketplace?

"The international fairs are very important to us to contact our usual clients and to reach new channels that eventually still don't know our products. We use the fairs to launch our new collections, presenting to the international clients our products, and capabilities and thus reinforce our global profile. In this particular case, we did a collaboration with one of the most important designers in porcelain, the German Carsten Gollnick, to create a new collection that has a global inspiration and could reach worldwide clients to whom design and esthetic is important to their day to day lives. Definitely it will be one of the various attractions of our new collections this year and one important novelty of the Ambiente 2011 show."

In what ways is this new collection a change of direction for Vista Alegre? What are your expectations for the new collection, and how do you see the design vision evolving from this point onwards?

"In fact it's not really a change in our direction. It's the reinforcement of the offer we have to the modern consumers. Vista Alegre has a comprehensive range of products that meet the needs of various segments: traditional, neo-traditional, modern, artist and glamour. It's a very wide scope of product development, but is something that make us one of the most prestigious brands in the world.

"It's something that is in the DNA of the brand along his history, to have this balance between its classic roots and the most innovative and leading design. We want to lead the tableware design in the world in a very short time frame. This is just one single step. Our expectations about Silk Road are very optimistic. We think that it will rapidly be a reference to the modern consumers and also to some neo-traditional consumers, with the decorations we are developing. We really believe that it will be a success in our main reference markets."



You can see the new 'Silk Road' Collection at the Vista Alegre stand at Ambiente Frankfurt, **Hall 4.2 Stand B06** and **Hall 4.1 Stand F05**
www.vistaalegreatlantis.com