

Early Innovations

Design ideas that would bring the dreams of a passionate owner to fruition, and sky-rocket **Perini Navi's** place in the market

Andromeda la Dea was significant for Perini Navi as it ushered in an Owner (with a capital 'O') who went on to have a profound influence on the company's product development and brand image. Tom Perkins, the American billionaire venture capitalist, is commonly associated with *The Maltese Falcon*, a project that has eclipsed just about all other super sailing yachts. However, he owned two previous Perinis, both named *Andromeda la Dea*. On the second and larger 47m *Andromeda* launched in 1990, Perkins and Perini developed the track mount at the top of the mast that allowed the fisherman, set between the two masts,

to be trimmed more efficiently. Along with *Xasteria* (currently *Klosters*), *Liberty* and *Piropo IV*, *Andromeda* reflected the next step in Perini's evolution as production extended beyond 45m – a market segment it has dominated ever since.

There were two fundamental design changes introduced through this new and larger series of yachts: the length of the flybridge was substantially increased to afford even more open-air living space, and the hull



shape was redesigned. A deeper hull form provided more interior volume in the guest accommodation amidships by reducing the space taken up by the keel box and reduced the centre of gravity for better sailing performance. Moreover, the aft guest cockpit had become progressively wider and more protected from the elements by being stepped down on a level with the main saloon.

Perkins is not the only public figure to have joined the select brotherhood of Perini owners. Others include the media moguls Rupert Murdoch with *Rosehearty*, and Silvio Berlusconi, the first owner of *Principessa Vivia*, notable for being the first Perini hull to be built in Turkey. In the late 1980s, nearly two decades before *The Maltese Falcon* would put the country on the superyacht map, Fabio Perini had taken the astute business decision to acquire the Yildiz shipyard in Istanbul to build the hulls and provide basic outfitting before final finishing in Viareggio.

"Turkey has changed so much in 20 years that Yildiz as a microcosm also experienced an enormous transformation," says Yildiz Director, Burak Akgül. "Perini was able to transfer know-how to the reality in Istanbul to set up what we wanted to do there. I think we are very fortunate in having an extremely driven, motivated group of young people who work for us in Istanbul. And what's most important is that they identify in being a part of Perini Navi to an extent that it rules above everything else."

A traditional counter stern had so far been a standard feature of Perini yachts – a nod, if you like, to traditional sailboat design. The break with this custom came with *Carlotta's* reverse transom in 1992; followed by another leap in size with *Cornelia* and *Morning Glory*, both launched the following year. The reverse transom combined with the extra hull volume provided the opportunity to introduce another innovation: a flush door in the aft section of the hull that dropped down to water level and provided direct access to the lazarette.

By now, Perini's company policy of commencing a build before looking for a suitable owner, so as to retain control of its brand image and fundamental design principles, was well established. As part of this policy, the interior finish and décor, created by in-house designer Bernardo Chichi, was standardised, which meant yachts could be completed in a timely and competitive manner.

"To out-think the market is a risky business," says PN Shipyard Director, Franco Torre. "If we can join forces with the owner early on, all the better, but there have been very few cases where the client has provided the original impetus. The advantage of our method is that owners avoid waiting two years or more while their yacht is being built."

Taouey, launched in 1994, was a rare case of a 'special project' that developed from an owner's impetus in the form of a specific brief. At 58m, she was also close to ten metres longer than anything Perini had attempted to design and build to date. "A special project is something that has to be managed slightly separately from the regular activities that feed and maintain the company," explains Torre. "But we still have to invest our people and experience, otherwise we would be doing something that doesn't reflect the Perini concept. After all, even though the boat may be unique, the client comes to us because he expects a Perini yacht."

The Designers

In-house designer **Bernardo Chichi** began his career with Benetti, but during his time with Perini he has been instrumental in establishing the luxurious and timeless interior-styling that has come to define the brand.

The interior continues the company's focus on maritime tradition, albeit with a crisp and contemporary format, by drawing on the time-honoured materials of oak, teak and Italian marble, while the clever use of storage space is typical of sailboat design.

Felicità west marked the first occasion that outside designers were brought in to enhance Perini's in-house style, usually from the field of land-based architecture. As the biggest and fastest aluminium sail boat in the world at the time of its launch, the project effectively launched Venice-based duo **Nuvolari & Lenard** into the rarified world of superyacht design.

