

"The ultimate expression in design is to create the finest thing possible," declares Frank Nuovo, a charismatic and versatile man with a real genius in product design. He is the driving force behind Vertu, now the most sought-after name in luxury mobile phones.

In 1997, Nuovo proposed to Nokia that a new company be formed to pursue luxury communication and to build the ultimate communication device. In 1999, Vertu, with Nuovo as Creative Director and Designer, was founded as a subsidiary of Nokia for this grand cause.

Interestingly enough, the logo came before the name. The simplicity of its presentation, a V shape, took form slowly in the mind of Nuovo for many years. "[For the logo] I went back to the most essential human thought of communication. I used to travel a lot and at the airport, I would see people greeting other people with no word, just a smile on the face and outstretched arms. It is a very welcoming expression, which communicates the essence of our concept and style: positive, uplifting, and very human." With that spark of inspiration, Nuovo developed what has become the shape of a V for its logo. The contrast of light and dark came to represent the upper and under side of arms in an open embrace. With the V in place, it was just a matter of finding the right word that would carry the meaning of the symbol, with a lot of name recall. Vertu, the Latin word for love and caring of fine objects of art, was a natural choice.

Indeed, each Vertu phone is a fine piece of art. Nuovo takes the crafting of mobile phones to the highest level, not in the technological sense, but aesthetically and functionally; the aim, put simply, is perfection: "The experience is not only to deliver

something beautiful to look at, but to experience and share the works of artisans and craftsmen. It is about a purist approach, both holistically and stylistically." To help explain his approach with Vertu, Nuovo often uses the metaphor of a wristwatch. "The most expensive and beautiful watches today only tell the time; and they do so only if you wind them every morning!"

With mobile phones, the primary focus is voice and data. Despite the emergence of 3G phones and the ever-changing spheres of functionality, Vertu only offers tested and proven technology so that each phone is reliable and robust in its delivery. For example: while current mobile communication technology infuses the Internet for information convergence, Vertu achieves the same end by means of old-fashioned concierge service. The idea is that instead of having the user surf the Internet as one walks down the street, one can simply press a button and ask somebody for the information needed. Nuovo remarks, "It is a purist service approach, as opposed to a technological approach. I am still the chief designer of Nokia. With great respect to that, we have the capability to introduce new technology, but we focus on the instrument itself and the reliability of such. We stand behind it with great force."

A Vertu phone is exceedingly complex in design and construction, unmatched by any other phone; be it dipped in gold or embedded with diamonds. An average mobile phone has about 15 to 20 hand assembled parts, but Vertu phones have 230 to 400 parts put together by hand, with components in variations from stainless steel, platinum and liquid-metal technology, along with sapphire, ceramic and ruby bearings. In addition to its signature collection, Vertu recently introduced a new series: the Ascent

collection. If the signature collection was the sedan edition of elegance and sophistication, the Ascent collection is akin to a luxury high performance sports car model. "The DNA is still there between the two designs. They complement each other. One does not cancel each other out." The use of material and number of assembled parts differ, but the functionality and design stay true to Vertu's purist approach.

Frank Nuovo turned the industry around and created a new whole market for luxury communication. "Truly discriminating buyers are after such authentic construction and material use, and handcrafting is the only way to achieve it." With that, Nuovo successfully turned mobile phones, like wristwatches, into a timeless piece of art. He expects that his customers would have other phones, so that Vertu would not be their only phone, but rather a precious instrument that ages but does not get old, just like an antique that holds memories and grows beautifully with the user. ●●



FRANK NUOVO

頂尖流動藝術

THE CULMINATION OF MOBILE ART

FRANK NUOVO CREATES THE ULTIMATE IN
PERSONAL COMMUNICATION

BY KIKI CHAN

