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[Stephen Craft]

## Fink water jug Robert Foster

Sleek and elegant, with its sinuous lines and curved spout, even the form suggests the movement of water. Designed seven years ago by Robert Foster, of Fink and Co, the pressed aluminium and anodised jug, with its powder-coated aluminium handle, is the flagship of the Fink's range of homewares.

For Robert Foster, who graduated in gold and silver-smithing from the Canberra School of Art, designing household objects was a way to reach a larger audience. One of Fink's first commissions was to produce three different water jugs for a restaurant, with the paltry budget of \$450.

Foster, who didn't have any traditional tool-making experience, designed a pressing mechanism that couldn't be copied. "I made a rudimentary pressing tool to form part of the shape. There wasn't anything sketched out. I could see the form in my head," Foster says. "Each jug requires three separate pressing stages in its creation before a bottom is welded on. The jug is then hand abraded and sandblasted before it is anodised."

Seven years later, and now found in leading restaurants in Australia, the Fink water jug is quickly moving to table settings off shore. "The Water Jug was recently featured in the magazine *American Gourmet*. We're getting phone calls from all



over the United States, from Florida to Boston," says Gretel Harrison, Fink's marketing manager. "The Museum of Modern Art in New York has just requested another shipment for their store."

While other jugs spit water before landing in a glass, Foster's design is ergonomic. "Even though it's slightly off centred, it pours perfectly. Despite its appearance, the jug is stable," Harrison says.

The jug, available in silver, matt black, turquoise, a deep blue, orange, red and purple, is often the only color standing in the all white kitchen. "Each piece is hand welded so no two jugs look quite the same," Harrison says. "We don't manufacture in vast quantities. At the most, it's 100 at a time. There's so much hand work involved."

Retailer Ross Madden of R.G. Madden, didn't hesitate putting the jug on his shelves when it was first released on the market. "It's a beautiful and fluid form. It's one of the few Australian products that speaks for itself," Madden says.

When Alberto Alessi, the doyen of international design came into Madden's store in the mid-'90s, he couldn't walk past Foster's jug. Madden says: "Alessi didn't buy it on the basis of its Australian origin. It doesn't have koalas or kangaroos embossed on the metal. It has its own signature, the unique color and boldness of its design." □