

New Lürssen 55-metre designed  
by Bannenberg & Rowell



# Superyacht Industry: Full ahead, Digitally!

A year ago, HANSA predicted that superyachting would adapt and survive. A look at the order books and design studios confirms the market is thriving. Digitalisation is the key at work, creating high-end platforms to transport families away from screens. *By Nick Jeffery*

2020 sucked and 2021 is ridiculously busy!« was the immediate response by Rupert Connor, Founder and President of Luxury Yacht Group, when asked for an assessment, adding »As we are so dependent on crew placement sales our 2020 was down 50% on 2019 as most projects went silent due to lockdowns. The recovery in 2021 has been good and there is a massive shortage of crew. The lack of crew is probably going to cause major issues in the industry over the next 12–24 months with salaries rising and crew being given roles for which they possibly lack the necessary experience.« Of two new projects in build, one has no delays and the other minimal supply line delays due to Covid.

## Lots of money available

Espen Oeino, designer of REV – whose management have reported delays to its schedule – points out that most projects slowed down during the late stages of build during Covid as people needed to

travel (for example for SOLAS inspections, MTU engineers visiting, specialist sub-contractors fitting equipment) and because of a need for smaller teams on site, to keep a safe space between them – sometimes this being overcome by shifts working 24 hours/day.

HANSA asked Oeino if he believed designs need more opening ports for on-board ventilation but he responded »there is a general trend towards being outside more – even pre-Covid – and now, rather than ventilation, people are demanding more space for provisions to have longer autonomy and range. Some were stuck aboard for weeks and have seen importance of garbage disposal, fresh produce storage and so on«.

Oeino's office – who presently have a new range of catamarans being built in China – is working about 50:50 in the studios or from home and, when tracked down to his mobile in St. Tropez on a Friday afternoon mid July, admitted to having been at meals and meetings with clients, saying »the number of enquiries

is up for us and you'll find the same with the yards. The reason is not so clear but perhaps it could be as some people have lost loved ones and want to build a yacht before they pass away themselves. There is also lots of money available«.

## »Good level of workload«

DNV's Maritime Impact Yacht portal states: »Rapid response, with enthusiasm for all yacht projects – from straightforward plan approval for classification to solutions to highly-complex technical queries (or initial design brainstorming) put to DNV Advisory Services – is a factor recognised to be critical to new-builds. DNV can draw on all its global network of specialists and vast data efficiently thanks to its digital technologies, that have received significant investment over the past decade.«

Edmiston reported a healthy first half year in 2021 with 25 brokerage yacht sales of over 30m LOA having a total value of half a billion Euros. As an aside, when

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ensuring equal if not better efficiency.«*

François Zuretti

Chairman Nick Edmiston was asked about a new British Royal Yacht he replied: »When I spoke to Prince Philip on the subject, about a dozen years ago, he was far from enthusiastic to have a new one. I believe that Prince Charles and Prince William hold the same view. The original ›HMY Britannia‹ should never have been decommissioned but rather given a complete refit and re-engined. Regrettably, in my opinion, the requirement for a new Royal Yacht, in these days of air travel, is questionable«.

### More buying »unseen«

Hampshire Marine's CEO Dean Smith – who, having worked at Devonport many years ago, might be open to managing the build of a new Royal Yacht – echoes the state of the market »business is very upbeat with a number of projects underway (including the world's largest sportsfisherman at Royal Huisman) and enquiries in hand. It seems ›stable not crazy‹ at present with plenty of work involving the existing fleet of worldwide superyachts and the full order book of new builds in the shipyards. Most companies we work and liaise with are also seeing a good level of workload so everyone is grateful given that many

industries have been turned on the heads by Covid.«

Winch Design has seen enormous growth in yachts, aircraft and architecture design work and, in its 35th anniversary year, recently announced the company has been fully transferred to employee ownership – the Winch Employee Ownership Trust (WEOT). Perhaps this will set a trend.

Chris Cecil Wright's Monaco-based broker partner, Henry Smith, points out that »More people have been buying yachts unseen, in part due to travel restrictions but also due to the advance in marketing technology. Using the Matterport 3D scanning system and Zoom, I hosted a yacht viewing on the 62m ›New Hampshire‹, which was located in Imperia, whilst I was in North Yorkshire.

The buyer was in New York, his captain was in Fort Lauderdale and the captain of ›New Hampshire‹ was on his new command in Panama. »We toured the yacht as normal – in terms of the route taken – and discussed points whilst actively being able to see specific items on our screens. We went to contract immediately following the call. In terms of sales we are seeing around 35–40% uplift, year on year, and have multiple lines of inquiry open to acquire vessels«, he said.

