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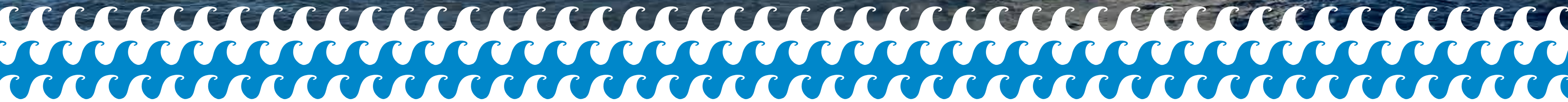


*The ART
of DESIGN*



The New Wave

A NEW GENERATION OF WEALTHY AND VISIONARY OWNERS COUPLED WITH ADVANCES IN TECHNOLOGY AND MATERIALS ARE PUSHING BOUNDARIES IN THE SUPERYACHT INDUSTRY, WRITES **TIM THOMAS**



SEEING THE DRAMATIC

Philippe Starck-designed superyacht A for the first time is an unnerving experience. Her radical lines seem incongruous against those of the more traditional yachts she is moored next to, and even now – nearly six years after her launch – she still has the ability to split opinion and cause animated argument. Love her or hate her, though, she is indicative of an industry that is experiencing a quiet revolution. From exterior lines to interior design, and high-tech bridges to the latest in audio-visual gadgetry, the boundaries are being pushed, even in the most unassuming builds.

‘The superyacht industry has changed dramatically over the years,’ says Jonathan Beckett, chief executive of brokerage firm Burgess. ‘Yachts are

getting bigger and bigger, and people no longer take no for an answer. There are all sorts of solutions being found for what, 20 years ago, would have been impossible. And it’s a lot more about style now – back then, yachts were much more ship-like. I was recently talking to a client who wanted a 35-knot submarining yacht that could go under the water when the weather picked up. And why not?’

‘As designers, yards and buyers become more confident about stepping away from the norm,’ says Christopher Craven of SuperYachts-Monaco, ‘there’s a natural progression to more radical lines and highly individual projects, but what we are seeing is more yacht for your euro.’

Interior design is among the elements making leaps and bounds.

‘Owners are far more expressive in their tastes than 10 years ago,’ Craven explains, ‘and there is, without doubt, a more personal feel to almost every yacht I inspect.’ Whether it’s the use of unusual materials, re-imagining the conventional two-saloons-and-a-formal-dining-area layout to incorporate a spa, double-height saloon, opening balcony and cinema, or simply custom design to showcase an owner’s collection of art, specialists are being brought in from outside the yachting industry. ‘While the well-known creatives are popular and continue to impress,’ Craven continues, ‘it’s becoming commonplace for the client’s interior designer – who did their jet, house and chalet – to be commissioned to do their yacht, too. This has certainly made yachts more diverse and, let’s be frank, interesting.’

In tandem with these styling developments, there has been a revolution in technical elements – particularly in onboard entertainment and services. Dutch audio-visual specialist Van Berge Henegouwen (VBH) has overseen the installation of sound and entertainment systems on many recent high-profile projects. ‘It’s all about the personal experience,’ says VBH’s commercial director Susanne Mensink, ‘so there’s no standard installation. Some owners like their IT and AV fully integrated with the interior design, while others want multipurpose solutions – for example, we know owners who are choosing interactive video walls so they can watch television but also use them to review family pictures and home movies. Owners are also looking to indulge their personal preferences, which can vary from an onboard nightclub to a karaoke bar.’

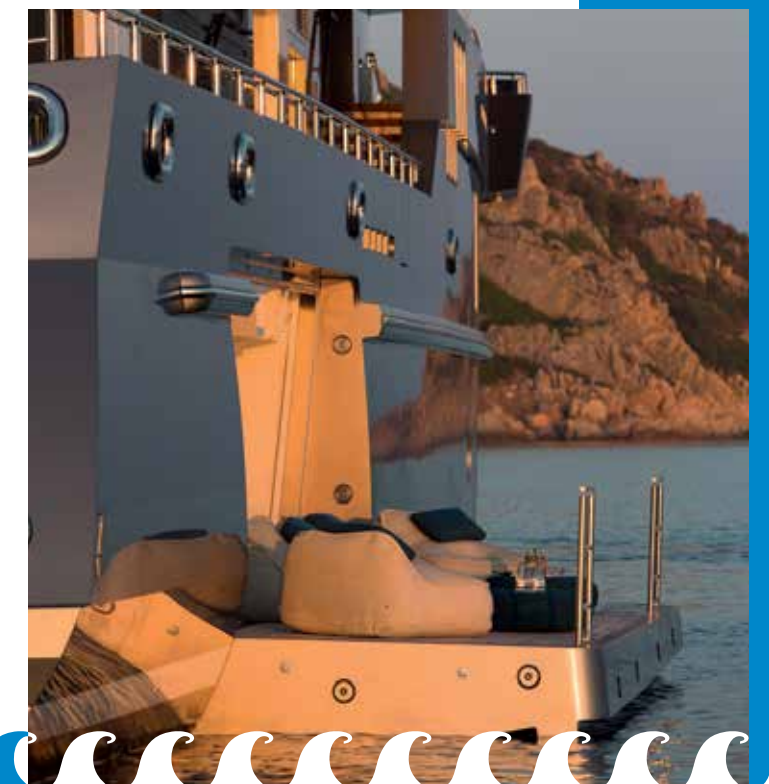
For another, engineering-minded owner, VBH is creating an interactive engine room – the yacht features a glass corridor through its centre and VBH’s LuxperienceLab is creating a projection that will appear on translucent e-glass. Using touch technology, the owner will be able to navigate through the machinery. ‘Main components will be clickable to show general information,’ Mensink explains, ‘as well as real-time data. Details available will include engine performance, power consumption and powertrain information.’

