

BUSINESS

Local firm puts innovative designs on world tables

By WENDY LEVY

A local design company is winning acclaim around the world for its innovative contemporary tableware.

FINK and Co is a small Queanbeyan firm manufacturing beautiful and unusual tableware from metal and glass.

The winners of a recent ACT Government innovation award, FINK is responsible for that stunning anodised metal water jug seen in many colours in restaurants around town.

Its range also includes matching metal water beakers, brightly coloured bowls, lidded pots, shot glasses, sushi trays, citrus squeezers, tea strainers and vases.

Gretel Harrison, FINK's marketing director, said the water jug was designed in 1993 as a

prototype for The Republic restaurant. FINK designer Robert Foster was given \$450 to design three prototypes and came up with a winner.

"As a result, everyone wanted one," Ms Harrison said.

"It is now regarded as the flagship of the collection and has been described as an Australian icon," she said.

FINK started life in the ANCA artisans' studios in Mitchell.

Canberra School of Art graduate Robert Foster had already gained an international reputation as a silversmith and designer and was looking for a way to put his cutting edge designs on the market.

The company moved to Queanbeyan three years ago when more space was required for production.

"We went from 60 square me-

tres of floor space to 300 square metres," Ms Harrison said.

She said each product in the range involves some form of innovation both technically and aesthetically, with research and development, including production of the dyes, taking up to three years.

The FINK jug, for example, requires three separate pressing stages before a base is welded on.

Each jug is then hand abraded and sandblasted before it is anodised in turquoise, red, orange, blue, black or purple.

A lustrous polished silver jug with a glossy finish is also available and special colours can be negotiated.

Hand polishing the jugs takes about two hours each.

Another FINK product, the explosive vase, is made from a metal tube. Each piece is unique

as the shape is formed in a custom-built steel mould locked together with hydraulic rams.

The explosive vase featured in the *International Design Year Book 2000* and is made from a metal tube.

FINK also produces and distributes work by other artists, such as the sets of shot glasses by Elisabeth Kelly.

Mr Foster is also working on a prototype teapot for Alessi as well as continuing to make works for galleries and private collectors.

The FINK products are sold in 35 outlets around Australia and in New Zealand and there are plans to export to Europe and the United States.

In the ACT, they are available from the National Gallery, Regatta Point and from Flair at Manuka.

www.finkdesign.com



Picture: MARTIN JONES

FINK marketing director Gretel Harrison shows two examples of the firm's innovative products in the Queanbeyan workshop.