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# Andrew Winch on Building Winch Design



Andrew Winch at the old fire station

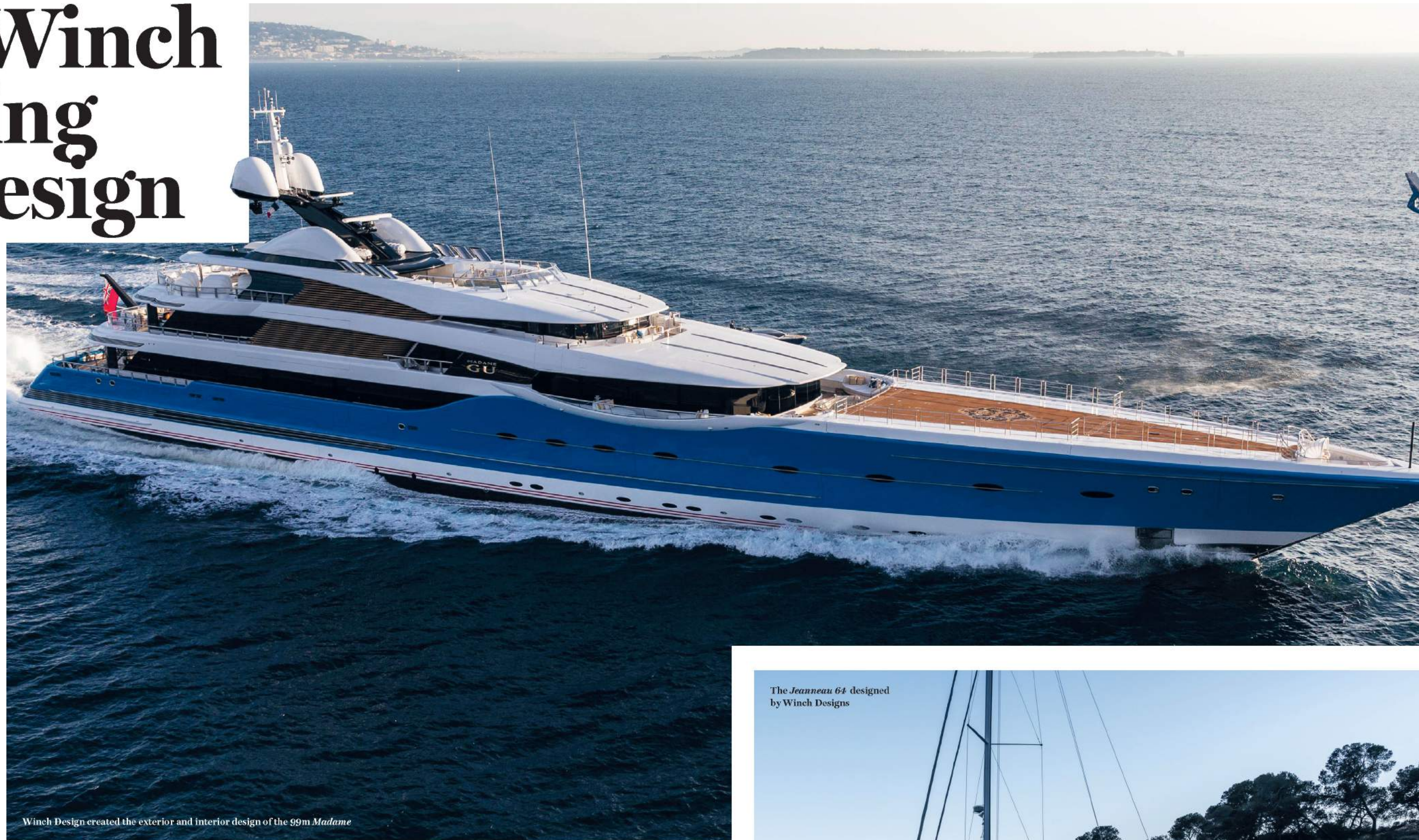
BY VIVIAN HENDRIKSZ

"I love being by the river. Water, the tide and moons mean a lot to me. I'm Cancerian, and there is something very important to me about moving water, it's inspiring," says Andrew Winch, yacht designer and founder of design studio Winch Design during our interview one crisp autumn morning in London. While sitting in his recently renovated office in the Old Fire Station, it's clear to see why he loves working here. The calm, peaceful surroundings of the idyllic neighbourhood and the stream of people and boats that travel up and down the Thames serve as the ideal backdrop for nurturing the creativity needed to design a yacht - or a plane, or an office or a new house.

