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Guido de Groot

Interview with *Guido de Groot* from *Guido de Groot design*

Q: What are the mandatory features of the ultimate custom yacht?

A: Although, my interest is to design new yachts, when client ask me that question, I always answer, that first the client should look for existing yacht to match his desire. As a second choice, a series built should be considered and only when he can't find what he wants, we should go for custom design. The fact the we are still in business demonstrates that there is a demand for new designs.

In addition to all that, many clients enjoy the creation of a new yacht more than "picking" existing yachts. This process of designing and building is appealing to many clients.

Q: What are the mandatory features of the ultimate custom yacht?

A: This is a tricky question to answer, as the very nature of a custom yacht is that it is made to meet whichever requirements the Owner has and should be exceptionally well designed to ensure that it reflects the Owner's desires. Undoubtedly a custom yacht should be made using the finest materials and finishes, built without compromise on quality etc. However, defining which of these materials is quite personal. Each client will have their own perception of what constitutes luxury. The Designer needs to understand this personal view and provide fresh thinking and well resolved solutions for the client in a package that can be built.

Q: What are the features of a shipyard to be able to build a super yacht?

A: There are many shipyards that build yachts. However being able to build Super-yachts and truly deliver on this promise requires a somewhat different approach. Some core elements remain the same whether a yard is building a production vessel or an exclusive custom yacht. To build a solid reputation for building superyachts a shipyard needs to have access to the finest craftspeople, talented and imaginative engineers and a range of other specialist technicians. This will come to nothing if the shipyard does not have good leadership and management plus an ability to deliver a great product on time and within budget to meet the clients' requirements. In other words it has to be a serious and professional firm.



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Q: What new materials would you suggest to use for jointwork?

A: New Materials are constantly being developed and it is the Designer's job to keep abreast of the new possibilities. That is not to say that a good designer abandons traditional options. There is no single new material that has made an appearance in my opinion in the marketplace that automatically should be specified. It is a personal matter. With custom yachts there are no absolutes. You may specify marble and solid mahogany on one yacht and then need to design using light weight, high performance composites with honeycomb or foam cores, with perhaps a veneer, on another. It comes down to what a yacht is expected to do, how fast it will go and what the client requires and desires.

Q: If you were designing a sailing yacht for yourself what would be the philosophy behind it?

A: Sailboats by function of what they need to do and how they go about doing it require some different thinking to that which I would use on a motor yacht. If I were in the position where I was designing a sail yacht for myself, I think I would approach it in a way very similar to how I would design any other sailboat, with the difference that I would not need to research what the client likes and does not like!

I have to say that I would design a very attractive, modern and clean yacht with an interior that suited my taste and requirements. As I said before, it is much the same approach, except I endeavour to design other yachts to suit their owners taste and needs. I would want mine to be comfortable rather than a performance machine, but that is a set of priorities to suit my situation.

Q: If you were designing an explorer yacht for yourself what would be the philosophy behind it?

A: I view an exploration yacht as the equivalent (but much larger) of an off-road vehicle. There are many types of off-road vehicle, some designed to be very rugged but with little luxury and others such as a Range Rover which are extremely capable off-road but still offer good performance on the road whilst cocooning the passengers in total comfort and luxury. I feel that there is a place for an exploration vessel that is truly capable of sailing in the most extreme conditions, but which like my analogy would be similar to a Range Rover; functionally very capable, rugged but refined, with great levels of comfort and luxury. I would use it to explore the most far flung and interesting places but would want it to be a great place to relax and be pampered after a day's adventuring.

Q: What is going to be the trend of yacht design in the future?

A: To answer the question of what will be the yacht design trends of the future I believe you need to look at what has come so far.

You cannot really talk about yachts as something very general. There will always be several different types of yacht, ranging from fast yachts to large displacement yachts. Some will have traditional looks and others will be futuristic. Those yachts evolve, but



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their function is to entertain their owners and guests. Yachts change as their users' expectations and demands change. How yachts will look like in say twenty years depends for a large part on this. Accommodating the "toys" and other items will affect the layouts and appearance of future yachts.

