



DUTCH SUPERPOWER

Try telling Holland there is an economic downturn. Dutch shipyards are bursting with superyacht projects that take scale and substance to another level. Toby Hodges tours the key yards and design studios

As the strong New Zealand dollar cripples the country's export industry, Holland once again reigns supreme in superyacht production. Within 110km of Amsterdam, two powerhouses of big yacht design and a handful of yards are not only filled to capacity, they are shaping the future of supersailing yachts.

Two things stood out during our recent visit, aside from the number of commissions in build. First, up to four new J Class yachts could be launched in Holland in the next year or two. And secondly, there are at least two projects in build over 85m that will dwarf the scale of anything else in yachting.

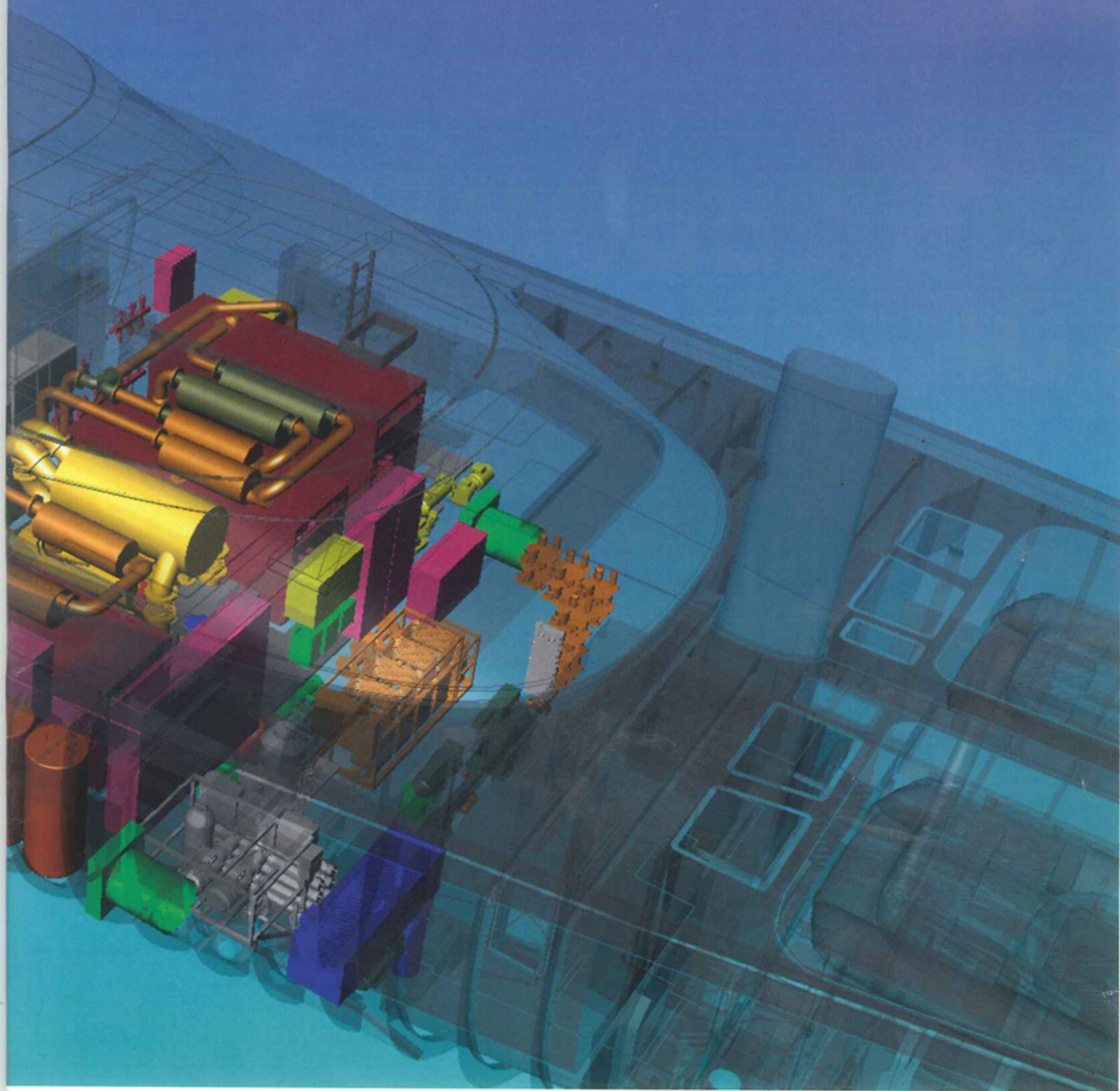
A visit to the studios of Hoek Design and Dykstra

Naval Architects highlighted current projects and future directions. Both firms are masters of the modern classic design. And both are fundamental to the resurgence of the J Class fleet.