"We've been on the same stretch of the River Thames watching the tide go in and out for 34 years now," Winch continues while looking out over the roaring river. A passionate sailor from a young age and an avid art collector, he is surprisingly soft-spoken for such an influential person within the superyacht industry. Having penned some of the industry's most notable superyachts like *Areti*, *Madame Gu* and *Dubai* and designed interiors for iconic yachts such as *Dilbar* and *Cloud 9*, Winch is unabashedly open about the foundation of Winch Design. During our talk over coffee and stroopwafels, he shares his challenges as a designer, as well as his vision for the future of Winch Design.

In the three decades since the studio's foundation in Winch's family bedroom, it has grown exponentially, employing over 100 designers, architects, interior decorators and more. Winch Design's expansive portfolio includes yacht interiors and exteriors, chateaux, beach villas, houses, offices, helicopters and private planes. "If we can't survive with that much diversity, then we're clearly not doing a good enough job," Winch notes with a chuckle. As one of the few studios in the world to work in yacht design, aviation and architecture, Winch admits that when he first set up Andrew Winch Design with his wife Jane in 1986, he only wanted to design sailboats. However, he quickly realised that the studio would be very short-lived if he only worked on sailing boats. "You only have to hit the first recession to realise that the sailboat market was probably less than 10% of the motor yacht market at the time. Also, the motor yacht market was probably 10% of what it is today." Finances were not the only reason why Winch decided to move into other design fields, despite never having trained as an architect or interior designer.

"We were invited to design our first aeroplane interior by a sailboat client," says Winch. "He did not go through with the sailboat in the end, but we ended up doing the interior of a Boeing Business Jet (BBJ) 2 for him. It was our first plane. I had no idea what a BBJ was, but I said if it's a private jet, then



Winch Design created the exterior and interior design of the 99m *Madame Gu*

JEFF BROWN/BREED MEDIA

I want to do it. I'm an annoyingly open person to opportunity. I think 'let's have a go' must be my motto for life." Since then, the studio has gone on to work on other aircrafts such as Boeing 767s, Airbuses, Falcon 7xs and helicopters. His willingness to take on all luxury projects, whether they be on the sea, air or land is also partly thanks to the influence of his mentor, the late Jon Bannenberg. After graduating with a degree in 3D Design from the Kingston College of Art, Bannenberg encouraged Winch to learn more about yachting. So Winch went to work as a skipper on a 52' sailing yacht and sailed to the Caribbean, where his eyes were opened to the world of superyachts. "I've grown from that to understanding things like the 156-metre *Dilbar*, which has a 24-metre swimming pool inside," he says with a chuckle.

Afterwards, he returned to London to work at Bannenberg's studio, where he served as its sailing boat manager for six years before deciding to set up his studio, a move which the late designer fully supported. "Jon never accepted that yesterday's solution was all that could be done. He constantly challenged himself as well as the shipyards, designers and clients he worked with, forever pushing them to create the exceptional instead of the norm," he adds. "He taught me to be open-minded and never pigeonholed." This sense of willingness also helped instil Winch with a strong view for what is and what isn't a feasible project for the studio to take on. The size of a project does not make him nervous, not in the slightest. "The complexity of a project or the decision making of a client can make me nervous, but we are regularly asked to look at projects. My initial comment is always 'let me look at it' - it does not matter what it is - and give me two weeks to assess it. I have

to see if we have the right team, desire and if it commercially makes sense for us to do it. Those are the parameters in business." While working on the interiors for the 156-metre *Dilbar* in 2014, he was approached by Jeanneau to work on a project for a new sailboat design. Winch had originally worked with the company to develop a full range of sailboats, but it had gone bankrupt before the first model could be built. Now 20 years later, they were asking him to work on a new 64' model.

