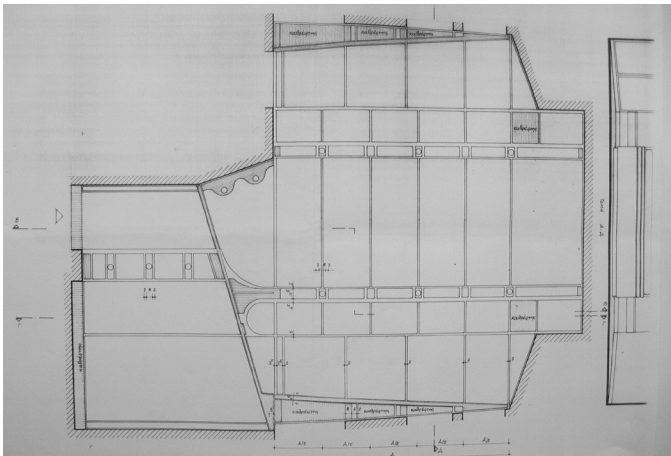


Libra Y

By Atelier 66

text by Dimitris Antonakakis

http://www.floatermagazine.com/issue01/Libra_Y/



Atelier 66, *Libra Y*, Drawing. Courtesy A66.

According to the yacht designer Bill Dixon “in order to design a yacht for someone, you have to understand his needs; his character; you have to lunch together and even to meet his wife... Yacht owners spend two or three hours a day on board, they have lunch, or perhaps spend some weeks of their vacations on board. The yacht means to them, escape from their businesses. It’s their freedom, their personal moment.”

Judging from my experience regarding the yacht *Libra Y*, Dixon is more or less right. My personal relation to the first owner of the yacht, Yiannis Maurakakis and his family, consists the foundation of this co-operation. I had realised, how perfectionist he was, and I discovered soon enough, that his intention was to re-design in a big extent the boat he had purchased. I knew he was interested in every mechanical function of the vessel, although he didn’t really delve into details he sought to understand its rationale. He wanted all the devices to be organised in a simple way, so as to occupy the minimum possible space and leave some valuable space for the necessary daily needs. He checked the necessity of the navigation and communication equipment and then he chose the most advanced and of limited size one. Then he cleared the vessel from unnecessary hefty equipment, deleting the usual mess at the vessel’s silhouette.

The intervention at the ready to be delivered yacht arose by the request for lengthening it. Scientific research had proved that vessel’s lengthening for 3m would strongly increase its buoyancy. The lengthening was achieved, thanks to a 3m zone that was adjusted at the yacht’s poop; all this, without really affecting the function of the boat propeller.

This transformation gave more space to the common areas of the deck and refined its overall image. My intervention at the yacht’s re-design process came as a result of the owner’s confidence in our tenacious care of every subtle detail- we had just finished his residence with the same outmost care- and of course the faith he showed to us. At first, Yiannis Maurakakis tried, in cooperation with naval architects, to solve the problems that he had spotted after the yacht’s lengthening and the extension of the two successive levels of the deck and

the corresponding saloons. As it was difficult to adapt himself to the unreasonable, according to him, obsessions of the naval architects that concerned space organisation issues, he asked me to help him with the design of the inner ladder that would connect the two levels of the vessel’s common areas. This is how our collaboration started; a collaboration that for me was a really interesting and educational experience. Firstly because, it led to a profound friendship with Yiannis Maurakakis, and secondly because it revealed to me a set of important yacht space organisation parameters that I couldn’t even imagine. These parameters activated my creative spirit and offered me some original ideas beyond every established naval architectural standard. With the encouragement of Yiannis Maurakakis I was able to meet these standards in a rather unusual way.

As far as I can recall, the most important of these parameters are the following:

- The vessel’s instability along with the fact that there is no standard horizontal surface which can provide stability to the objects laid upon it. Every mobile object (ex. books, discs, plates, glasses etc...) has to be placed in certain slots that are specially designed for this purpose. Our techniques were adjusted to these parameters through learning and discovering.

- The vessel’s instability also affects the organisation of passengers’ moves around the yacht. In case of tempest passengers should easily find handles to grab at.

- The mere symmetry in the organisation of the yacht in relation to its horizontal axis which is necessary for its balance. The above mentioned in the case of large ships are accompanied by symmetrical arrangement of the scales and other installation, something rather sophisticated for a yacht. Therefore, a problem to be solved was the installation of a shifted symmetry at the design process.

- The slight curvature of the vessel’s symmetric limits at the ground plan, overview and at the altering lateral and lengthwise sections, created a chain of new preconditions- problems and facts that we were not familiar with and we had to deal with them. E.g.:

- We discovered that at a vessel, the idea of what is horizontal and what is vertical along with the idea of the “plumb” are rather relative.

We were adjusted to the new facts, considering that the ground is horizontal and restoring the horizontal sense only at the lateral sections of the vessel.

- Designing the wooden floor of the yacht (tic strings), we had to deal with the absence of rectangular spaces. Each space required different solutions.

- The outer reveals of the vessel are characterised by vertical and horizontal deviations. So, we took advantage of the areas between the vertical and the curve of the outer reveals.

- The ceilings were designed so as to be visitable. Usually, they were curvilinear and symmetric (e.g. the saloons), but for smaller areas they were mostly curved and asymmetric. The main bedroom with the odd shape also occurred significant difficulties.

- At the end, we received the vessel’s bearing-load structure and we contributed to the design of the yacht “aspects”, “aspects in motion” with forward direction, proposing a simple dynamic shape, always in collaboration with the owner and the naval architect.

Yiannis Maurakakis resourcefulness led to a set of technical

solutions that facilitated the life on board and allowed significant interventions on the vessel's shape and its daily function. From the automatic side ladders, to the fore crane and the adjustment of the radar to the funnel, his ideas refuted every shipbuilding cliché. At the same time, the pleasant atmosphere of the works encouraged both the workers and the engineers to suggest solutions that in combination with our architectural contribution often led to surprisingly successful applications.

The space organisation, the material choice and the details have always been an architectural field open to alternatives, often accompanied by excellent solid and well-designed industrial products. The remaining architectural solutions-suggestions required extraordinary precision. The co-operation with the workers on the spot of the project each time demanded many hours and was very important. The designs could hardly reflect the architect's desires because of data plethora and space narrowness. Models in scale 1:1 were needed so as to interpret the gunwales, the door and closet handles, the shape of the false roof, etc. The materials and their combinations have always been our concern as we tried to avoid luxury and we sought for "preciousness" that would arise by their proper association.

In 2000 LIBRA Y has passed to new owners. The new owners appreciated our interesting work and asked us to change some things at the use and the configuration of spaces.

The dining room was "deleted" and we designed at the right and the left of the room two big couches with two adjustable oblong tables. On this basis, we designed the open air living room with stable benches and the corresponding table. We have also made some changes at the small room adding a bunk.