Since *Endeavour's* rebuild at Royal Huisman in the 1980s, Dutch yards have been largely responsible for the modern J Class revolution. Dykstra spearheaded the rebuilds of *Endeavour* and *Velsheda* and redesigned the modern replicas *Ranger* and *Rainbow*.

In addition, most J owners are Dutch and the current new builds all stem from Dutch yards. Hoek's office currently has two new Js in build, J8 and J11, and it has just revealed that the construction of J9 is due to start this autumn.

Royal Huisman's concept design layout of the 57.5m/189ft Dubois flybridge ketch *Twizzle*. The yard develops every aspect of every build to optimise the use of space prior to construction. Examples highlighted here include the generators and exhaust runs, compressors, watermakers, pumps and boilers. The level of detail and quality of finish at all the superyacht yards we visited is of the very highest standard



Royal Huisman

Founded: 1884

Employees: 280 (plus 70 at Rondal)

Builds: over 30 superyachts (sail) in 30 years

Key builds: *Endeavour* (rebuild) (39.5m/129.8ft), *Hyperion* (47m/155ft), *Athena* (90m/295ft), as well as *Ethereal*, *Hanuman* and *Twizzle*

Speciality: premium quality, 30-90m yachts all built in-house; Rondal on site

www.royalhuisman.com



Royal Huisman is a yard with heritage and pedigree. The fifth-generation yard was awarded a royal warrant on its centenary in 1984. It was founded by Jan Jans Huisman to build local fishing boats. Even before the royal accolade it had a good reputation for its work in wood, steel and, since the mid-1960s, aluminium. *Flyer* and *Flyer II* put the yard on the map when they won consecutive Whitbread races under skipper Conny van Rietschoten in 1977, 1978, 1981 and 1982. Coincidentally, *Flyer*, an S&S ketch navigated by Gerry Dykstra, recently returned to the yard for a refit. And fellow ocean racing legend *Mari Cha IV* (renamed *Samurai*) has also joined *Flyer* in Huisman's Huisfit service.

Royal Huisman has a reputation for premium quality. It aims to build everything in-house and doesn't subcontract any major parts. The yard is set up to build boats in the 40-60m bracket, but it extended in 2001 to accommodate the build of Jim Clark's groundbreaking 90m schooner, *Athena*.

As well as its 30,000m² modern facility in Vollenhove, Huisman has several unique assets. Rondal is a sister company on site,

formed by Wolter Huisman in 1975 to supply Huisman and other yards. Its composite hall has been temporarily extended to build the masts for a 70m Perini ketch, a 73m main mast and 60m mizzen.

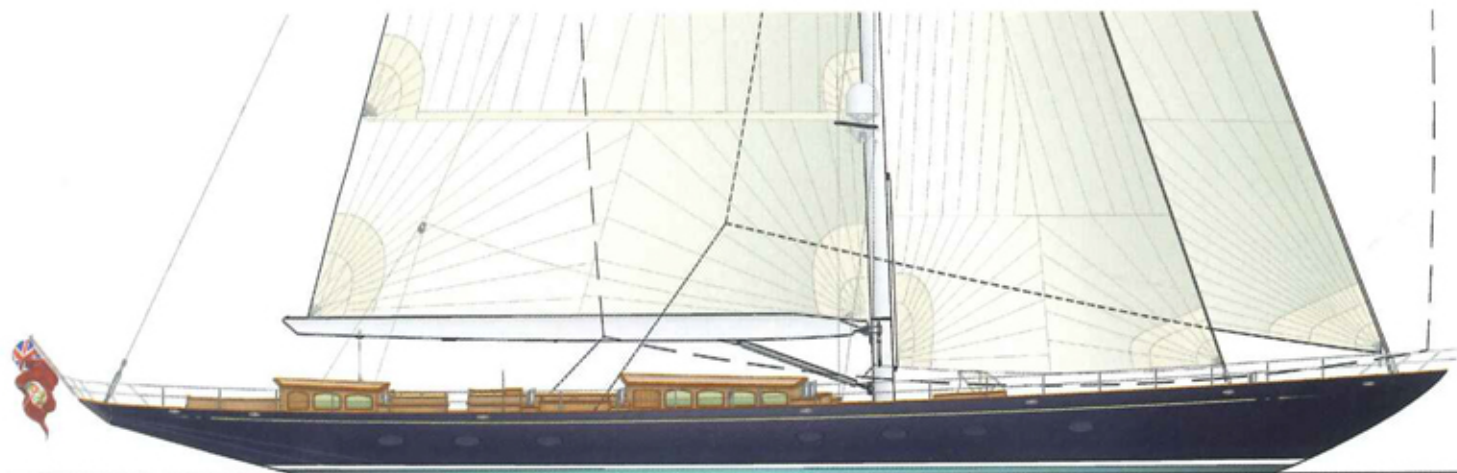
The behind-the-scenes detail and the engineering stood out for me. Huisman develops all the naval architects plans in-house and painstakingly engineers each aspect of the build in 3D whenever required. Every system, down to each plumbing pipe, is assigned a different colour. Every cable run and plate penetration is precisely mapped out before production starts.

