

BIRTH OF 'A' - PURE GENIUS

FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE THE LAUNCH OF MOTOR YACHT A IN 2008, CREATOR AND DESIGNER, PHILIPPE STARCK TALKS OPENLY TO AMANDA MCCRACKEN ABOUT THE PHILOSOPHY AND CREATIVITY BEHIND HIS MASTERPIECE DESIGNED FOR ELEGANT 21ST CENTURY LIVING.



Back in the 70s the world lay at Philippe Starck's feet and he grasped it with both hands, a pioneer of design, architecture and artefacts that can now be seen worldwide in every detail of everyday living, testament to his intellect and idealism. The Starck philosophy is to promote an ethos of honesty and integrity, which he feels are at the core of his designs. He creates haute couture in every dimension, marrying all the elements with a molecular energy which lives and breathes through his creations, designs and products. Starck seemingly invents and reinvents himself at every turn and is one of the best known contemporary designers in the world, with accolades aplenty.

It is therefore no surprise that he has a loyal following among some of the most well-known and influential people in the world for the design of individual custom-built superyachts. Although superyacht design has changed in the 21st century, nothing has really rocked the world for young entrepreneurial high net worth individuals, until the launch of motor yacht A. This is probably the most talked about yacht design ever: the social media airwaves went global, traditionalists were scathing while others embraced it, heralding Starck a genius, but that's not really of interest to Starck. He doesn't see his role as messing about in the pool of others, as he explains:

"Until now, yacht architecture has derived more or less from a grounded architecture, violently and painfully pushing water, in permanent conflict with the elements, essentially displaying the only real power it had - power and vulgarity of money. Today a yacht has to be in harmony with nature, with the elements and also, and probably most of all, in accordance with other human beings. It is in this state of mind that A was conceived."





Starck describes A as being an exceptional yacht which stems from a bygone era, a time such as the Renaissance era, when there were no barriers and the intuition, intelligence and curiosity of patrons profited creators and artists, who had freedom of thought. And this is how he sees his role with the owners of A – a philosopher of this century. *"When trusting me, the courage and intuition of the owners of A was even more remarkable as, at that time, even if I had already produced and developed many projects, even if my attachment and knowledge of the sailing and yachting world was deep, my boat creations were, on purpose, quite modest in size and quite rare. The owners gave me a blank page, where, if I correctly recall, was written: 119 metres."*

And of course A is 119 metres (390ft), built at the Blohm and Voss yard in Germany and designed wholly by Starck. Freedom to design this project was one of the main parameters agreed at the outset. So, with a blank page Starck approached the project using his personal kinship with the sea and looked for a vision that would be a new dimension on the water, one that lives in harmony with the elements. He didn't approach it like one would normally from the outside in, a design that works within a general arrangement plan, a modular vision. On the contrary he threw this aspect to the wind and dug deep, he explains: *"I dug into my memories, my sensations and visions but also into images, algorithms from water, from sea movements. The elegance and power of the changing waves is an endless lesson. A comes directly from all that."*

"I DESIGNED A IMAGINING OUTSIDE AND INSIDE AT THE SAME TIME TO ENSURE GLOBAL HARMONY AND TO HAVE NO CONFLICT BETWEEN THE HULL AND THE SUPERSTRUCTURE AND THE VOLUME I WANTED INSIDE."

PHILIPPE STARCK



When you put Starck's thoughts into focus you can start to understand where the design of the exterior of A comes from. Think of the hull as the lithe body of a sea creature, say a dolphin or whale, and look at the bow as the refined head and the superstructure as the body and dorsal fin, all moving in perfect harmony, quietly and effortlessly through the waves, and you get the idea. Starck continues *"I designed A imagining outside and inside at the same time to ensure global harmony and to have no conflict between the hull and the superstructure and the volume I wanted inside. It is very important to work both at the same time in order to avoid mistakes and inharmonious details. I designed the entire boat with Thierry Gaugain, my partner in sailing projects, and we had a consultation with Martin Francis to check the hydraulic of the yacht and especially the hull. It is during the tank test that we had the confirmation of my intuition about a hull making a minimum of waves with a maximum of efficiency."*





A

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LOA 119m (390.4ft)

