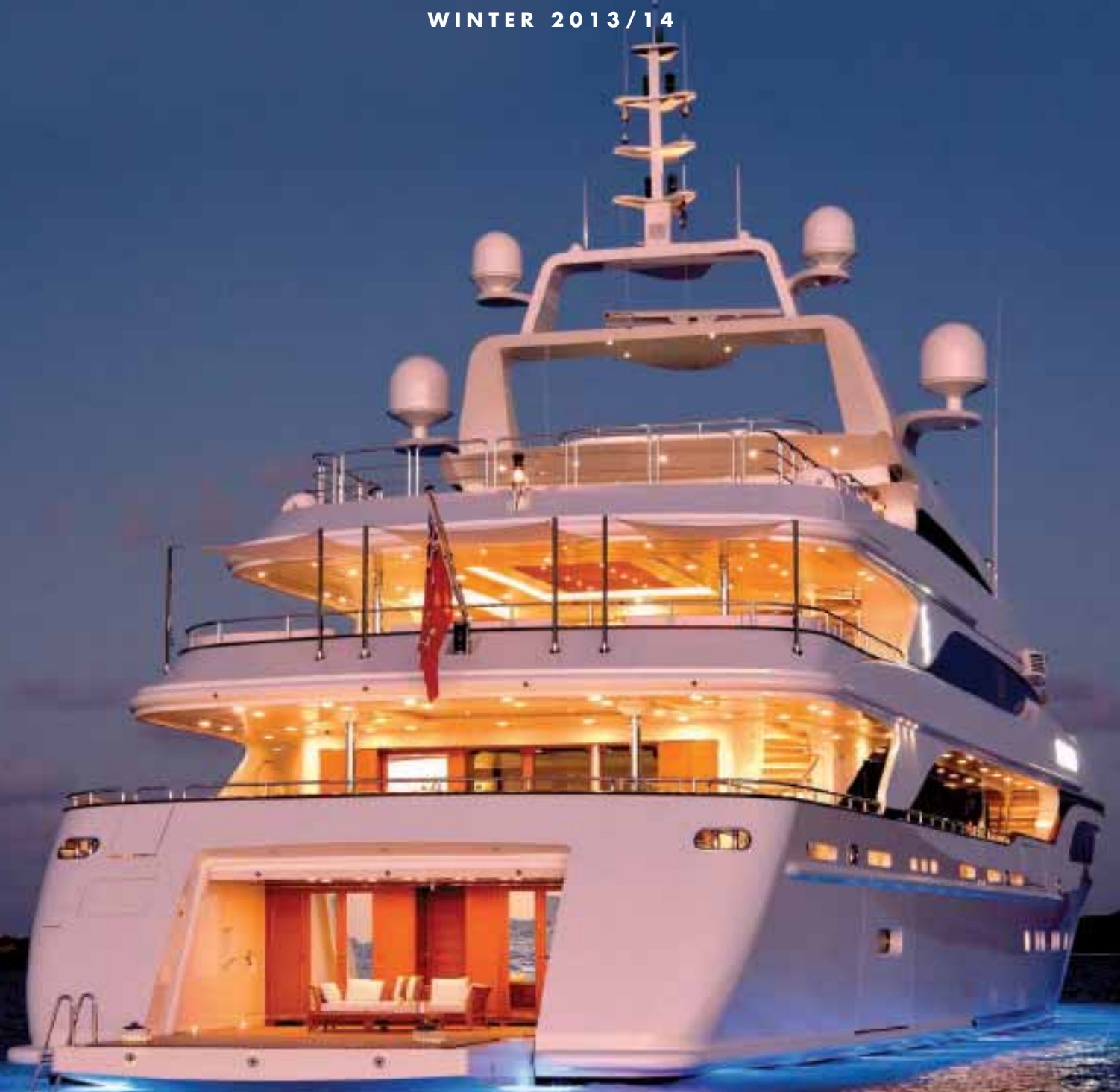


ELITE

T R A V E L E R

SUPERYACHTS

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ITALIAN MASTERS

Many of the yachts in the preceding pages have come from leading superyacht builders, but who is it that constructs such complex vessels? *Elite Traveler Superyachts* takes a behind-the-scenes look at the CRN shipyard, which entered the big leagues earlier this year with the launch of the 262-foot megayacht *Chopi Chopi*.

BY MARINA MICI





CRN SHIPYARD



LAMBERTO TACOLI

As chairman and CEO of CRN, Lamberto Tacoli knows a thing or two about the superyacht trade. He joined the industry in the early 1990s, first as marketing manager then as CEO of SM Italian Yacht, and went on to found Custom Line in 1996 with Norberto Ferretti. Tacoli was appointed CEO after CRN and Custom Line merged in 2001; in 2006, he became chairman of CRN exclusively. (Custom Line is now operated separately.)

