

Pearly Queen

Last year, four superyachts were launched in New Zealand. The last of these, and also one of the last launches of 2010, was the 31.5m long-range motoryacht *Black Pearl*, which splashed on 29 December 2010. *The Superyacht Report* visited *Black Pearl* in Auckland on the eve of her departure on her maiden cruise.

By Ellie Brade

SHORT SPECIFICATION

Builder

Diverse Projects

Naval Architecture and Exterior Designer

LOMOcean Design

Interior Designer

Chris Connell Design

LOA

31.5m/103'

Beam

7.8m/25'

Draft

2.05m/6'7"

Gross Tonnage

199T

Cruising speed

12 knots

Range

3,000nm @ 11 knots

Engines

2 Caterpillar C18 ACERT 600hp

Generators

2 Caterpillar 51kw C4.4

Classification

Germanischer Lloyd 100A5 MC & CI LYC

Commissioned by a kiwi owner, *Black Pearl* is intentionally very much a product of Australasia. Built in New Zealand, she was designed by LOMOcean Design of Auckland, with an interior by Chris Connell of Melbourne that was fitted out by Specialist Marine Interiors (SMI) of Whangarei. With over 100 Australasian companies having played a role in the build, she is another fine example of the quality work being carried out in the Southern Hemisphere. At 31.5m, she is also the first foray into the superyacht size bracket for the team behind her, Diverse Projects.

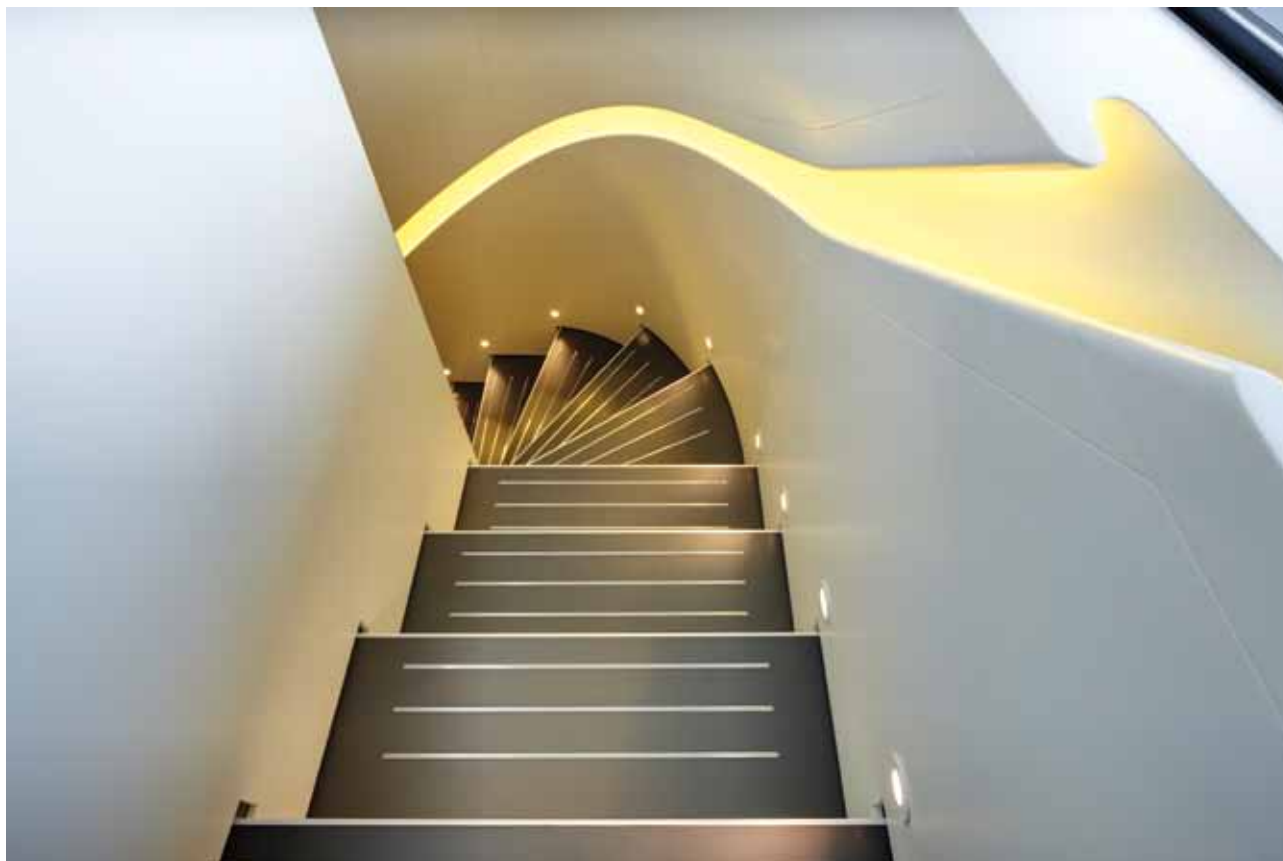
BUILDING 'DIVERSELY'

