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STAR ON THE HORIZON

Youth, energy and talent; a powerful mix some may argue. Now add an immense drive to succeed in an unforgiving field and you've got India's brightest yacht designer, Ashish Gupta.

Text by Heather Newby



The SL39 Villa, designed with a villa in mind

We all know the stereotype of boys and their toys, but for Ashish Gupta the fascination with cars, engines and aerodynamics never died. Now, at the age of 34 he's India's most promising design talent and is set on making waves throughout the world of yacht design. "I've always been interested in automotive design from a very young age. However, I've struck my ideal with yacht design. It has everything; the mechanics that interested me with

cars, an essence of architecture that captivates me with buildings and the science behind the aerodynamics of design," he says.

Ashish's passion for design led to the birth of the prestigious design company Beyonddesign in 2001. Having mainly focussed on high-end luxury villas, themed restaurants and corporate offices, in 2003 he got the opportunity to add another feather to his cap in the form of yacht design. However, this was no ordinary first step into the design world; Ashish went on

to create India's first superyacht with his mentor, Architect Nozer Wadia.

The 45-metre vessel now cruises the Asian waters when it's not moored off the Mumbai coastline and is a floating testament to one man's talent and vision. This superyacht paved the way for Ashish to really establish his career in yacht design, and in 2007 he received a scholarship to the prestigious Institute of European Design (IED) in Venice. Ashish admits, "The Dean at the IED was astonished when he looked at my portfolio to see

that I had already completed a built yacht project."

It appears that the only way was up for the young designer from this point as he concentrated his energies on what he likes to refer to as 'lifestyle architecture' rather than yacht design. "I like to look at yachts as architectural floating buildings, and while I always work within the bounds of what is physically possible to achieve in terms of structure, engines and aerodynamics, I like to push the boundaries and venture into uncharted territory," he says.

Nowhere is this dynamic design style more evident than in his Maharaja 150 yacht concept. Attend any boat show, or log on to any futuristic yacht design website and you're sure to see the tri-hulled vision that appears to be plucked straight out of a James Bond movie. According to the design, the 150-metre, steel-hulled beauty will boast a 25-metre beam and a staggering 6,500-mile range. With six decks, she packs in everything the heart could desire... and a little more. There aren't many superyachts that have a 15-metre infinity pool, an 18-metre-wide beach and a 30-metre golf putting

“I built the Maharaja 150 from inside. I see it as yacht architecture rather than yacht design.”



The Black GT 95, inspired by the Lamborghini Reventon



“Asia’s marine market is really taking off and I plan to be at the forefront of it”

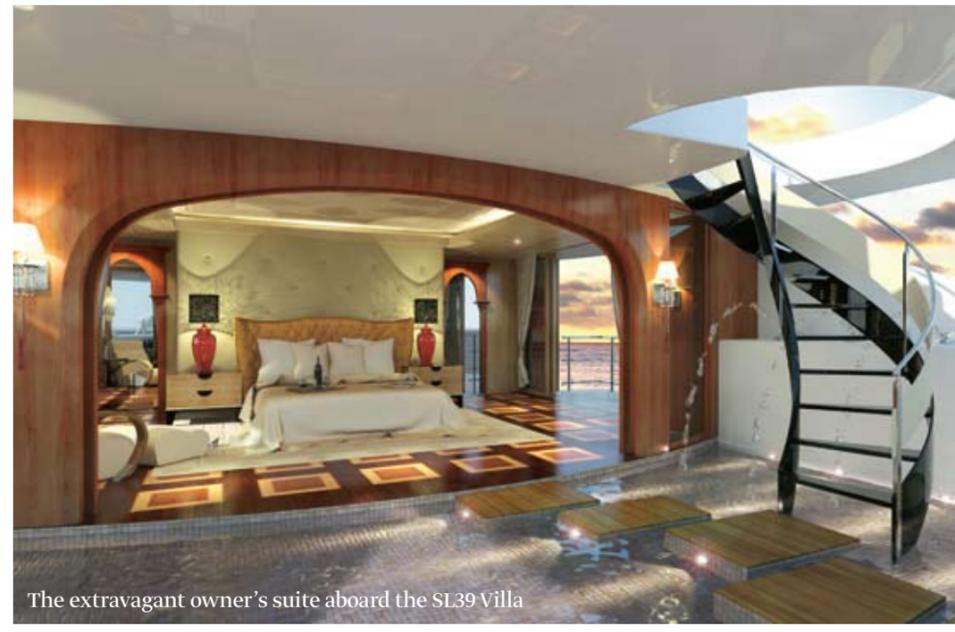
The staggering exterior of the Maharaja 150



green. Ask where these slightly out of the box design ideas come from and Ashish says, “I started to attend a lot of shows like Monaco, Dubai and Genoa and it struck me that a lot of the yachts looked the same. They were all white with the same superstructure and similar lines. I was sitting on a 95-metre superyacht at the time and thought to myself, I am sitting here, with a huge bank of information that I’ve collected from my work with previous clients, why don’t I put it to good use? I understand their desires and there were some common trends emerging that seemed integral to design preference. They all wanted to be more connected to the water and to smudge the barriers between the interior and exterior living spaces. One even wanted to have a mini golf course. From this input, the Maharaja 150 was conceptualised.”

Whilst these designs are spectacular in form, they do prompt the question: is the function befitting of the form? The answer is yes, thanks to the collaboration of Willem Stolk of Holland-based marine design and engineering consultancy Stolk Marimecs. Ashish admits that Willem’s continued support and technical prowess is imperative to his design work, “I built the Maharaja 150 from inside – I see it as yacht architecture rather than yacht design, therefore it was imperative that Willem checked that my ideas were viable on the water.”

