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luxury briefing

MULTI-DISCIPLINED DESIGN

EMPLOYING A TURNKEY APPROACH ACROSS THREE DISCIPLINES, WINCH DESIGN FINDS UNIQUE WAYS TO FULFILL ITS CLIENTS' DREAMS. NO MATTER HOW WILD THEY MIGHT BE. TALKING TO **AINO GRAPIN**, THE STUDIO'S RECENTLY APPOINTED CEO, IMOGEN SMITH LEARNS MORE ABOUT THE BRAND'S DEVELOPMENT AND ITS MINDFUL APPROACH TO PHILANTHROPY

'Beautiful things, in general, are a bit of a thread in my career,' says Aino Grapin of her professional experience to date. It's hardly surprising then that the recently appointed CEO was especially drawn to Winch Design; a company known as the leading international studio designing superyachts, private jets and architectural projects around the globe.

Founded in 1986 by Andrew Winch, the brand originally positioned itself as an interior and exterior yacht designer, concentrating solely on sailing and motor yachts. Since then, the Barnes-based studio has rolled with the

changing tides of the industry to become a firm that now specialises in three design-focused disciplines, offering turnkey design services across the board.

Based in a riverside development overlooking the Thames, Winch Design is a 90-strong operation working across three studios, all while maintaining its goal of creating its clients' dreams.

In her role as CEO, Grapin is responsible for ensuring the company is 'as successful and competitive as possible', coordinating with Andrew as Creative Director and adding her business knowledge to fuel the design-led approach that drives the brand.

Following beginnings in strategy consulting at Bain & Co, then nearly a decade at Christie's and a stint at online art auctioneer Paddle8, Aino has amassed a wealth of strategic and operational know-how as well as a keen interest in the arts.

Aino reflects that coming from this background, 'it took a lot of vision for the company founders to look outside their industries and approach me to be a custodian for the company,' but attributes this fresh perspective as being one

of her major strengths within the company. As Aino explains: 'Ultimately, I am in a business role but because Winch Design stands for creative excellence, my role also requires passion, creativity and an understanding of our clients.'

It's this enthusiasm that has led to partnerships with the best shipyards in the world: Lürssen, Amels, Feadship, A&R, CRN Yacht, Heesen, JEANNEAU and Nobiskrug to name but a few. One of Winch Design's current projects is an 85m yacht with Nobiskrug, 'which we've designed inside and out and is a very dynamic motor-yacht concept with a striking, dark-blue hull and white superstructure.'



In addition to the design studio's creative achievements, Winch Design contributes to numerous charities in both time and money. 'Every year, our target is to donate about £1,000 and one day per employee.' Over the last few years, a major recipient of these funds has been the Blue Marine Foundation (BLUE), which is working to protect approximately 10 per cent of the world's oceans by 2020. 'This work is essential for everyone, especially for the yacht industry, because without beautiful oceans with fish and coral, the incentive to go yachting is lost,' reiterates Aino.

In support of the studio's donations, three years ago, Winch Design launched The London to Monaco Bike Ride as a fundraiser event. Over 10 days, the team of participating cyclists covered 1,400km and raised over £200,000. Such was its inaugural success, the bike ride has grown awareness in the industry, and other businesses such as Lürssen and Sunseeker International are now fully on board with the initiative. 'It's fantastic to see this event gain momentum but the most exciting thing about supporting

the Blue Marine Foundation is that the damage to our oceans is actually reversible,' says Aino, adding that 'although we've done a lot of harm, we can very quickly reverse the effects of our actions through small changes.' A belief that's been put into motion at Winch Design, which now prides itself on being a 'plastic-free' office.

Welcoming new partnerships with charities, Winch Design also supports The Art Room, which offers help to children and young people who have emotional or learning difficulties through art and therapeutic activities, as well as Maggie's, which provides support to people with cancer as well as offering help to their families. It's an impressively proactive approach to philanthropy that Winch Design adopts; as Aino sums up, 'we basically try and do as much as we can.'

Working in an industry that stands for being stereotypically male-dominated, Aino says 'it's actually been no different to any other industry I've worked with in the past,' while adding 'we are trying to dispel stereotypes such as the notion that women tend to work on interiors while men gravitate more towards exteriors and project management.' Aino emphasises that she fully supports other women in the industry and stresses that excitement around the yachting, aviation and architectural industries can be nurtured from an early age to encourage women to aspire to a career in these industries.



Previous page: Recently-appointed CEO of Winch Design, Aino Grapin

This page: "Beautiful things, in general, are a bit of a thread in my career," Aino Grapin brings her creative touch to the design firm

Opposite, from above: Art Deco design details featured in one of Winch Design's interior concepts; Traditional meets contemporary, a Winch Design concept on board an 87m ACE yacht



So, what's in store for Winch Design in 2018? 'There are some things I can't talk about yet but this year, we will be delivering three yachts, which are being built in Europe at the moment.' On the property side of the business, Winch Design will unveil a beautiful residential development in Cape Town as

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well as island-based retreats in the Indian Ocean. There are also many ongoing projects in the aviation department for clients based around the world, including a Dreamliner, proving that Winch Design really reaches a global market.

Continuing to develop in this new era of Winch Design, Aino's goal is to maintain the business's sense of creative excellence and extraordinary

client service across all three of its disciplines, and it's obvious from stepping onto a Winch Design yacht, home or private jet that the 'attention to detail is second to none, and that's what we strive for every time.' ●

winchdesign.com