Diverse Projects, led by Directors John Vitali and Lars Bjorklund, is not a yard. Were it to be dubbed anything, it would probably be a 'virtual yard', but really it is a project management company. Hired by an owner to oversee the build process of a yacht, their role includes selecting a shipyard site to build at and the hiring and co-ordination of the necessary sub-contractors. Diverse, by definition

'showing a great deal of variety', is an apt title for the company, as their method of building unsurprisingly draws on a large variety of talents to produce the end result.

Given the above, it goes without saying that Diverse Project's method is a step away from the conventional way of building a superyacht. With their builds there is no home yard and no permanent workforce. The 'virtual yard' concept is not a new one; indeed this is how Wally Yachts first built yachts. Grant Willis of SMI was extremely complimentary about Diverse's take on the virtual yard concept. "It absolutely works well. Everyone involved is on the same team and working towards the same common goal," said Willis. "Obviously you need knowledgeable people running the project, who are able to navigate the difficulties, but you have that with John and Lars."

The Diverse Projects USP, they argue, is that retention of control over the project by the owner and the subsequent transparency, in terms of





the costs of building a yacht. By their own admission, the Diverse Projects' approach takes a certain type of owner to commit to their way of building. "But with the right owner, it really, really works," Vitali argued. "They are completely in control." As the owner is in charge overall and in control of all of the sub-contractors, including Diverse Projects, the owner will always know exactly how much each individual service costs right down to the last cent. That is not to say that those involved do not make a profit, but rather the fee for the services of those involved is made clear to the owner before they are hired on to the project. All work is invoiced for on a fortnightly basis, meaning that the work is paid for as it progresses rather than in large lump sums. Again, this process has been seen before and was, for example, the payment procedure implemented on the ITM Away refits of *Octopus* and *Tatoosh*.

In the current economy this overall package may well seem like an attractive prospect to some potential owners. "With open accounting the owner can see exactly where their money goes," explained Bjorklund. "By being in control in this way the

owner also always feels completely in control of the project." In this build, Diverse Projects even had webcams set up in the Whangarei shed so that *Black Pearl's* owner could go online to their website at any time and see how work was progressing on his boat.

In the interests of competitive pricing, the owner of *Black Pearl* was presented with a number of options for the various service providers. With the bid package and prices in front of him, the owner was then able to select his ideal combination, aided by the advice of the Diverse team. Building in New Zealand was also a means of ensuring a quality product for a good price. "That's not to say we wouldn't build elsewhere, though," says Vitali. *Black Pearl* notched up some 200,000 man-hours over her build time. "In New Zealand, there is a fantastic ratio of quality of work versus labour rate, particularly compared to the prices of northern Europe. Added up over all those hours, there is an immense difference in money spent," said Bjorklund. Also notable is her total cost of approximately nine million euro, which, they argue, is excellent value for a brand new fully custom yacht.

"In New Zealand, there is a fantastic ratio of quality of work versus labour rate, particularly compared to the prices of northern Europe. Added up over all those hours, there is an immense difference in money spent."



