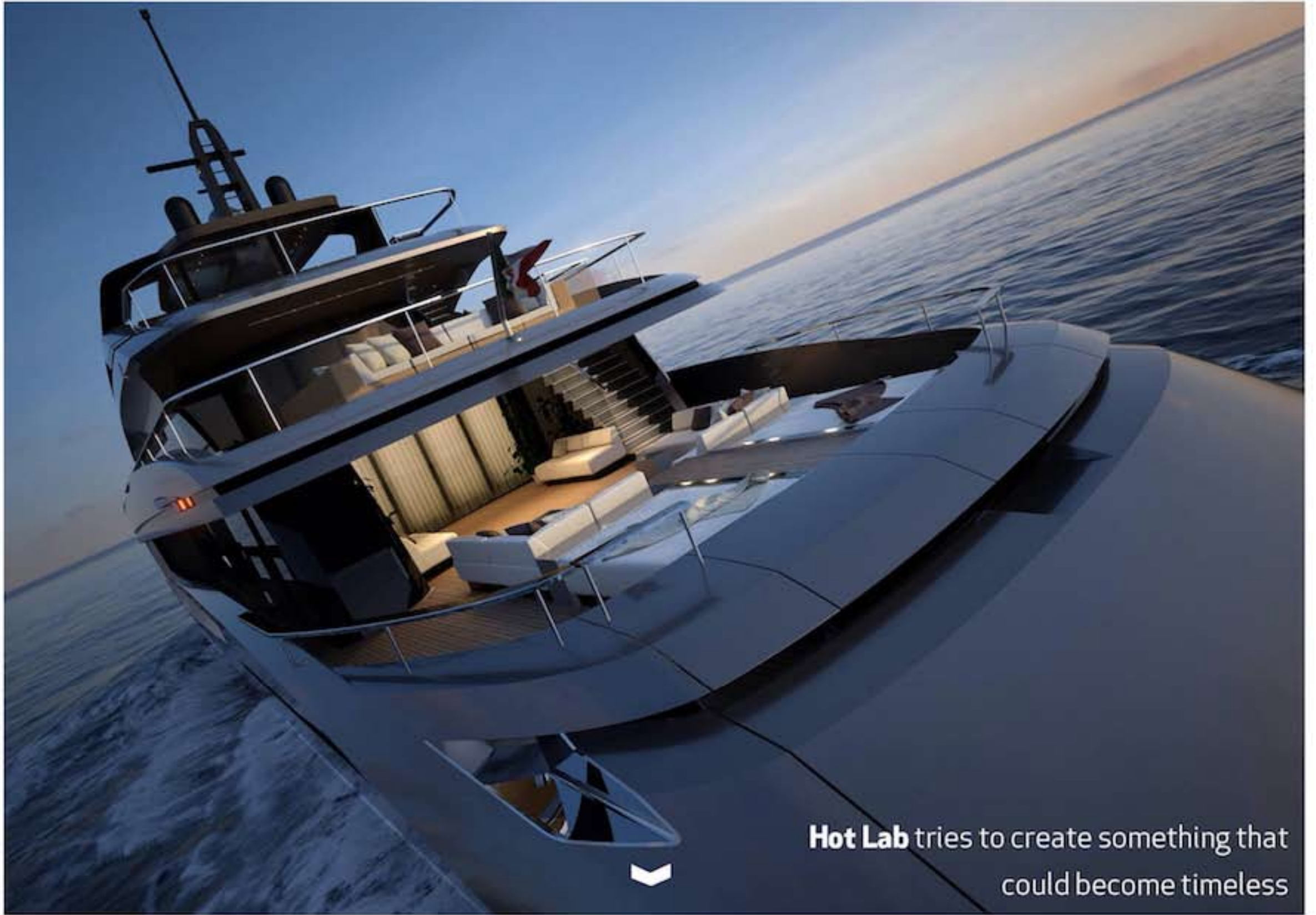


Hot Lab

By Isla McKechnie



Hot Lab



Hot Lab tries to create something that
could become timeless

Innovative and proudly Italian, we sat down with the design studio **Hot Lab** to get a view of their unique design processes and to find out what the future of yacht design has in store, from the this young and talented design studio.