The layout of the yard is planned for optimum efficiency, for example an escalator reduces walking time between shop floors. The total volume of air in the ventilated and heated paint hall can be circulated four times an hour. It's small wonder that Royal Huisman paint jobs are renowned.

During our visit the 48m Hoek sloop *Wisp* had just launched, a 46m Hoek Pilot Classic ketch was in fit-out and the hull of the 43m Frers sloop *Sea Eagle* was in construction.



Left: the 73m main mast and 60m mizzen for a new 70m Perini ketch, plus a carbon mast for a new sloop in build at Rondal's composite hall on Royal Huisman's site. Below: new launch *Wisp* with Rondal's custom boom



The 48m *Wisp* was the first Hoek/Royal Huisman collaboration and was finished just before our visit in March. She includes Hoek's trademark twin deckhouses. Her owner requested a stable boat

that would not heel too much and the result is a beamy design with plenty of volume. A noteworthy feature is the shape of the boom. Rondal worked with designers André Hoek and Rhoades Young to

create a profile that is in keeping with the yacht's design. Considering the size of superyacht booms, it is surprising their aesthetics have not been addressed like this before.



Royal Huisman in build

Some standout plumb-bow superyacht ketches have launched in recent years, specifically the Dykstra-designed 67m *Hetairos* and 55m *Kamaxitha*. This latest model from Hoek Design, a 46m NextGEN ketch (51m including the bowsprit), with interior styling by Redman Whiteley Dixon (RWD), could match either for splendour (see sailplan, right). Details and imagery are restricted until after her launch this summer, so you'll have to take my word for it.

Ruurt Meulemans, Hoek's technical director, says the owner would not compromise on looks or performance. The Hoek team analysed the lines of five hulls using CFD before tank-testing the preferred shape using a 20ft model. Performance shapes with plumb ends can suffer slamming, so vee sections were included forward. Hoek favours the incorporation of trim tabs on the keel to help with pointing and accelerating out of tacks.

The ketch also has a T-keel that lifts to deck level, a carbon spade rudder, plus carbon rig and rigging. And the

whole hull has been faired, a raceboat tactic that is becoming a trend at Huisman — its latest three launches *Pumula*, *Kamaxitha* and *Wisp* all have fair underbodies.

An innovative feature is the headstay furler that has been designed into the bowsprit. The bobstay fittings have also been cleverly integrated into an extraordinarily fine forefoot, connected to a titanium reinforcement tube within the hull.

On my visit, two variable-speed generators and a flywheel generator were hooked up and running in the yard (all machinery is tested for three months during build at Huisman). This system, developed with Whisper Power, is designed to run the generators at their optimum rpm, with peak loads available from a lithium battery bank.

The whitewashed oak interior, designed by RWD, has a stylish modern feel and includes numerous custom tables in special veneers and materials.



Holland Jachtbouw

Founded: 1990

Employees: 85

Builds: 30

Key builds: *Windrose of Amsterdam* (46m/152ft schooner), *Athos* (62m/203ft schooner), *Rainbow* (39.9m J Class)

Speciality: 35-60m yachts; use expert subcontractors

www.hollandjachtbouw.nl



Although all yards on our tour of Holland were very busy, Holland Jachtbouw (HJB) in Zaandam, a northern suburb of Amsterdam, seemed positively bursting with activity. By subcontracting out large parts of a build to the many experts in the area, it has created a business model that allows unrivalled success in big-boat building. So, the interiors, electrics, hull and painting work are all contracted out. "Exterior and finishing is what we do," HJB's managing director Roeland Franssens confirms.

