

SuperYacht24

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Luca Dini: “Italy should unite and not forget that a yacht is still a boat”

Nicola Capuzzo · Monday, May 27th, 2024

La Spezia – The founder of the eponymous Design & Architecture studio has called for greater cohesion within the sector and the ‘Italian system’, in addition to explaining why they involve the crew in their design process.

La Spezia – The Blue Design Summit held in La Spezia was an opportunity to hear about the latest projects some of the most important Italian architects are working on. Among them was Luca Dini, president and CEO of Luca Dini Design & Architecture, who presented the project for the construction of Neom Sindalah Island in Saudi Arabia, along with other projects his team is working on in Mexico and Albania. Dini assured that Albania “will be the future of the Mediterranean for yachting” thanks to the development of new marinas. With the Neom Sindalah Island project, the renowned architect is confident that Saudi Arabia in the Red Sea will also become a new destination for super yachts, especially during the winter season as an alternative to the Caribbean (“it is just a 3-hour flight from Rome”).

Drawing on his experience in Saudi Arabia, Luca Dini lamented the “lack of interest from Italy” towards this project of creating a new island, noting that “no delegation” was present when it was time to team up to promote the activities of Italian companies. “Why don’t we unite? Even we architects should come together to create a system,” he said, making an appeal to his colleagues.

Luca Dini, at the sidelines of the Blue Design Summit, shared some reflections with SUPER YACHT 24 on the future of design in yachting and on the innovations that often have to contend with the onboard life of those who manage recreational boats.

What trends do you see for the coming years in terms of innovation, as well as challenges and opportunities to seize? The question arises from the observation that sometimes design, shipyards, and crew seem to be somewhat distant worlds from each other...

“We should, not to say take a step back, but perhaps pause for a moment to reflect on what yachts are today because they have become objects of great fashion. The boat has increasingly become a showroom for a furniture store rather than an object that sails. So, since many in my profession unfortunately don’t go to sea, but think of creating (rightly from their point of view) a very cool, very contemporary object, they forget that boats need to sail. I use the boat every season and I see all the things we do well and all the things we do poorly. There’s a reason, though, why boat furnishings have always had certain characteristics, while homes or hotels have others”.

Can you provide concrete examples?

“You can’t just impose and say, ‘Oh, but nowadays with freestanding furniture, you can make a boat just like that...’ because that’s nonsense, it’s dangerous. I go on the boat with my family, with children, with the elderly, with my mother, etc. The boat is dangerous. So when you talk about furniture, it’s logical to use slightly rounded, softer edges, and not to use glass tables with sharp corners. Maybe it will be less fashionable, but the boat is an object that moves. The kind of stress you have there is like in a house during an earthquake, which you don’t normally experience. So you can’t forget about these things. The mistake that we designers often make is not consulting with the crews, who have been truly working with us in our studio for some years now. I call the chef when I have to design the kitchen of a boat. The same goes for the captains and sailors. I ask them: ‘Is this storage enough for you? Are these technical spaces sufficient?’ We come to an agreement”.

You can’t always accommodate their needs, can you?

“Just because someone tells me they need a room doesn’t mean I’ll give it to them. But we talk, I consider the problem, not because I’m a genius but because I go boating and I see what the real problem is”.

How do you reconcile innovation in yachts with design? What do you see as new and different in the coming years?

“I absolutely don’t believe in electric boats; for me, they’re all just marketing ploys. Absolutely not. I see an impressive development in chartering, there’s definitely much more opportunity for people to charter rather than buy; I see especially the desire to spend vacations or moments discovering new places. That’s why I insist so much on the upcoming yachting destinations, which are 100% Albania and the Red Sea on the Suez Canal side. These destinations are the future in innovation”.

You appear skeptical about technological progress, is that so?

“We’ve seen some of it, but boating is not like automotive; the investments that can be made in research in boating are not even remotely comparable to those being made in automotive, so everything will be much slower. So, regarding research, we do what can be done today, sustainability, the things we can do, we enforce them. If you are designing and building a new boat, you have to use a particular type of filler, a specific type of painting, the furniture has to be made this way: what can be done should also be somewhat enforced from now on. For example, one could say: ‘From now on, all taxis must be electric’ since they mostly operate in cities. It could very well be a similar thing in boating: enforcing some things that are feasible while also pushing forward research, which, I repeat, in boating will never have the funding that exists in automotive, but we can try to create something new”.

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