

# The Superyacht Design Report

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DESIGN

*TSR assumes the role of client, as Claydon Reeves creates our perfect yacht.*

TECHNOLOGY

### I did it KyWay

The results of the first Kymeta flat panel sea trials are revealed.

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*Which designers hold their resale value best?*

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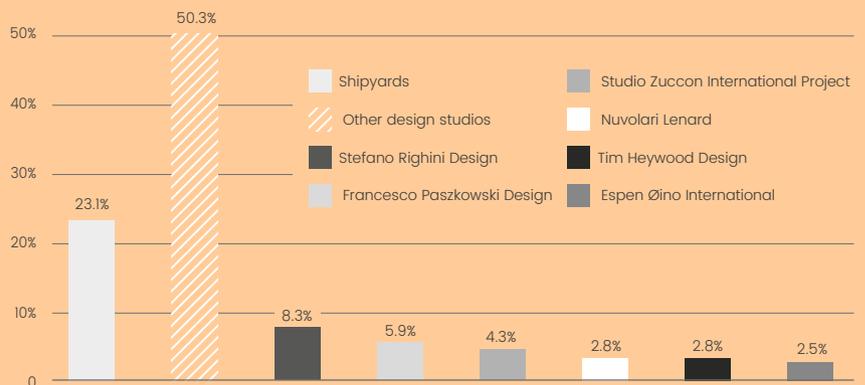
### Riza Tansu, CEO, Tansu Yachts

*For me, a yacht shouldn't be like a boutique hotel in Milan; it should be like a beach house in Malibu where you can wander about in bare feet and board shorts.*

FLEET

### The Superyacht Design Report

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The man behind one of the most successful lines in history discusses what irks him about concepts for concepts' sake.

OPERATIONS

### Ocean Preservation

*"The more owners realise what is out there, the better chance we'll have to change our world's destiny. Sipping a cocktail at anchor will not contribute anything to this awareness."*



Owner On Board:  
an interview with  
Riza Tansu, founder  
of Tansu Yachts

# Simple is good

INTERVIEW BY JUSTIN RATCLIFFE

*Riza Tansu has drawn on his unique insight as a designer, builder and owner to create a signature brand of displacement yachts with utilitarian exterior lines and urban chic interiors that are not only markedly different from others on the market, but also appeal to a different type of client. We talked to the founder and CEO of Istanbul-based Tansu Yachts following the sea trials of 43.7m Cyclone, his largest launch to date.*







After graduating with a degree in industrial design from the Middle East Technical University in Ankara, Riza Tansu happened to pick up a book entitled *Do What You Love, The Money Will Follow* by Marsha Sinetar. Like many publications in the self-help genre, its tenets are sometimes simplistic, but the central message resonated with the designer and has influenced his career choices ever since.

“That book showed me the way and confirmed what I already suspected: if you do something with passion and love, the commercial side will follow,” Tansu explains. “But if you think, ‘Should I do this or that to make more money?’ then you’re likely to make bad decisions. I’ve never done anything just for the money or sat down at the table with Excel spreadsheets and studied how to build a successful business. Instead, I’ve just followed my dreams and what makes me happy. You should always listen to your heart, pursue what you want for yourself and the clients will follow.”

Tansu first put this philosophy into practice by setting up his own interior design and furniture business. Then he opened a restaurant and themed it around his love of rock music and interest in light aircraft (he holds a private pilot’s licence). The venture proved so successful that it became a full-time concern, and by the time he sold up Tansu was a wealthy 35-year-old. Energetic, confident and easily bored, he was ready for a new creative challenge and in the mid-1990s turned his entrepreneurial eye to Turkey’s booming boatbuilding industry and yacht design.

“At the time, there was something of a trend for converting ocean-going tugs into superyachts,” says Tansu. “But given the limitations imposed by narrow corridors and heavy deck equipment, it’s very difficult to come up with workable compromises. So for the first 10 years we experimented with all kinds of smaller workboat designs, from pilot boats to trawlers, to come up with a practical, yet comfortable, formula.”