"I said I would be interested in doing it if we made a production line, from 50' to 64'," says Winch firmly. The company agreed, and they currently have a number of production models under construction, with the new model coming out the end of next December.

Winch himself owns a 64' Jeanneau sailing boat, which he enjoys sailing on whenever he can with his family. However, just because he holds an affinity for sailing does not mean that he prefers designing sailboats over motor yachts, aeroplanes or interiors. "It's just as complicated to work with Jeanneau and create a 64' sailboat as it is to design the interiors for a BBJ - you have to design every single, tiny detail before it goes into production." All these projects do pose their unique challenges, ones that Winch and his team relished working on. For example, the 156-metre Lürssen

superyacht *Dilbar* was complex for a number of reasons. "*Dilbar* was a complicated project because of the scale of the job. We delivered it all turnkey - all the paintings were put on, all the decorations hung up, the full interior design ready." After approving the initial design with *Dilbar*'s owner and his team, Winch did not see the client for three years while the studio was working on the project. Winch did not speak with him until the delivery of the superyacht. In the end, the design team created

**"I'm an annoyingly open person to opportunity. I think 'let's have a go' must be my motto for life"**

The *Jeanneau 64* designed by Winch Designs



WINCH MEDIA

seven different full-sized, complete mockups of her interior, including the swimming pool to fully understand what the owner was looking for. "We had something along the lines of 27 lorries delivering all the furniture, accessories and decorations. There were more than a thousand scatter cushions delivered as well, each one custom-made for specific spaces on board. We made a different design for each cushion too - that is the level and attention to detail we go to for interiors." The studio's interior design was such a success that the owner requested all his belongings be moved from his previous superyacht *Ona* to *Dilbar* within 24 hours so he could live on his new home immediately. "That's a true story - it was amazing," says Winch with a smile. "The project was about giving him a new home, one that he felt fitted him like a glove and we succeeded."

Making their clients' dreams come true is a cornerstone of Winch Design philosophy, and each project encourages Winch to push himself to the next level, such as one of the studio's larger superyacht projects set to launch next year, the 111-metre Lürssen motor yacht *TIS*. "She is a classic, and I've said this to



*Cloud 9* interiors by Winch Design

WINCH MEDIA

**"I am developing a culture of working within the group to support the group, rather than lead the group"**

fondly and warmly of employees who have stayed with the studio for 24, 25 years working remotely and quips that no one ever seems to leave, they only seem to grow. "We have a talented, multifaceted team of designers here, and they are just as able to design the exterior of a yacht as they are a chateau." At the moment half of the studio's business is architecture-related due to the number of projects they take on, while the other half is divided between aviation and yachting. However, Winch is quick to add that this does change, as the studio goes through phases all the time. "You know big jobs, small jobs, too many jobs, not enough jobs - that's typical, and you learn how to cope, how to go through them while structuring and strengthening the business."

One of the most significant changes Winch and his wife Jane initiated within the company's structure was the transition from Andrew Winch Designs to Winch Design. The new strategy, which was implemented over two years ago, was developed to strengthen the studio's culture and ensure its longevity while supporting its growth. "We were larger than we felt we could handle and Jane decided in the longer-term that she wanted to retire." So the search began for a suitable candidate who would be able to take over the reins at Winch Design. "We said let's hire someone who will tell us what we can do better than we can." Their search led to the appointment of Clive Beharrell, a long time friend of Winch, as non-executive chairman. One of his first tasks was to examine how the studio could improve on its business management, which ultimately led to the hiring of Aino Grapin as CEO. "I think it was critical to find the right cultural fit. Aino has been here for two years now, and we've done a lot of growth and development in many areas, like organisational structures." For example, she has helped implement an internal magazine called *World of Winch*, reorganised the studio's departments across the building and encourages team lunches and activities. In addition, the studio has hired another 30 employees since her appointment and grown as much as 30%. It's safe to say that with Grapin and Beharrell overseeing the studio's business and management, Winch is confident of the company's future success.

