One of Stefano Patrovich's projects is a collaboration with Wärtsilä, a megayacht running on natural gas.

Gliding high

TEXT: MINNA TAKKUNEN **PHOTOS:** DANIELE DEL CASTILLO

For luxury megayacht designer **Stefano Pastrovich**, the pursuit of simplicity is the name of the game. Work is an **organic process** that starts again with each new client, and he wouldn't have it any other way.

Deck house of the 47 Wallypower, a 14.3m motor boat. [Above]

Stefano, aged 13, with his model glider. [Left]

Come with me,

I want to show you something. Let's soar high up to the skies and glide above the clouds towards Italy. Now, take a gentle plunge into the Ligurian Sea near Genoa and zoom in on that little boy playing in the water. He is growing up fed by the sky and the sea. The boy is tirelessly fascinated by how things move and race through the water and the air.

He wants to fly, and he will. But above all, he will sketch out creations that help other people move so fast through the water they almost feel that they are flying.

Years later, after a lot of studying and testing and more playing in the water and the sky, he says it all comes down to survival. What does he mean by that?

TOO MUCH HAPPINESS MARKS THE DEMISE OF CREATIVITY. Before we dive into the game of survival and its role in the story of his life, let's take a look at where the boy is now. Today we can hover above Genoa – although he could be anywhere in the world really, depending on where his clients reside and because he loves to travel. It stimulates different moods and emotions that foster his inspiration and give flight to dreams.

Stefano Pastrovich is only 38, yet he already has substantial experience as a luxury yacht designer. Custom designs are his trademark. He has had his own design studio since 2005 and is one of brightest stars in his field. The speed yacht 118 Wallypower, featured in the television show Top Gear, is amongst his most famous creations.

Still, fame and glory are not his goals. "If you are too happy with your work, it's time to stop. The point for me is not to be satisfied or to be called a genius."

Belonging to the people who are exceptionally talented and know from an early age what they want to do in life, he was drawn to study architecture, but not to design buildings. "I like things that move and go fast."

One of his fast-speeding future projects is a collaboration with Wärtsilä, a megayacht running on natural gas.

MOVING ON WITH THE SURVIVAL INSTINCT. Since he was ten, Pastrovich wanted to become a pilot. If he had not been short-sighted, he would have become one. With determination, he obtained a private pilot licence anyway, in San Francisco when he was 18.

A love for flying has sparked his professional progression in lots of ways. The six months he took off from his design work when he was 24 to fly gliders has proved to be one of his most valuable periods. "Gliding gave me the revelation that one should concentrate on the basics."

At its purest, it's a question of survival. Even though you need to know the fine details and regulations in order to be able to fly, it all comes down to a few fundamental rules when you are up in the air. Everything else comes second – like decorations. This idea fused seamlessly into his work.

"If you don't know the basics, then you don't know how to decorate your design."

At his office in Genoa: "People are guests in the ocean." [Right]

Not drawn to buildings: "I like things that move and go fast." [Above]

Drawing inspiration from architecture, he even worked the Eiffel Tower into a speed yacht.

GETTING SHIPS THEIR WINGS. Talking of flying, Pastrovich wonders why so many yacht designers draw ideas from cars. Where a car is just a singular volume, ships come closer to planes with their double composition of a hull and a superstructure.

Pastrovich's ideas spring from anything in the world, from the tiniest details or shapes in nature to the most massive man-made structures.

As a yacht designer, he regards himself as half architect, half designer. In fact, he has literally drawn inspiration from icons of architecture, such as the enduring triangle of the Eiffel Tower, which he worked into the superstructure of 118 Wallypower.

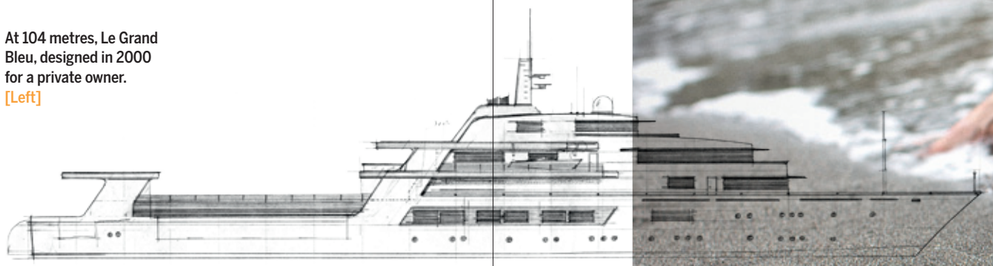
Creating spatial illusion stimulates him and he has utilized it often in the limited space inside yachts. His favourite architectural pieces include **Frank Gehry's** curvy, distinctive works. Another favourite is Osaka airport, with its wing-shaped roof. "It is very difficult to do, but the result is very well done, delicate and emotional."

