



BY MICHAEL PETERS

SIGHTLINES

Lacking Perspective

BEWARE THE PITFALLS OF PLAYING YACHT DESIGNER.

While we all can argue politics, economics, and religion from our cloistered points of view, one thing we can agree on is that we all know a beautiful woman when we see her. We don't argue over this nor do we overanalyze the makeup of her beauty, we just accept it as we see it. But what if it was your job to understand the elements that make her universally attractive so they could be replicated?

This type of analysis is the job of designers and most people generally judge their work with a simple thumbs-up or thumbs-down. In the automotive world, the public unceremoniously sorts out the design winners and losers in the marketplace and preserves the most beautiful as collectibles. Clients do not muddle in the design affairs of their cars, except for choices of paint and upholstery and after-market trim. Even the most high-end car manufacturers will "protect" their clients against improper choices, lest they harm the brand. Clients are not really invited to the design table.

Not so in the yachting world. Just about all the yacht-company presidents and bespoke clients I have ever met have seen themselves as designers. And this is where the trouble starts. They don't have any design training and the first drawing they want to see is the profile of the boat. From this single, two-dimensional drawing, all styling proposals will be evaluated. Which sounds simple enough, until you realize they don't know what they are looking at. They are not design professionals and are limited only to what they see. They are lacking perspective.

Visual perspective eluded man all the way up to the early 1400s, and escapes most people today. Perspective is what gives depth to space. Do you remember your old high school art classes where the instructor would show a horizon and a vanishing point? Of course not. You are a successful businessman, not some starving artist. Well, if you are evaluating a yacht design, you need perspective, or you are out of your depth.

If you understood perspective, you would realize that in profile the mid-ship sheerline of the boat starts closest to your eye and curves to-



Fans of the Jaguar E-type are legion, but Michael is not sure it would be that way based on the line drawing. Share your thoughts—drop him a line at inbox@pmymag.com.

wards centerline at the bow, visually dropping as it moves further from your eye. If you want a perfectly straight sheer, you need to kick up the curve in the 2-D drawing. If you draw a perfectly straight sheer on paper it will look like a hogged sheer on the real boat, as the curve drops toward the bow. Most clients fixate on the profile

drawing as the logical starting point, so an explanation of the effects of perspective can be a hard sell.

Professional designers know that a real boat looks lower than it appears on paper, because the highest point on the boat falls away from the eye in perspective. We know the stem angle and the windshield can be drawn more upright than looks good in a drawing because they will appear more raked in reality. We eliminate bow-rails and seat backs from our drawings, because they look as bold as a sheer line in profile, but disappear in the visual priority of the finished boat. We learn to compensate for these things and not show the client the entire truth.

To understand all this better, go out to your garage and take the cover off your cherished 1963 Jaguar XKE. She's beautiful! Now go find a lines drawing of your car in profile. Does the windshield really stand up that vertically? Does the grill really look like a frog's mouth? You probably never would have bought that ugly thing if you had to order it from a profile drawing. But perspective changes everything, and she is indeed beautiful. Lucky for you the design professionals knew this all along. Take any car you own and I'll bet you hardly recognize it in the service-manual drawing.

Thankfully we can produce 3-D renderings these days and make a client more comfortable with the design. Realize that a flat drawing of a boat is no more realistic than a flat map of our round world. So, if you are having a boat designed or are contemplating the drawings of your next yacht in a sales brochure, don't fixate too much on the profile, because it lacks perspective.

And if you don't have a really beautiful car in your garage, you really should get one before you blow all your money on a boat! □