

Quality-First Design

An Interview with David Gray, Co-Founder and Product Director, Corston Architectural Detail

EDITORS' NOTE In 2019, David Gray co-founded Corston Architectural Detail and serves as its product director, where his passion for thoughtful design and innovation shapes every product the brand creates. With a deep appreciation for architecture and craftsmanship, Gray is driven by a desire to develop products that combine timeless aesthetics with practical performance, resulting in exceptional solutions for both contemporary and traditional spaces. Before launching Corston, Gray built a broad and valuable foundation in product development, working across a wide range of industries. His experience spans designing everything from suitcases to sideboards, demonstrating not only his versatility as a designer but also his ability to apply a consistent design philosophy across diverse product types. This varied background has sharpened his attention to detail, materials, and functionality.



David Gray

Will you discuss your career journey?

My career journey has been a fairly organic one, shaped by a long-standing fascination with how things are made and how good design quietly improves everyday life. I began working closely with architecture and interiors, which gave me a deep appreciation for detail, proportion, and materials, especially the elements people touch and use every day. Over time, I became increasingly frustrated by the lack of beautifully designed, well-made architectural hardware

available in a considered, coherent range. That gap ultimately led to co-founding Corston. As Product Director, my role has been about translating timeless architectural principles into practical products, obsessing over the details, refining what already exists, and creating pieces that feel both classic and contemporary. It's been a journey driven by curiosity, problem-solving, and a belief that the smallest details can make the biggest difference.

What was your vision for creating Corston Architectural Detail?

Corston was born out of frustration, really. As designers and renovators, we kept seeing beautiful spaces undermined by poorly considered architectural details – switches that didn't feel right to the touch, door hardware that looked like an afterthought, finishes that aged badly. We looked at the interiors market, particularly inspirational coffee table books, and wanted to make these high-end, exclusive interior products available to everyone. We looked at the familiar categories of lighting, switches and sockets, and hardware, and in our opinion, they felt very unloved. Our approach is to bring a lot of industrial design effort into these products. By raising the quality and engineering standard and providing very fast lead time from stock, we have managed to break into the market faster than we initially imagined.

The vision was to create a range of architectural details that were as carefully designed and engineered as the spaces they sit within. We wanted to bring a sense of calm, consistency, and longevity to those small but crucial elements, things you interact with every day but rarely think about until they're wrong.

From the start, that meant obsessive attention to proportion, materials, and tactility, as well as designing products that work together



Corston Architectural Detail showroom (above) and products (opposite page)

COMPANY BRIEF Drawing on over 50 years of experience in the interiors industry, Corston Architectural Detail (corston.com) was founded in 2019 with a clear goal: to create beautifully crafted products that coordinate seamlessly, elevate any space, and feel as good as they look. Corston focuses on creating perfectly proportioned, timeless designs to suit both modern and traditional properties. By designing, engineering and manufacturing all its products in-house, the company maintains complete control over every stage of production and upholds uncompromising precision, seamless quality, and a level of craftsmanship customers can trust. In 2023, Corston moved into a purpose-built headquarters in the English countryside. In the same year, it opened its flagship brick-and-mortar showroom in Paris, along with a warehouse in Poland to support further expansion across European markets. In early 2025, Corston was launched in the UAE and the U.S. As part of its U.S. launch, Corston set up another new workshop in Chicago and took up residency in the prestigious New York Design Center at 200 Lexington Avenue. The company also has a space in the Zimmer + Robde showroom in the North Dome of the Design Centre, Chelsea Harbour in London, and has plans to open dedicated showrooms internationally to showcase the high level of craftsmanship that customers can trust.

as a complete system rather than standalone pieces. Corston is about stripping things back, doing fewer things better, and creating details that feel timeless, honest, and made to last.

How do you define Corston's mission?

Corston's mission is to bring clarity, consistency, and integrity back to architectural details. We exist to design and make the elements people touch every day – switches, sockets, hardware – in a way that feels considered, timeless, and beautifully resolved. That means obsessing over proportion, materials, and finishes, and ensuring every piece works seamlessly together. Ultimately, our goal is to simplify decisions for architects, designers, and homeowners, while elevating the everyday experience of a space through quiet, thoughtful design.

Will you provide an overview of Corston's work?

At Corston Architectural Detail, we believe that the small details in a space – the switches you touch every day, the handles you use a hundred times, the lighting that sets the mood – matter just as much as the bigger design elements. That's why we set out to design and craft architectural details that elevate every room and feel as good as they look.