"You have to be realistic about the importance of running a strong, stable business that you know many people rely on. But the more we can build talent and the stronger we are and the more successful we can be." Success to Winch is not the be all, end all. Rather it represents security for him and his employees to be able to come in and not worry about the future - regardless if Winch himself is still working as the creative director. "I would like to see this business be more successful in 20 years than it is today," he admits. "I don't want to see it die, and many, many design studios die." However, Winch does not have retirement in mind any time soon. "I don't think I like the word retiring," he muses. Instead he aims to keep himself busy sailing, working on projects and travelling. "I'm going to the America's Cup in New Zealand in 2021, and I already booked that in the office diary. I'm booked up from the next three to four years minimum." At the same time Winch is also keen to share his knowledge and experience with the younger generation as he wants to support creativity both inside and outside of the studio. "I am developing a culture of working within the group to support the group, rather than lead the group. I want to be a founder, but I want to empower the creatives to take and move the business forward." ♦

Peter Lürssen - I believe that *TIS* is a pinnacle of classic design in the context that Bannenberg's first motor yacht design *Carinthia V* was. I hope that *TIS* is considered as elegant and iconic in 40 years as *Carinthia V* was," he says excitedly. Created for a client who aims to spend a lot of time on board, the custom *TIS* features a bespoke swim platform for the owner to give his guests a warm welcome. An equally sophisticated interior nicknamed 'cashmere cream' matches her elegant exterior adding to her timeless charm. "It's soft, gentle and classic. You could say it has the appeal of a London hotel like Claridge's or the Le Bristol in Paris." As founder and creative director of Winch Design, Winch works on the creative aspects of all the projects the studio takes on. Although he does not meet every client personally, he does not necessarily want to.

"Each one of our clients walk through the door with a dream. They don't come through the studio front door and say 'I want a Winch'. They come in and say 'I have a dream.'" He jokes that the team can't keep him off them, but it is clear to see that Winch is proud of the team he has created. He speaks





55m Project Cosmo due to be delivered in spring 2020

# How Heesen is Safeguarding its Business for the Future

Despite Frans Heesen, the founder of the Dutch shipyard, officially leaving the company in 2012, after visiting the sprawling 22,000 square metre facility in Oss, it is evident that Heesen is still very much a company with a strong family feeling.

BY VIVIAN HENDRIKSZ

When visiting the yard for lunch with Arthur Brouwer, Heesen's CEO and Mark Cavendish, Director of Sales and Marketing, the familiarity and friendliness with which the employees greet me and interact with each other catches my attention. Although the construction halls and dry docks are vast and wide, the atmosphere created by the busy craftsmen, engineers and naval architects is warm, pleasant and reassuring.

It comes as no surprise to hear that five of the original 20 employees are still working at the yard 40 years later. Even though Heesen has grown considerably since its beginnings in 1978, its focus on core values has remained the same. "The norms and values of being a family company are still there, and people like that," says Brouwer on why Heesen has such a high employee retention level. "The other reason is that no one day is like the other at Heesen, which is the main factor to successfully attracting new personnel." With no less than 13 superyachts currently in build at Heesen, employees relish new challenges and the opportunities these new-builds bring to the workforce. "It's the same skill set, but it's always a new and different project."

Currently employing over 450 people full-time as well as working with hundreds of temporary employees and subcontractors, Heesen is set to continue growing its workforce and its revenue over the next coming years. "Our projected growth for the next few years is 30 to 40% - revenue and turnover wise, but also in gross tonnage (GT). Our ships are

getting bigger, and therefore we need more skilled craftsmen to build them." Since the launch of Heesen's first yacht *Amigo* in 1979, the size of the yachts the yard builds has increased from 20-metres to 80-metres. Today the yard is capable of building superyachts of up to 83-metres, and Heesen is currently working on its largest custom motor yacht to date, the 80.7-metre Project *Cosmos*. While the all-aluminium *Cosmos* marks several new fronts for the yard - she will offer 50% more interior volume than Heesen's previously largest superyacht, have a top speed of almost 30 knots and feature the new patented 'backbone' to increase structural rigidity, Heesen builds more than just custom superyachts.

