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# A yacht of two halves

A notable launch for both Feadship De Vries and naval architect Philippe Briand, 58m Najiba is an elegant addition to the renowned Vitruvius series.

by Julia Zaltzman




Naval architect Philippe Briand has found success in recent years with his Vitruvius Series of yachts. The likes of Exuma and Galileo G have set a high benchmark, but for the fifth yacht in the Vitruvius range, 58m Najiba built by Feadship De Vries and launched in December 2018, Briand and his team were faced with a different set of criteria.

“This is a yacht built for two families,” says Briand. “Two brothers from the Middle East, they are highly experienced owners and have owned several yachts, but importantly, Najiba is their first fully bespoke build.”

Central to the project was the owners’ specification to build a large boat that both families can enjoy together. “The presence of two owners is integral to the design, as we not only had to consider how the flow and layout of the boat would work, but we were required to accommodate two master staterooms that are equal in space and ambience,” says Briand.

Their desire to build a bespoke yacht with a naval architect’s approach was also key, says Briand, who relies on his vast experience designing sailing yachts to create something a little different from the norm.

“We always begin our projects by organising the layout and space planning first, so on this occasion we agreed on both the internal proportions and the hull lines from the off, the latter of course being fundamental to any yacht project,” says Briand. “It’s important to note that the naval architecture and internal layout were worked on in parallel, as we strongly believed that this was the best way to achieve a successful design that delivered the required onboard experience for both owners. That is how the style of Najiba evolved, and from there, we worked on ensuring that she is also highly efficient in the water.”



Distinguished and lithe, Najiba certainly lives up to her name, meaning 'noble'. Briand's distinctive minimalist lines create a simple, elegant profile, while the running surface provides excellent seakeeping qualities. The main deck has a long midsection of glass extending up toward the foredeck, with an open area aft for entertainment, while the upper deck has a second salon in the centre, with an open sundeck above. Najiba is the second-largest aluminium vessel built by De Vries.

"Based on our extensive experience, we ensured that Najiba's design provided comfort at sea, as well as fuel efficiency," says Briand "All the Vitruvius hulls are highly characteristic featuring the plumb line bow; it's become a signature of Vitruvius, and the starting point is always focusing on the point where the hull will penetrate the water. Najiba's hull benefits from our vast knowledge of sailing yacht design; it's a careful balance between art, design and efficiency. Once we have the hull lines, the rest of the boat follows in the same spirit."

Designed with graceful proportions, serving as a floating connector between science and art, Najiba is also ultra-efficient. With a fuel consumption of 11.5 litres per nautical mile at a cruising speed of 12 knots, this 880GT yacht can achieve a range of 4,400 nautical miles.

"We keep it simple and pure, and our designs are without superfluous elements. All of the lines in our yacht designs are there for a reason, they serve a purpose, and are not included just for the sake of design. If something has no function, we don't include it," says Briand. "We try to be as minimalist as possible, as again this improves efficiency, but also in terms of aesthetics. This discipline stems from my background as a sailing yacht designer, where lines have to be straight and simple."

Najiba's transparent glass guard rail is another fantastic example of a feature that looks simple, but requires architectural knowledge to know how to design it correctly. "Many shipyards would believe it's not possible to build a guard rail out of glass that is strong enough to withstand the power of the sea, and comply with all regulations," smiles Briand. "We worked very closely with Feadship to make sure that we made this possible—it wasn't easy, and we spent three months on this alone—but I felt it was highly necessary from both a design point of view and for the owners' experience on board."

"We have to consider people's experience on board," adds Briand. "Their line of sight, how they will interact with the environment, it is fundamental to their level of enjoyment when on board. We spent a lot of time devising various



Philippe Briand ©Gillaume Plisson



different window tints—they are not the same throughout the yacht. Black-out tints are needed in the cabins, while the bridge requires transparent glass, and then during the day we tried to shade the interior from the glare of natural light without hindering the fantastic views. It's balancing design with function."

Najiba's interior by Studio Liaigre continues Briand's pared-back vision. Clean white surfaces teamed with hardwoods create the impression of being in a beachside villa. In addition to the two owners' suites, one of which can be converted into a TV room if required, there are four further cabins accommodating eight guests, and ample quarters for 14 crew.

"The interior features teak and white, and very little else. Even the washbasins are made from teak," says Briand. "There are few auxiliary objects, again, harking back to the elegance of simple lines and architecture. The focus is on the scenery.

"When designing anything, I always ask, 'Why is this here?', summarises Briand. "If I can't justify it, I won't include it, and I maintain that discipline throughout the whole design process."