



FIFTH OCEAN YACHTS®

WE CRAFT THE FINEST STEEL AND ALUMINUM CUSTOM YACHTS
TO DELIVER TAILOR MADE DREAMS TO OUR OWNERS



Michael Schutte

Interview with *Michael Schutte* from *Brilliant Boats*

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

A: Here is the thing – every one of our customers wants something different. For sure this is something he hasn't been able to find somewhere else, or he wouldn't be talking to us in the first place. The coolest part of our job is that every yacht we design has a whole new list of “mandatory” items or facilities. In the past these have included things like wide open views from the interior, underwater lighting, swim steps for dogs, submarine LAR systems, so who knows what is coming tomorrow?

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

A: These days there are many “shipyard” models to choose from, and properly organized and supervised, there are plusses and minuses to all of them. The extremes run from an empty shed and a black book full of trusted sub-contractors, to the traditional one-stop facility with all the required trades permanently employed, all living under one roof. Certainly, the minimum attributes any successful Superyacht builder requires access to are very high skill levels in all trades, the experience to know what to do with them, and the resources they need to do their jobs 100%. Without doubt this includes money in equal measure with parts and tools, so whatever other challenges the shipyard faces throughout the build, the most important attribute in the end is always integrity. Without this, the rest is just a stage set.

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

A: The key for me here is weight. Because we wear several hats here at BB, we understand what the real cost of a yacht interior is over time, not just at the end of the installation. Our interior design department has been working for years to optimise light weight interior solutions using all kinds of materials. These include panels cored with balsa, honeycomb, and foams, along with composites and clever laminates for finishes as well as fire resistance. There is a fine line to be walked between style, durability, weight and regulations on one side, and cost on the other. Finding the correct path is a balancing act, often literally when you throw in vessel stability – certainly on the big boats...



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

A: Have you been hacking my personal files? This one is easy! Modern, light, fast, and practical. I am actually working on a 45 footer on one of our low drag semi-planing hull forms, powered by a rotating wing mast and canting keel. It can be driven from the cockpit by one person and will have an open interior arrangement with only two cabins. I mean, who really knows 6 people they seriously want to take cruising with them.... ;-)

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

A: Rugged, stable, efficient and flexible. The first three to get you there pain free both personally and financially, and the last so you can max out on the fun when you arrive. Think easy and comfortable water access – beach club, lots of toys and shell doors with private balconies for guests. Also because these boats go further and longer; Decent crew amenities and well considered crew access to public areas – A happy crew means a happy boat.

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

A: Apart from the few giant “Rock Star” boats that will always be built by the newly super-rich, which will just keep getting bigger and shinier, I have to say that the future for the rest of us will be about efficiency. The actual cost of running the “average” Superyacht today is staggering, no matter how much you have in the bank. Improvements in hull design is a huge part of this – along with basic driveline efficiency. Most vessels built today are operating at +/- 50% effective efficiency. This is horrible and totally unnecessary in a world where we can easily be pushing 70%, even with existing, well proven technologies. These systems cost more to buy, which is why most builders are not interested today, but with rising fuel costs and increasingly power-greedy yachts, there is a point when even the cheapest squillionaire is going to demand a more intelligent product from our industry.

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

A: Actually managing to be able to get people to pay me to do what I would be doing anyway is easily my greatest achievement. I have been fooling everyone for 20 years now. I am the MAN!

Q: How do you feel about shadow vessel?

A: These are the only practical answer to the regulatory issues around vessel size, guest numbers and the space left for toys and crew. This has just got a lot more challenging with impending changes to crew space requirements, so I think this is a sector that is about to get much more important. To anyone considering building a new 50+m vessel, two smaller boats may make a whole lot more sense, both in terms of facilities offered to the guests, as well as in practical acquisition and running terms. Like.



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

A: Be honest and clear about what your vessel's mission requirements really are. Then design for them specifically.

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

A: I can answer this two ways. Based on what people ask for when our phone rings, motor boats are far more popular than sail boats. BUT, I have to say that the all of sail boats we have designed have all been for owner's who have kept their boats for years, YEARS! - so for them the sail boats are clearly more appealing as they haven't changed them for new ones. Maybe it is an experience thing. Put it this way - a sail boat is a wife, and a motor boat is a mistress. The wife is pretty much permanent, while mistresses tend to get replaced more often....

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

A: For yachts, this is the small (ish) catamaran to carry an 8t submarine. When your load is 25% of your displacement, fun and games happen around the drawing board. If we can include other projects then the Poseidon Undersea Resort was definitely out there...

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

A: Horses for courses, but, cost allowing, I always recommend the lightest possible solution that does the job.

Q: What characteristics are unique for ice class yachts?

A: We haven't been asked for one of these...yet.

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

A: He should be perfectly clear about what he really wants. Anything is possible, just not everything... He should make sure the design is 100% finalized before anyone starts building anything.

Q: Why trawler yachts are so popular nowadays?

A: I think this is a natural response to the "running shoe" aesthetic popularized in the 80's and 90's. Bottom line? You don't have to be super flash to go to sea



Brilliant Boats team



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for fun. Trawlers are typically no-nonsense boats for no-nonsense owners. These are boats designed to be at their best at sea, not stern-to in St Tropez. Not that the two are mutually exclusive – “Senses” is one notable exception that proves this.