In order to fulfil all of its customers' demands, Heesen's business model is split into three pillars: full-custom superyachts, platform-based superyachts (yachts built using existing hull forms and engineering platforms) and speculation building. This way, potential owners who do not want to wait years for a new superyacht can still buy the vessel they want. "You don't have to buy a boat that is three years out there; it's 14 months, 18 months or 20 months away - that has been one of the keystones of our success." Since Heesen has started work on larger custom superyachts, it has also started working on bigger spec builds, building up to 55-metres. "We could go up to 57-metres or so. We do not build one at a time, we build a couple, and we have timed that pretty well over the last couple of years," explains Brouwer.

This in itself is a testament to Heesen's growth, as not all builders are financially secure enough to invest in the speculative building. It can be a challenging option - especially for smaller yards who are inexperienced in developing a

brand or turning a single model into a successful series. But Heesen has fine-tuned its spec programme into a well-oiled machine. For example, one of the most recent spec vessels sold is the 50-metre project *Aster*. Part of the Heesen 5000 Aluminium class, she was sold to experienced owners in late November 2018 as work to date, the 80.7-metre Project *Cosmos*. While the all-aluminium *Cosmos* marks several new fronts for the yard - she will offer 50% more interior volume than Heesen's previously largest superyacht, have a top speed of almost 30 knots and feature the new patented 'backbone' to increase structural rigidity, Heesen builds more than just custom superyachts.

"A year before you start building it. And every day after it gets progressively worse," says Cavendish with a charming smile. "No, the best moment for the customer to buy is when all the options are still open. Changing the interior will cost time and money and disrupts the production process. But we are pretty good at adapting," he adds. "It's what to do when you have a business model with boats on spec." Heesen has been lucky or successful enough to have a few owners to purchase spec boats in turn-key condition, taking everything from the exterior styling to the interior decor and design. "*Ventura*, the owner even took the name!"

Designing an attractive spec boat is indeed no easy task, as the yard has to predict what the market, as well as its clients, will want, even before the yacht has been built. "We tend to go with a weight average of what the market will expect, a bit higher in quality on average, but it is less extreme than a custom. For example with *Trisha*, taking her into a spec boat programme would make me hesitate because of her specific looks," notes Brouwer. "She is a beautiful boat but designed around specific



Arthur Brouwer, Heesen CEO; Right: Mark Cavendish director of sales and marketing at Heesen



"The norms and values of being a family company are still there, and people like that"

- ARTHUR BROUWER, CEO OF HEESSEN

if you plan for a 60-metre full-custom, but Mark is successful in selling a 67-metre, which goes into the same hall, then it has an enormous impact on labour, on throughput times and design. It may be a positive impact on the bottom line, but I'll have to move labour off other projects which means we may not build a 55-metre boat on spec, we build a 52-metre."

It's evident that Brouwer and his team at Heesen are pretty good at predicting what changes in the future may affect the company, but what are their thoughts on future trends? One of their latest concepts, X-Venture, designed by London-based studio Winch Design sees the Dutch yard branching out into explorer yachts. A new range, X-Venture features 50 to 60-metre concepts, which can be built on speculation, as well as designs for 70 to 80-metre semi-custom yachts to show the market what Heesen is capable of. "If someone comes here, it's not a wild idea; it's already developed, GAs and everything is ready. It's a more active offering in the market, and it does attract new clientele to come and talk with us."

At the same time, Cavendish is also aware that the explorer yacht market is still very small in spite of the recent spike in interest. "We are not looking to compete with the SeaExplorers or anything like that," he says. "We compare X-Venture to a Range Rover, a very luxury craft which is capable of long-range cruising." The concept had a more rugged appeal, which Cavendish suspects will attract the younger generation of superyacht owners, who may be a little fed up of going around the Mediterranean between Monte Carlo and Cannes each season. "It's glorious, but I can imagine that some people think there is more to the world than Cannes and Saint Tropez."

As Heesen continues to look to the future with new concepts and rapid growth - their interior design department is set to grow 35% over the next year alone - it does come as a bit of a surprise to hear that Brouwer does not want to move into a larger size segment. "We started at 37-metres, but are now pretty successful in the 50 to 60-metre sweet spot where we operate in. That is where the most transaction of metal boats are." The market for 90-metre plus superyachts, on the other hand, is a lot smaller and is driven by a handful of established yards, such as Lürssen, Feadship and Oceanco. But in Oss, Heesen is not physically capable of building vessels over 83-metres at this point due to its current construction facilities, surrounding bridges and waterways. Also, breaking into a new category could also negatively impact the yard's margin, adds Cavendish.