HJB launched the J Class *Rainbow* two years ago, has another J in the shed and there are whispers of two more Js to come. It helps that it understands the modern J scene intimately — the founder of the yard, Chris Gongriep, owns *Rainbow* and Franssens regularly sails on board.

During our visit a 45m sloop from Bill Dixon was nearing completion and has since been launched and fully commissioned. J8 was in fit-out and the old *Hetairos* was in for a refit. A 46m Tripp will be the next project to arrive from aluminium fabricators Bloemsma. Small wonder, given such an

overflowing order book, that the yard is having to extend.

A new 60m x 26m shed will be built and the main construction hall is being lengthened to 55m. New design offices between the sheds will include a glass façade overlooking 100m of waterfront. The iconic schooners *Windrose* and *Athos* helped establish HJB's reputation, so it is fitting that the first hull to arrive in its new shed will be a striking new 60m schooner, *Rainbow II*. The black-hulled Dykstra design is inspired by the original 1897 schooner *Rainbow* from G.L. Watson, called at the time 'the first modern schooner built in Britain' and later renamed *Hamburg*.

Franssens puts the success of the yard down to its no-nonsense approach. "We want to think clever and come up with good, simple solutions," he says. For example, HJB aims to develop the hybrid power system it devised for *Rainbow*. Whisper Power is a system where various generator types charge the lithium ion batteries that power the vessel. Compared with a traditional system, it takes up less machinery space and allows prolonged periods of silent running.



Dixon 45m

This striking 45m performance design from the board of Bill Dixon launched in April. The biggest challenge for Holland Jachtbouw was the creation of an automatic retractable bimini and dodger system. Neither this nor the telescopic keel was allowed to interfere with accommodation space. The uncluttered Rhoades Young-designed interior features lots of bright colours and numerous finish materials, and was built offsite by subcontractors.



HJB in build

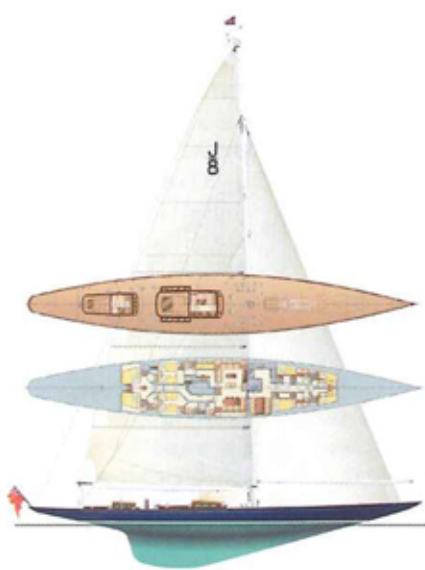
The latest J Class, J8, is taken from an unbuilt Frank Paine design. The original lines were modelled on the modified hull of *Yankee*, the only J to beat *Ranger* in a race. She boasted an extra foot of waterline length compared with the other Js in the 1930s. André Hoek reworked the plans for this modern interpretation. "The handicap systems are different now, but she will still have the longest waterline," he says. "The chord line of the keel is shorter than any of the others, so she has the least wetted surface area."

The project began in 2012, but stalled until a new owner was found last December. The design has since been modified to fit the client's wish for increased potential performance. She shares similarities to Hoek's first J redesign, *Lionheart*, including a double cockpit layout and an owner's aft deckhouse. But the topsides of J8 will be lower and she will have an art deco interior by Hoek Design.

J8 has been optimised for racing, but will also be used for cruising. She will have a combination of generator, flywheel generator and battery bank for long periods of silent running.



The rendering shows how the 60m schooner *Rainbow II* will look in front of the new-look yard. Build on the third construction hall, right, began in early May, with phase one due for completion this year. The first hull to be fitted out here will be this grand schooner in the same colours as the J Class *Rainbow*. Both the new schooner and the J were redesigned by Dykstra Naval Architects



Claasen Jachtbouw

Founded: 1985

Employees: 70

Builds: 40

Key builds: *Lionheart* (43.40m J Class), *Heartbeat* (23.80m sloop), *Firefly* (35.20m sloop)

Speciality: 20-45m Spirit of Tradition yachts; carpentry skills; aluminium facility under same ownership

www.claasenshipyards.com



A tour of the Claasen yard can be a nostalgic experience. It feels like a traditional shipyard, right down to the smell of fresh sawdust and lacquer, as you'd expect of a yard that produces classic-style yachts. The yard established its name through building traditional Dutch leeboard yachts. Skills have been passed down the generations and today the joiner work and teakwork is renowned.

