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NAVIGATING LANES

PLAYING CATCH-UP WITH NUVOLARI LENARD DESIGN

By Charl van Rooy



Carlo Nuvolari and Dan Lenard

The Nuvolari Lenard studio needs no introduction. For many in the business, designers Carlo Nuvolari and Dan Lenard have become household names over the past decade as the duo behind projects by the likes of Alfa Nero, Quattroelle, Palmer Johnson's SuperSport series, and some of CRN's most iconic yachts. We met up with the pair onboard one of their latest designed yachts, the new MCY 105 from Monte Carlo Yachts, to learn more about the studio's most recent projects, their views on issues in the design business, and why the studio strongly believe in apprenticeships to help form the next generation of designers.

For the design pair based in Venice and as personal yacht owners themselves, boating comes naturally to Carlo and Dan. Both having been involved in the business in some form from a young age, the pair seem as comfortable onboard the yacht on display here in Monaco as they would, I assume, at their own home. Dan speaks with flair and gusto about the work that the two has done, while Carlo, who clearly shares the same passion, exudes a more analytical nature, choosing his words carefully before speaking. And he better, as the topic on hand is the studio's largest completed project to date, the 106-metre Y712 that was recently launched at Dutch shipyard Oceanco.

It is a sensitive subject and I sense that Dan is aching to share as to what is hiding behind that striking exterior. But he composes himself and answers, "We are known not to talk about unfinished projects. Not only because of client confidentiality, something which we take very seriously, but because in each of our projects we incorporate some really fresh elements, so fresh that many of them are game changers when first revealed. By revealing too much too early, you can easily lose that 'wow' affect. So our silence is to protect our own efforts as well, until it is ready to be shared."

The relationship that Nuvolari Lenard has shared with Oceanco is echoed in iconic projects such as Amevi, Alfa Nero, Vibrant Curiosity, and Seven Seas to name a few.

But how exactly did this largely motor yacht-oriented design studio land a contract for the design of the largest sailing yacht in the world? Nuvolari explains: "The owner

a some kitsch styled home, but rather a study of classic era that is portrayed in a world' top quality executed replica-version designed and reinterpreted by us."

"Instead of protecting an idea by not sharing it with others, protect it rather by executing it so well that nobody else will be able to do the same"

commissioned another design company to design the preliminary concept. After that stage, we were appointed to do the project; designing the exterior and interior of the yacht."

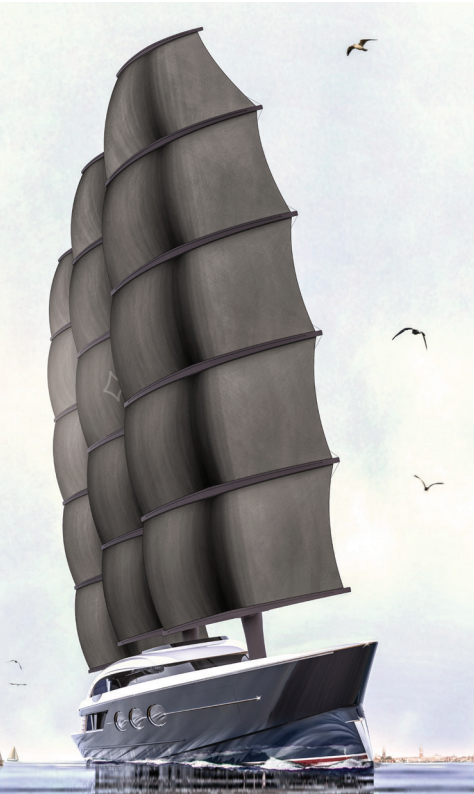
"The process for us was incredible," adds Lenard. "We worked very closely with the client using (working) scale models to experiment with different bow shapes and superstructures. The interior on the yacht is completely different than what one might expect. "We have seen 'fake' classic interiors in the past, but this concept is based on meticulous research of the original classic interior. This is not simply an impression of

As to that unique bow shape, Nuvolari explains that there is a functional and stylistic reason behind this stand-out feature. "On any sailing boat you are attempting to maximise the waterline length. Dykstra was responsible for the naval architecture as well as the DynaRig design – he [Gerry Dykstra] is a genius, a poetic engineer and a great guy to work with. To achieve the maximum waterline length, you can use a vertical or reverse bow. But this is a 106-metre ocean going ship and you will inevitably at some stage encounter significant swell and waves. She will quickly turn into a submarine if you don't add some sort of flare to the bow. So we ended up with a combination of the two. This will no doubt

become a signature aspect of the yacht. The market spoke about Maltese Falcon for years, and I guess they will talk about this project in much the same way."

