

BOAT INTERNATIONAL'S GUIDE TO THE FINEST BOATS BETWEEN 12 AND 24 METRES

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WEEKEND WONDERS
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Superyacht designers
on the joys of their
smaller masterpieces

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BOAT



SCALE DOWN

SIZE MATTERS



*Is bigger really better?
Risa Merl speaks to the
world's top superyacht
designers about how
today's smaller production
boats demand more
talent, more care and
even the ability to see
into the future...*

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Taking a starring role in designer Mario Pedol's portfolio is 180-metre *Azzam*, the largest yacht in the world by length overall. Yet the head of Nauta Yachts is equally proud of his creative contributions to the world of production yachts, such as the 15.94-metre Beneteau Oceanis 51.1 sailing boat, which launched at the Cannes Yachting Festival in 2017 and has already sold 200 hulls.

On paper, the two projects couldn't seem further apart – in size, power, level of customisation and certainly in the number of hulls delivered. But Pedol begs to differ. "Incredibly enough, they have something very much in common. In both cases, there is a huge amount of thought and design work before starting the build," he says, emphasising that though the Beneteau is smaller, it doesn't mean less work went into her design.

A smaller production boat – even a fraction of the size of *Azzam* – requires two years to design, as a rule. Production yachts, as the name suggests, will be reproduced multiple times. Custom-built yachts involve inevitable change orders and the opportunity to tweak things along the way, but with a production yacht, details are set in stone before the build begins.

"Every aspect needs to be addressed as it's going to be a repetitive process; it must be streamlined and efficient," says Luiz de Basto, the Miami-based designer who penned the exterior of the 90-metre



"In production, you have to design the best boat possible, but there are many constraints... This is the challenge" MARIO PEDOL (ABOVE, LEFT)

Oceanco *DAR*, but also scales down to design smaller yachts for brands ranging from Astondoa to Burger. *DAR*'s interior designer, Nuvolari Lenard, is flexible, too. The Italian studio designs superyachts and production yachts, creating the successful line-up of Monte Carlo Yachts, as well as designs for Marquis Yachts and Cantieri Colombo.

Pedol, de Basto and Nuvolari Lenard are among a handful of designers who have created some of

the best-known custom superyachts in the world, yet still keep a hand in production yacht design, often taking inspiration from one realm into the other. The lengths and volumes might be smaller in production yachts, but the reach and impact can be huge. Germán Frers has designed more than 700 yachts for Nautor's Swan, starting with the Swan 51 in 1981. Philippe Briand has developed 300 models for 20 brands, resulting in 12,000-plus hulls. Today, he gives priority to his main production yacht client, Beneteau, but he's just designed a new motor yacht for Sanlorenzo, which



Mario Pedol is just as proud of his 15.94m Beneteau Oceanis 51.1 (left) as he is of 180m *Azzam* (above). Above left: with his Nauta Yachts partner, Massimo Gino (right)



PHOTOGRAPHY (PREVIOUS PAGES): GUILLAUME PUISSON. THIS PAGE: RV/GON

will launch in 2019. Michael Peters, who designed the 35-metre Devonport *Rospiya* (formerly *Lady Tiffany*, now 42-metre *Aquarella*), a *ShowBoats* award-winner at the time of her launch in 1995, has gone on to create production yachts yielding more than 30,000 hulls. He's now working on projects for Hinckley, Viking and Bertram, and a new line of trawlers for Kadey-Krogen.

Why bother doing both? Big superyachts possess an obvious glamour and prestige, and a chance for unbridled creativity when a daring owner or yard is involved. But in production yachts, designers find a unique challenge. "In production, not only do you have to design the best boat possible, but there are many constraints – the market budget, designing for efficiency and comfort, and the need to be efficient in terms of the build," says Pedol. "But this is the challenge."

Briand is fascinated by the optimisation and precision of production yacht design, and this is what keeps him in the game. He began his career designing production yachts in 1978 and credits this experience with teaching him the skills needed to design superyachts. "[A production yacht] is like designing a car – a lot of design and engineering work is required," he says. "I like it because it's pushing the envelope all the time."

It's working with the smaller envelope that spurs both creativity and innovation in yacht design.



Luiz de Basto (above) and two of his production yachts: Astondoa 65 TopDeck (top) and Intermarine 62 (right). Previous pages: Sailing Yacht *Azzam* (left), *Azzam* (right)



Designers must optimise layouts to eke out as much living space as possible, while also hiding storage in every nook and cranny. Space is a luxury, and in production yachts, more is fitted into a smaller space, from additional cabins to specialised electronics.

