

THE

For yacht designers, there's nothing more exciting than a big

ONES

commission. But what happens when your dream project

THAT

doesn't make it to the water? Four leading studios tell

GOT

Charlotte Hogarth-Jones about their yachts that never came to be

AWAY

PROJECT MARS

STUDIO

H2 YACHT DESIGN

PROGRESS MADE

TWO YEARS – THE TEAM WERE ABOUT TO LAY THE KEEL

SPECS

295FT X 49FT MOULDED BEAM

2,999GT

FIVE DECKS

SIX GUEST CABINS

ONE OWNER'S SUITE

TWO 33FT TENDERS

HELI PLATFORM

Our involvement in Project Mars began while we were doing some refit work for a client. Towards the end of the job, I realized that there must be another

project in the offing – but, for whatever reason, we hadn't been invited to pitch for it.

I had a word with the captain, who gave me a sense of what the owner was looking for, and I worked up some designs that I hoped I'd be able to show the client at the Monaco Yacht Show. Try as I might, however, I couldn't get access to him. I was sitting in this café, feeling dejected, when across the road I caught sight of him, with his captain. I immediately ran over and asked if I could show him my ideas and, as luck would have it, he loved them. He basically pulled the plug on the other designer there and then.

Fast forward two years, and we were now working on this very special yacht with Fincantieri. We were literally about to lay the keel when the project came to an abrupt end due to the 2008 financial crisis. I remember watching the news and seeing that two of the client's businesses had gone under, and thinking, "Shit, this isn't going to end well."

It was a massive surprise to us when the project was canceled – it was virtually unheard of for this to happen. We had no proper allowance in our contract for what occurred, which meant that even though they paid us what they technically owed us, we'd spent much more. There's no doubt that we learned some hard commercial lessons that day, but some very positive design ones too.

The client was a super-cool, laid-back, young Scandinavian guy, and the yacht was very much designed around his lifestyle. He was a real health and fitness junkie, so there was a huge mid-ship spa and a big pool on the bow right outside his cabin. He also had a

personal trainer with him on board, which was unusual at the time.

He was all for parties, with provision for DJ booths and speakers, but he wanted everyone

off at night – he only wanted enough accommodation for close friends to stay over.

Unique features included fixed side balconies and a double-height atrium on the main deck that could be converted into a dining room or meeting room, plus there was a fully functioning folding helideck. Mars had a plumb bow too, and there weren't that many of those around at the time – in fact, it might even have been the only one. Most clients were nervous about committing to this look in case it was a just a trend. Now they're everywhere! In terms of interiors, he was very into the idea of a clean, modern Scandinavian feel, but with a natural palette and some signature pieces based around nature, such as tree root coffee tables from Chista.

About a year later, Fincantieri marketed the project for sale – it came close a few times with subtle variations, but the demand for such radical yachts is not as high as you might imagine, and an agreement could never quite be made.

For us, the story has a happy ending, as one day, six or seven years later, we got a call from a client representative in the Middle East who wanted to discuss the Mars project with us. That call led to the commissioning of the 404ft *Al Lusail* project at Lürssen, so it was nice that something good came out of it in the end, and we'd had a test bed to develop in detail some interesting ideas that we then went on to transfer to other projects.

Would I do it all again? Absolutely. Without Mars, we'd never have got to do *Al Lusail*, and the client was one of the most dynamic guys I've ever met. I owe him a lot.



Jonny Horsfield,
founder
and owner,
H2 Yacht Design



"The client was super-cool, and the yacht was designed around his lifestyle"



ANOTHER WORLD

H2 Yacht Design created Project Mars for Italian builder Fincantieri Yachts with a clean, modern, Scandinavian interior and the distinctive balconies H2 is known for



PROJECT ICEBREAKER

STUDIO

STUDIO INDIGO

PROGRESS MADE

FIVE MONTHS - A SCANDINAVIAN SHIPYARD HAD BEEN IDENTIFIED AND VISITED, PLUS A CONCEPT GA HAD BECOME A WORKING GA. AN INTERIOR OUTFITTER HAD ALSO BEEN IDENTIFIED

