

A Series of developments

Established in 1969 in Auckland, New Zealand, McMullen & Wing may not be one of the most recognised brands in the industry, but they're certainly one of the most passionate when it comes to heritage, design and the promotion of their home country - particularly when it comes to the development of the superyacht industry. This is mirrored in their most recent projects currently being developed, consisting of three very different series by three very different designers.

Gemma Fottles

The first of the three new series comes from Canadian designer Greg Marshall. Named the Diamond Series, Marshall uses the best elements from his design of the 45 metre Big Fish, which McMullen & Wing completed in 2010. The range will feature three variations of 45, 50 and 55 metres. Second is the Blade Series from British studio H2 Yacht Design, and combines Mediterranean style with blue water capability. Last is the Flow Series from Dutch design studio Vripack. Offered in a 44 and 51 metre versions, each design will have an impressive range of 5,000 nm and 5,700 nm.

Here we talk to CEO of the company, Michael Eaglen, who told us the inspiration behind the development of the new concepts as well as explaining why they will never chase brand recognition.

What were you looking for when you decided to develop the McMullen & Wing's concept?

It goes right back to the underlying purpose of the whole programme, which was to promote truly inspiring yachts which highlight the uniqueness of McMullen & Wing, in product, process and place. As a product, McMullen & Wing's yachts have a reputation for reliable innovation, a go-anywhere capability and deep, lasting quality. As a process we offer the true custom yacht experience. Our place is New Zealand, and McMullen & Wing is deeply rooted in our heritage having played a key role in every step in New Zealand's journey into the international yacht building scene.

We started out very clear that these were to be yachts for amazing adventures: yachts which would

appeal to adventurous clients.

These had to be more than expedition yachts, and more than superyachts: yachts designed to be put to the test in any sea, yet hold their head high alongside their most refined and stylish harbour-oriented counterparts.

What were the deciding factors when it came to choosing the studios involved?

Early in the programme we decided to partner with three designers. We wanted to offer a range of concepts, which might appeal to a range of clients, but even more than that, we wanted the programme to support our underlying message that we are a custom shipyard, and we work with dozens of designers from all over the world.

Once we were clear on the background, it was relatively easy to choose the designers, really. We obviously wanted to choose three different and yet complementary firms who each represented a subtly different place in the market, yet could all claim clear and specific relevance to the underlying objectives.

The first partner on the programme was Greg Marshall, with whom we have been friends and collaborators for many years. We built Big Fish with Greg, and are also working with him on our current 50 metre project. Both of these yachts already fit the brief perfectly as capable and very personal custom yacht projects. Being from British Columbia, Canada, Greg and his team have a deep

connection to the environment around them which we relate to very closely and is reflected in the yachts they design.

The selection of Vripack may seem obvious on one level: although Vripack designs all sorts of yachts, they are best known globally for explorer yachts. As Naval Architects they have clear pedigree in true ocean-going yachts. But actually it is their inspired approach and clear creativity, which was the true driver for their selection. They are a little bit crazy, while still being well grounded in the technical execution, which we felt would result in a truly new design with a deep connection to the brief for the world's most capable luxury yachts.

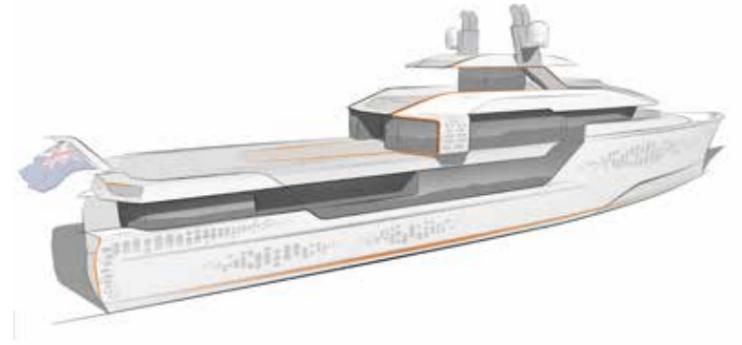
With H2 Yacht Design we were looking to balance the group, in type, geographical and stylistic terms. With the first two members of the programme operating respected full-service naval architecture and engineering studios, we were interested to introduce someone from the poetic school. We were looking for someone to represent the thriving British yacht design community. And in styling terms we were looking for someone to apply a more Mediterranean style to the capable yachts brief.

The heads of the three studios personally joined you on a global tour of some of the world's top brokerage centres, giving brokers a personal preview of the new designs. Why did you decide to do this?

We have felt for a while that in the increasingly product-focused trend toward semi-production yachts, the designers are gradually becoming swept aside by the shipyards: engaged to provide shapes



Project Diamond by Gregory C Marshall



Project Flow by Vripack

and colours but alienated from the clients themselves. By bringing the designers themselves on the road show we were seeking to return the designers back to the centre of the process: to give brokers an insight into the personalities of the designers and to picture their clients enjoying the creative process at its best.

