



Frank Nuovo's fondness of handcrafted products from the last century, like watches and classic cars, led to the inspiration behind the creation of the Vertu brand. *Opposite:* "Automotive design was always on my mind. I sketched dream cars as a kid," says Nuovo, who loved visiting the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance. No doubt the pair of Rolls-Royce Edwardian Silver Ghosts were a turn-on.

PHOTOGRAPH BY BETH COLLIER. OPPOSITE: ©2011 BY BRETT CRANNELL/COURTESY OF THE PEBBLE BEACH CONCOURS D'ELEGANCE. TOP RIGHT: COURTESY OF 1ST DIBS PARIS.

"While elegant simplicity generally rules good design, building character into a product requires an adventurous spirit," says Frank Nuovo, who has dreamed up some of the most luxurious cell phones ever as principal designer for Vertu. Nuovo's own creative spirit was informed early on by a fascination with artisan craftsmanship and industrial design: classic timepieces, the sleek cars he saw during outings to the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance, and a fixation with Leonardo da Vinci. A degree from the Art Center College of Design and first job at the global design consultancy DesignworksUSA led Nuovo to cut his teeth designing for BMW and Nokia, to name a few. His concept for a luxury phone collection, proposed in 1998, led to the birth of Vertu, a brand that shifted the ubiquitous cell phone to become a passion investment. Materials like sapphire, leather, stainless steel and precious metals made the Vertu a design accessory. "Fine craftsmen and traditional skills were increasingly being lost," says Nuovo. "I felt there was an opportunity to bring that into high technology." vertu.com; 888.999.5303



Stylistic forms from both the Art Nouveau and Art Deco periods are an influence in Nuovo's design work. *Bronze statue by Le Faguays, price available upon request; 1stdibs.com*

DESIGN GURU

FRANK NUOVO



Design period you find most engaging:

The art of the Renaissance is by far the most honest in its quest to capture history through paint and sculpture. I am also partial to the influences of both Art Nouveau and Art Deco movements. The shapes and forms embrace many other styles, and functionality plays a strong role in its foundation.

Dream dinner party guests:

Johnny Depp, Frank Gehry, Joni Mitchell, Stephen Hawking, Robin Williams, and my mother as the chef. They would never forget her cooking!

Design icon:

As a child of early science fiction surrounded by tech gadgets, Leonardo da Vinci—the first industrial designer—was my design hero. There was a wonderful book on him that sat on our coffee table; it greatly influenced me.

Most people don't know:

I spent my first 20 years playing music, much of it as a professional drummer playing all styles from Jazz, fusion and big band to good ol' rock and roll.