

Building the best

A closer look at the latest developments at Feadship

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interview by Merijn de Waard

It goes without saying that Dutch shipyard Feadship is one of the world's finest builders of superyachts. Boasting a rich history with roots dating as far back as 1849, the company has grown and flourished over time with iconic superyachts such as the 47 metre Paraiso, the 86 metre Ecstasea, and the 99 metre Madame GU, all proudly part of the Feadship fleet. Incorporating the Koninklijke De Vries and Royal Van Lent shipyards as well as De Voogt Naval Architects in 1949, the First Export Association of Dutch Shipbuilders was officially established, ultimately leading to the revered brand we know today.

old companies each with our own history... Sometimes you get repeat clients who of course have a connection with 'their' yard, so then it's logical they continue with that relationship, but if there is no preference we usually just go on the build slots.

You recently announced the new facility of Royal Van Lent. Can you tell us more about the development of that decision?

It's a big step! The two serious options were Rotterdam and Amsterdam, but the location we have now in Amsterdam is so close by that we can run it as part of our existing company. Our team will rotate between the two facilities. There will of course be separate yard managers, but in principle it is going to be the same organisation as our Kaag facility. We see it as an extra dock, not an extra shipyard.

visioned boats like Azzam or Dilbar 10 years ago? If you told someone you were building a 160 metre yacht, they would ask if you were crazy. Now it's on the table.

The shed is 160 metres, but do you want to go there immediately?

You never know. Ideally, we wouldn't like to go much bigger than 120 metres to start, but how much choice do you have? We definitely won't start with 140 metres. We will start in the coming years building up the workforce for Amsterdam and luckily we have a very good order book, so we have a sufficient amount of work to be able to grow the company in a natural way.

The Royal Van Lent yard is owned by LVMH. How active is their involvement?

We talk with them about our strategies and

of course, have just recently completed five similar yachts for a group of friends, but it's a custom project for that group. It's one project, really. It may be we do something like that in the future, but it's client driven. Our core business will always be pure custom yachts.

There are a few shipyards who deliver a similar quality to Feadship. Are delivery times one of the main things you compete on?

We want to build yachts together with a client to completely fit it around the needs of the individual - I think we are particularly good at that. Of course you compete with delivery times and elements of pricing. Quality and innovation wise, though, I know we still build the very best yachts out there.

Is the market under 70 metres difficult for



Location of Van Lent's new Amsterdam facility

This year has been an exciting one in regards to new developments at Feadship, with two major company announcements made in quick succession. First, the news of the development of a brand new facility in Amsterdam for the Royal Van Lent yard, followed by the rather unsurprising appointment of Jan-Bart Verkuyl as the new Director of the yard, taking over from Dick van Lent after four decades of innovative leadership. Talking to SYT, Verkuyl comments on his official new position, one which he took up after two years of slowly absorbing Mr. Van Lent's responsibilities. "I feel a deep connection with the company DNA," he says. "I feel very much at home and it resonates with me, so I cannot help but be enthusiastic about the company. I think that's also the reason I eventually took more responsibility - people recognised that."

Here we talk to Verkuyl in more detail about the differences between the Royal Van Lent and Koninklijke De Vries yards, Feadship's intentions with their impending new facility, and the new superyachts we can expect to see come out of the yard in the near future.

Feadship is the brand, which is comprised of Koninklijke De Vries and Royal Van Lent. Do some clients specifically opt for one rather than the other?

In principle it shouldn't make a difference if a client's yacht is being built at Royal Van Lent or Koninklijke De Vries. We are two

“ Quality and innovation wise, I know we still build the very best yachts out there ”

So with that, we are not expanding in numbers of yachts - we have two slipways and two drydocks at Kaag. Our vision is that we remain as four build slots. We see that the market is shifting towards bigger boats, and we will most likely have one of the slipways empty here for refit work or as a workshop. That's where the market is, so we're following it as we, Feadship, have already done with the Makkum facility. The first boat can go in there in 2019.

Do you see the 100+ metre market as more of a regular market nowadays, or is it still very much accidental?

There seems to be a very clear trend, though how long that will continue to go on, I don't know. If you look at it historically every generation of the company is building bigger yachts, so we cannot ignore the fact that there is more demand. Who could have en-

they have a good insight into what goes on in the luxury market. They respect the family traditions in all the businesses they have and are very good people to brainstorm with. In terms of our contact with other brands in the Group, if a client has a specific preference for a brand in the group, for instance, Loro Piana, or Fendi, we can establish that contact, but the brands are all individual.

If you look at it from an investor's point of view, it's interesting to build yachts on speculation - especially if you build the same one multiple times. Do they wish to do that?

We are Feadship. We choose to create custom, fully unique projects, so that's our place in the market. Every yacht delivered by Feadship is completely bespoke. Building a platform or a semi-custom series is not the angle we want to take. Koninklijke De Vries,

Feadship to compete within?

Although there seems to be more competition from series builders in the 40+ metre arena, we still cater to those that want a quality full custom project. Last year we delivered Halo, and as far as I'm concerned that was an amazing package. It gives you the flexibility to go into all the marinas at 57 metres, so I don't see why clients wouldn't want to build in that size range anymore.

Can you tell us something about the projects you are currently working on?

We are blessed with a huge amount of projects. In total Feadship has around 17 in build, of which 11 are above 70 metres. Here at Kaag there is no project under 70 metres anymore. We just delivered Joy, and that was the smallest yacht we had in build which is crazy. We are also working on a 70+ metre project, which is stunning. She was undertaken with an extremely engaged client, who really enjoys the work - every time he comes and sees the craftsmanship he has a big smile on his face. Behind that there are numerous projects, including a 93 metre, which everyone will see by the end of the year.