Although Claasen Shipyards specialises in Spirit of Tradition yachts from 65-145ft, last year it delivered its first modern performance yacht, *Louise*, a 22m Berret Racoupeau design. They also own the aluminium fabricators Bloemsma in Makkum where many superyacht and J Class hulls are built (see facing page). Currently under construction is the largest Hoek-designed Truly Classic to date, a 126-footer for delivery next spring, as well as the third TC90. A full mock-up of the TC126 interior was built under the hull of the TC90 in fit-out.

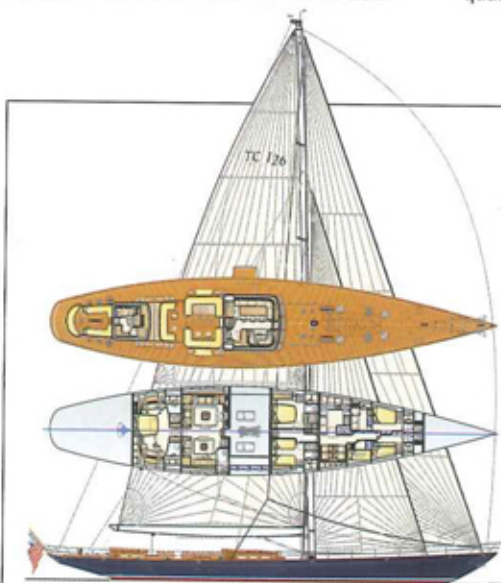
All very impressive, but Claasen's next yacht is the biggest J ever. Unfortunately, the details have been kept very quiet, but I can say that this new 44m/144.6ft Tore Holm-design, J11, looks sensational. Only the merest blisters of doghouses rise from an otherwise flush deck. She will be the 28th



collaboration between Hoek and Claasen since the mid-1980s. The aim is to have her racing next summer after just 15 months' build time. Claasen built the F Class *Firefly* in eight months, so the yard is confident about this timescale.

Claasen's method of fitting out interiors explains the short lead times (both the new TC126 and J11 are due for launch in spring 2015). They use a CNC machine to plot the naval architects' construction drawings directly onto MDF panels. The carpenters can then build the interior to the template's exact lines including ducts for cable runs, etc.

The interior is then deconstructed and taken to off-site subcontractors to be varnished. A range of subcontractors is usually trialled because "competition drives quality," says Claasen.



Truly Classic 126

Hoek believes this new flagship of the Truly Classic range will appeal to a range of clients because it provides options for sloop or ketch rigs and forward or aft owner's cabin. The first model will be a sloop for a repeat client who took inspiration from the 125ft Hoek schooner *This Is Us*.

The saloon has been designed aft of the main deckhouse, adjoining the master cabin, to give the owner half the yacht. We saw premium quality mahogany work in build, with classic raised and fielded panels.





Claasen in build

Having completed the TC90s *Keoloha* and *Atalante*, Claasen speculatively built two more sistership hulls during the economic downturn. "It's a size that can still be sailed by two crew," says designer André Hoek. "A lot of owners don't want four crew and the idea with the 90 is that the sailing and social areas can be separated." This TC90 was recently agreed and will also be the third TC90 in collaboration with MCM Yacht Management.

Bloemsma Aluminiumbouw

Many of the aluminium superyacht hulls in Holland are fabricated in Makkum, just north of the IJsselmeer. Bloemsma Aluminiumbouw, now owned by Claasen Shipyards, regularly builds hulls for Truly Classics, J Class yachts and Feadship motoryachts.

"These are specialist fabricators that have learned all the tricks and are the best in the world," Hoek says, adding that Bloemsma can build a J Class in a third of the time of competitors. During our visit, the hull of TC126 was being finished and the framework for J11 had begun alongside a 46m Tripp hull. It illustrated perfectly how hull shapes have changed in the past 80 years.