I have designed large yachts, small yachts, fast yachts, river cruisers, exploration yachts and many more besides. I have designed traditional interiors, minimalist ones, contemporary and even baroque ones. Overall I have not seen a particular trend. Yes, some things are more fashionable and some interior styles are in vogue. A current trend is the desire of many clients to have good proximity and views of the sea; hence the appearance of retracting balconies and larger portholes. Perhaps though this is based on a Mediterranean/Caribbean focus where many yachts function. This could change with clients from other markets. We will remain adaptable and respond to these needs.

Q: What do you consider as your greatest achievement in your career?

A: In terms of exterior design the 39m MY Motor Yacht build by Shipyard Jongert and the sailing yacht "Axonite", built by K&M Shipyard. One of my favourite interior designs is for the 33m Mangusta 108 "MY Crazy Too" as it was the first of a kind for a client with a very exciting brief to design a very fresh, modern and contemporary interior. It was also the project that opened the gates for more yacht interiors around the same design scope.

I consider myself extraordinarily lucky to work on a variety of exciting projects, but some that stand out for me are the Feadship "Katrion" (renamed NOA VII), which broke with that marque's typical style for the 80's and 90's.

Q: How do you feel about shadow vessel?

A: Whenever I have designed a yacht, whatever its size, there never seems to be enough space to fit all the extra items, tenders, toys, helicopters, submersibles etc. A shadow vessel is a great solution. It means that the "mothership" can be designed in a different way. More space can be allocated to accommodation and providing amenities for passengers and guests. The shadow vessel can be designed to handle numerous other functional aspects. It means that each vessel is designed with fewer compromises and each does its job better. The shadow vessel can be designed to carry all the toys, have a proper helicopter landing platform and storage plus can be made to be faster than the "mothership". It can set off after and arrive before the mothership so that everything is in place and ready for the Owner and his guests.

Q: Displacement yachts vs. planning yachts: what is your suggestion to a new client?

A: All yachts are designed to fulfil different roles. The question of which type of hull-form to use depends on what the client is seeking to do, what materials the yacht is going to be built in etc. Planning hulls on yachts are intended for vessels that will achieve higher speeds. Displacement hulls mostly are intended for slower, perhaps more comfortable vessels. Semi-displacement hulls fulfil the roles in-between, normally. If



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you are seeking better range and more seakindly capabilities, normally you would probably seek to use a displacement hull. However, good speed and range are also possible in displacement yachts, it just needs the appropriate hull and the suitable length. Wave piercing hulls (as used on fast ferries) are both fast and efficient.

Q: In your experience, which type of vessel are more appealing to new customers: motor yacht or sailing yacht?

A: This is a question that is interesting in as much as it is easy to answer based on past precedent but perhaps will become less simple in the future. Historically, new clients have been attracted to motor yachts as they offer less compromises on space. Many clients have found themselves unfamiliar with the more pronounced heeling that is typical of a sail yacht, which can put them off. So one could say that clients that have been brought up with sailboats would gravitate towards sail and those new to yachting would relate to a motor yacht. There are more of the latter than the former. However, as environmental issues and efficiency become more prominent I see it probable that new types of yacht may emerge that will offer the same space and comfort of a motor yacht but have sail assistance to improve range, reduce fuel consumption and have better environmental credentials. Perhaps this question will have a different answer in twenty to thirty years time, only time will tell.

Q: Which yacht would be interesting for you to design, that you have not designed yet?

A: Strictly speaking there are some projects that I would find very exciting and which are not yachts per se although they, at a stretch, could be classified as such. One type of vessel that intrigues me is to a submarine; one designed as a yacht with high levels of luxury and accommodation would be a fantastic project to do. The other would be an Ekranoplan (a wing in ground effect) craft. This is a type of hybrid between a boat and an aircraft. A very fast vessel that flies just skimming the waves.