In July 2009, Tacoli became a member of the Ferretti Group board of directors, and was appointed Ferretti Group chief sales and marketing officer in September 2009. In January 2012 he became the CEO of CRN. Tacoli is also the vice president of UCINA, the Italian Marine Industry Association.

Elite Traveler Superyachts: What first attracted you to the yachting industry?

Lamberto Tacoli: I have been attracted to the yachting industry for as long as I remember and my interest led me to pursue a career in the industry. During the late '80s I became a shareholder of Custom Line. The brand became part of the Ferretti Group and the rest is history. I have been involved in and witnessed many changes in the yachting market in my time. I saw that there was an opportunity to acquire the Doric Shipyard so I made a proposal to Norberto Ferretti, and a deal was finalized in 1999. A little later, I started working for the Ferretti Group at CRN, focusing on the relaunch of the brand. I have devoted my entire career to the group and have ridden some waves with them. I believe the superyacht industry is unique in its ability to combine the great ocean and man's great skills to allow for a stunning result: A superyacht that gives the owner freedom.

How has the landscape of the yachting industry changed since you started?

Yachting is completely different to what it was when I started out, in both a positive and negative sense. The economic crisis that we have witnessed during the last few years has been hard for the entire industry and one that we all continue to strive to overcome. The technological developments that we have witnessed have changed what was a cottage industry into an industry that employs thousands of people worldwide. The rapid growth has been chaotic at times, but for those of us who have taken careful and thoughtful steps it has been an exciting and fruitful time. It is clear that we are currently experiencing a transition period, but we are beginning to see how the next few years, and indeed decades, will pan out with new markets, new protagonists, and new products. Nautical culture has grown extensively, and industry expertise has also widely increased, perhaps due to the economic downturn as builders and brokers could no longer rest on their laurels and simply ride the wave.

How have the clients that buy your yachts changed during your career?

The most notable change in CRN's clients has been in their place of origin. Countries that had been blocked for many years opened up and their presence has significantly stimulated the industry. I have also witnessed our clients refining their requirements and becoming more involved in the details, and of course, with ever-changing technologies, their expectations are much higher, as indeed they should be.

It seems as if the size of an average buyer's first yacht is getting bigger and bigger, with yachts as large as 200 feet being built for first-time owners. How is dealing with this type of owner different for a shipyard than dealing with a more experienced owner?

In my experience it is not a difficult experience, just a different one. The challenge lies in being able to anticipate or understand their requirements, but I think that it is during the process itself that we can see the value of the shipyard's experience. It is of utmost importance that we immediately understand the client and that we listen to their desires in order to avoid any misunderstandings along the build process.

Italian yacht building has gone from strength to strength in recent years, but what do you think are the major challenges now facing these builders?

I think the challenge for Italian shipyards consists in maintaining the high standards that we have all achieved. To do this we need to constantly be looking at ways of improving and achieving the best results



possible. I believe that we are aware that leadership can only be preserved through the continuous attention given to research and innovation.

What do you believe are the strengths and weaknesses of CRN in comparison with your competitors in both Italy and worldwide?

CRN celebrates its 50th year this year, and I believe we have earned our solid reputation as builders of spectacular superyachts. The CRN brand guarantees continuity and tradition in a market that has seen many important and historic brands decrease significantly or disappear altogether. Our Italian pedigree is of utmost importance to our buyers, but along with this we are proud of our leadership in the development of unique designs and innovations. CRN has often led the way in what have become the most desired innovations in yacht builds, including concepts such as the floodable garage, the beach club, and the fold-down balcony. Today our aim is to find ways to improve the productive procedures in order to make them more efficient and effective.

Which do you believe is more important in the success of a shipyard: The quality of the product or the quality of the brand marketing and the client relationships?

CRN focuses on two fundamental elements: The

client and the product. The fact that 70 percent of our clients are repeat business is highly significant and indeed great motivation. It means that the level of satisfaction is high. The shipyard grows together with our clients with whom we have created constructive and lasting relationships.

How has CRN coped with the challenging market conditions since the economic crisis? What changes have you had to make to survive?

The biggest difficulties we have faced as a yard are thankfully in the past. The financial issues that the Ferretti Group faced have been overcome and today we have a solid majority shareholder, the industrial group Weichai, which allows us to look into the future with greater security. We must continue to pay attention to the signs from the various markets. The general economic crisis is continuing and we cannot let our guard down. We will continue to invest heavily in the Asian countries.

In what way has the change in market conditions changed your business strategy going forward?

These changes have mainly led us to think and act more on a global scale rather than a localized one, and when I say "local" I am referring to macro regions. Today we aim to attract clients from all over the world, while previously our attention was directed at Europe, North America, and the Middle East.

What do you believe are the golden rules of a good shipyard both in good and bad times?

I believe that there should always be passion for what we are building, respect towards the client, and constant desire to achieve more. Of course during difficult times one should be professional and optimistic, fundamental qualities in any business.