His first project was *Troy Explorer*, a 23.6m Pacific Northwest trawler launched in 1998, with naval architecture by American Steve Seaton. Others followed of a similar ilk, but *CV70* (the CV stands for carrier vessel), a chunky 21m vessel painted naval grey that he built on spec for himself to test the market’s reaction, came closest to defining the future direction of Tansu Yachts. “It was a form-follows-function boat,” says Tansu. “For me, a yacht shouldn’t be like a boutique hotel in Milan; it should be like a beach house in Malibu where you can wander about in bare feet and board shorts. *CV70* proved that the workboat DNA can provide a cost-effective, comfortable and user-friendly platform.”

The watershed came with 35.2m *Ceylan* and 36.4m *Nomade*, launched in 2010 and 2011 respectively. Based on what Tansu calls the ‘mothership’ platform, both yachts confirmed his focus on open-air living and penchant for military-styled exteriors. *Nomade* made her debut at the Monaco Yacht Show in the year of her launch and was sold by David Legrand of Fraser Yachts within 15 days of being listed. The speedy sale at a difficult time for the market proved there was an appetite for Tansu’s style of casual cruising, but it was a personal disappointment for Tansu as he had been looking forward to using the boat himself for a season or two. “Owning and using yachts is a huge advantage as a designer,” says Tansu. “When you live on board, as I’ve done, you get to know how the boat works and develop new ideas for the next project. It gives me the opportunity to see what we’re doing right and what we can do better. And, of course, you also find out what you don’t really need.”

One thing that Tansu feels his clients don’t really need is overly complex technology on board. This includes features such as hydraulic folding balconies and platforms that are de rigueur on today’s superyachts. “In my opinion, the less automated moving equipment you have on board the better,” he argues. “It’s stuff that can go wrong



*Three of a kind: Esosh (above), Highlight (below) and Cyclone (overleaf) were all launched within weeks of each other this year.*





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and potentially make your cruise hellish. When I’m on holiday, I don’t want any hassle and these James Bond-ish innovations are a recipe for disappointment. Sure, having a balcony is great, but integrate it into the design as a fixed structure, not by pushing buttons. Simple is good.”

From the beginning, Tansu has also resisted the temptation to maximise gross tonnage up to the 500gt threshold and even his most recent 40m-plus projects are not much over 300gt. This clearly limits the interior space, but as the yachts are designed for alfresco, Mediterranean-style cruising, he prefers to view low volume in terms of the advantages it brings. “In contrast to more traditional yacht design, we don’t start by maximising the interior volumes and then enclosing them,” he explains. “Why have interior space you don’t use? We prefer to optimise the volumes to meet our clients’ needs, but we also emphasise the exterior spaces. For me, it’s like having a house with a large garden instead of a condo in a skyscraper. Furthermore, less volume combined with long waterlines means lower build costs, fewer crew and smaller, more fuel-efficient engines.”

Wood is a traditional build material in Turkey and its craftsmen are masters at the cold-moulded construction method comprising multiple layers of wood strip planking coated with fibre and epoxy resin. Tansu Yachts is as happy building in iroko and acajou as it is in steel and aluminium, and has delivered several wood-composite yachts. “We use engineered wood as a structural element in a very high-tech process,” says Tansu of the technique used to build projects such as 34.6m *Only Now* and 37.9m *So’Mar*. “In fact, it’s more sophisticated than steel and offers better characteristics, such as less noise and vibration. A 40m wooden boat displaces around 100 tonnes less than a steel one, so you can also install smaller engines. People tend to think that a superyacht has to be built of steel but that’s totally wrong. Anyone in the industry who knows the business understands that wood is a great construction material.”