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A SpaceCat by Espen Oeino





© Naturalmat

Naturalmat handcraft organic mattresses for superyachts from a converted family shipyard in Devon, UK

Research at Yale University found that »voice-only communication elicits higher rates of empathic accuracy relative to vision-only and multisense communication both while engaging in interactions and perceiving emotions in recorded interactions. Innovative Design Engineering (IDE) masters degree show, at the Royal College of Art and Imperial College in July, almost exclusively comprised digital projects, two of the most interesting being: a new aural system, by Tobias Kappeler, to replace Zoom-type conference calls plus a device, presently aimed at children, enabling one to design to the computer by simply moving one's hand around in the air, by Natalie Bar David Frenkel, who says: »What I like most in a digital work environment, is the ability to listen to people, get feedback and change things instantly – according to their needs«.

### Endless possibilities

The possibilities, putting the two together, seem endless and it might not be long be-

fore the likes of Michael Leach Design, known for organic forms, can sculpt away in the air and a 3D model appear in front of their remote client. Before we get too immersed in our screens, Berthon's Managing Director, Brian May, points out: »The yacht industry has had a major boost as grandparents trade up to provide a larger platform for their family to enjoy, rather than just friends. This also means grandchildren are being inducted to sailing and motor yachts that will bode well for the future; youngsters had been so indoctrinated with the digital world, the freedom of the sea will remain with them forever, as will the memories of family and friends being on board and having no traffic lights or constrictions to abide by.« Berthon has introduced customer-friendly, outdoor, waterfront events from chilled acoustic Sunday Sessions to some major concerts exclusively for its Lymington Marina berth-holders, as well as opening a wine and keg-beer/cider bar – a digital app is not required to place a drinks order!

Vickers Studio – who has a major gutting-and-refit of Leander in Turkey amongst its projects – relocated from London to near Chichester harbour, »bliss in comparison«. The crossover between land and sea is as strong as ever for designers. John Vickers recently »delivered« a »big house in Moscow – it's all been very difficult with travel restrictions, flying in and out as the red list has changed. Choosing colours is a nightmare, selecting marble slabs via WhatsApp and face-time. We have got there in the end and it's been much better for the planet!«

### Work-life balance as boost

François Zuretti, based in Nice and renowned for his residences as much as large yacht interiors, also notes positives: »The health crisis has forced an industry-wide shift toward new and more adaptive work strategies, ensuring equal if not better efficiency.« For Zuretti companies, this has translated as a renewed commitment to remaining close to clients and guaranteeing a consistent quality of tailored services, despite travel restrictions and limited communication. Clients have become more aware of their own needs and expectations which encourages more exclusive and customized projects.

Naturalmat and Silverlining Furniture are British companies that have received the Queen's Award for Enterprise, both former exhibitors at Monaco Yacht Show (MYS). Silverlining CEO, Mark Boddington: »The pandemic has only reiterated that work-life balance is key, where fun, time spent with family and friends and memories are remembered. This has re-

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A Clifford Denn 160 m Royal Yacht proposal

sulted in a boost to the yacht industry which not only offers a lifestyle but also an enjoyable safe haven during lock down or when isolating.«

It has also change working practices with many firms offering permanent working from home/office balance and flexible hours for those whose skills can be employed at home. Working practices have changed forever and the people and business benefits. »For Silverlining the relationship with clients is even more important and contact the digital space through film, imagery and live presentations is now here to stay – saving time yet engaging clients in the creativity and commissioning journey, wherever they are. We continue to innovate in luxury, especially in craftsmanship and new sustainable low maintenance finishes, and are launching a new collection in the autumn«, he adds.

### Spotlight on what's right

Again with Covid-19 the spotlight has been shone on what's right – low-carbon, locally-sourced, sustainable practices within luxury. »We have also just launched our ›academy of skills«, as high calibre talent is hard to come by, and we need to generate skills to grow and put something back through a legacy of skills for the next generation, especially in the world of growing automation«, says Boddington.

Mark Tremlett, Co-Founder and Business Director of Naturalmat – whose father Chris Tremlett was renowned for designing and building fast power boats – went sustainable before it became de rigueur, handcrafting organic mattresses and beds from the updated family shipyard premises in Devon.

Tremlett observes that there is »more and more emphasis on trying to make the yacht as eco friendly as possible, which is something of a sisyphian task on a motor yacht – but all the same they are trying. This pushes more enquiries our way as market wide (hotel & retail) we are as green as you can get. I suppose at least by lying on an eco mattress on board their conscience might be assuaged!«

A busy 2021 would appear to mark acceptance of the new way of working: respect for the environment, less travel for meetings, more digitalisation at work – allowing for quality screen-free time to go yachting and enjoy nature. All market intelligence companies, from BoatPRO to SYT's free ›The State of Yachting«, show extremely healthy order books. The Sisyphian task of trying to create a perfect green superyacht will not stop. ■

## Jastram 1/3 Eckhoch in Mega