"The restrained volume pushes you to optimise the accommodation and make it as comfortable as possible so you stand out in the market," Briand says, but he also notes that as build materials, technology and naval architecture have evolved

over the years, so too has a designer's ability to find more space, sometimes doubling the volume. "We have done many 45ft [14-metre] sailboats over the years and seen this progression. Now 25 years later, a 45ft yacht with the same length overall is twice as roomy." Briand was inspired by the wide aft sections of modern racing boats he's designed, a feature he employed on production sailing boats, thereby affording more interior volume and also a bigger cockpit, a win-win.

As production yachts have evolved over the

SCALE DOWN

years, so too have client expectations. Just because a production yacht is smaller, it doesn't mean owners are willing to sacrifice on big boat amenities. De Basto's design for the Astondoa 65 Top Deck has bulwarks opening completely to create an open platform, like the living spaces seen on a much larger yacht, while his design for the Intermarine 62 has a beach club, a rarity in a yacht of its size. "I think it was the first time it was done on such a small boat," he says.

Innovation and inspiration is a two-way street; the Intermarine 62 also has a unique exterior lighting design that de Basto hopes to be able to take into a larger yacht one day. "I applied linear lights to emphasise the graphic lines of the yacht," he says. The model has sold more than 20 hulls since launching two years ago.

Production yacht interiors are not what they once were either. "Nowadays, anything above 50 feet [15 metres], everyone wants their own interior – it's the norm for the yard to have two or three options," says de Basto. Many yards offer multiple layout and interior decor choices. This can prepare owners for the next step, onwards and upwards to a semi-custom or custom yacht.

Designers are aware that production yachts



The CNB 76 sailing yacht, designed by Philippe Briand

are a "gateway boat" and as such have a mission to capture an owner's attention and make them love yachting. "I know owners today of large superyachts, 45 or 50 metres, who started out with a Beneteau," says Briand.

Some production yachts are suited to help owners segue into the superyacht set, such as the Briand-designed CNB 76 sailing yacht. "It's a link between the custom and production world because it's designed around the possibility of having permanent crew on board, which before this, only started on a 24-metre CNB," he says, noting the yacht is still highly optimised and relatively inexpensive. With space at a premium, most production yachts have few or no crew and are run by owner-operators, which means they need to be incredibly practical and user-friendly.

"With a production yacht, you have to balance beauty and functionality," says Bart Bouwhuis, creative director of Vripack, who is proud of its design for the Wajer 38, which balances stunning looks and performance as the first European production boat with IPS engines.

Today's production yachts are thoroughly engineered, similar to the way that cars are built. In a compact space, like a car or a smaller yacht, details stand out all the more. "For the new Burger 48, I wanted to do something very upscale for the interior – as it's a small space, you're in closer contact with the materials, it's almost like a car where everything is close to you," explains de Basto.

Also like a car, a production yacht design has to be even more forward-thinking. "A production yacht needs to be able to withstand the test of time to a greater extent compared to a superyacht," says Bouwhuis, since the idea is to build many of one model over several years. Vripack uses its "VriThink" platform to forecast what might be fashionable two years down the line.

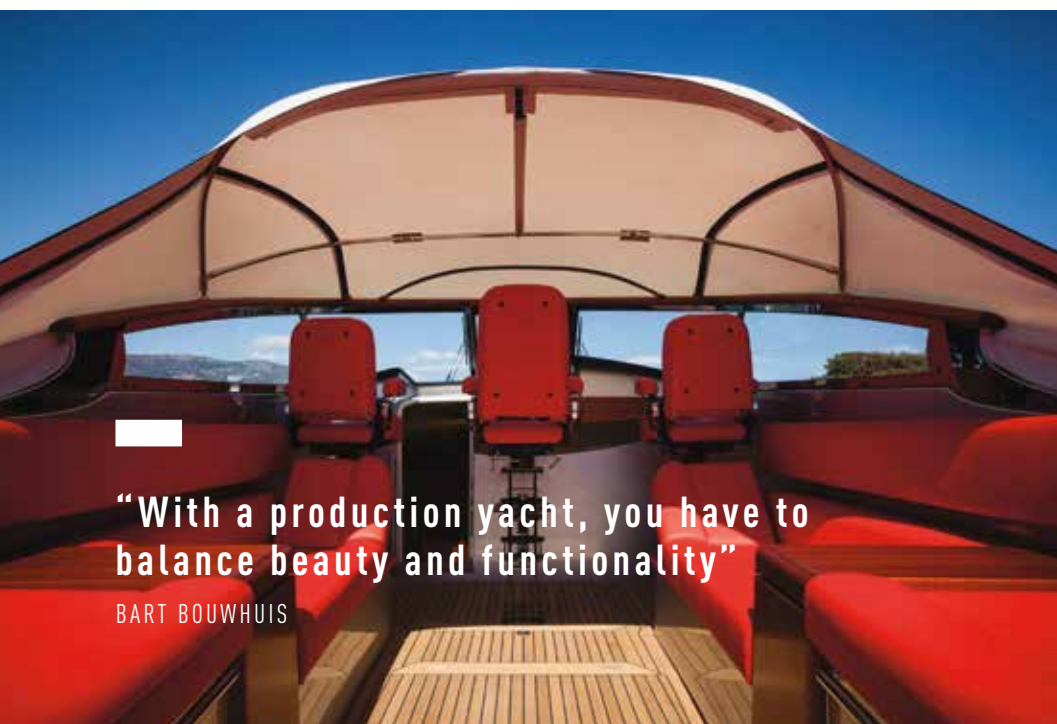
Designers are constantly chasing trends and looking towards the future. "What I love most about production is you have to envisage what the market will be seeking two years later, so there's a lot to do in terms of benchmarking and imagining what is to come," says Pedol, who finds inspiration from big motor yachts for small sailing yachts, and vice versa.