Diverse Projects do not currently have any superyacht orders signed. “We have a number of new build projects under discussion,” said Bjorklund. “It takes longer to build the trust needed to undertake this type of build.” For now, with the contracts of those who worked on *Black Pearl* ended, and no costly workforce or facility to maintain, it is business as usual for Vitali and Bjorklund. They seem confident that more orders will come. Competition for orders comes from a strong quartet of yards in New Zealand, namely Alloy Yachts, Fitzroy Yachts, McMullen and Wing and Yachting Developments, all of whom have had orders placed in the last 18 months. But then, all it takes is one order and one certain type of owner, and the process begins again.

BLACK PEARL

Discussions about the construction of *Black Pearl* began in early 2008. *Black Pearl's* owner had enjoyed a 24m sailing yacht for many years and was ready to make the transition to a bigger yacht, this time a motoryacht. The sale of that sailing yacht was the catalyst to committing to the new build and from the start *Black Pearl's* owner had a firm

vision of what he wanted. Skipper of the 24m yacht and now captain of *Black Pearl*, Paul Sewell helped to orchestrate discussions and worked with the Diverse Projects team from start to finish of the entire process. “Paul was a big part of how well the project went,” commented Willis. The result, particularly with the interaction of a captain who understood from experience how the yacht would be used, is a yacht that really does reflect the owner and his vision. Originally, the intention was to keep the boat under 100ft (30.48m), but the design grew as different aspects were added, first from 92ft (28.04m) to 98ft (29.87m) to the 103ft (31.5m) she is today.

With a contract signed and the design approved, the road to her completion began at Profab Engineering in Palmerston North, where the hull and superstructure were built. They were then transported 180km over land to Napier, in late 2009, where the parts were welded together before being towed to Oceania Marine in Whangarei, whereupon the second phase of work began. This cross-country construction method was a part of keeping costs down but the quality high.



“The owner’s vision and brief really formed a good driver for inspiration.”

Diverse Projects directors Lars Bjorklund (left) and John Vitali (right)



YACHT REPORT | BLACK PEARL



The eventual naval architect and exterior designer, LOMOcean Design, had been involved early on, “back when the idea of a new boat for the owner was just a gleam in the eye,” explained Andre Moltschaniwskyj of LOMOcean. “The owner’s vision and brief really formed a good driver for inspiration. *Black Pearl* was a great opportunity to show we could design a modern classic motoryacht as well as ‘spaceships’ such as *Earthrace* or *Tûranor*.” (See page 70 in issue 122 of *The Superyacht Report* for more information on *Tûranor*.)

The floating interior presented some challenges to LOMOcean, in that they wanted to extract as much liveable interior volume as they could from the internal geometry of the hull. “The space taken by the plywood ‘rough construction’ that forms the interface between the aluminum structure and the furniture and linings can be a considerable impediment to this, with a knock-on effect on the interior arrangement,” said Moltschaniwskyj. “But we worked closely with SMI to find ways to maximise the use of the interior of the boat, without making their job too complicated and expensive.”

Chris Connell Design was selected for the interior of *Black Pearl*. *Black Pearl*’s was the inaugural superyacht interior for Connell whose work is usually land based. “The constraints of space and protocols compared to land-based projects made for a challenging learning curve project,” he said. “With help from all the build team, it was an exciting and successful project as well.” The brief from the owner for the interior was ‘Classic Armani’. “Like an Armani suit, it was to be simple and classically understated, yet detailed. It was this approach that appealed to me. We followed the mantra of ‘less is more’ whilst paying great attention to resolution and detail.”

Having been presented with Connell’s sketches and overall vision for the interior, the owner approved the approach and mood. From

Connell’s layouts and concepts, the SMI team set about engineering the shop drawings prior to her arrival in Whangarei, ready to turn them into reality. “The design involved five staircases, which is a lot for a small boat,” said Grant Willis of SMI. “That was a little bit of a challenge, but they came out really nicely.” The use of white fittings throughout the boat was also a chance to highlight the prowess of the SMI team. “White on white materials means there is no room for error, as everything has to be perfectly aligned,” said Willis. “But we were very pleased with the outcome. It was nice to work on a project that wasn’t 10,000km away for once, as well.”