Getting to know AES Yachts

Why their latest project is set to put the Turkish shipyard on the map

Gemma Fottles

The name AES Yachts probably doesn't ring an immediate bell. With a distinct lack of information pertaining to the company available, well, anywhere, this comes as no surprise, though with an exciting 66 metre new build project scheduled for completion next summer, that could be about to change.

Established just four years ago, the Turkish yacht building and interior outfitting company based in Tuzla is headed by Hasan Sancak, a man boasting a career in

predecessor wasn't capable of. Either way, Sancak seems to have got it right with his latest venture and welcomed their very first project into their facility towards the end of their inaugural year; the 35 metre Phoenix built by fellow Turkish shipyard, Nedship, in 2003. The list of works undertaken included a major interior equipment overhaul, the installation of two powerful gyroscopic stabilisers, the installation of three custom awning systems which were built in house, and full exterior paint works - to name but some.

After an intensive six month period the all new Phoenix left the yard to happy owners and a substantially larger project swiftly followed in her wake. The 51 metre Elena - also built by a neighbouring Turkish shipyard - arrived at the yard towards the end of 2013 for a period of 10 months. Upon completion another, again larger, new build project

years of business, but Sancak tells us that it was never the intention to be a refit yard with a penchant for quality interior design. Explaining this, Sancak states, "We work in every aspect of construction. We help others with interiors because we actually know what lies behind the wall and ceiling!" AES was destined to be an all encompassing yard that not only polished up superyachts to the standard they deserve, but also built brand new boats. And that's exactly what the AES team are busy doing now, with their very first new build vessel currently under construction in their brand new 78 metre shed. "It was our intention to have new build projects," Sancak continues, "At AES, we need to showcase our products. If our designs always stay renderings then nobody cares about it."

Named Project Days, the 66 metre superyacht is a custom project undertaken by

was to - with the assistance of Sancak - find a vessel suitable for a major refit, bring it to Tuzla, and let AES work their magic. This didn't quite go to plan, however, which actually worked out in the yard's favour. Sancak explains more: "We found a 50 metre explorer in Greece and we visited with the owner but the price was raised and we backed out. So we decided on a new yacht with a new design. It started at 59 metres, then 62, 63, and? It ended at 66."

Of course every project is important to the shipyard, but Project Days is particularly integral to the growth and development of AES, with the owner already envisioning future vessels with the yard if all goes to plan. "This is a very important project in Turkey," Sancak confirms. "If the owner is satisfied with the project, he will proceed with another 66 and another 45 metre project."

With Project Days and another substantial



The 65m Project Days

the maritime industry that spans the last two decades. Entering the industry on the commercial shipping side, his first professional experience with the luxurious side of maritime was in 2007. Two years later Sancak was ready for a new challenge which materialised in the form of Cizgi Yat.

Though Cizgi Yat led a very short lifetime (opening its doors in 2009, going into liquidation in 2011), the company managed to produce E&E in 2011 to industry-wide acclaim. Measuring 42 metres and featuring exterior design from Vripack, naval architecture from Vripack in collaboration with Endaze, and an interior from Art Line, the hard work poured into her from Sancak and the Cizgi Yat team paid off and was awarded at the following years World Superyacht Awards.

The success the yard experienced with E&E, however, wasn't enough, and following the closing of Cizgi Yat's doors in 2011 up sprung AES Yachts from the ashes just a few months later in 2012. A turbulent journey, indeed, but perhaps necessary to gather the experience needed to elevate AES to levels its

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landed on the yard's doorstep, the interiors on board the 60 metre Katina at Brodosplit in Croatia, though with difficulties in work permits and an extension of the job by 9 months, it wasn't as straightforward as predicted. Sancak says, "Our workers could stay in Croatia for just three months at a time. We signed the contract for six months, which would have meant we changed our workers twice... we stayed 15 months - can you imagine how many times we had to change the workers? It was a challenge." Three substantial refits certainly kept the new yard busy in their preliminary three

AES in collaboration with CCN Yachting, designed by Hot Lab Yacht & Design with naval architecture by Endaze Marine Engineering, exterior lines by Michele Dragoni and interiors in collaboration with Enrico Lumini. To adhere to the experienced client's requirements for generous living spaces, she spans across five decks with a beam of 12 metres resulting in an enormous total gross tonnage of 1,800 GT.

The new vessel came about after undertaking maintenance work on board the owner's previous Italian-built boat. Impressed with the quality of AES' work, his original idea

refit project currently keeping the AES team busy, the 71 metre Victoria, Sancak tells us that right now, their order book is full. "We have Victoria which we are planning to finish in one year, Project Days we will finish in one and a half years, so we are full right now. We are in discussions with another Turkish client for a prospective 70 metre, but we cannot start for another 1.5 years. Our team is limited... there are a lot of interior designers all over Turkey, but our team is really good and we won't compromise that." For now at least, AES seems perfectly comfortable with where they are heading.

In regards to the Turkish industry, are AES Yachts going to be the one to change the world's perception of Turkish shipbuilding? Well, they definitely lack the same kind of professionalism and structure as their Northern European counterparts, but the proof is, as always, in the pudding. With their 66 metre Project Days scheduled for completion in Summer 2017, ready to be presented at that year's Monaco Yacht Show, perhaps AES will prove themselves to be one of the gems in Turkey's problematic crown.