When launched in 2007, Alfa Nero made headlines for innovations such as her unique swimming pool on the aft deck, a feature that today has become a trademark of the yacht. When asked how the studio deals with other designers interpreting their original ideas into other projects, the pair smile and lean back when answering: "Knowledge is a universal commodity," says Lenard. "You cannot stop it. Instead of protecting an idea by not sharing it with others, protect it rather by executing it so well that nobody else will be able to do the same. Just make it very difficult for everyone else to copy you, basically."

Like so many other high-profile design studios, creating highly customised superyacht projects are not the only way the pair spend their time. The studio's partnership with the Beneteau Group comes to mind. First designing lines for Beneteau Yachts, and now Monte Carlo Yachts, the Nuvolari Lenard stamp is today carried on hundreds of yachts worldwide. But are these production line designs simply a way to pass the time for these big boys? As it turns out, no. "Production lines we see as our bread and butter. We always have two or three projects on our table, which allow us to constantly exercise our styling and develop the teamwork in the studio."



An impression of the 106m project Y712 underway

Lenard continues that these projects differ vastly from custom, one-off superyachts, and demands a vastly different approach. “When designing for a brand such as Beneteau, we do not know who the end user will be. You have to factor in that the company will have to sell a certain number of these units for the line to be financially viable. It is very similar to the automotive industry in this sense. And when designing for a line, and not just one particular production model, you have to consider the fate of the entire range of yachts and pay attention that one model will not overpower or cannibalise the rest of the line. It is very difficult to achieve, but also extremely rewarding.”

And their artistic engineering work are yielding results. The Monte Carlo Yachts partnership is one such example. “The four of us; Carlo, Fabrizio, Carla Demaria and myself were sitting around a table one day and the question we had to answer was, ‘How are we going to challenge the existing brands that were dominating the market at the time, and come out with a better product?’ The idea from the beginning was not to design a pleasing and safe automotive-inspired yacht, because that would not set us apart from the others. You will see the line of the yachts look a little different than anything else out there,

and it has proven to be very successful. In the seven years of production, Monte Carlo Yachts has reached an annual turnover of over €100 million this year. The company has grown from four people in 2009, to over 350 employees in under seven years.

With such high expectations from clients, and with a total of 950 metres worth of yachts under construction baring the Nuvolari Lenard name, how do these two manage their time? “We don’t manage to be honest. We are slowly going crazy,” comes Nuvolari’s answer. “I didn’t even have time use my motor boat this summer season!” adds Lenard. But it seems the pair would have it no other way: “The biggest advantage of our double business, is that we keep the same team all the time. We don’t hire when we get busy and fire people when there is less work. We have 15 internal employees who have been with us for a long time. We do rely on subcontractors to help us with technical drawings and execution of the symmetrical overlay work. But all the creative work is done in house.”

Despite the small amount of artists employed by the studio, Lenard feels it is this intimate environment that gives them the cutting edge. “We can execute the work we are doing better if we only have to face our team on the one side, and the client on the other. The moment you have to start delegating to people who represent you and your company, then you start losing your artisan approach. And that is a fundamental part of design.”

This hands-on, old school approach could be attributed to Lenard’s brief period spent developing under Martin Francis while still in the early stages of his design career. This mindset has lead to an active apprenticeship program supported by the studio – a way Lenard feels best enable young designers to develop a feel for their own path. “At Martin Francis I learned that you have to touch the real world of where it is that you want to be one day. And to experience this, I feel the apprenticeship formula works best. Nobody is born with enough knowledge to cover the entire spectrum of the design business. You may be very good at drawing and create a few nice designs, but you might not know enough about boats to deliver a comprehensive design that factors in all the aspects. I urge young designers not to be happy with any job in any design office, but rather in the office he/she really feels would let them do what they want and learn from the office as much as possible. We support this method of teaching as well, with at least two apprentices in the office at any time. It is satisfying to see them get placed in good offices following a period spent with us.”

TOP 5
NUVOLARI
LENARD-
DESIGNED
SUPERYACHTS

Seven Seas
Oceanco, 2010, 86m



©Rob Starling

DB9
Palmer Johnson, 2010, 52m



© christo303

Atlante
CRN, 2015, 55m



Quattroelle
Lürssen, 2013, 86m



©Klaus Jordan

Azteca
CRN, 2010, 72m



© christo303



The 72m Azteca in Nuvolari Lenard’s hometown of Venice