The overall result is a modern, yet home-like, yacht that feels bright and airy. The spaces created by the team seem more voluminous than you would expect from a typical yacht, circa 30m. Touches of orange in the décor and soft furnishings, with touches of a piratical theme, run throughout. Everything throughout the boat is flush, where possible, and all door jambs are to full ceiling height, again opening out the spaces. A mix of casual and comfort, the build team describes the yacht as inviting rather than unapproachable.

It is not hard to imagine the owner and his family relaxing onboard. “The owner and his family are very interactive, they are all about the group activities,” says Vitali. “There is no ‘I am doing this’, it is always ‘we are doing this.’ Although the accommodation onboard is designed to allow privacy and individual spaces, the rest of the boat is dedicated entirely to interaction between guests.” The owner’s stateroom is roomy, with a bathroom and walk-in wardrobe. Guests will be welcomed into comfortable double suites, whilst the forward cabin contains four bunks, each with their own iPod stations, intended for the owner’s grandchildren. A seating area on the forward deck is roomy enough for 10 to sit comfortably together at once. A family-orientated boat indeed.



“We followed the mantra of ‘less is more’ whilst paying great attention to resolution and detail.”



YACHT REPORT | BLACK PEARL

Walking through all three of her decks, the predominant feeling is that of light. Apparently echoing the brief of Richard Beattie with *Big Fish*, the aim with *Black Pearl*, according to Vitali, was 'to bring the outside in', something the large windows that feature throughout the yacht play a part in. The DuraShield Superyacht Glass on *Black Pearl* was produced by Glasshape, yet another New Zealand company with a role in the build.

Incidentally, Glasshape also supplied the floor-to-ceiling glass panes for *Big Fish*. Class requirements dictated that the front windscreens aboard *Black Pearl* had to be able to withstand a 12m wave, the equivalent to bearing the pressure of 16t, whilst the side windows had to be able to withstand 6t. The owner was also keen that the interior furnishings be protected from the sunshine streaming in, and so the glass used is also a tint-free UV-resistant type.

So many aspects of the yacht reflect the owner and his family. Vitali and Bjorklund visited the owner in his own home to best understand his lifestyle and how to reflect that in the yacht. At the start of the build came a special

request about the exterior colour of *Black Pearl*, with the owner asking that it be the exact colour of a Tahitian black pearl (which was also the inspiration for the name of the yacht), belonging to his wife. This request was met through the development of a paint of that colour in conjunction with Awlgrip.

Another reflection of the custom nature of the yacht is the design of the aft superstructure which was designed to allow the owner to cast when fishing; the aft deck is also home to a convenient cupboard filled with fishing equipment. "When the yacht was nearing completion and we were living onboard her, that was really when we started to feel exactly what it was that the owner was trying to achieve in this boat. That's when it became real," said Vitali. "It was the same when we showed her to potential clients. It came to life for them. Until then what we were telling them were only words."

Black Pearl's completion at the end of 2010 came after nearly three years of building work. This is a longer build time than might be expected for the typical 31m yacht, but by

explanation, "The owner decided to slow the project over a seven- to eight-month period during the build," says Bjorklund. "Financially, he was OK, but all the same he decided to slow things slightly for a while. Had we gone full tilt building her, it probably would have taken 27 months from start to finish."

Following her handover, which took place in February, *Black Pearl* has a lengthy cruising plan ahead of her. Having departed Auckland to pick up her owner from Fiordland on the South Island of New Zealand, she will then head for Australia where she will be displayed at the Sanctuary Cove Boat Show. After touring some of the Pacific Islands she will head back to New Zealand before being shipped to Europe in February 2012 in time for the Mediterranean season. *Black Pearl* is available for charter through the Diverse Projects Charter division. ■

Images: Running shots, interiors and deck shots by Chris Lewis; all other images by Studio Q

To comment on this article, email issue123@synfo.com with subject: Pearly Queen