Vitters' 46m Frers-designed hull is turned during the move to the finishing shed. This aluminium performance sloop will have a retractable keel and a swing pod propulsion system to suit her use for cruising and occasional racing. Oliver Stirling, formerly of Andrew Winch Design, has designed her interior and launch will be next year



Vitters

Founded: 1990

Employees: 74

Builds: 24

Key builds: *Thalia* (48.5m ketch), *Adèle* (55m ketch), *Aglaia* (66m sloop)

Speciality: 40-60m sailing yachts; use top-level subcontractors; own composite specialists Green Marine since 2010

www.vitters.com



The location of Vitters shipyard on the eastern side of the IJsselmeer seems puzzling. Why did Vitters settle on Zwartsluis, a seemingly isolated village east of Amsterdam? "There are a lot of suppliers and infrastructure around us," managing director, Louis Hamming, explains. This is vital, as the yard relies on contracting out large parts of the build. "Also when we started, the boats were not so big!" Hamming adds. New builds are launched and towed to have their rigs stepped and dressed in Harlingen, an eight-hour voyage.

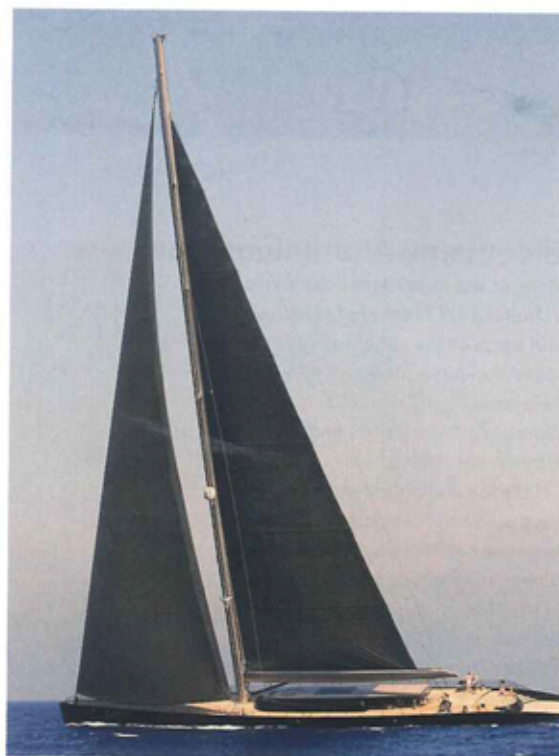
Yet this location hasn't prevented Vitters taking on big projects such as the sensational 66m Dubois sloop *Aglaia*, (right). The modern yard includes 60m and 80m sheds. Next year, the beam of the latter will be increased from 14m to 18m, suggesting the yard is scaling up. "We like building in the 40-60m range," Hamming says. "If we go bigger or over 500 tonnes you enter into the unknown, with a lot of legislation."

Although Hamming wouldn't admit as much, we can reveal that Vitters is currently

in collaboration with Oceanco on the build of a 85m Tripp-designed ketch (see page 50). Vitters has built entire hulls in its yard before, but today it predominantly finishes yachts. "We don't paint and do joiner work; decks and interiors are all bought in," Hamming explains. "Business-wise this makes sense and gives us the flexibility to produce what is best." Since purchasing Green Marine four years ago, Vitters has the ability to offer Dutch-finished carbon builds too, such as the electric-green 33m sloop *Inoui*.

The subcontractor model seems to work very well at Vitters. "There is a cross-fertilisation of R&D in the company. A lot of knowledge comes from the inside," Hamming says. "You have to make use of outside technology to stay ahead of the game."

Examples of advanced technology can be found in most of Vitters's builds, including the furling drums used for the code sails on *Aglaia*. These sails are too large to manhandle, so the yard came up with a practical solution to furl them below deck. Sometimes it pays to develop in-house and at other times to buy in, adapt and improve.



Hoek Design: the retro specialists

Andre Hoek's office in Edam is inspiring. The high walls of the 15th Century orphanage that Hoek bought and converted are now adorned with models and framed sailplans of his designs. Above Hoek's desk hangs an impressive 20ft hull model. With the model's slender profile, counter-stern and T-keel with trim tab, it's tricky to guess the vintage. It turns out this was the tank-test model for a new 46m ketch currently in build, an aesthetically harmonious fusion of new and classic design that symbolises what this design firm does so well.

Hoek was one of the first designers to marry the appeal of classic lines with modern appendages

(Spirit of Tradition). His Truly Classic (26 models from 50-126ft) and Pilot Classic ranges (17 models from 33ft-192ft) have been a phenomenal success and, judging by the number of Hoek Designs we saw during our tour of Dutch yards, the popularity of these designs has not waned.