BEAM: 18.8m (61.9ft)

DRAFT: 5.2m (16.9ft)

BUILDER: Blohm & Voss GmbH, Germany, 2008

NAVAL ARCHITECT: Blohm & Voss GmbH / Francis Design

EXTERIOR DESIGN: Philippe Starck

INTERIOR DESIGN: Philippe Starck

CRUISING SPEED: 19.5 knots

GUESTS: 14 guests in 7 suites

"UNTIL NOW, YACHT ARCHITECTURE HAS DERIVED MORE OR LESS FROM A GROUNDED ARCHITECTURE, VIOLENTLY AND PAINFULLY PUSHING WATER..."

PHILIPPE STARCK



The living areas on A are pure theatre, nothing is modular, nothing is symmetrical or aligned. The result is a freedom of expression that defies you to categorise it in any way. The effect is chic, elegant, unstructured, yet the eclectic use of noble elements combined with contemporary furniture is at the heart of the most elegant way of living, as Starck explains: "the rooms are very wide, very bright, very harmonious. In shades of light shark skin, mirrors, warm wood, silk fabric and carpets, all very artistic but in a discreet way in order to remain quiet and relaxing. Bathrooms are in polished stainless steel with back-lit arabescato marble, Baccarat mirrors and polished stainless steel accessories...by themselves they are each a piece of art."

As expected, the owners have an entire floor to themselves, reached by a private lift. A swath of curved panoramic windows (with bullet-proof protective glass) gives stunning light and openness to the suite, which comes complete with private pool and terrace.

"The master bedroom and its bed are exceptional, of great ambition, of great complication and high technology. A large disc covered with a rug turns while supporting a bed - in the centre of the immense master bedroom - that can also rotate. The room is composed of different zones and thanks to the disc and a planetary rotation system, the bed can shift under the glass roof, next to the chimney, near the bathtub, to an infinite possibility of positions in order to be placed at the best spot depending on the action. As always, our work is like haute couture and our goal is to give the best and most accurate service possible to the person who will live in our projects", explains Starck.



Life on board A is exceptional and there is no better place than on the main deck. Here Starck describes his vision of living in this space: "The main lounge is very open, very wide and bright, luminous. Volumes are very pure and clean. The spirit is like a huge artist's loft in a castle decorated in a very luxurious way. The main materials are mahogany, natural leather, fur, silk, bevelled mirrors, engraved mirrors, Baccarat chandeliers mixed with special custom Murano chandeliers made by artists. A big place is given to a library and fireplaces. Very long tables, custom-made by Baccarat, positioned diagonally in the room give the opportunity to, depending on time of the day, have a gorgeous breakfast, lunch alone or with lots of friends...or host a lavish buffet. The table can also become a fantastic cocktail table and can serve for a romantic dinner or again a fantastic party. The space is like an art collector's studio, with lamps, armchairs, sofas, custom-made and designed by me or by different world famous artists mixed with antiques from different periods. The magic of the decoration comes from the very eclectic collection of furniture and art coming from all ages, from everywhere in the world and gives a very fascinating mix... everywhere you look you can find a fertile surprise at the highest cultural level. The space by itself becomes a piece of art while still very human and very comfortable with a sort of je ne sais quoi and perhaps French touch which makes everything light and naturally elegant."

A can accommodate eight to twelve guests in six cabins all with direct access to the beach area aft. Three are designed so that they are connecting and can be used to create a huge suite. The whole yacht is a magnificent playground, with three pools, an open-air party deck at sea level (which doubles up for storage of the Starck-designed tenders and all manner of watersports). Unlike most superyachts the yacht has permanent fixed sunshades so that guests can enjoy living outdoors during all seasons: from the stern living rooms to the spaces in the bow, you can choose between summer, winter and mid-season zones.

So you can understand now how A's master plan is for the 21st century: "large open spaces, flexible and multi-purpose where the different destinations are suggested but never imposed: a chimney, a swimming pool, sofas... Life on A is fluid and smooth. Whether for two or many more, there is a space for all occasions and moods, day time or night time. The deck of A is like a village: horizontal - where anyone can naturally find his or her physiological space" concludes Starck.

PURE GENIUS.