SPECS

279FT X 53FT BEAM
UNDER 3,000GT
FIVE DECKS

24 GUESTS IN 12 CABINS -
TWO 32FT TENDERS;
TWO FASSMER LIFEBOATS
HELI PLATFORM
CONVERTIBLE HELI HANGAR



GO ANYWHERE

As its name suggests, Project Icebreaker was designed to tackle the polar regions in superyacht style

In late 2016, Studio Indigo was approached by a client to undertake a feasibility study for a 280-foot polar ice-class explorer yacht. We were absolutely delighted - it was exciting new territory for our design team, although the clients and their tastes were familiar to us. They were known for their forward-thinking and open-minded approach, and they made

it clear that they wanted to push the boundaries a bit, so the yacht was always going to be something very special.

As well as a charter yacht, they also wanted the boat to serve as a research and conservation platform, so the brief was to create a super-efficient, functional vessel that would be as capable of pushing through sheet ice near the North Pole as it would be cruising up the Amazon. It had equally appointed accommodation for up to 24 guests, and each suite had side-deck access directly from the cabin. The boat had an impressive list of toys too - including ROVs, submarines, a snowcat and four snowmobiles - plus three panoramic viewing lounges, one of which floated above the convertible helicopter hangar.

Our design incorporated exposed beams and cambered ceilings with bronze bracing details. Natural materials were used in abundance, with brushed wooden floors and weathered teak joinery, all softened by plush contemporary furniture and textured wall panels. Part of the theme of the vessel encompassed wellness and retreat, so the spa facilities on board were also considered carefully. We looked at how part of the hull floor could be glass, creating a viewing portal to admire the sea life while being pampered by hot stone or mud treatment massages, and we planned to illuminate the water beneath the boat to attract curious sea life. Seeing a beluga whale swim while you're being massaged would have certainly given you something to talk about at dinner!

Project Icebreaker reached a fairly advanced stage, with meetings being held with a Scandinavian specialist shipyard and interior outfitter in both our London studio and over there, and the specification of helicopter and tenders had also been considered. Then the client's personal circumstances suddenly changed, and the project had to be shelved.

We were particularly disappointed as this boat represented something so completely new and challenging for us, and working with a client you know is also a huge advantage, as you really understand how they live and what their values are. We aren't aware of any intention to restart the project, so we've moved on for now. But we always keep in mind that one day we may be called up to reignite this visionary and hugely ambitious project. You never know...



David
Waite-Wright,
design director,
Studio Indigo



Luca Dini,
founder,
Luca Dini Design
& Architecture

I've got no problem admitting that I felt completely in awe the first time I stepped on board *Rossy One*. Here was a yacht that had gone through such important and terrible phases throughout history. It was exciting to have the opportunity to work on a boat with a real soul.

The yacht was launched in 1931 with the name *Argosy* and had been designed for a New York banker by Cox & Stevens. It became an American Navy warship during the Second World War (renamed *Cythera*), after which it was bought by the American League for a Free Palestine, largely thanks to funds obtained with the proceeds of a theatrical script by the writer Ben Hecht, from which the boat took its name. *Cythera*, however, was accosted by Britain's Royal Navy not far from the Palestinian coast with more than 600 Jewish refugees on board, and the vessel was then redirected to Haifa, where it once more became a warship - *INS Maoz*. It was abandoned at the end of the Suez/Sinai campaign in 1956, and then operated as a passenger ferry on the Sorrento-Capri line under the name *Santa Maria del Mare*, until it was bought in 2006 by the Italian owner I knew.

I already knew him because I'd designed a yacht for him previously, so we had a good working relationship right away. Seeing this beautiful classic yacht abandoned, and planning its return to its glory days, was simply exhilarating. Unfortunately, due to financial problems, and also a lack of time on the owner's part to commit to such a big project, *Rossy One* was stopped at a very advanced stage. The renovation of the exterior was well under way, while my interior project was complete - it just hadn't been put into practice yet.