Where do you find the majority of your new clients? Do they come from your own marketing or via brokers and other introducers?

Many of CRN's clients are repeat clients who either own a Custom Line or another vessel from the Ferretti Group portfolio. Our clients are loyal, and we are fortunate enough to have a team that has established solid relationships over the years, backed by the guarantee and trust that the CRN brand provides. The brokers and the dealers of the Ferretti Group with whom we cooperate are another channel of contact with new prospects.

Where do you think the new breed of clients is going to come from in the next five years?

I believe that for the large superyacht sector the new areas of interest will be in Asia Pacific, Latin America, and Africa. That said, when it comes to countries such as China and India we will need patience and great investment.





CRN BOATBUILDERS



AT WORK



VESSEL UNDER CONSTRUCTION

CRN – A BRIEF HISTORY

Founded in 1963 and part of the Ferretti Group since 1999, the CRN shipyard is based in Ancona, Italy. The brand is primarily known for the build and design of fully custom-built superyachts in steel and aluminium up to 279 feet, and for two semi-custom lines in composite of 131 feet and 141 feet. The brand was propelled into the big leagues with the launch of the 236-foot *Azteca* in 2010, which won accolades as one of the top 100 largest yachts in the world.

The shipyard covers an area of over 871,877 square feet, 376,737 of which are covered. Built on the Adriatic, the facilities, which also produce some of the Custom Line range under separate management, include an 820-foot marina with three docks, a slipway, and three modern sheds that house the latest technically advanced facilities available for superyacht building.

The shipyard is headed by Lamberto Tacoli, who along with Norberto Ferretti was responsible for the 1996 launch of the Custom Line brand. Being part of the Ferretti Group means that the yard benefits from the assistance of the corporation, a respected leader in the design, construction, and sale of luxury motor yachts. In 2003 CRN took over the neighboring Mario Morini shipyard, which specialized in steel and aluminium commercial vessels, and in so doing became one of the biggest nautical poles for the manufacturing of megayachts from 131 feet to 295 feet in Europe. The CRN engineering team, together with Tacoli, is behind many of the innovations on CRN builds. One such innovation includes the “beach club” concept found on several CRN models, including *Azteca* and *Darlings Danama* (featured in the summer 2013 issue of *Elite Traveler Superyachts*). The latest advance from CRN, featured on the recently launched *J’Ade*, is the floodable garage.

The yard fulfills the great majority of a client’s desires internally, with in-house expertise ranging from a full exterior and interior design team to engineering for bespoke naval architecture, innovation, and best features for life on board. Not content to rest on their laurels, CRN also collaborates with leading designers on several of their platforms and exterior designs, and has been responsible for pioneering many new design trends now considered standard, like balconies, terraces, beach clubs, and floating garages.

Do you think current yacht designs can be successful with any culture or do you think there is going to be a need to change yacht design to adapt to the cultures of the emerging markets?

This is an excellent question, which should perhaps also be made to the yacht designers. I believe that this is very much a challenge for yacht designers who must propose solutions and designs that best meet the desires of the new breed of clients. However, I am sure that the designers are already working on concepts to suit the requirements and tastes of the emerging markets, and I look forward to seeing the results.

What is the role of brokers in a new construction, and would you recommend that a client use a broker to negotiate their contract and guide them through the process?

The role of the broker is an important one; many clients do not understand the superyacht industry.

Brokers fulfill a fundamental role as an owner’s private consultant. They must follow the clients’ requests and guide them towards products and shipyards that can guarantee complete satisfaction. Moreover, another strategic role of a broker is to ensure the entire sale and construction period is seamless and stress free, from negotiating contracts at the beginning and throughout the build process to aiding with yacht management issues on delivery of the vessel. For any builder it is very important and advisable to have expertise within the company to safeguard the clients’ interests and to make the process easier for all of the parties involved.

Having launched Custom Line along with Norberto Ferretti at such a young age, you are clearly no stranger to innovation in the superyacht sector. What do you see as the next chapter in yacht design in the next five to 10 years?

Maybe the challenge that every shipyard faces is that of finding a “trademark,” a hallmark that makes its products recognizable. Yacht design, technology, and architecture must all go hand in hand. We should never forget that a new build involves teamwork and synthesis between all parties.

What non-CRN yachts do you see as groundbreaking and why?

In my opinion the following yachts are all unique and iconic as they have all brought about innovations to traditional yachting and have motivated the industry to think outside of the box. But above all, they have inspired the industry and their style and engineering have had great impact.

- 244-foot *Eco* built by Blohm+Voss
- 303-foot *Tatoosh* built by Kusch Yachts
- 289-foot *Maltese Falcon* built by Perini Navi
- 390-foot *A* built by Blohm+Voss
- 591-foot *Azzam* built by Lurssen