The CEO has no plans to move production outside of Oss any time soon. "We work with our own people here at Heesen, we believe in controlling our quality by having skilled people, using a guild system," says Brouwer. "Moving our people from this location to another is not going to work because they live here with their families. We would have to rehire and retrain a new team." This reassuring notion underlies the idea that no matter how large Heesen may grow, its values, ideals and norms will remain the same. Because at the end of the day, a shipyard like Heesen is not just a workplace, it is a community that is invested in turning individuals' dreams into reality. ♦

usage. We don't do that with spec boats. We avoid extremes as it has to be sellable."

When working on a new spec boat, the yard has to deliberate what innovations will be coming to the superyacht segment within the next three to five years and how to implement them into the design. "It takes the team of designers, developers and sales a while to decide on what to build and how to bring it to the market. For instance, if we have a new boat, we have to decide if it will be an X-bow or a Pelican beak bow, which can make an enormous impact because the boat will be sold four years from then. If we miss that mark, then it can be quite costly for us," stresses Cavendish.

Turning to the yard's financial situation, we discuss how the yard's spec building programme is effectively financed as the two senior executives explain the Dutch company's financial operations. "We have our own finance lines with the bank, not with him," points out Brouwer. "We have a very healthy balance sheet with a solvability of over 50% and have never underperformed - that is why the bank happily agrees to finance us." While Heesen's current business strategy sees 40 to 50% of its annual revenues stemming from its spec programmes, most clients looking to purchase a superyacht over 60-metres tend to go for a custom yacht as they have a particular idea of how it should be.

Despite a healthy bank balance, Heesen is not rushing to build more spec yachts, as the margin for the different types of newbuilds is the same. What's more, the yard's pricing for custom yachts and speculation builds is also approximately the same. "There is a bit more risk when it comes to custom, but that's priced in because of the complexity of the build. We do consider factors, such as if we build a certain hull form or platform for the first time

then there will be some inefficiency in the build. But at the end of the day, there is not much difference." Heesen is only capable of building two custom superyachts over 60-metre at the same time in its docks, meaning the yard can work on three or four custom yachts over 60-metre simultaneously at different stages together with its spec boats and platform vessels. "The flipside of being so full with production, with sold boats means that you cannot take orders that rapidly," admits Brouwer.

When walking through the facility, it is evident that Heesen is nearly working at full capacity as all the halls and docks we pass through are occupied. However, the team is well aware that its current busy state may not last, so Heesen's business plan and projected growth is continuously reviewed. Every time the yard sells a new contract, it re-evaluates what could happen to its business within the next five to six years, taking into account changes to labour, rates and inflation. "We create potential scenarios. One scenario takes into account what could happen if there is a slow-down in the market like we had a few years ago. We look at what would happen if we take out one boat from our production plans and what the impact would be - not just monetary wise but people wise as well."

The yard has purposefully set up its business so that if it does witness a slump in demand, taking out one boat from production will not harm its workers. On the other hand, Heesen also has a scenario which predicts what would happen if it sells another new vessel within the next two to three years. "For instance,





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TOM VAN OOSSENEN, KLAUS JORDAN