The various origins of his enthusiasm also stem from personal encounters with people who have inspired him, such as **Michael Jones**, the man behind Google Earth. The boss of Wally, **Luca Bassani**, has been a key figure in the learning experience of Pastrovich.

Although modern technology and design function as signposts in his work, ultimately it's nature that shows the way. He likes to think of people as guests in the oceans.

THE OWNER'S CHARACTER IN SHIP FORM. It's all organic for Pastrovich. The design process unfolds naturally, in a sense that different parts of his sketches need to be there for a reason. First of all, he spends time with the client, listening and making observations so that he can capture the core energy of the person.

They say dogs look like their owners – or vice versa – and this



At 104 metres, Le Grand Bleu, designed in 2000 for a private owner. [Left]

is the comparison Pastrovich uses to describe one of the sources for his ideas. He makes it sound almost as if his job is to design a sea-going version of a unique character: the owner's personal style and features sketched and built into curves and shapes that are fit to take on the seas.

And as we are all unique as people, so must the designs be, with individual fingerprints showing in the end product.

Another way to open up the organic quality of his work is through the concepts of 'body' and 'skin' that he uses to describe what is at the heart of his design philosophy. "People often look at just the skin, but the skin is a consequence of everything else. Dissection is important in architecture. First, we need to go inside and analyze what the body is like." Only then comes the skin, and it needs to fit the body beneath it. A bodybuilder cannot have a runner's skin.

CARVING OUT THE BARE NECESSITIES. Organic method also means that nothing in design is just by chance. Pastrovich knows that the human mind is easily led astray and distracted by enchanting incidental things. They confuse the creative process if you're not careful.

"It's like falling in love. You can't trust yourself at the beginning." To keep distractions out of the picture, he likes to try and test from different angles how the design works, and repeat this method until he feels that the design is alive and has a heartbeat. "I try to see it from an opposite perspective." Adding elements that don't really belong to the creation on the drawing board helps to reveal what is essential and what is just decorative smoke that does not serve the real identity of the yacht.

At its core, the process comes down to cleaning and clearing the big picture so that everything unnecessary drops away.

In his book Wet The Pencil Pastrovich has demonstrated this objective to simplify and carve out the elementary through Charles Chaplin's Tramp, the actor's most recognized character. There is a photo of The Tramp, leaning on his cane, and next to the photo, Pastrovich has outlined the vital signs of the figure: the hat, the moustache and the cane in the same proportion to the photo. Through these three fundamentals alone, we all recognize who's standing there.

"It is what I've been doing all my life, this getting closer and closer to the real soul of the boat. This is the essential part and everything else plays a supporting role."

HOW TO SHAPE A BETTER WORLD. The organic nature of his work shows in how Pastrovich likes to be involved in both the exterior and interior design of the yachts. He sees the whole product through, from the first pencil lines to the finishing touches.

Aah. The pencil. There's a connection between the mind and the drawing hand that has always been there for Pastrovich. "People ask how I find the right solution so fast. First of all, I design any idea in my head first, which makes it possible to instantly simulate many different potential options. I find the fitting design much faster than by outlining all the possibilities with a pencil."

It's as if the movement of the pencil is able to bring together and encapsulate the long experience, all the different influences and knowledge – and the uncompromising enthusiasm he has.

For Stefano Pastrovich, work and life cannot be separated from each other. "With every project, you learn something new about your life." Another natural consequence is that the concept 'outside of work' does not exist for him.

"I can't stop looking at things and thinking how to shape them better. If I ever stopped designing yachts, I would work at the same process with flying."

Outside of work does not exist: "I can't stop thinking about how to shape things better." [Right]

Organic method means that nothing in design is left to chance.