A trend Peters is seeing now is open boats with outboards, but he's grateful that trends shift, as it gives the chance to explore new styles. "I've seen six or seven major trends in my career, one of the biggest trends that's virtually gone now is the cigarette-style performance boat. It's a thing of >

Bart Bouwhuis (right), creative director at Vripack, was responsible for the 11.3m Wajer Osprey 38 (below)



PHOTOGRAPHY: MINISTERIE VAN BEELD



"With a production yacht, you have to balance beauty and functionality"

BART BOUWHUIS



Above and right: Michael Peters penned the Summit 54, which will launch at the 2020 Miami Boat Show



the past, completely passé,” he says. Another shift Peters has seen is the growing size of production yachts. “Custom boats used to start at 80 feet [24 metres],” Peters says. “Now you can get anything you want in the 80ft [production] size range, any style you want, there is someone producing something close to it. To build a custom boat as a one-off would cost you twice as much.”

In the case of production yachts, the client is the yard, and the boat must appeal to hundreds rather than an audience of one. This client can be just as demanding as a custom yacht, but the demands of



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PHILIPPE BRIAND

many are distilled into one unit. “We are appealing to a larger market, but we start with the same process: we must analyse the requests of the client,” says Briand.

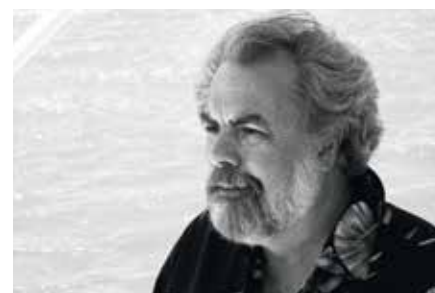
For builders who are scaling up to their next flagship, the expertise of a superyacht designer is invaluable. “Production builders are generally always building their next biggest boat – if they already build a 40-footer, then a 50-footer is going to seem big for them,” says Peters. “It helps that we’ve done much bigger custom stuff, and we can say, ‘We’ve been there,’ and pave the way for them.”

While one might assume the bigger the boat, the bigger the resulting pay cheque, this isn’t necessarily the case. Designers earn a royalty based on the success of the project in production building. This can make the designers more invested, literally, in the project. The role of the design team can also morph from creative director to business consultant.

“Our role is often a lot of consulting from a marketing and business sense,” says Peters. “We’ve had years of seeing builder’s illusions shattered – a typical company over-projects how much of a product will be sold, so we constantly have to temper that and be the voice of reason.”

Peters says he does this by explaining that if a builder wants to reach a larger market, they need to be more homogenised in a yacht’s design. This doesn’t have to mean a vanilla product.

Nuvolari Lenard’s range for Monte Carlo Yachts has a distinctive family look but the studio is lauded for its creative interior layouts as well as the highly optimised flybridge and exterior spaces. With MCY, Nuvolari Lenard was starting



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MICHAEL PETERS

fresh with a new brand, but designers might also create something that will appeal to the masses by finding something hidden in a heritage brand’s design DNA.

The constant when designing any type of yacht is fostering a connection with the sea. “Of course, the client for a 50-metre motor yacht is very different indeed from a 50ft sailing yacht, but the purpose is the same – they both want to be in contact with the sea,” says Pedol. “And you as the designer are inspired to do your best for each one, no matter the size.” ■