

Portrait / Philippe Briand, a great signature of French naval architecture



Philippe Briand has always been immersed in the nautical world, starting to race at the age of 6. Supported by his father, also in the business, he built his career between racing boats, production boats and large yachts. Portrait of a great figure in naval architecture.



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Regattas from the age of 6

Philippe Briand is a competition enthusiast. From the age of 6, he has been sailing in regattas, first in an Optimist, then in a dinghy and a houseboat.

"Sailing is a technical sport. At that point, I realized that the material was predominant in the result. Especially since my father was already in the business as a sailmaker and rig builder. Technically, I was pushed to not do the same thing as my father. And, I designed boats."

At that time, there was no school dedicated to naval architecture. And there are still few of them today.

"We were all pioneers. I started designing racing boats when I was 11. The first boat I built to my design was when I was 16. From then on, I learned on the job. My father was a very understanding man. He was a bit of a coach and helped me find my way. I did boats, that's how you learn."

Swedish training with a great skipper

Very quickly, Philippe Briand was guided by his father, who had a good relationship with the Swedish skipper Pelle Petterson, who won a bronze medal in the 1964 Tokyo Games in the Star class, and then a silver medal in 1972, also in the Star class.

"He was also an architect and designer and had managed to build a production yard that was the largest in the world before Jeanneau and Bénéteau. He taught me a lot about the industrial spirit of our profession. He was also a racer and very famous. I participated with him in the design of the 12M.J.I for the 1978 America's Cup, where Pelle was the skipper of the Swedish challenge. I learned a lot about boats and the America's Cup with him thanks to this double training in 3 years. On the Cup, the boat was beaten in the challenger final."

A firm specialized in production and racing boats

Upon his return to France, Philippe immediately found himself in the thick of things. He opened his own office to design both production and racing boats. He tried to set up a project for the America's Cup.

"I was extremely young. I almost succeeded, I went as far as the challenge deposit. My heritage from Sweden and the heritage of production boats (Editor's note: his father works for large French shipyards) pushed me toward French production yards."

This is how he got into Jeanneau, designing his first production boat in 1978. A collaboration that continues to this day.

"It was an industrial environment that was emerging, very embryonic. I had the inside knowledge of this environment from my Swedish experience and from my father who was their supplier and who knew the production product well. This was actually the time when the yard started to make large-scale pleasure boats."



Sun Kiss by Jeanneau, Philippe Briand design

Finally, Philippe Briand's firm is expanding enormously in the production boat.

"We are the leader today. We have designed the most production boats. There are more than 12,000 boats designed by our firm sailing in the world today. We have collaborated with all the French shipyards, including Jeanneau and Bénéteau."

I have managed to have a competitive career designing racing yachts. My career is quite full of boats that have won the Admiral's Cup, the Whitbread, several world championships, the Ton Cup, where I was helmsman myself. I have had some success and invested a lot of effort in the America's Cup. I have done 6 America's Cup campaigns as principal architect. It fills a lot of a career between racing and production boats."

Introduction to the world of yachting

From 1997/1998, the architecture and design firm turned to the world of large yachts. It has produced several iconic designs in sailing, including the record-breaking Mari Cha III and IV.

"In the 2000s, motoryachts and superyachts were the most important market in yachting. We entered the field in 2008. We have an honorable place. We are known for our design and efficient boats. Today we have reached our 8th^e construction, the largest of which was 75 m long. A yacht takes many years to design and build. This is the majority of our activity. We also keep a foot in the production boat business, especially with Bénéteau. We are motivated by innovation, we make sure we never repeat a design. We are curious, we are looking for the boat of tomorrow. We keep this competitive spirit by being the first to discover it."



Mari-Cha IV

Be competitive and innovative

Today, Philippe Briand has two offices and a staff of about ten. The La Rochelle office is specialized in production boats " which are historically our mission "and the one in London is more design-oriented, the superyacht.

"Unfortunately, we no longer make racing boats. The market has died out because it's so sophisticated. I love keeping an eye on it. But it's no longer individuals who can buy sports cars to race. These are exceptional boats for the Vendée Globe or the America's Cup."

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"I like to innovate so that my design satisfies the desires and uses of an owner. I think about the user and try to be innovative for their enjoyment. That's what makes people want to use it. It's an industry of desire and not of need. At the level we've reached, we hope to have a voice in proposing projects to owners or construction sites. Our experience and our permanent degree of innovation allow us to imagine the boat in 4 years. That's actually the gestation time for a private boat or a large yacht."