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TOM VAN OOSSENEN



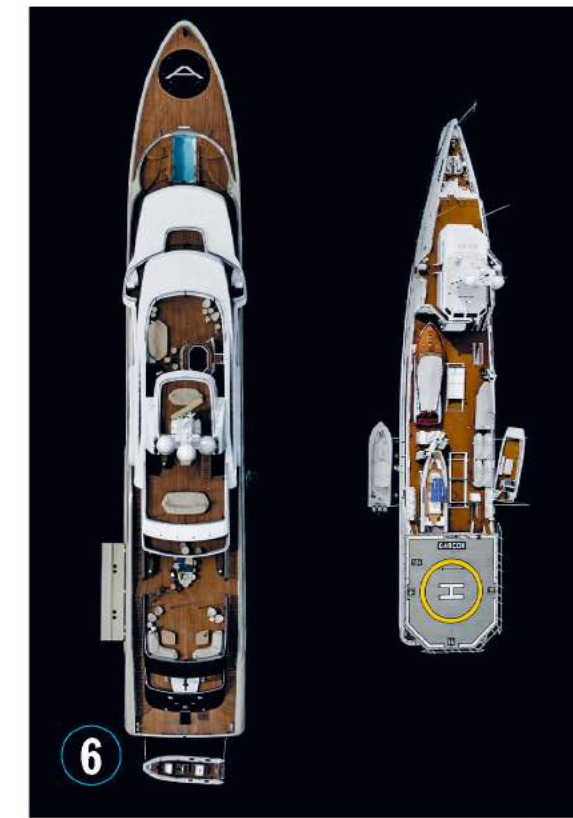
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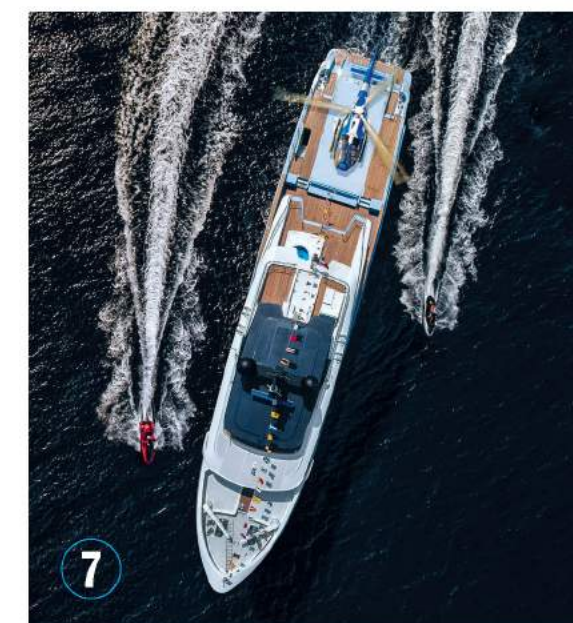


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# A Thousand Words

BY CHARL VAN ROOY

In the digital age in which we find ourselves, we are surrounded by visual material that is designed to inspire and engage global audiences. Superyachting is no different. As a hobby or passion and a lifestyle of indulgence for those lucky enough to live it, yachting is about emotion and owners draw inspiration for their next yacht or family voyage from a number of sources. These composed scenes are a reminder that the yachting world, like many other industries, is a highly visual one, and is reliant on a handful of creatives that constantly push the boundaries in the creation of inspirational material to entice an ever-growing base of superyacht owners around the world. Here at SuperYacht Times, with the help of our industry's finest photographers, we will continue to be your source of superyacht inspiration by offering the freshest and most thought-provoking imagery. Watch out for our next issue where we talk to some of your favourite superyacht photographers and study some of their most career-defining moments behind the lens.



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**1 STRENGTH IN NUMBERS**  
A superyacht convoy rides out the storm together.

**2 JOIN THE CLUB**  
A members-only gathering for some of Feadship's finest superyachts.

**3 EXPLORER CLUB**  
Seeing the world's three largest explorer yachts cruising side by side in one frame was one of our favourite compositions of 2018.

**4 WORK IN PROGRESS**  
Under the skin of Lürssen's new 111-metre motor yacht *TIS*.

**5 DUSK TILL DAWN**  
*Ariva* enjoying the best of London in one image.

**6 INSEPARABLE**  
One of the most well-known cruising pairs, *Ace* and *Garçon* travel to every corner of the Mediterranean together but are rarely photographed side by side.

**7 READY TO GO**  
Sanlorenzo's newly delivered 500EXP motor yacht *Ocean Dreamwalker III* fully kitted out for her upcoming world travels.

**8 SEA PATROL**  
A gang of Lürssen yachts speeding south across the North Sea as they head for Mediterranean waters.

**9 FAMILY TIME**  
*Hampshire II* and her new baby sister hanging out in the Norwegian fjords.

**10 SUNRISE**  
The *A'* family hiding from the crowds in Iceland. ♦