Tansu explains the relative merits of both metal and wood construction to his clients and lets them make the final decision. These clients are very wealthy individuals as opposed to billionaires, so



*Sexy Fish, the fourth hull in the so-called 'mothership' series, was launched in 2016.*

cost is an important consideration. On paper at least, wood is slightly more expensive than steel or aluminium, but the labour hours are roughly the same and metal manufacturing processes such as laser-cutting and priming can push up the final cost. "One of the most expensive impacts on the build cost is the painting," says Tansu. "Wood-composite boats cost less to paint because they already have a flush surface that requires much less fairing. This means a 40m wood-composite boat of around 300gt might cost up to €500,000 less than a steel one."

Over the past decade, up to the delivery of *Sexy Fish* last year, Tansu Yachts had completed around one vessel annually. And 2017 saw a sudden spike in launches with no fewer than three new yachts – 39m *Esosh*, 38.4m *Highlight* and 43.7m *Cyclone* – all hitting the water by August, with four more projects under construction. Steel-hulled *Cyclone* is the brand's first yacht to exceed 40m, but is very much a continuation of the Tansu design philosophy with her angular exterior styling and elegant, yet unpretentious, interior design. Despite her modest 332gt, the three guest suites, master stateroom and main salon are comfortably spacious and there is a

central stairway serving all three decks. There is also a dedicated cold room, laundry and generous crew quarters. Originally ordered by an Italian client who pulled out midway through construction, Tansu is content to own the boat himself until a new buyer comes along which, judging by past performance, will not take long. "We're used to building to contract and on spec, but I always make sure I can finish a boat if something happens along the way," says Tansu. "I couldn't do that with a 60–70m project, which is one reason why I want to keep production below 500gt. *Cyclone* was within my means and I'm happy to be able to use her until she sells."

The tranquil view across the Bosphorus Strait from Tansu's Istanbul studio belies the fact that Turkey is going through a period of geopolitical unrest in the wake of terrorist attacks, an attempted coup and the ongoing conflict in neighbouring Syria. There is no doubt the charter market in Turkey has suffered as a consequence, but the impact on the boatbuilding industry is harder to calculate. A healthy order book and record number of launches this year suggest that the effect on Tansu Yachts has been negligible. "Some people

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may be nervous of building in Turkey, which I think is based more on psychology than the reality,” says Tansu. “The situation hasn’t affected us directly because we’re a brand, not a shipyard. We hire out our construction facilities, which means that if a client doesn’t want to come to Turkey we can build in Italy, for example, so long as the yard meets our quality standards.”

Tansu finds it hard to see his yachts go after delivery because he puts his heart and soul into every vessel he designs and builds. “My boats are my passion and I won’t share them with people that don’t deserve them,” he once told me. In other words, he is picky about the clients he works with and they have to understand his design philosophy and share a similar mindset. “I try to educate inexperienced clients when they ask for something impractical, but I’m also prepared to say ‘no’ and direct them to other designers who might be able to serve their needs better,” he explains. “I like to have a direct, honest relationship with my clients and when that happens we become good friends. Years ago, I had an American client who came to our first meeting with two lawyers and

we didn’t even talk about the design of the yacht. A good contract is important, but he was scared to death by the legalities and what would happen if I died or the business went bust. To my mind, that takes all the fun out of it and I walked away from the project.”

Tansu’s back-to-basics approach to yachting has struck a chord with like-minded owners, and he has seen his signature styling widely emulated, which can be interpreted as flattery or insult depending on whether you follow the Oscar Wilde or Frank Lloyd Wright school of thinking. Twenty years after setting up Tansu Yachts, he has launched nine projects over 30m with more in the pipeline, but has yet to spend more than a season or two on any of them. It is something he’s looking to remedy. “I’m 55 now and I would like to build myself a boat and, hopefully, not sell it, so I have time to enjoy it a bit more,” he concludes. “My own yacht would be the simplest of them all, able to take me anywhere in the Mediterranean or Caribbean. That would be my dream.” JR