



## Q&A WITH Mark Tucker

### The Founder of Design Unlimited

BY VIVIAN HENDRIKSZ

Establishing a successful yacht design studio is by no means an easy feat. Ensuring the studio continues to grow and thrive is another challenge in itself, one that Mark Tucker, founder and managing director of Design Unlimited has relished over the past 18 years. Having worked on numerous award-winning projects over the years, including the 64.68-metre *Shemara*, 53-metre *Mirage* and 46.2-metre *Pink Gin VI*, the British studio has gone from strength to strength, thanks to the vision of its founder and his team. As Design Unlimited focuses on its upcoming projects SuperYacht Times took a moment to catch up with Tucker during METSTRADE to learn more about the team, their projects and his thoughts on yachting.

#### You set up Design Unlimited in 2000 - what are some of the studio's significant milestones?

That's a tough one! There are certain boats that stand out to me, but all of our clients have amazing yachts. Some of our earlier boats like *Visione*, a Baltic 147' that was the biggest composite sloop at the time, come to mind. She was built 18 years ago, but is still with her original owner, still being sailed, even raced, which is great! Other milestone boats I'd say would be *Shemara*, a beautiful, classic gentleman's motor yacht, which underwent an extensive refit where we were responsible for both the interior design and exterior styling. Actually, the studio recently completed another restoration project, 50m *Alicia*, she really is a classic icon. Then you get your *Pink Gins*; *Pink Gin V*, *Pink Gin VI* - an evolution of a famous name. *Pink Gin VI* is a unique boat, with a very, very different feeling. We've designed three yachts for that particular customer, and we have come to know him and his taste very well.

#### Design Unlimited works on both custom superyachts as well as production series. Do you have a personal preference when it comes to design?

I find both rewarding, in both similar and different ways. Our custom superyacht work is particularly rewarding in terms of its status in the industry, and the feeling you have once you

have achieved a new, unique design. However, production design is also very important in terms of what you can bring into that market place, such as responsible design, and how it reflects on other yards. We do production work with Sunseeker, Baltic Yachts, Johnson, Euphoria and Windy Boats, and we are very proud that we have such good relationships with those companies. This different area of the market can be quite challenging at times because you have a number of cost-control measures, design, brand and USP to keep in mind, but these things make it quite interesting as well. At the end of the day, if you see someone having a great time on one of your boats - custom or production - the sense of satisfaction is the same.

#### Can you tell us a bit more about some of your recent projects - such as the new aluminium range for Sunseeker & Icon?

Well, we just started working with Sunseeker on the Icon product line, and that is a very big step for them, and us. However, our work with Sunseeker is more of a behind-the-scenes collaboration - any model we create is 100% a Sunseeker yacht. We previously worked with them for several years, up until 2008, and developed 12 of the former models, so it is nice that they have come back to us to work on this new range.

#### Where do you look for inspiration when working on a new yacht design?

We look at everything for inspiration - including yachting! The yacht design industry is an amazing industry to follow and be a part of, full of incredible designers and you should always respect that. While Design Unlimited may not be the oldest design studio, I think it's essential to learn from what some of our peers have done over the years. We find inspiration from all sorts of other areas - the world is a big place. Art, colour, seasons, textures, architecture - they all come into the equation - our team is continuously looking at and observing what is happening in the world and they in turn have their own sources of inspiration.

#### How would you describe yourself and the design team at Design Unlimited?

I am a team player. I like working with people and I am very proud of our talented team and their diverse skill set. I like to think that we promote diversity in our designs for our clients - if you look at our projects and our range of boats, there is no stereotypical, studio style. I'd never force my own personal ideas onto a project and our team is involved in all projects, whether it be custom or production. I think it is good that there is more than one person behind a design and young people have great ideas - they haven't got the clutter that some of us oldies have got and they see things differently sometimes.

#### Do you think that there is sufficient innovation in yacht design?

I would say there is - especially among some of the more trendier styles, such as the expanding explorer yacht sector. While everyone has their own opinion on what an explorer yacht is or isn't - a true explorer, in my opinion, is one which helps develop responsible systems. However, trying to put all these newer systems together in a whole package can be difficult. We are working on a new range of explorer yachts at the moment, they are not superyachts, but they are absolutely true explorer yachts, and the whole ethos is started from scratch, with a new platform. We only signed the contract a few weeks ago, but after the briefing, the entire team went 'wow'. There was a buzz going around the studio, and everyone was going on about it - it is sure to turn a few heads - and we will share more details on that project at Boot Düsseldorf in January.

#### How do you foresee the superyacht industry evolving?

The superyacht industry is small, with a lot of people in it. It's more a matter of can it and will it sustain itself, especially as more and more people come into it.

Historically we are not a very green industry either. I think that we would all like to be more responsible and ecologically conscious, but it has to come from so many different aspects - starting with the engines, the main oil burner. There is much responsibility across the board, but not all clients are willing to pay the extra costs linked to hybrid systems. Overall I think change is afoot, I think that the next generation that comes along will push harder in certain areas, I think that is inevitable. But we have to give them the platform to move it along.