

Contribution ID: 20

Type: Paper

SKIN. The use of external surface in yacht design

Wednesday, 15 June 2022 11:00 (20 minutes)

Skin, external surface, coating... Those are words strictly linked to the concept of appearance, which means to be watched, to show, and sometimes to seem: a comparison between to be and appear.

From a design point of view, the surface coating is, mainly, an esthetical choice. Nevertheless, sometimes that element met other reasons. During the First World War, painting warships with the dazzle technique allowed them to “hide” from the enemy: the shapes and colours applied to the hulls allowed them to appear in different sizes or positions compared to the real one. In that case, the skin assumed a vital defensive role. Even if the large part of yachts today does not shine for peculiar external surface – if we closed the eyes we would imagine hulls in neutral colours, generally in one or two tones – skin is a project element of high potential.

Ivana Porfiri called Jeff Koons, acclaimed contemporary artist, to finish the external coat of the Guilty. The skin highlights shapes and formal choices of hull and superstructure, and also brings the bond between art and yacht design, explicit by the art exposition in the interiors, forward.

Another example of designed skin is LAP-1 by Francesco Paszkowski Design. Here the external coating was designed with camouflage with shades of blue, a symbolic colour for Baglietto shipyard, by which the yacht was built.

Finally, browsing the most significant projects, the paper aims to analyse the design and use of yachts' external coatings. The project of the skin in a nautical context is today linked to mainly esthetical reasons. Nevertheless, also thanks to the use of new materials, innovative painting, and covering techniques, we foresee new possibilities for skin design. External coat, colours, textures, and hull finishing could meet different and new needs as the energy and environmental issues.

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Session Classification: 1A

Track Classification: Yacht and pleasure craft design