



The evolution of Vista Alegre

January 27, 2024

As Vista Alegre celebrates 200 years of creating l'art de la table, Tableware International's editor Mairead Wilmot speaks with Vista Alegre board member Nuno Barra to learn more about honouring the brand's extraordinary history....

Ambiente: Hall 11.0 C81 | Hall12.0 C82 | Hall 12.1 C01 | Hall 12.1 FOY10

Vista Alegre celebrates 200 years in 2024 – what an achievement! Tell us how you intend to mark the occasion.

It's absolutely an incredible milestone! And it's fortunate for those of us who can experience this celebration and work on the brand at this time.

It's 200 years of achievements of history and 200 years of growing together with all those who have been part of this institution's journey. That's why this story can only be told with the memory of those who, in some way, have been part of this journey. It was with this in mind that we launched a challenge to our customers, partners, employees, artists, all those who have touched or been touched by Vista Alegre and invited them to celebrate this very important milestone in the history of this brand that is deeply intertwined with the history of the country and Europe. The first step was to ask them to tell us their memories: their stories of Vista Alegre. From the tea service that always existed in the family home to the continuity of these pieces today. This was the first moment of celebration – we wanted to involve the people who have walked alongside us. Collecting personal memories and knowledge of one of the oldest and most emblematic industries in operation will be an essential

contribution to the construction of the Vista Alegre Museum's Digital Archive, which will aggregate and make accessible this content, promoting the valorisation of national and European ceramic culture.

Then, throughout the year, we'll be preparing a series of events, exhibitions, collections, and very special pieces dedicated to commemorating the bicentenary; moments of celebration for the brand that will show not only how far we've come in these 200 years, but also, and very importantly, all that we still want to build (to infinity) from now on.



How does the company perceive itself? As a tableware brand or something more?

There is a naturally evolutionary and, of course, entrepreneurial character to the brand's DNA.

Founded in 1824, the Vista Alegre Porcelain Factory was the first industrial unit dedicated to the production of porcelain in Portugal. The spirit of persistence of its founder, José Ferreira Pinto Basto, was crucial to the foundation and success of this risky industrial enterprise. A royal decision taken on 1 July 1824, King João VI authorised the establishment of the factory, awarded the title of Royal Factory, in recognition of its craftsmanship and industrial success. These first steps in the brand's history dictated the audacity, rigour, quality and spirit of innovation that has always accompanied the brand.

And it is with this spirit that we are now much more than just a tableware brand. Our core is tableware, giftware, art (with special editions) and hotelware, but we are evolving to lifestyle. That's why today we have a line of home cosmetics, textiles for the home and personal use, cutlery and, of course, a high-quality offer in the home decoration segment. This is the result of the work of our fantastic in-house teams, but also of our constant partnerships with renowned artists and brands all over the world. We are a brand and an institution in constant evolution.

Do you feel a lot of responsibility being the current guardians of Vista Alegre?

Of course! The whole team has that feeling, but above all we feel the pride of belonging to this institution. As I said at the beginning, it's a privilege to be part of this story. It's a huge responsibility to maintain quality, to respect the brand's values, to continue what all those who built it over 200 years have left us. But also, the responsibility to continue the brand... for at least another 200 years!



In terms of the tableware industry, does its future lie in hospitality or are retail sales even more important? What is your view?

I don't think it's possible to make that distinction. All markets are important; we can't name one as more important than the other. Each one has its own needs and demands and the secret – or to be more assertive, the success – may depend on how we respond to those needs. The spirit of evolution, of truly listening to the needs of our clients, regardless of whether they are hospitality or retail, is what marks the future. There is room and space to evolve on all these different markets. That's why it's so important for us to continue to be present at international trade fairs and to have teams spread out all over the world.

Back to Vista Alegre, I'm really interested in the way you partner with Bordallo Pinheiro, most recently on The Meaning – both brands have such unique styles albeit the same parent company. Do you think this sort of joined-up creative thinking is the way forward? Not just for Vista Alegre, but the industry as a whole?

It was a very interesting and enriching partnership for both brands, for several reasons. Technically there is, without a doubt, a great challenge; each raw material reacts differently and has its specificities to be worked on. When we put them together in the same piece, the challenge of making mistakes, in other words, of learning, it's more significant. There is a healthy pressure on our technical teams so that the final result is what we are used to launching on the market. Then, of course, the identities of each brand are very different. Ensuring that there is harmony, beauty and a collection that we are all proud of is another great challenge. The truth is that we liked it so much that we are already doing it again this year. We will have good news to share very soon!

Marking 200 years of creativity

As Vista Alegre marks its 200th anniversary, Nuno Barra tells us about some of the collections launching which will honour the event

All the new collections we're launching in 2024 are dedicated to the celebration of the bicentenary. This means that, in most cases, we've looked at the extensive collection at the Vista Alegre Museum, selected pieces with historical relevance and reinterpreted them, giving life to new tableware, new decorative pieces, new pieces from the textile segment, beautiful crystal sets and, of course, contemporary pieces crafted by outstanding artists and personalities, such as architect Siza Vieira, Joana Vasconcelos, Lourenzo Mattotti and the irreverent OSGEMEOS. We're going to launch incredible pieces that are destined to win many international design awards and delight our customers and partners.

We're going to have a year of celebration, many surprises, many new pieces and many moments where we'll have the opportunity to tell you a little more about our extraordinary Vista Alegre. I leave you with a challenge: Be part of our history! Join us in these celebrations.