

When the owner of *Bliss* embarked on the construction of his first superyacht, he had many motivations, but two in particular took precedence. Moving up from an 18 metre yacht to one twice the length, he was keen to fully exploit its size. His previous yacht was equipped and finished like a superyacht but lacked the one essential luxury that comes with the real thing – it was cramped and he yearned for more space. The second imperative was to favour new solutions over traditional ones. The approach would be fresh and contemporary.

In pursuit of the second requirement, the yacht is constructed from composite materials and the interior and exterior design embraces modern materials and styling. Practicality and flexibility are a strong guiding principle in the entire approach: function first, form second and frilly pretension totally absent.

The result is a yacht that is tautly disciplined in its design and presentation, with some clever internal space planning that allows rooms to serve more than one purpose and spring occasional surprises.

Intended for family cruising and charter work, *Bliss* is a 37 metre performance sloop from Dubois Naval Architects and built by Yachting Developments in Auckland, New Zealand.

‘From the outset, the owner had strong feelings about how he was going to approach this project,’ says Guy Waddilove, who became involved as the owner’s representative at an early stage. ‘He is a forward-thinking person and was keen to steer away from traditional ideas, so wherever a modern approach would achieve a better outcome, he would opt for that. In the type of construction, for example, that meant he would only contemplate building in composites.’

From the moment you step on board, the effect of this determination to pursue practicality and shun tradition is obvious in the complete absence of external timber. No varnished caprails, not even teak decks.

WHEN THE OWNER REQUESTED THE MOST CONTEMPORARY MATERIALS AND FINISHES, DUBOIS AND YACHTING DEVELOPMENTS STEPPED UP TO THE PLATE WITH THIS LIGHTWEIGHT, PARED-BACK SLOOP

bliss

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BLISS





Design Unlimited created a stylish look with minimal use of wood. There is an absence of traditional timber joinery and panelling. The walls and deckheads are white leather, matching the white leather upholstery



Instead, the decks are finished simply in white painted non-slip – saving tonnes of weight, hundreds of hours in annual maintenance and, in the tropics, avoiding burned feet and overburdened air-conditioning. A daily hose-down and the job is done, and there is the added benefit of eco-friendliness.

Similar consideration went into the bimini. Often great effort goes into creating removable biminis, which, in truth, usually take considerable time to erect and dismantle and most often end up semi-permanently deployed. The Bliss approach was to create a permanent hard-top bimini that extends over the guest cockpit and the twin helm stations.

Over the cockpit, two large sunroof blinds can be drawn back to open the area up to the sun or starlit dining, while clear hatches set into the aft overhang allow the helmsman to view the sail trim. The hard structure is supported by substantial stainless steel pillars and cross-braces, which allow the mainsheet to attach directly on to the roof, keeping the cockpit and aft deck clear.

Set into the underside of the bimini are overhead lights and angled high-spec loudspeakers. Twin coffee tables, finished in clear fibreglass with aluminium honeycomb insets, can be raised and rotated to create alfresco dining tables. This is clearly an area that will enjoy the most use, able to shift mood and function from lounging by day – enjoying the sailing action and passing scenery – to casual lunches and more formal evening dinners. In poor weather, clear side screens can be deployed to provide protection.

For those who want to top up their suntans, two low-slung L-shape settees on the aft deck can be converted to large sunbeds, or, at anchor, they could relax in the spa pool dam in the foredeck tender well.



BLISS

LOA 36.8m
BEAM 8.35m

LWL 32.2m
DRAUGHT 4m

DISPLACEMENT
118 tonnes

ENGINES
Caterpillar C9'D' rated 510 bhp
@ 2,500 rpm

THRUSTERS
2 x 50hp Lewmar Retractable

GENERATORS
Kohler 50kW / 50Hz @ 1,500rpm

FUEL CAPACITY
15,000 litres

FRESHWATER CAPACITY
4,000 litres

SAILS
Doyle Sails NZ

SPARS AND RIGGING
Martin Spars, Navtec
rod rigging

MAST AND BOOM
Hall Spars

OWNER AND GUESTS
6/8

CREW
4/5

CONSTRUCTION
Composite: post-cured epoxy,
e-glass, carbon fibre, high-
strength PVC foam core

CLASSIFICATION
3 Germanischer Lloyd #100A5
Unlimited Sailing Yacht, MC
Machinery Class, MCA LY code
compliant

NAVAL ARCHITECT
Dubois Naval Architects

EXTERIOR STYLING
Dubois Naval Architects

INTERIOR DESIGNER
Design Unlimited

OWNER'S PROJECT MANAGER
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Between the aft sunbeds and the guest cockpit are twin helm stations with large carbon-fibre wheels driving a cable and quadrant steering system that provides good response and feedback to the helmsman. The helm station design, with push-button sail controls, systems and navigation monitoring, Brookes & Gatehouse performance displays and miniaturized throttle and thruster controls, is efficient and modern.

