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7 DESIGNERS
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Wild

7 weird and wonderful requests made of yacht designers—and yes, it was a real pony.

BY DIANE M. BYRNE

Things

he saying “to each his own” couldn’t be more appropriate than in relation to design. What one person considers beautiful, someone else considers bizarre. When a yacht client makes an (*ahem*) unusual request of a studio, most designers try to fulfill it, even when their instinct tells them the concept won’t work.

Results are sometimes comical, yet other times surprisingly cool. “There are many factors they don’t know about, so they really do need guidance,” designer Patrick Knowles says of clients, who, he adds, “often come to the conclusion on their own” that an idea is impractical.

Then again, says Marnix Hoekstra of Vripack, “It’s vital to understand why someone is asking for something. ... To judge it as crazy doesn’t make sense. We can all live without a yacht, after all.”

SWIMMING WITH SHARKS

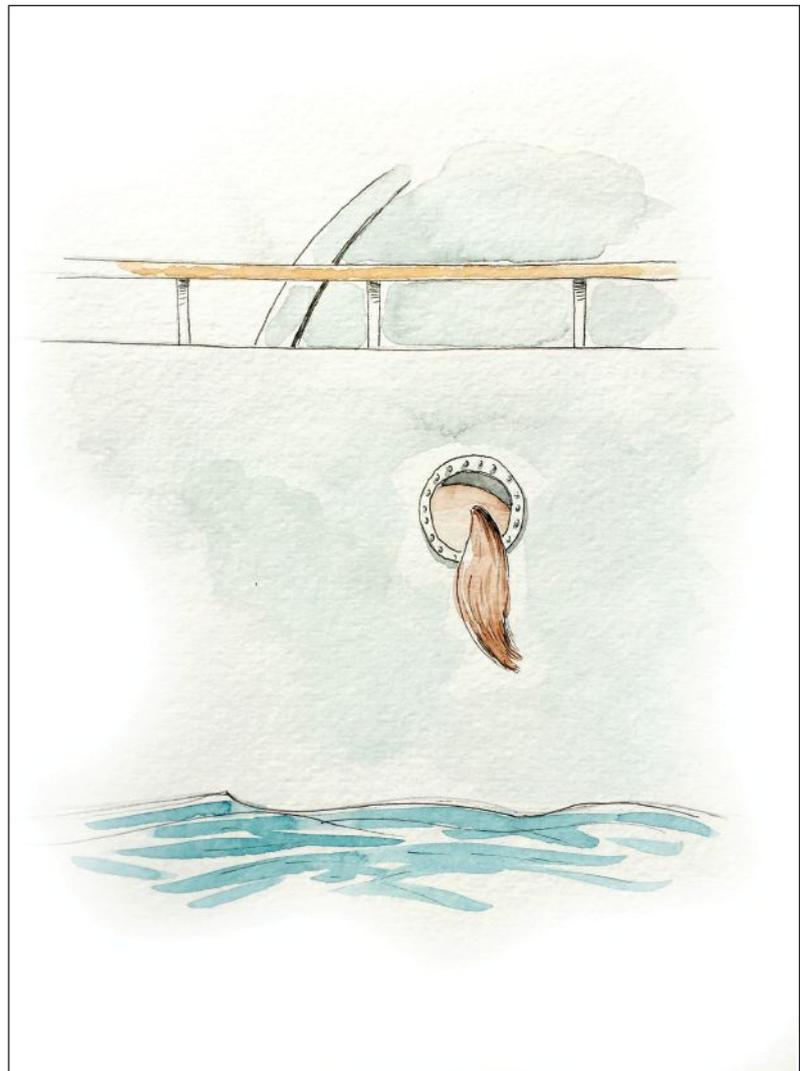
Several superyachts have aquariums, but one filled with sharks—and containing a shark cage for the owner, who happens to be *afraid* of sharks? A client of Gregory C. Marshall Naval Architect requested just that for a 295-footer. The client wanted a multideck atrium with “living walls” (that had live plants growing from them) on the yacht’s upper decks, and the shark tank on the lowest deck. A glass elevator would have taken the owner from top to bottom. The project never advanced beyond the on-paper stage, which Marshall says may have been for the best: “The odds of getting an authority to OK transporting sharks aboard is probably slim.”

PONY EXPRESS

Ed Dubois of Dubois Naval Architects earned a reputation as a designer of powerful sailing yachts. Perhaps that’s why a client thought he could draw a yacht that would accommodate a special family friend. “One owner wanted her daughter to be able to bring her pony with her on board the boat,” Dubois said, prior to his death in 2016. The owner even suggested creating “a rotating, turntable-like exercise machine” upon which the pony could trot and swim off. To Dubois’ relief, he and his team convinced the owner that “it probably wasn’t a good idea for the sake of the pony’s entire happiness.”

GREEN THUMB ON THE DEEP BLUE

Vripack considers itself beyond the ordinary, but Directors Marnix Hoekstra and Bart Bouwhuis could not have anticipated the request for a 295-footer



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with a park containing garden vegetables and other edibles. “This is huge!” says Hoekstra, whose team is still researching concepts for keeping the plants alive long-term at sea. The park would be 1,292 square feet, occupying more space than the yacht’s engine room.

PUPPY LOVE

Several years ago, Patrick Knowles of the eponymous design studio had a client who “always took his dogs on his boats.” The client was a dog breeder who wanted a yacht in the 150-foot range with an exercise track out on deck. Knowles recognized a conflict straight away: “Dogs have claws,” and the owner wanted teak decks. Knowles tried sketching the track as a mezzanine inside, toward the transom. “A lot of designs” ensued, he says, but no solution could be found. “Ultimately,” Knowles says, “we convinced him to just bring them along and call it a day.”

A LOVE FOR LAMBORGHINIS

It’s common for owners and designers to draw inspiration from sports cars. However, as Antonio Romano of Hot Lab experienced, sometimes customers can take their admiration a bit too far. A fan of Lamborghinis wanted a fully custom 115-footer with “an interior design project inspired by the Lambo’s style,” Romano says. Not a big deal—until, Romano adds, “He also asked to have a real car in the main saloon.” The design team made several attempts on paper, but couldn’t overcome the technical concerns. “In the end,” Romano says, “we convinced the client that maybe having a proper main saloon will be a bit more comfortable than a garage for a Lambo.”

NO SHORE THING

Bill Prince of the eponymous design studio recalls a client wanting a beach-like area aft, with sand, aboard his 141-footer. The owner even proposed refrigerating the platform, mimicking the cool sand layers felt when you dig your toes in on a real shoreline. Problem number one: “A cubic foot of beach sand weighs over 95 pounds,” Prince says, having also envisioned



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waves at anchor whisking the sand away, therefore requiring regular refilling and re-raking, from generous onboard reserves. “Over 40,000 pounds of sand would be needed to achieve this vision,” he says. “That’s the equivalent of setting a new 45 Hatteras on the swim platform.”

STUFFED ANIMALS

From Sint Maarten to Maine, more than a few yachts have stuffed toys sitting on beds. But an entire room devoted to furry friends—and not the kind you buy in a toy store—is quite a different thing. “We were asked to incorporate a taxidermy suite on a large, 80-meter-plus project a few years ago,” says Dickie Bannenberg of Bannenberg & Rowell. The owner wanted to display prized hunting trophies. The request was even more memorable than the one Bannenberg & Rowell received for a three-deck-high jellyfish tank. **Y**