

SUPERYACHT

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Venerable Vripack



Vripack has a strong, forward-thinking design ethic and looks to break new ground

Vripack's youthfulness is daring, disarming and infectious and very much the work of Marnix Hoekstra and Bart Bouwhuis – sales and design directors respectively. Together they form an unstoppable, ideas-driven duo that loves to break new ground. They say the time for that is now, for they see a new generation of yacht owners over the horizon: more adventurous and more high-tech savvy.

Thirst for innovation

"Vripack is determined to make them co-creators of their yachts," says Hoekstra. In an interview, he and Bouwhuis stressed that their thirst for innovation applies to both yacht design and engineering work. They cite a new 50m superyacht project that will incorporate aspects of 3D printing and give the owner a say in the graphic finishes of his yacht. "The next generation of owners will more readily embrace high-tech in



yacht designs. We really think this will resonate with them," says Hoekstra. The company is preparing for an "entirely new target audience, one of ever younger yacht owners," adds Bouwhuis.

Does working on the edge scare clients away? "It's really the other way around," says Nienke Tromp, head of PR and marketing at Vripack. "Clients often challenge us to do something seemingly impossible. Our record is one of blending revolutionary design with high

The 54-year-old company, Vripack, still pushes the envelope with youthful, infectious enthusiasm as it rethinks yacht design

WORDS ROBERT WIELAARD

Ferries are unloved because, invariably, they are dirty, noisy, uninspiring, utilitarian eyesores. But change is on the way. In 2016, a new ferry starts service between the Dutch mainland and the North Sea resort island of Texel. The fingerprints of the Vripack naval architecture and design studio are all over it. Formed 54 years ago and boasting a portfolio of more than 7,000 designs, the venerable Dutch company still has a huge capacity to rethink the designing, engineering and building of both recreational yachts and commercial craft.

Texelstroom 2, that new ferry, exemplifies the 'holistic' approach to design and engineering that, in recent years, has come to impregnate all of Vripack's work. Vripack treats design, naval architecture and engineering not as separate, but highly related activities. Vripack says yacht designers must draw inspiration from colours, forms and materials far beyond yachtbuilding's shores. It practices what it preaches with a vengeance.

About a quarter of Vripack's design and engineering works are commercial projects. But its design approach is the same for

commercial and recreational projects, large and small. In recent years, Vripack has given its out-of-the-box, holistic design thinking top priority. Its 'Vrithink' site shows how innovative design trends happen everywhere and not in isolation. Vripack says it wants to 'harness the power of global trends (and) rediscover the role of beauty, authenticity, humanity and integrity.'

If that sounds like new-age mumbo jumbo,

Exploring new routes – Vripack calls them 'engineering fantasies' – has become a company-wide theology

Vripack makes no excuses. At last year's Monaco Yacht Show it embraced a juvenile enthusiasm by exhibiting colourful mannequins holding model Vripack-designed craft. On the eve of last year's METS in Amsterdam, its PechaKucha evening gives designers and others a stage to present creative ideas in 20-minute presentations. This has nothing – and everything – to do with yachtbuilding.

quality. It's what the industry expects of us."

Because Vripack straddles naval architecture, design and engineering, it is hard-pressed to name a rival. It competes with designers, naval architects and engineers "who handle parts of projects," says Tromp. "They can lead us to work on other parts. That's how our competitors can also be our clients."

The comment illustrates how comfortably Vripack has positioned itself. In an industry in