It was in 2004 when the Italian design trio of Michele Dragoni, Enrico Lumini and Antonio Romano set up shop in Milan to create Hot Lab Yacht & Design studio, after working together at a small product design studio based in the same city.



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efore any designs could be penned however, a name for the newly established studio had to be decided, a process which they approached with the same frame of mind as the creation of their designs.

'As Italians, we think of ourselves as being creative, which is the 'Hot' part of the name and also technical, a certain way in which our work is done; and that is the 'Lab' bit. Together we came up with Hot Lab.'

From starting as three designers, the studio now employs six people and occasionally appoints freelance personnel from various parts of the world.

When asked about their style and what sets Hot Lab apart, the answer comes without delay.

“We still have bigger things up our sleeve!”





'We follow our clients' wishes, trying to make something completely tailor made to their needs and their style. All the way from the linen that goes onto the beds and the cutlery, we follow our clients in every part of the project, this is how we work.'

Design wise Hot Lab places emphasis on the use of clear lines and combining the elements of natural and artificial light. The same goes for different materials such as wood or stone in addition to synthetic materials, traits which are all clearly visible in their high-quality and realistic renderings.

'As for our exterior designs, that's a completely different story. Most of our exterior lines come from Michele's hand. His background is in car design and so the shape and how the lights plays on the shape, how the edges are combined together, all comes from his background as a car designer.'

In recent past, design studios started focusing on creating spec designs; these can be seen as a certain 'billboard' to display the studio's style and ability. Hot Lab is no different and credits much of their recent success to these designs in particular. Working together with



*Hot Lab is aware
of technology without
losing sight of
the importance
of hand drawing.*

shipyards such as Oceanco and Mondo Marine, these projects enables both the yard and the design studio to display innovative new designs to clients.

'An interesting project in terms of exterior design, is the Mondo Marine M50, which we presented at Monaco last year. We received a lot of interest from the market as a result of that project. We try not to go overboard in design, but create something that could become timeless, which, for a young studio as ours, is not that easy.'

As for the design itself, Hot Lab is aware of what modern technology has to offer and how it affects the de-

sign process. However the importance of a hand drawing is still in many ways the preferred tool of choice. *'A drawing lets you dream more and allows for more flexibility than a computerised rendering. Some of the guys and girls in our studio now use a drawing tablet, even for sketching. It allows you to create a drawing, mixed in with real material, which gives the client a clear idea.'*

It is not only their own designs and projects the studio has to be concerned with however. As Hot Lab explains, clients tend to draw inspiration and ideas from various



new launches and design projects from different shipyards and designers, a view the studio has embraced and which is incorporated into the initial design phases. *'Clients are so knowledgeable these days. Most of our clients are perfectionists, and so we have to know everything about where which yacht was delivered and launched, because if they refer to a specific design feature which they like on a different yacht we need to know about it.'*

Since conception nine years ago, the Italian design studio has always kept one eye on the future, and predicting eventual trends in the industry is another quality clients has come to appreciate about Hot Lab. Recent innovations has seen emphasis being placed on beach club designs; an area dedicated to outdoor relaxation and recreation activities. In addition to this concept, Antonio feels the use of glass on yachts has become a major design factor, not only for aesthetics purposes, but practical reasons as well.

'Glass has become so strong. The latest products can better resist the sun and the stresses associated with being out at sea. All of our clients are asking for bigger windows, with better views from the inside.'

A further change in the layout and intended usage of interior spaces is also foreseen.

'I think we will see a change in how people use their boat. The formal dining area on a 50 meter rarely gets used, perhaps just for breakfast when its chilly or windy outside. So we design dining areas that will support more functions. We are also moving it aft, next to the sliding doors where guests can experience the comfort of being inside while still being part of what is going on outside.'

When looking back at their past projects, Bilgin Yachts' Noor stands out and attributes their success to the amount of time spent on the yacht's interior design. Another intensive project was the refit of the 43 meter M/Y Keyla.

'The refit of Keyla has been the most interesting for us so far, in terms of the quality of the construction, material that we have chosen and and the final result of the design. We were at the RMK yard in Turkey every other week.'

Despite their recent successes Hot Lab doesn't seem to be slowing down and according to Antonio, they have no intention to do so, *'We still have bigger things up our sleeve!'*