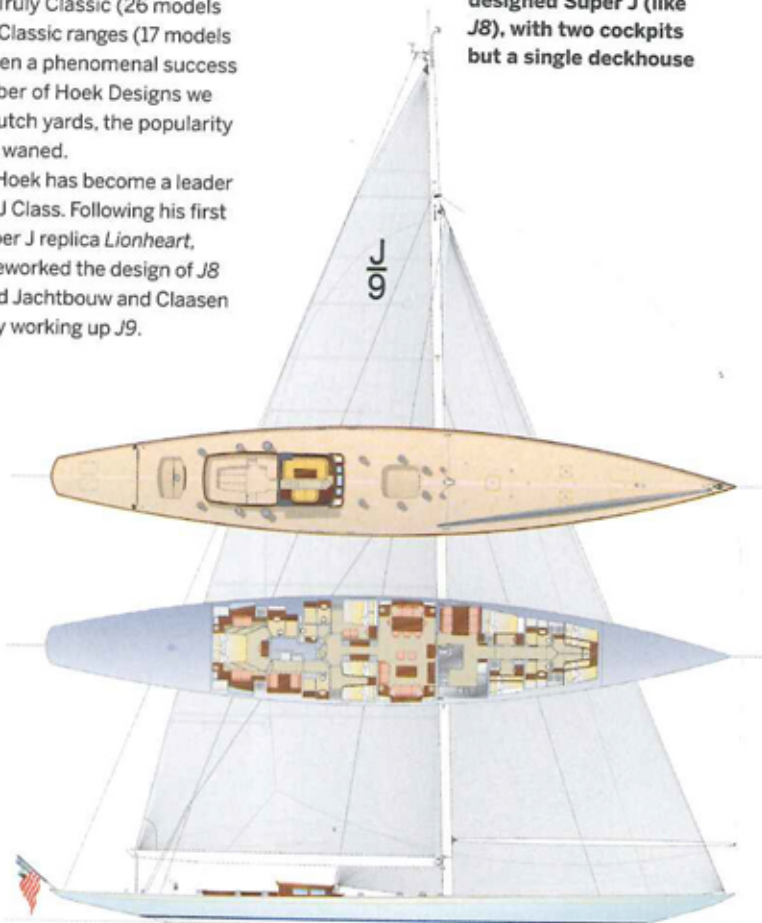
Over the last decade Hoek has become a leader in the renaissance of the J Class. Following his first J commission for the Super J replica *Lionheart*, launched in 2010, Hoek reworked the design of *J8* and *J11*, in build at Holland Jachtbouw and Claassen Shipyards and is currently working up *J9*.

www.hoekdesign.com

J9 is another Frank Paine-designed Super J (like *J8*), with two cockpits but a single deckhouse



Left: Andre Hoek, the prolific master of the timeless classic



Megasailing yachts

Dykstra: giants of design

It is a frustrating trend that the bigger yachts get, the less designers and yards seem to be able to say about them. This is certainly the case with Dykstra (www.gdnp.nl). It divulges details about plenty of yachts around the 20m mark, but is more reticent about those in the 100m or more range, such as the 106m project *Solar* in build at Oceanco. "We're not allowed to talk about the world's largest sailing project!" managing director, Thys Nikkels, tells me.

He was slightly more forthcoming about *Dream Symphony* (right) a well-documented 141m four-masted leviathan currently being constructed in wood in Turkey and due to launch after *Solar*. All frames are now in, however a completion date is yet to be given. Dykstra also refused to confirm rumours that it might have another project of similar size on the boards. Still, with three super superyachts over 100m Dykstra is (quietly) rather busy.

Oceanco: the megayacht specialists

Oceanco (www.oceancoyacht.com) had a staggering six 80m-plus projects in build last year. One is the mysterious *Solar* project, mentioned above. A collaboration between Nuvolari Lenard and Dykstra & Partners, she will sport three Dynarigs, which are rumoured to be in build at Magma Structures in Portsmouth. Oceanco also has an 85m Tripp-designed ketch (right) at their Rotterdam yard. She is a Dutch team effort, with fabrication completed at two other yards and an expected finish at Vitters, for delivery in 2015. It seems the superyacht world is entering a new breed of mega-sized yachts.



KEN FREYDICH DESIGN



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