Two large curved sliding glass doors provide access from the aft cockpit to the main saloon, which features a bar and lounge area to starboard and three banquet settees set in a U-shape around a large rectangular coffee table to port. The coffee table conceals a complex feat of engineering, which allows it to convert to a dining table. Electric motors lift the table to dining height, extend its two perimeter leaves, and slide up a central insert to fill the gap and create a seamless plane. Then, to spare guests those awkward scoots around the table into their seating positions, the push of a button slides the tabletop sideways. Once guests are elegantly seated on one side, the table is slid back to allow guests easy entry on the other side.

Typical of designs by Dubois Naval Architects, the large side windows, the dramatic sweep of the 50mm curved windscreen and overhead hatches pour light into this central portion of the yacht and provide guests, seated or standing, with panoramic views.

Arrival at the yacht, with its black hull, white superstructure and spare, modern appearance creates a first impression of contemporary design, pared back to its essentials. The interior, styled by Design Unlimited and built in-house by Yachting Developments to a very high standard, offers no contradiction and perfectly complements this

approach. The colour palette, for example, is admirably brief: black, white, silver and blue with touches of chocolate in the guest areas and the dark polished wengé floors.

The floors offer perhaps the only nod to tradition in the sense that they echo the teak and holly look – except that closer inspection reveals that the stripped inlays are not timber at all, but stainless steel. Combined with the dark, high-gloss wengé, the effect is dramatic and represents a considerable accomplishment by the yard.

The entire look, inside and out, is linear, cutting edge, clean and minimal. However, it is not without occasional flourishes. The black hull, for example, is relieved by a bright orange cove stripe and transom name, which hint at humour and rebellion, certainly not traditional in any sense. The interior, with its polished stainless, leather and lacquer, features a subtle introduction of texture in the form of shagreen detailing – which uses stingray skin, rough to the touch interspersed with occasional smooth spine nodules. The bar counter is glass topped, with a centrepiece comprising stainless wire mesh embedded in the glass and an LED lighting surround.

Describing the look as more like a spaceship than a yacht, Design Unlimited studio head Mark Tucker says, 'It's been great to work with a client who has no inhibitions when it comes to pushing the boundaries and creating something truly out of the ordinary.'

In yachts of this size and type, the central public area is frequently divided into an upper and lower saloon, the second of which, in many cases, tends to get little use. Once again, the team has applied fresh thinking to this issue. Instead of a 50-50 split, the upper saloon is





The centreline companionway is lined with white floor-to-ceiling leather panels separated by LEDs, and at the aft end is a spectacular full-length abstract painting by George Raftopoulos



maximised and a small lower level is created. The lower level contains a day head plus access to the engine room to starboard and ship's office to port. Due to the emphasis on easy maintenance, the owner intends to run the yacht with a crew of just four. Forward, two crew cabins are provided – one a captain's double and the other with upper and lower berths, and both with en suites.

However, for busy charters, there might be a requirement for a fifth crew member. Accordingly, the window alcove in the office can be converted into a single pilot berth, with a partition for privacy. In this configuration, the fifth crew person could have access to the day head just across the way, which includes a shower.

The crew cabins also illustrate the determination to use all available space on board. Every void has been relentlessly hunted down and converted to cupboards or storage spaces, including cavernous overhead lockers that open and drop down like airliner bins.

Situated between the crew accommodation and the office are the service areas comprising the laundry, galley and crew mess. Again, traditional barriers between crew and owners are blurred, both in the style and finish of the service areas, and in the way the spaces are used. The galley is spacious and attractive – more what one might expect in a 50 metre than a 36 metre yacht. The intention is that the owner and guests will feel comfortable wandering into the galley to fix a cup of coffee or a light snack – or to perch on one of the barstools to watch the chef at work.

Guest and owner accommodations are aft. Two mirror-image guest cabins are situated on either side of the companionway, each featuring twin beds that can slide together, plus a Pullman berth. The en suites

feature black granite floors, with white Corian counters and deep rectangular hand basins.