Christian Liaigre introduced a clean and linear feel to the interior of *Rosehearty* – a challenge for any boat builder as it demands more care and precision during the outfitting to avoid all-too-visible imperfections.

Having designed the interiors of four Perini yachts – *Squall*, *Parsifal III*, *Salute* and *Riela* – **Rémi Tessier** is the most prolific designer to have collaborated with the company.

As much as the awe-inspiring clipper rig with its free-standing, rotating, 58m carbon fibre masts, **Ken Freivokh's** radical interior for *The Maltese Falcon* in 2006 convinced us that we were looking at something utterly new. "One of the guiding principles governing the interior design was to ensure that the revolutionary rig and sail mechanism was reflected internally", explains Freivokh. "In the same way that a Bentley Continental or Bugatti Veyron is more than just a car, *The Falcon* is more than just a yacht. It is a sailing machine – a very high-tech, comfortable and elegant one, but nonetheless a transportation machine."

British designer **John Pawson**, known for his minimalist architecture, was brought in by 50m *Baracuda* owners to design the interior. Pawson's minimalist style represented a definitive departure from Perini's traditional interiors to reflect the more contemporary tastes of its clients, but the culmination of Perini's ongoing collaboration with some of the world's top designer names is *Panthalassa*, which won the Prix du Design at the 2010 Monaco Yacht Show. In their recommendation the jury cited the fine interior design by

Foster + Partners that promotes a diffused light throughout the boat.

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time. Moreover, it was the first time Perini allowed 'outside' designers into the fold in the form of naval architect Ron Holland and interior designers Nuvolari & Lenard. Perini is justifiably proud of its technical office, headed up by Franco Romani, but Ron Holland has worked closely with the in-house team to optimise hulls forms, appendages and sail plans ever since. This led the way for later collaborations with naval architects Ed Dubois and Philippe Briand and a string of internationally renowned interior designers.

The move from steel to aluminium was not a simple one, though. Compared with the traditional steel-hulled yachts, the lighter aluminium construction of *Felicità west* required reinforcements to accommodate the massive loads on the stays. Burak Akgül recalls that the chain plate for the mainstay, for example, extended some three metres into the hull structure, which required two weeks of welding to provide the necessary strength to meet Lloyd's class and the yacht's performance predictions. In addition to a carbon fibre in-boom furling system and an optimised rig with Doyle's latest Ocean Weave sails, the yacht required further modifications below the waterline. The deep-V shape of previous hulls offered huge interior volume amidships, but the performance-oriented aluminium hull had to be shallower and more rounded.

Perini Navi's foundations were based on conservative brand values. Its heavy-displacement, steel hulls served the demand for unmatched comfort and luxury with unprecedented volume, but performance was not at the top of the wish list and owners were unlikely to enjoy the view from the podium at the growing number of superyacht regattas such as the end-of-season Superyacht Cup in Palma or the Newport and St Barths Buckets. In this regard, *Felicità west* represented a sea change in client expectations. So at the turn of the new century, the company began to focus its attention on the need for speed. TYR

"*Taouey* was a massive project for the company," continues Torre. "We were obliged to push our limits of production and engineering, but the gamble paid off and the experience and skill sets acquired in the process meant we could take production to the next level."

The next level and the direct offshoot of *Taouey* was a 52m mini series that included *Atmosphere*, *Independence* and *Liberty* (now *Galaxia*) built in the late '90s. The three boats featured a fore-to-aft service passageway that passed through the engine room to improve maintenance access and allowed the crew to move around the yacht unnoticed. In order to consolidate and improve on previous innovations, Perini Navi had from the very beginning increased boat length incrementally. Downscaling from *Taouey* to 52m marked a return to this practice in an attempt to maintain build quality through controlled development. A close look at the Perini fleet reveals it is a trend that continues to this day, whereby occasional 'spikes' in size are followed by boats of more modest dimensions.

One such spike appeared in 2003 with 64m *Felicità west*, a milestone yacht that blazed the trail for subsequent production. Not only was it Perini's first all-aluminium yacht, it was also the largest aluminium sailing yacht afloat at the