How were the designs received?

We couldn't be more pleased actually. I think that the brokers really appreciated us making the effort to bring them to the whole story rather than just a shiny brochure, and they enjoyed the direct personal insight which each of the designers brought.

McMullen & wing describes itself as, "A Jack of all trades, and a master of every single one." Do you think that with the launch of these three very different series you have proved this philosophy?

In one sense these yachts are all very different, but in another they each answer a similar brief. Clearly they are all very different in style, but as a custom yacht builder that's normal. To us, as steel and aluminium displacement luxury expedition yachts, these three families of yachts are intended to represent just one corner of our capability.

To illustrate this, we are working on a couple of all-composite projects right now as well: one semi-displacement yacht and one high speed planing yacht which occupy quite a different place in our fleet.

We are also working with a couple of designers on a new sailing yacht project which we are excited about: we hope that this

might mark McMullen & Wing's return to sailing yachts after a few years focusing in the motor yacht realm. Sailing represents an important part of our heritage: from Whitbread Round the World Racers and America's Cup winners to super sailing yachts and classic restorations.

In 2010, McMullen & Wing launched the 45 metre Big Fish. Was it always the intention to create a series, or did this come following the huge success of Big Fish?

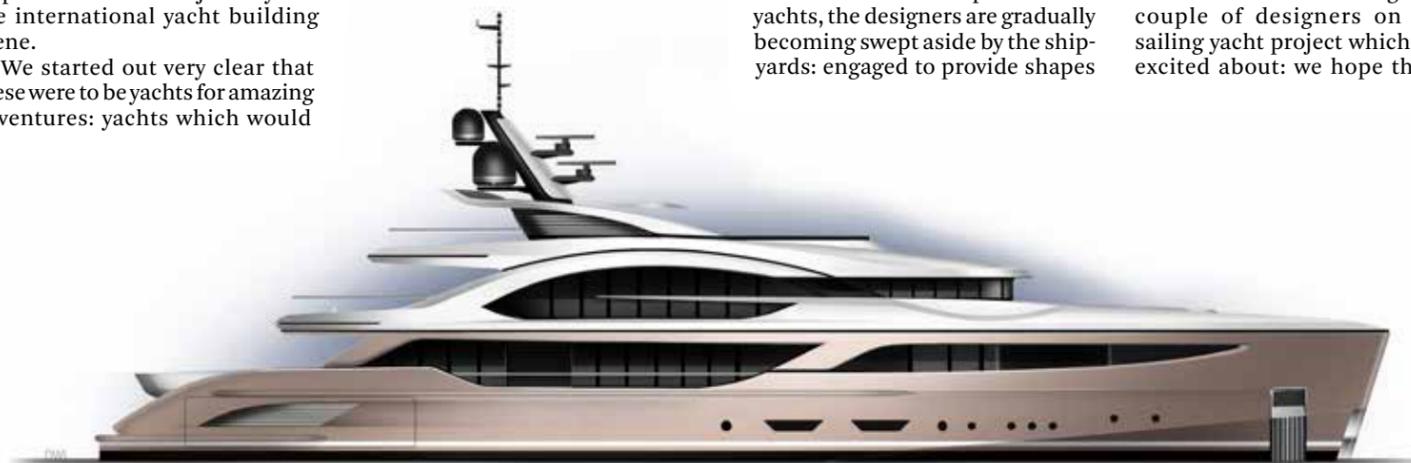
Like all our projects, Big Fish was a one-of-a-kind, designed in response to a specific client's brief. For Greg as the designer, she was of course a development of all yachts that have come before her, but in herself she was something entirely new and one-off. But she was, and still is, a spectacularly popular and successful yacht, which has attracted enormous attention.

She has also led to a number of new concepts following several of her key themes, some for her original owner and some for other clients. Indeed our current 50 metre project draws quite directly from Big Fish in styling terms, although she also is borne of a very personal creative journey in many less visible ways, and she too is intended for a similarly adventurous life.

Jonny Horsfield comments that when he was researching McMullen & Wing, he found that you had little mainstream brand recognition. Do you agree, and how do you expect the launches of vessels from each of this series will increase this recognition?

Jonny is absolutely right: McMullen & Wing is certainly not one of the big loud brands in the marketplace, and neither do we aspire to be. We aspire to be respected, not famous, and we hope for each of our sales to be rooted in that respect rather than just brand for brand's sake.

Of course we need some people to know who we are so that they can refer us. We are always working to build relationships with the design and brokerage communities in order that they can represent us accurately to their clients, but we won't be courting brand recognition as such.



Project Blade by H2 Yacht Design