I feel bittersweet about the whole thing and, to me, *Rossy One* seems like unfinished business. Yet, after several years, I still feel very proud of it and close to it. Had it gone ahead, it would have been one of the highlights of my career, I'm sure of it.

PAST MASTER

Rossy One has a rich history - she is pictured here in 1931 - which Luca Dini was hoping to bring up to date



PROJECT ROSSY ONE

STUDIO

LUCA DINI DESIGN & ARCHITECTURE

PROGRESS MADE

EXTERIOR RENOVATION WAS WELL UNDER WAY; NEW INTERIOR WAS DESIGNED BUT NOT INSTALLED

SPECS

1,140GT
FIVE DECKS
FOUR GUEST CABINS
OWNER'S SUITE
SIX CREW
ONE 26FT TENDER;
ONE 32FT TENDER



PROJECT LIGHT

STUDIO
NAUTA DESIGN



Mario Pedol,
president,
Nauta Design

PROGRESS MADE
CONSTRUCTION HAD ALREADY
BEGUN AT FINCANTIERI YACHTS –
PLATE CUTTING HAD STARTED, THE
SHAFT LINES WERE ALREADY BUILT
AND THE PROJECT WAS FULLY
ENGINEERED AND TANK-TESTED

SPECS
262FT X 46FT MOULDED BEAM
APPROX 2,200GT
FIVE DECKS
14 GUESTS (12 FOR COMMERCIAL USE)
IN SEVEN CABINS
OWNER'S SUITE
HELI PLATFORM
TWO 26FT TENDERS

paid for the extensive engineering and testing they'd done and things that they'd bought, such as the propeller shafts. Thankfully the steel could be used on projects elsewhere.

We were paid for all our design work, and to

It's not often that you get carte blanche to do exactly what you like as a brief, but that's what we were asked to do by an owner back in 2006, who wanted us to design the exterior of a 230-foot motor yacht. We met him through

another one of our clients at a party. It was the largest yacht we'd ever been asked to design at the time, so it was a big deal for our studio, and we were thrilled to have so much freedom to work with.

We didn't think that yachts had enough outside space, and we wanted owners to connect more with the ocean. So, we changed the balance drastically, from about 30 percent outdoor/70 percent indoor space, to something more like 50/50, and we made windows a lot larger, with no obstructions.

Project Light was to include 6,880 square feet of free teak decks, and 8,280 square feet of luxurious accommodation "wrapped" in 2,150 square feet of glass surfaces. At the time this was revolutionary – no one was doing things this way.

Then, the global financial crisis of 2008 happened, and I think it was a surprise for everyone apart from a few very savvy financiers who saw it coming. Our client's business was doing really well, and we were two years into the project. It wasn't nice.

By the time we were given notice that the project wasn't going to go ahead any more, Project Light had been fully tank-tested in the Netherlands, and they'd just started cutting the steel. The owner lost their deposit to Fincantieri shipyard, which basically

be honest, the project was absolutely a good thing for us, because it led to us being contacted by the future owners of *Azzam*, one of the largest yachts in the world. They'd seen Project Light and loved the boldness of it. In the end, what we designed for them didn't have many elements in common with Project Light – they didn't want as much exterior space as the climate they were using the yacht in was so different – but we did apply the same big, light windows, and the two yachts have the same grace and lighter superstructure.

Light will always be close to our hearts, because it really was groundbreaking. We tried to market it at the time and sell it along with Fincantieri, but there was such a small section of owners who were interested in something so niche. Only a few brokers really saw its value too – a lot of them were saying, "What is this?!"

Nevertheless, we had a few serious owners who were interested. In the end, it just wasn't the right time for them, but all of them went in a similar direction five or six years later. In one of those meetings an American prospect, a very refined gentleman, commented that Light "could have been designed by Frank Lloyd Wright." That was arguably the best compliment we ever received. ▣



"At the time it was revolutionary. No one was doing things this way"



FUTURE VISION

Project Light was ahead of its time in 2006 with its vast outdoor spaces and use of huge windows