Situated at the aft end of the companionway, the owner's suite spans the full beam of the yacht, with two entrances on either side of the panel designed by Australian artist George Raftopoulos. A kingsize bed is on the centreline with a desk to port and settee to starboard. Behind the bed on either side are his and hers en suites.

Once again, the double entranceways and bathrooms suggest flexibility in design. For a family with small children, the owner's suite can be divided into a large master suite and an adjoining double-berth cabin. A concealed partition can be drawn across to isolate the main bedroom, desk and portside en suite into a self-contained suite. The settee and smaller starboard en suite thus become a separate cabin with its own entrance. At the push of a button, a second bunk descends from the starboard window alcove to create a double-decker sleeping arrangement.

'It was undoubtedly a challenge to create an interior that was both comfortable and highly contemporary,' notes Tucker. 'And it is very rare to almost entirely eliminate wood in the way that we did. Yet we identified and sourced an array of modern fabrics and finishes that created some of the most striking effects that we have ever worked on.'

Functional and flexible, as per the owner's brief, the success of the interior is also a result of a determined effort to maintain a design identity throughout the yacht. So, for example, the rectilinear shapes are carried through to the stainless steel fittings, handrails, door handles, heated towel rails and tapware. With the restrained use of colour and materials, a pleasing design cohesion is observed throughout.

Success, of course, must also be measured in terms of how the yacht performs in its primary function: as a wind-driven machine. In this respect, Dubois has a well-established reputation. 'For many years now, we have worked on both excellent sailing performance and comfort of life at sea and in harbour,' says Ed Dubois.

To achieve this goal, hull design, sails and rig are state of the art. The Doyle Sails wardrobe is made of a carbon vectran composite specifically designed for *Bliss*. 'The composite structure is designed to bring the latest weight saving and optimised performance,' says Quinten Houry, superyacht project manager at Doyle Sails. The wardrobe comprises a reacher and blade set on Reckmann furlers, a staysail that sets on a detachable inner forestay, an MPS and large-roach fully battened mainsail.

The rig is an elegant 50 metre carbon fibre five-spreader configuration by Hall Spars. The in-boom furling system features a unique gooseneck design, which does not require the boom to be centred for furling. The construction of the rig was in a mixture of high and medium modulus carbon fibre and the inner forestay, backstay and running backstays are PBO. 'The shrouds and forestays are stainless rod,' said Garry Hassall, managing partner of Hall Spars. 'We did a calculation of cost versus weight and this was the most cost-effective option for this project.'

