



THE VISION OF VISMARA

AFTER THREE DECADES OF PRODUCING LIGHT AND INNOVATIVE CUSTOM YACHTS, THIS ITALIAN YARD IS DEVELOPING A NEW 'PRÊT-A-PORTER' CONCEPT. TOBY HODGES TESTS THE V50

Vismara Marine has always been an exciting, fresh and different company. Its yachts are fast, light and inspirational designs. To look at the history of this Italian custom yacht specialist is to track the timeline of the modern cruiser-racer. And looking at its models today offers insight into where yacht design is headed. Here is a firm that is consistently ahead of its time.

Over the past three decades Vismara Marine has launched over 130 custom yachts from its Viareggio yard, many of which are now regarded as iconic designs. Names such as *Pistrice*, *Alligator* and *Kiribilli* resonate because of the way they combine style and function, able to win on the racecourse despite carrying a cruising interior.

News that Vismara is expanding with the launch of its first series-produced model, the V50 prêt-à-porter (see an explanation of the concept on page 52), encouraged us to travel to Italy for a test sail.

Viareggio is the nucleus of Italian boatbuilding. A visit to this Tuscan town near Pisa guarantees a moment of disbelief when first you see the tops of flybridges and multi-spreader rigs towering above the skyline of the town centre buildings. Some of the powerhouses of superyachting reside in disproportionate scale within

Viareggio's modest centre, including Benetti, Perini Navi and Azimut. And nestled into its bustling waterfront lies this rather special yard, Vismara Marine.

The man behind the brand

Vismara's visionary is the name behind the brand, designer and founder Alessandro Vismara. Vismara studied naval architecture in Southampton and worked at Perini Navi as chief of naval construction before opening his own design studio. He helmed his first three-quarter ton design, *Lace Wing*, to victory at Cowes Week and the Italian Championships.

While Vismara dedicated the 1980s to designing IOR racers, for him the 1990s were all about 'beautiful boats'.

"We decided we could make a company dedicated to giving to cruising people the right to sail properly like the racing guys," he says. The Nineties saw a surge in clients who wanted minimalist interiors: no teak, and white painted throughout. These were state of the art boats built in light composite construction, some with radical features such as canting keels and wingmasts. >

Main picture: founder of the yard Alessandro Vismara stands beside a wall of photos of his one-off design successes





ON TEST

Above: the radical modern interior of the V80 *Luce Guida*. **Right:** design in action



Below: Vismara's first design, the three-quarter tonner *Lace Wing*



Up until 2003 Vismara designed for other builders and built for other designers at the Marine Services yard. But then he decided "to create a brand and be responsible for the cycle of design, production and resale". Vismara Marine was born.

Alessandro Vismara trained up Polish workers in Viareggio before helping to establish Rega Yachts in Poland. Since 2002, all Vismara hulls have been built at Rega, and today the Polish yard laminates hulls for a variety of brands including Mylius, Comar and, most recently, Michael Schmidt Yachtbau.

This shared construction relationship helps explain why Vismara was so busy during our visit. Hulls arrive at Viareggio either bare, or fitted with furniture, and to a very impressive level of finish. "Until now we averaged two to four boats a year, 100 per cent tailor-made," says Vismara. "The new business plan is to keep that range of custom boats and to grow the prêt-à-porter side. We think in two years' time we can be up to ten boats a year."

New builds and refits spilled out of the yard's lofty sliding doors. Indeed, a powerful-looking new Vismara Mills 56 cruiser was due to be christened the day after our visit. There were also two new V62s, a 50ft custom Vismara and the second V50 in the shed, plus five Baltic Yachts refits from 50-80ft.

As well as working closely with Baltic Yachts for nearly three decades, Vismara has worked with some of the industry's leading design firms, including Farr, Judel-Vrolijk and Bill Tripp. Its latest collaborations are with Mark Mills, who Vismara rates highly for his vision, dedication and enthusiasm.

When listing the designs his yard has produced over the years (see right), Vismara described the Mills-designed V62 *SuperNikka* as his 'perfect boat'. A Vismara, he says, is



Felice Baccolla



Above: the Mills-designed V62 *SuperNikka* in build and on the water

all about CFD-analysed design, pre-preg hulls and composite interiors that form part of the boat. He believes in keeping interiors light and avoiding heavy, complicated systems.

Vismara produced a fully hybrid 50-footer six years ago, radical still today. "We have always tried to push clients to a more modern, current approach – while creating the commercial value by trying to avoid fancy requests," declares Vismara. "Why are we good at custom? We are good at listening and understanding."

A custom approach

"I love the preliminary stages – to learn about the client, to create a relationship," Vismara explains. "But now owners don't like so many meetings – everyone is time poor. Plus they are scared to make an error."

Vismara is still very much a yard focused on custom builds, but the decision was recently made to invest in creating a 'prêt-à-porter' line of female-moulded yachts. "Many clients don't have the experience to buy a custom boat now," Vismara maintains, adding that the new line of boats "use the same high technology, but are built in a standardised design and promoted through a network of dealers".

As well as the V50 we tested (see page 52), the yard is creating more prêt-à-porter production models off the back of custom projects. The radical V62 *SuperNikka*, is a very current example. She launched last year and won the Mini Maxi worlds. A mould has since been taken with the chine smoothed out, and two more V62s were in the yard at fit-out stage.

Past iconic Vismara models include yachts such as *Kirribilli*, a 60ft 'maxi' developed with Renzo Piano, and the 54ft fast cruiser *Brizella*. But this V50 is the start of a fresh new era, "a type of boat that has not existed before".

Alessandro Vismara's most iconic designs



Pristice – a V40 launched in 1992. Designed for IMS racing – "the first real proof that you can win races like the Sardinia Cup with a cruising boat, and that you could sail like a racer," declares Vismara. She won the IMS Italian Championships and Champagne Mumm Cup in 1993.



Kirribilli – the green and gold flush-decked 60ft design was developed with Renzo Piano as a fast cruiser with mini-maxi characteristics. Launched in 2001.



Dragon 2 – "Gold Dragon" – "Totally Vismara, with a minimalist very current design," comments Vismara. Striking features include her wraparound coachroof windows, gold and red styling and a central engine under the saloon table.



Luce Guida – a state-of-the-art V80 designed by Luca Dini. Built for the Princess of Kuwait, this has one of the most radically different interiors I have ever seen, as shown opposite.