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PROGRESSING ALONG THE PATH TO ADVENTURE

The benefits and limitations of remote communication in yacht design

- *Philippe Briand reflects on how remote communication is changing the creative process in yacht design*
- *Two new superyachts actually in build: a 66m lifestyle yacht at Rossinavi and the 55m expedition yacht M/Y Shinkai at Feadship*
- *The studio has been working together with the Owner for over 1 year now without ever having physically met*
- *One more 52m superyacht design into development phases*
- *A virtual new reality at Vitruvius Yachts*

It has been a busy year for the Vitruvius Yachts design studio, watching an ambitious Expedition yacht enter the final furlong of construction while another exciting 66m Lifestyle project is well underway. And with one more 52 M superyacht design well into the development phases, the momentum shows no sign of slowing at the London offices of Vitruvius.

For many, the last year has been a particularly challenging time as yachting professionals – especially those in design and creative areas – have had to quickly adapt to the “new normal” of remote working and digital connection through video conferencing technology. This has been particularly felt during the crucial early development stages of a yacht construction project, as opposed to the past where face-to-face meetings have fuelled inspiration and progress.

An efficient and productive way of working has evolved

Yet at Vitruvius, the team led by Philippe Briand has found that under these new conditions, an efficient and productive way of working has evolved, especially when collaborating with exacting clients who thrive on scrutinizing every design detail. This experience brought to light the many benefits that remote communication can have, as well as the limitations.

Briand reflects on what he has learned from the process:

“On a recent call with the Owner of our 66m Lifestyle yacht project currently under construction at Rossinavi, we joked that this must be the first yacht to be built on Zoom, because we have been working together for over 1 year now without ever having physically met. It has been a surprisingly educational process, even after all these years of working in yacht design.”

“Another client for a 52m yacht approached us a number of months ago with a comparative overview of what he liked in five yachts, and why he would not be buying those that were available on the market; he knew what he wanted, and he wanted to fit a lot into a platform of under 500GT. The challenge was not only to create a yacht that met all these demands, but also to communicate and constructively work with the client within the physical constraints of not being able to meet in person. Our mantra during this whole process has been: ‘preparation, incubation, evaluation, elaboration and communication’.

“However, now that the essence of the 52m yacht has been created – the architecture and the concept design – we find that we are reaching the limits of what can be done successfully via video conferencing alone. It’s been a steep learning curve, and it has probably drawn the process out somewhat.

“Carrying out design work and exchanging creative viewpoints over video is less efficient and has tested all of the designers involved. We have each gone through the various phases of the creative process individually – the incubation, evaluation and elaboration of an idea – and then needed to communicate this effectively with the other parties who themselves have their own challenges and focuses. An open-minded outlook has been crucial in finding harmonious solutions.

Will we continue using remote communication tools in the future, once we are permitted to return to our face-to-face meetings? Yes, most likely to some extent.

But will we continue to prefer the responsive and personal elements of in-person collaboration? Undoubtedly.”

WHAT’S CURRENTLY UNDERWAY AT VITRUVIUS YACHTS?

A new 66m lifestyle yacht at Rossinavi

Construction on a 66m Vitruvius yacht recently began at Rossinavi’s facilities in Viareggio, with delivery expected in 2023. Based on the Vitruvius Lifestyle yacht design, its contract was signed in December 2019 and, as a sign of the times, the development phase was efficiently and successfully completed entirely through Zoom video conferencing technology.

As a global citizen, the yacht’s owner plans to exclusively use it for private holidays with friends and family. Having chartered twice a year for the last 20 years, the client is a focused and discerning yachtsman who has compiled a precise and extensive wish list for his dream yacht during this period. The owner’s representative on the project is Fabrizio Loi of Florida-based new construction specialist Interyachting, while interior design is being carried out by Enrico Gobbi.

“It has been a fascinating and stimulating process designing this 66m yacht, as the owner is one of the most thorough and knowledgeable clients that I have had the pleasure to work with in my four decades as a yacht designer,” adds Briand. “By meticulously recording every detail and preference for his perfect yacht over the course of two decades’ chartering, he has created a comprehensive

design reference that includes an extensive photo archive. Alongside the guidance of his owner's representative, we were provided with a very detailed feedback and preferences. Every line, every single volume of the yacht has been scutinised. One would think this tiresome, but it was quite the opposite because the team feeded of the gentlemen's input and experience and I think we are delivering a superior yacht, and it has been a thoroughly enjoyable project to work on together. The benefits will no doubt been seen in the final outcome of this special Vitruvius yacht when launched in two years' time."