Both in their own ways would be formidable technical exercises, with numerous practical and aesthetic challenges. They would be absolutely unique and intriguing. On a more conventional note, I would find designing a very large superyacht an extremely interesting proposition.

Q: What was your most unusual project among motor yachts?

A: This is a question that forces me to say that it is relative. What some people consider to be quite commonplace and normal is in many cases quite unusual to others. Also some projects may be conventional looking but have parameters that are unusual.

When I first designed the interior for a fast motor yacht capable of speeds in excess of 56 knots, much of the practical design thinking required a change of approach. It needed a very lightweight interior which required internal partitions and bulkheads to be made completely differently to any other I had done before. But after that I designed a series of several other very fast yachts capable of speeds in excess of 46 knots in sizes ranging



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from 25 to 42 metres. It turns out that these almost became normal for us as a studio. But in actual fact very few yachts of this size and performance are built in the world, so they are all reasonably unusual. It have also done multi-hulled yachts, which are unconventional yachts which allow and require quite different interior layouts.

In a different vein, I have also undertaken a design for a 30m motor yacht that had to be designed and built in 11 months, from scratch. This project was unusual in that the timescale was very compressed and the yacht had to be built in a yard with practically no prior experience in building luxury yachts. It was extraordinary.

Q: Steel yachts vs. composite yachts: what do you prefer?

A: It depends what type of yacht you are designing. If you are designing a production yacht, it makes a lot of sense to design using composites. Equally if your ultimate goal is a very high speed yacht, again the likelihood is that the design would use high performance composite construction. If on the other hand your yacht is a “one off” then the solution should consider steel, steel/aluminium, aluminium or possibly even wood. Each material has advantages and drawbacks and has to be chosen on a case by case basis.

Q: What characteristics are unique for ice class yachts?

A: This question in many ways applies mostly to a naval architect rather than a Designer, in as much as the technical engineering requirement to design a vessel planned to operate in icy waters is normally outside my scope. However as a Designer working on an Ice class certified yacht I would naturally presume that the yacht would operate in extremely cold environments. If I design a yacht that will operate in the Mediterranean it will look and be planned for that environment. If designing a yacht that will operate some of the time in polar waters for instance, it will look different, it will probably have different amenities and toys (skidoos instead of wave-runners, perhaps) etc.

Q: What shall an owner decide for himself before build a yacht?

A: Any person before they buy any high value item, whether it be a car, house, private jet or yacht should think about how they intend to use it. What is its purpose? Why buy it?

A yacht is fundamentally a discretionary purchase, a luxury purchase, as few owners intend to live on it full time. However, there are many practical considerations too. Where will it be used? Where will it be moored? Will it be used for short periods or for several weeks at a time? Will it be used for family holidays, to entertain business clients, a combination of both? Will it be used in warm or cold (both?) climates. Other considerations are the budget, the general size (how long?) the number of guests it will be intended to carry, which designer to use? (Guido de Groot being an excellent choice for example!) which yard to commission? Should a project manager be hired to oversee the project? Very often we will provide guidance on many of these aspects (all part of the service!)



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Q: Why trawler yachts are so popular nowadays?

A: In my mind trawler yachts have similarities to exploration yachts in that they tend to fulfil a similar function to SUVs (and other off road vehicles) in an automotive context. Their ruggedness, their visual strength and honesty is attractive. Trawler vessels are functional devices which are designed to operate safely in the most extreme seas and conditions. Many of these same characteristics are translated into a trawler style yacht. I guess in terms of image a trawler yacht makes a statement of their owner: this yacht owner is adventurous and is a true sailor who is not daunted by the sea. In truth I suspect, like most owners of Porsche Cayennes and Range Rovers, the Owners of trawler yachts will not use them in really challenging conditions, but many find comfort in the fact that they could, if they wished.



Guido de Groot Design team