Not only has Willem reassured Ashish about his designs but he has been a constant source from which to glean support and confidence when trying to crack the global market. Ashish confesses, “My first Monaco Yacht Show was very overwhelming. I was surrounded by Lürssen, Feadship and



Feature/Dynamic Design

the other big players. On the first day Willem encouraged me to put forward my designs. My first stop was Mr. Lürssen himself — I certainly dropped myself in at the deep end! He was very impressed with my work which gave me a huge amount of confidence. With every shipbuilder I visited, I got more and more positive, and that was just the beginning. I have now gone on to do so much more and there is still so much more to do. Asia's marine market is really taking off and I plan to be at the forefront of it."

Since India's first superyacht, Ashish has gone on to complete a stunning refit on a high-profile 95-metre yacht belonging to a leading Indian businessman. This was quickly followed by a complete re-design of the top deck of a luxury 55-metre yacht.

He now divides his time between domestic projects, including a 41-metre catamaran restaurant in Mumbai and a 25-metre yacht refit, and designing for the likes of Feadship, Oceanco, Heesen and Royal Huisman shipyard. "My design for SL39 Villa is now on the Feadship website (www.sl39.nl), so the biggest step has been taken. The essence of

the styling is taken from a villa. The curving windows and balcony should appeal to a wide range of people while the wooden decks were specifically for the Asian market. I feel that I have successfully brought the elements of the outside into the main living areas as you can see from the owner's cabin layout."

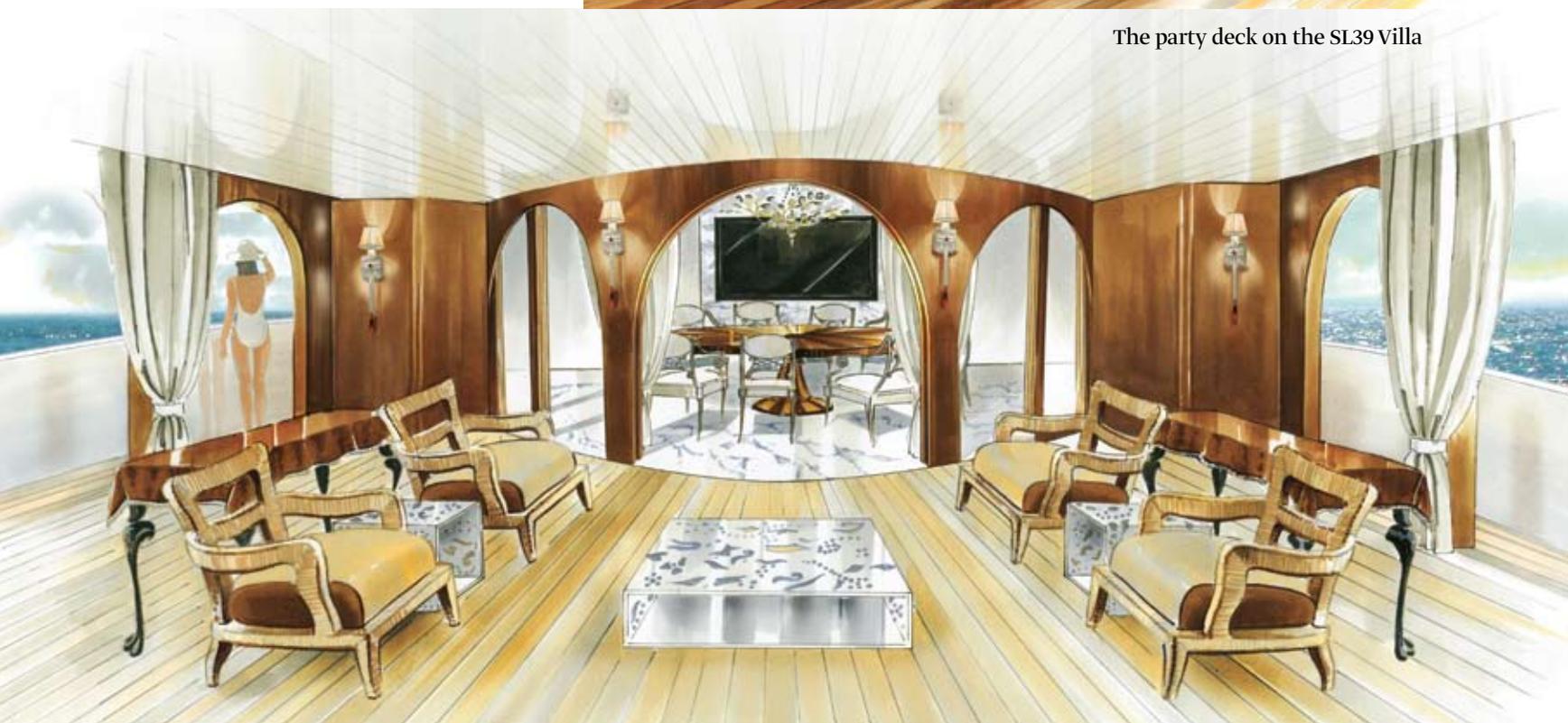
While Ashish continues to present his designs to the big names in the industry, and create more practical layouts, he certainly hasn't lost his

love for the more obscure; one only has to glance at the forbidding lines of the Black GT 95, that is inspired by the Lamborghini Reventon, to appreciate the revolutionary outlook he has to yacht design, and why not? The design world needs big thinkers and it's certainly safe to say that Ashish Gupta thinks big. **IB**

For further information, contact:
Beyondesign
Tel: +91 98213 73300
Email: thinkyachts@beyondesign.co.in
Website: www.beyondesign.co.in



The theatre room aboard the SL39 Villa



The party deck on the SL39 Villa