The 55m Expedition Shinkai at Feadship

A true Expedition yacht in every sense, the ice-classed 55m project Shinkai currently in build at Feadship in Aalsmeer is due for delivery at the end of 2021. This is an expedition yacht for 3 generations to go exploring the world

As with all Expedition vessels, the yacht's design brief focused on very particular requirements; in this case, serving as the base for operations of a 6.3-tonne, three-person submersible for pioneering underwater exploration. The open aft deck provides the perfect space to house the submersible in a shallow well, alongside its eight-tonne Palfinger knuckle-boom launching crane and a host of other toys including two sizeable tenders and a Toyota Land Cruiser, stored in a sealed garage for protection from the elements.

To allow for the planned cruising to high-latitude regions, Shinkai has been fitted with a cutting-edge gyroscopic stabilisation system that has never been previously seen on a yacht of this scale. The gyro is particularly important for the use of the submersible, as the sub needs a perfectly stable launching platform but also for the use in icy water. Instead of the deploying conventional fin stabilisers as those are at risk of being damaged by ice and flotsam, and are inefficient at low speeds.

In all exploration vessels the design is driven by the extensive presence of equipment on the aft deck

The owners of Shinkai wanted to maintain a luxurious degree of comfort and, with such significant demands on the rear deck space for technical equipment, the guest accommodations have been moved forwards and upwards.

The resulting design has a higher profile than is customarily seen on the sleek and elegant Vitruvius yachts.

Shinkai has four levels including a large owner's apartment on the upper deck alongside a full-beam dining room and his and hers offices with panoramic views forward. There are 4 further guest suites and seven cabins for 12 crew complete the accommodations.

After delivery at the end of the year, Shinkai's owners plan to undertake a Northwest Passage to allow her to stretch her legs and test her capabilities in Arctic conditions, where the submarine will provide guests with a front row view of such enigmatic sea life as narwhals and beluga whales.

“This is a special project for us, as the yacht is the second yacht we have designed for the owner. He was the first yachtsman to adhere to the principles of the efficient hulls.”

“We are thrilled with the progress that has been made on Shinkai in recent months and are enjoying watching the final stages of her construction at Feadship. As the second Vitruvius yacht to be built at the prestigious yard, this is another meeting of great minds and great names that will no doubt result in a landmark yacht to inspire many more adventurous owners of the future,” comments Philippe Briand.

About Philippe Briand – Founder and Designer of Vitruvius Yachts Ltd

The internationally acclaimed naval architect and yacht designer Philippe Briand is a driving force in his field. He made his name designing award-winning sailing yachts under his own brand name (www.philippebriand.com) and building on that experience has led him to create a revolutionary range of motor yachts: [www.Vitruviusyachts.com]. Inspired by a childhood sailing in the yachting centre of La Rochelle, France, Philippe Briand has dedicated his life to perfecting the art of conquering the sea. His designs stand out for their technical excellence and precision, combined with his strong artistic flair and ability to drive innovative design trends as he seeks perfection. As one of the founders of Water Revolution Foundation he contributes to the standards moving towards the neutralisation of the ecological footprint of the yachting industry, and Vitruvius Yachts are 30% more efficient than other yachts of comparable size. With over 12,000 boats built to date Philippe Briand could reasonably be considered the most prolific yacht designer of our time. His loyal client base of extremely discerning owners appreciate his collaborative approach to design – they are involved at every stage of shaping their own remarkable superyacht. With offices in both London and La Rochelle, Briand and his team of designers and engineers work with yacht owners around the world who are looking for the very best.

The impressive range of Vitruvius Yachts may range in size to over 100m in length. Briand’s meticulous attention to detail means they are perfected to the nearest millimetre. This dedicated approach to intelligent, sustainable yet stunningly elegant design has been recognised internationally with 34 prestigious yacht awards so far. Philippe Briand is available for interview by contacting...

[Philippe Briand has yachts under construction at Feadship, Perini Navi, Rossinavi and Sanlorenzo]

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