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Superyacht

INTERIOR DESIGN EXTERIOR SPACE CREATIVITY AND ARCHITECTURE



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DOMUS DESIGN

LETTING IT BREATHE

Formerly a partner at Germany's Newcruise, Katharina Raczek is about to complete her first solo project under her own company. It is also her first ever full residential project. *SuperyachtDesign* speaks with the designer about new challenges, new horizons and her newfound appreciation for giving a new space the time to breathe.

THE LIVING ROOM

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THE SAME'S LOUNGE CHAIR

“So many people comment on land-based designers going into yacht design and how complicated it can be, but no one tells you about when yacht designers work on land,” Katharina Raczek says emphatically down the phone from her Hamburg studio. Raczek is in a good place to comment on this role reversal as well, having just completed her first full residential project since her design career started at Newcruise in 2002.

“When I started in design I had nothing to do with boats because I get seasick really easily,” she tells us, relating how it was her decision to do her final project about a sailing yacht that led her to start working for Newcruise. “Some designers focus on the superficial, so things look great on the outside but the construction behind it is not well thought through. But it has always been important to me to understand everything. I thought, ‘OK, if I don’t know anything about sailing yachts and I want to write about it, I should go and train in a yacht design studio!’”

In a lucky break that would send most fledgling design students into raptures, just one month after Raczek’s final exam, the owner of 68m Triple Seven entrusted the 26-year-old, still interning at Newcruise, with the interior design of her yacht. “My first ever project was a superyacht,” she laughs, a decade later still sounding as if she can’t quite believe her luck. “It was all just a happy accident. Thanks to some lucky star, it all went well and I ended up doing two more yachts with this owner.” Following Triple Seven, Raczek became the dedicated in-house interior designer at Newcruise and eventually a partner.

The past year has seen big changes for the designer, who sold her shares in Newcruise and has since gone solo, launching her own eponymously named studio late in 2013. The move gave her the freedom to branch out beyond the yacht world while still acting as the interior designer on Newcruise projects. In fact, work is just about to finish on her very first residential project: a 135sqm private apartment in one of Hamburg’s art nouveau buildings.

The client, Professor Dr Mark-Ken Erdmann, CFO of the shipping company Rickmers Group, works on the same street as the Newcruise offices and got talking over lunch breaks and coffees with Raczek about his new apartment. “He has a passion for the sea and knows a lot about yachting,” she says. “He liked the idea that somebody would take over his apartment project and deal with the entire concept—that’s how superyacht projects always work.”

For Raczek, this is one of the most unique things about the way superyacht designers work; every yacht is its own world where the designer is involved in as much as the owner wants them to be. “[A yacht] is a little universe on the water,” she says. “It is not connected to the street or the rest of a building. If the owner lets you, you can touch everything from the toothbrush holder to the crew uniforms. You can really create the ultimate product and a completely connected design story.”

Integral to the apartment’s design story was several of Erdmann’s personal vintage pieces. It was important for him that the interior concept respected these pieces and wasn’t a total makeover of his style, instead unifying them with the space as a whole—even bringing in some of his Japanese heritage. Raczek admits that this made a nice change to a lot of yacht projects. “This was a very appealing experience for me, as it was an interior that ‘grew,’” she explains. “On yachts you have that very fixed deadline when the project needs to be done and everything always comes in at the same time. You never wait to give the space time to breathe and develop.” Raczek worked with vintage dealer Roland Schenk throughout the project to source pieces for the apartment and often this meant waiting, sometimes for months, for the perfect pieces. ▶



ASTOR MILAN SALCEDO



KATHARINA RACZEK

yacht project and you will be sitting with the top-level managers of every aspect of the build so when you are discussing potential problems, you will always find a solution. Every meeting is so fruitful and inspiring. Whenever you stand up from the table you will have always found a good way for the project to go on."

Raczek is determined to find a way of bringing her newfound appreciation for letting an interior evolve more freely to her future superyacht projects but is aware that the levels of efficiency and support in the industry may not be as easily transferred to the residential projects—"We yacht designers are really lucky, it is a unique world". She is most determined to continue to evolve as a designer though, something she will achieve through the growing variety of her projects.

"I don't think that I would like to be nailed down on a single style," she suggests. "I hope people will be able to recognise my form language in whatever I work on, but not a specific style. You grow open-eyed through your life, and it would be a shame as a creative person not to develop." She is currently working on a villa, a large office renovation, two more apartments and two large yacht projects with Newcruise.

"I definitely don't want to miss land-based design anymore," she stresses. "But this little sidetrack has taught me to appreciate even more how you can work as a yacht designer. This is an exciting industry where you have an opportunity to create the ultimate products, a little universe, and you get to touch everything. If I can bring some of this to land that is great. For a designer's soul, that is amazing. The ultimate dream." ■