



LUIZ DE BASTO

Meet the Superyacht Designer Creating World-Class Architecture

BY DELLVIN ROSHON WILLIAMS

“We welcome every challenge to create an extraordinary design, and not only from our yacht clients,” says Luiz de Basto, head of the Miami-based DeBasto Designs studio, the brand responsible for the award-winning 90m Oceanco yacht DAR. “If they (clients) are happy with their yacht, why not work with the same team on the new house, or airplane, or vice versa?”

DeBasto—a lifelong lover of art, cars, and architecture, is one of the great behemoths of the superyacht industry. He has consistently delivered over 200 custom yachts of all sizes for the world’s finest shipyards, for over three decades. Residential design and architecture, however, have long been a mainstay in his work. And his most recent project, a series of homes in Hawaii, come about as close to yacht design philosophy for a home as it gets.

“At the beginning of my career,” de Basto tells Upscale Living, “I worked on residential, and commercial building projects, but the work in yacht design took over. The option of doing residences has always been a part of my practice, but we only do them when our yacht clients request us to do so. We just finished 3 houses on the big island. A former yacht client, and friend asked us to design the interiors.”

One home in particular, “Umbrella House,” is a modern, relaxed take on a home design made of pre-fab components and shipped in a container and assembled on location. The interior design and décor of the two other properties reflect decorative furnishings and motifs taken from Hawaiian heritage and culture.

“Umbrella House,” de Basto continues, “is made of fold-down walls that create terraces, more than doubling the area of the house. It’s called Umbrella because of the central volume suspending the roof, containing the bathroom and technical equipment, the only enclosed area of the house. Other than that, there are no other walls. Where we need furniture, the walls fold up to create overhangs providing shade.”

The connections between the design of superyachts and high-end residential spaces are anything but serendipitous. Take, for example, de Basto’s treatment of glass structures and technology on the sea. From his work on Oceanco’s 90m DAR to their 105m Vector, or the 90m Cosmos, glass superstructure and paneling are not only used to enhance yacht exteriors but annihilate the boundaries between jaw-dropping, delicate interior spaces and exceptional panoramic access to the surrounding environment.

And while glass is not their dominant feature, the spatial layout of the two other homes boast large, open-air spaces around a courtyard because it keeps very cool, breezy weather most of the time; shoes are never worn inside the house; one is always barefoot (as one would be on a superyacht). “That said,” referring to the selection of materials and finishing, “we tried always go for soft to the touch surfaces, natural tones (colors come from the lush greenery, blue ocean, black lava) and wood with typical carving invoking petroglyphs and local heritage.” The design process is always similar regarding spatial planning in a way that reflects the client’s lifestyle.

“We want to listen to our clients and understand their requirements, family habits, preferences, and work from there: no matter if it’s yachts or resi-





dences. There are differences in materials and building processes. Regulations for a yacht or land construction operate at different levels of detail and precision, costs, logistics, transport and so forth.”

It is unclear whether the trend of yacht designers designing for longstanding clients is a trend, but it is definitely a staple of the DeBasto brand. And as he recalls, a few years back, the studio did the interior of the 42m Troy-marine expedition yacht, “The Big Blue”—also a finalist at the World Superyacht

Awards. The family went out on a one-year adventure through the Pacific. They enjoyed the experience so much that upon return the studio was asked to design their home in Denver. So, “I think it’s a natural choice.” ■