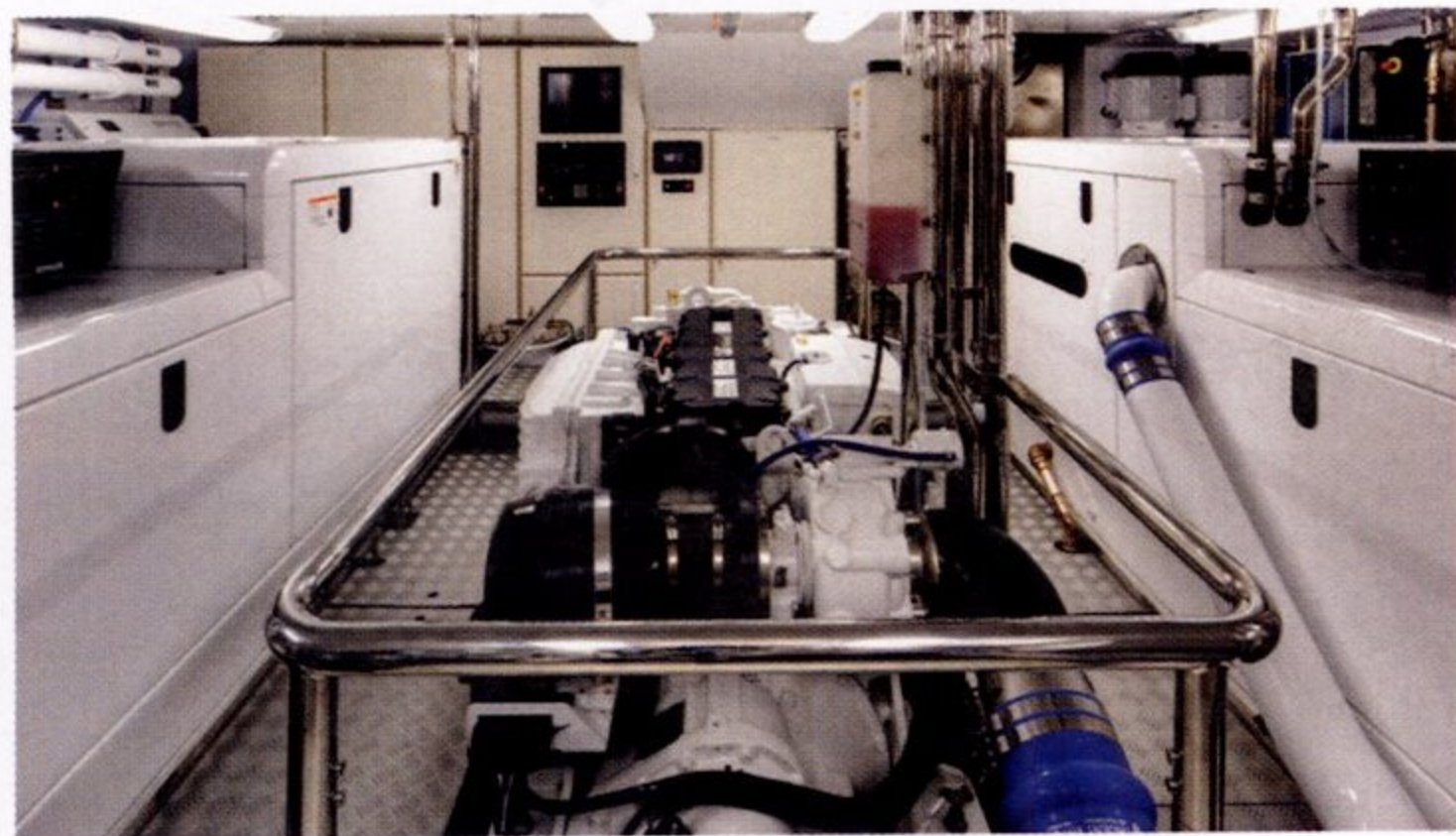
Combined with a hull that features considerable use of carbon fibre, the package produces lively performance, with early sea trials showing speeds of 12.2 knots close reaching in an apparent breeze of 22 knots to an apparent wind angle of 35-40 degrees, and up to 16 knots under MPS. Upwind under the blade and full main, the yacht achieved 9.8 knots in an apparent wind of 22 knots, and at a 30-degree apparent wind angle.

'The hull was a sandwich construction with a high-strength PVC foam core and carbon-fibre outer skin with post-cured epoxy,' says Yachting Developments managing director Ian Cook. 'The weight was closely monitored during construction, although the weight-saving regime was



The high-tech galley strikes a futuristic tone with black metallic lacquer, black granite and stainless steel work tops and blue glass splashbacks. All cabins including the owner's suite (below) are plugged into the Kaleidescape entertainment system, and the entire yacht is a wireless internet zone





moderate rather than extreme. A lot of weight was saved by strategic use of carbon and avoiding the teak decks,' he adds.

Lightship displacement came out at 120 tonnes, which Dubois calculated represented a saving of about 35 tonnes over an alloy equivalent. This translates to a displacement-to-length ratio of 120 versus 135 and a sail area-to-displacement ratio of 32.3 versus 25.9. 'So you can see that the power-to-weight ratio of *Bliss* is 25 percent greater than the aluminium equivalent,' explains Dubois. 'The lighter structure lowers the vertical centre of gravity quite a lot, increasing the stability:weight ratio as well.' Matched with a very high-aspect 3.6 metre

rudder and elliptical keel and bulb, these factors contribute to *Bliss*' sparkling turn of speed. 'One of the other advantages of this construction is that it requires fewer structural frames,' says Cook. 'That means we gain extra space for the interior.'

Construction began in November 2007 and the yacht was launched in November 2009. Following full commissioning, sea trials, certification and classification procedures, the yacht was handed over to the owner just two weeks later. This was due in no small part to the collective experience of the team involved. 'It has been a great project,' says Waddilove. Another contributing factor to the success was extensive testing of systems in the yard prior to launching. This included full scale mock-ups of the interior, a run-up of all the navigation systems at the yard, with the depth sounder in water tanks and the radar, wind instruments and satellite antennae up on the roof.

'For six weeks prior to launch the entire yacht was live,' says Cook. 'We connected water supplies for the cooling systems and ran everything: gensets, main engine, pumps, monitors, propellers, thrusters. The entire yacht was functioning in the yard.'

An owner with a clear, tightly defined vision and a skilled, well-managed team have combined in a project that has exceeded expectations in the outcome and build process. 'It has all come together very smoothly,' says Waddilove. *Bliss* gives every indication that the team behind its creation has produced a yacht that will well and truly live up to its name.