In addition, the ubiquitous iPad is leading the drive toward interactive control, not just for entertainment systems, but also for on-board service requirements. The recent 72-metre VSY-built *Stella Maris* uses a system called Virtual Steward, monitored in the crew mess, which allows guests

BURGESS; LÜBSSEN/BURGESS; PERINI NAVI/BURGESS; VSY/GUILLAUME PLUSSON



“Owners are far more expressive in their tastes than 10 years ago and there is a more personal feel to almost every yacht”



PREVIOUS PAGE

Sarissa has been fitted with a lightweight interior by Rhoades Young Design to aid sailing performance **THIS PAGE, FROM TOP** A living sculpture installed by audio-visual specialist VBH; Philippe Starck's Superyacht A **OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP** The deck, main saloon, overhead view and beach club of the VSY-built *Stella Maris*



THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM RIGHT

A modern square-rigger, the *Maltese Falcon*; Azzam, currently the largest yacht in the world; the *Maltese Falcon*'s foresail becomes a cinema screen; the deck of the *Grace E*



and the most recent Feadship Future Concept, Royale, adds an innovative use of glass to some radical styling. It is something the yard already has some practical experience of, having recently completed the Starck-designed *Venus*, reportedly commissioned by Apple founder Steve Jobs before his death in 2011. 'Glass has been a large part of our research since our concept model, the *X-Stream* in 2006,' says Ronno Schouten, design manager at De Voogt. 'We're not only able to build yachts with massive glass panes, but can use the glass as a structural part in the construction.'

Size, too, is likely to play a large part in future trends. 'The bigger the boat, the more interesting the design and layout becomes,' says Beckett. 'At over 120 metres, most people are seeking something extraordinary, rather than looking at the budget.' Swimming pools – perhaps most famously seen on Oceanco's *Alfa Nero* – are becoming bigger and many have glass bottoms. Yachts such as Fincantieri's 134-metre *Serene* have gone a step further, including an underwater observation room and even a snow room – an anti-sauna with snowmaking.

Meanwhile Azzam – launched from the Lürssen yard in Germany at the end of 2013 and, at 180 metres, currently the largest yacht in the world – takes a sleek exterior line and interesting interior style, and throws in a water-jet propulsion system that offers top speeds of over 30 knots.

Sailing yachts are also getting radical. From the *Maltese Falcon*'s iconic modern take on the square rigger to extraordinary new giant projects taking shape at Oceanco and Nobiskrug, owners are pushing the boundaries of aesthetics in ways never seen before.

Not that radical developments are entirely new, of course. Beckett recalls sitting in a meeting in New York with a client and the late Jon Bannenberg. The legendary yacht designer was sketching ideas it was clear the client wasn't taking to. 'He carried on sketching and sketching,' Beckett laughs, 'then turned to the client and said, "You're going to be the owner for only a short period. I'm always going to be the designer." You've got to be brave as a designer – and even braver as an owner.' It seems the new generation of owners are just that – and superyachting is all the better for it.



forcing herself on you in a way that a yacht such as *A* does. 'A move towards bigger glass surfaces and larger interior spaces is clear,' says Cristiana Longarini, managing director of VSY. 'The philosophy behind *Stella Maris* was to maximise the pleasure of life on board in all seasons without moving from the Mediterranean.' Its design team chose to extend the main internal spaces – the main and upper deck saloons, owner's cabin and gym – by introducing large glazed surfaces. It leads directly to another trend the company is seeing: a harmony between interior and exterior design in relation to the marine environment.

Such harmony with the environment is being translated into an increased drive for efficiency, particularly in motor yachts. While there is a growing trend for longer-range exploration, an increased awareness in environmental factors is leading not only to new hull forms – such as Van Oossanen's Fast Displacement Hull Form, as seen on the Heesen yacht *Galactica Star* – but also a switch to more efficient propulsion systems. The just-launched 73-metre Perini Navi yacht *Grace E* – built under the Picchiotti brand name – is a prime example. 'Grace E is so

interesting,' says Beckett. 'She uses Azipod thrusters with diesel-electric propulsion and she's green – a good compromise between go-anywhere construction, and style and taste.'

It bodes well for the future. 'It must be very exciting for young designers,' Beckett continues, 'and I think there's a great opportunity, whether you're a traditional yacht designer or a land-based architect, to take yachting to the next level.'

Dutch superyacht builder Feadship is leading the charge in looking at future possibilities. While radical concepts – full of curves, complex glass and extreme styling – are two a penny, Feadship's approach is altogether more practical. Every year, the design arm of the yard, De Voogt Naval Architects, is set a design challenge with a varying brief, the results of which are presented at the Monaco Yacht Show in September. The key is, it should be theoretically possible to build the yacht using current technology, which, as senior Feadship designer, Tanno Weeder, puts it, 'makes the boundaries a bit wider for everyone: owners, designers and our own engineers.' Previous designs have included mutating aft-deck spaces and extensive bio-mimicry,

