THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING HOLISTIC

Sergio Cutolo's Ovada-based Hydro Tec integrated design studio creates the most sought-after Explorer Vessels. Its experience and expertise in all areas of yacht design enable the limits of creativity to be overcome through audacious solutions

The first Rosetti superyacht, a 38-metre explorer designed for long voyages in all sea conditions, appeared in late May. Shortly afterwards came a brand-new 50-metre Columbus Yachts Sport with trans-Atlantic range and limited draft enabling it to navigate the Bahama shallows. Now it will soon be the turn of four more craft of between 35 and 42 metres from the Cantiere delle Marche (where a further four are under construction, including a Darwin 106 with fishing cockpit like American Fisherman yachts) as well as another 45-metre model from Palumbo Yachts, an ISA 430GT and an Aicon 66. Two explorers are under construction in Turkey, in two new yards, not forgetting the refit of a 70-metre under way at Dunya yachts in Turkey. It's an extremely busy period for Italian yacht builders, and these yachts are linked by a common element - Hydro Tec, an integrated design studio founded by Sergio Cutolo in 1995. He is sometimes responsible for the exteriors, interiors and naval architecture, but also occasionally handles naval engineering. Between 2004 and 2005 Hydro Tec decided to adopt the techniques of integrated design, a special creative approach. There are few studios in the yacht building industry that can boast the same all-round experience and make it available to yards and designers. Now he has passed the 25-year mark – 26, in fact, as well as the ten years spent under the wing of Alcide Sculati, then at the Baglietto and Rodrique yards - Sergio Cutolo can justifiably feel great satisfaction.

Would you say it's a positive period for the yacht-building industry, despite the pandemic?
Now more than ever people want to enjoy the sea, to set sail and explore different places. People want to feel free in a sheltered place. There's a great demand for explorer yachts (vessels that closely resemble the type of craft used for scientific research, with large spaces aft and an extended range – ed) that can remain in locations far from any port because they have room for plenty of fuel, food and water, and can carry all sorts of water toys and tenders. I know owners who have boarded their yacht during this pandemic and then stayed at sea for 15-20 days.

And in the explorer yacht field, Hydro Tec is second to none, wouldn't you say?
Well, we realised some time ago that a change was in the air. Voyaging in search of new places is one of humankind's ancestral drives. We specialised in this – we took all our experience, from the sail yacht world, too (Cutolo has experience in yacht racing – ed) to create design objects that are also extremely practical.

RSY 38m Explorer
by Rosetti Superyachts

M/Y Aurelia Flexplorer 130'
by Cantiere delle Marche

And nowadays explorer yachts are in great demand, aren't they?

Yes, and everyone wants them with the stern open to the sea, because yachts should have a close contact with nature, and large window areas. The two windows in the lounge of the 40-metre Aurelia Cantiere from Le Marche, launched in late 2020, are 2.5 metres long. It's a Flexeplorer, a type of turning point where design and technology merge. Its main feature is its versatile stern. Or take the Rosetti's EXP 38 – care has been taken down to the smallest detail, and it also has a private balcony for the owner.

Vittoria Yachts was launched a few months ago and Hydro Tec was brought in to create the lines of the first model. How did you go about this?

Vittoria Yachts is an offshoot of a yard with a long tradition in the commercial and miltary sector. They asked us to create their first superyahct and a series of smaller craft. We decided to give the yacht a distinctive personality and express the yard's identity. The yacht is just over 50 metres, has masculine lines, a large, safe hull and two special features, an all-round crow's nest and a pulpit – hence the choice of name for the yacht, the Bow Sprit – two privileged locations where it's possible to observe the world around. The stern section is a versatile area that owners can configure according to their own requirements. If you include indoor and outdoor area, it covers a huge 250 square metres.

*54 metres Bow Sprit
by Vittoria Yacht*

Two years ago you passed the 25-year marker. How did you celebrate it?

There's a book coming out soon that will tell our story. Then the expertise we've acquired in design and technology encouraged us to try something more audacious, and we developed the Vanguard. Calatrava or Gaudì could try out daring design and structural solutions because they had an in-depth knowledge of both the technical and aesthetic aspects of their work.

Can you describe its characteristics?

It's a 65-metre concept, an explorer, of course, that combines design, architecture and engineering. The evocative name is a clue to the yacht's nature – cutting-edge technology, power and safety. Its transparency makes it the ideal place to enjoy a close contact with the sea. Modern yachts live through the communication between their interiors and exteriors, and that's the only way to create striking effects. All the outdoor areas can be transformed for use in cold climates.

The play of levels is also an interesting feature, don't you think?

The Vanguard has an imposing straight bow so it can handle all sea conditions. With its angled windows, the midship tower resembles an airport control tower. The aft area is also interesting, looking almost like a sort of drawbridge. The pool has a series of moveable glass screens that can close it off when sailing in very cold seas.

Did you also create the interiors?

It's not normally something we handle, but we made an exception with the Vanguard because it's a holistic project. The interiors reflect current trends, drawing inspiration from home design. Vanguard is a pilot project that expresses our way of thinking. Something new!

Vanguard by Hydro Tec