Founded in 2019 in Wiltshire, England, by a team of designers and engineers, our vision was simple: to make beautifully crafted, perfectly proportioned, timeless products that coordinate seamlessly from room to room. We deliberately avoid trend-driven design and instead focus on pieces that will last – both aesthetically and physically, whether in a contemporary new build or a historic home. Everything we create, from solid brass switches, sockets, and hardware to lighting fixtures, is designed and engineered in-house. We maintain control over every step of the process because precision and craftsmanship are central to what we do.

A key part of our design philosophy is coordination and harmony: the finishes and proportions across our collections are carefully matched so that handles, knobs, toggle switches, and lights all speak the same visual language. That makes it easy for designers, architects, and homeowners to create cohesive, considered interiors.

We also believe in making exceptional design accessible and enjoyable: we opened our flagship showroom in Paris, and now in New York at the New York Design Center, so people can see, touch, and experience our products in person – something digital channels alone can't replicate. These spaces give designers and clients the tools and inspiration they need at their own pace.

Ultimately, Corston's work is about bringing thoughtful, enduring design to the overlooked details of architecture, creating hardware and lighting that feels natural to use, beautiful to behold, and built to last a lifetime.

How critical has it been to build the Corston team?

Building the Corston team has been absolutely critical. From the beginning, our ambition was to create products that architects and designers could trust implicitly, not just aesthetically, but technically and operationally too. That's only possible if you have the right people in place. Corston's growth rate has been extremely fast, with no signs of slowing down. We are now operating in 14 countries with local staff and market specific product. It takes an extremely capable team to deliver great service to our customers and the creative and logistical

functions, too. That team is now over 200 people, who all share a belief in tackling big challenges with energy.

We've been very deliberate about assembling a team that shares the same attention to detail and long-term mindset. Product design, engineering, sourcing, and customer service – each function feeds directly into the quality of the result. If one part isn't strong, it shows in the product. As a Founder and Product Director, I can have a clear vision, but it's the team that challenges it, refines it, and ultimately brings it to life. Corston's consistency, quality, and growth are a direct reflection of the people behind it.

How do you focus your efforts leading Corston Architectural Detail?

My focus is always on the product and the details that make it feel timeless. At Corston, that means starting with how something should look, feel, and function in a real space, and then working backwards to ensure it is engineered properly and made to last. I spend a lot of time refining proportions, finishes, and mechanisms, and making sure every product earns its place in the range. At the same time, I'm closely involved with our team to ensure we're consistent in our approach, from design and manufacturing through to how the product is experienced by the customer.



Ultimately, leading Corston is about restraint and clarity: not rushing to add products for the sake of it, but focusing our efforts on creating well-considered architectural details that architects, designers, and homeowners can rely on for years to come.

Did you always know that you had an entrepreneurial spirit and desire to build your own business?

I don't think I ever set out thinking, "I want to be an entrepreneur." What I have always been strong in is a point of view about design, quality, and how things should be made. I've always been frustrated by compromises – products that looked right but didn't feel right, or were beautifully designed, but poorly engineered.



Designing and getting a product to fruition is a balancing act where you need to consider everything. Once you've gone to that level of detail, you end up designing the business model and systems around that. So, the challenge becomes less about product and more about solving the other issues down the chain. As we grow in size, we spend a lot of time designing manufacturing processes to scale in line with our sales and new customers. That flexibility of solving the next issue in order to make customers happy is what we are about.

Corston really grew out of that frustration. It was less about starting a business for the sake of it and more about wanting to create something better – details that people interact with every day, done properly, without shortcuts. The entrepreneurial side came later, almost as a necessity, once it became clear that the only way to achieve that standard was to build it ourselves.

So no, I didn't always identify as an entrepreneur. But I've always been driven to solve problems thoughtfully, obsess over the details, and take responsibility for the outcome.

What advice do you offer to young people beginning their careers?

Building the right team has been absolutely critical to Corston's success. From the very beginning, we set out to create products that are beautifully designed, meticulously engineered, and built to last – and that simply isn't possible without people who genuinely care about detail. We've been very deliberate about surrounding ourselves with individuals who share our values: curiosity, craftsmanship, and a willingness to challenge "how things have always been done." The strength of the business today is a direct reflection of the people behind it.

My advice would be to take the long view. Early on, focus less on job titles and more on learning. Be curious, ask questions, and don't shy away from the less glamorous parts of a role; that's often where the most valuable understanding comes from.

Most importantly, take pride in doing things properly. Attention to detail, integrity in your work, and a genuine passion for what you're building will always set you apart. ●