

Built on patience and passion

The motorboat market, its 50th anniversary and its acquisition by the Oniverse Group. Gigi Servidati, President of Cantiere del Pardo, talks to us about these important past years for the shipyard

Alessandra Bergamini | 23 November 2024

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Gigi Servidati

“Considering all three brands, **Grand Soleil, Pardo Yachts, and VanDutch**, we are very pleased with this positive period for the **Cantiere del Pardo**,” a success achieved with a sailor’s patience and the businessperson’s intuition and careful observation of the market. In addition to the essential teamwork of the internal resources of the Forlì facility and the external resources of the design studios with which the shipyard has built close collaborative relationships to develop the boats (first sailboats and then motorboats too as of 2017.)

Gigi Servidati’s passion is that for the sea experienced when sailing, and then that for speed and competition. His patience is for waiting for the long-term results of new products, from the idea to the concept, feasibility studies, final designs, construction, and, finally, the launch, with “a sense of anticipation that we feel until we see the finished boat.” Patience and passion for a design and construction process that maintains the original essence of each individual brand while adding a good dose of innovation.

You celebrated the milestone of 50 years in business in 2023, but before that, the years 2015-2017, when you decided to bring sailboats and motorboats together, were especially key for you. My business partner, Fabio Planamente, and I always had the idea of motorboats in mind. Because I deal with products, it’s an industry I’ve always watched closely, even though I was born a sailor with the opposite



approach.



Grand Soleil 72 LC



Pardo GT75

We made some calculations and realized that the world of motorboating is ten times larger than that of sailing, which is a niche passion that embraces a much more selective audience. In addition, the advent of charters has in some people helped some people get into sailing, but in others has lessened the desire for the purchase.

So, in 2017 you founded the brand Pardo Yachts, launching an initial Pardo 43.

Yes. Adapting our experience in the sailing world, we offered our interpretation of the walkaround. We transferred some of sailing's softer lines onto the motorboat, seeking to temper them, and also introduced new things in the interior. These elements together turned out to be well-liked.



Pardo GT75

The market embraced our differences and we produced about 700 of them in just a few years. In 2015, quando valutavamo l'ingresso nel mercato del motore, we thought we would make 7-8 Pardo 43s a year, but we actually made 30 that first year, and 60 the year after. Honestly, so much success was unexpected. We had to change the layout of the workshop, and our construction processes, and add more models: the 50, the 38, and the other families, Endurance and GT.

In 2020, you added VanDutch Yachts.

We had been looking at VanDutch for some time. To me, they've been standard-setting boats since 2008, when they were first designed by Mulder Design in the Netherlands. I saw them every year in Cannes and I've always been drawn to their clean lines. I think it is the speedboat par excellence, a modern interpretation of a vessel that has been making history since 1950, a symbol of the consistency in the fiberglass world.



Van Dutch 75



Mr. Mulder came to see a Pardo and left his business card – that's when we first came into contact. Mulder was in search of a single production site where he could consolidate his manufacturing, which had been split between different sites before that. After extensive negotiations, we took over the brand, while maintaining Mulder's design, and we organized



Van Dutch 75

and optimized manufacturing here in Forlì. So far, we've come out with the VD32, VD40, VD48, VD56, while the VD75 will be launched in 2025. Each with small stylistic changes to lend more warmth to a somewhat "chilly" boat, which has however always been well-liked. We make 25 or 30 a year and are considering an increase fitting our production capacity.

Then of course there are still sailboats, the Grand Soleil models.

We're not giving up on sailing and are actually expanding with new models. For Grand Soleil, too, growth has been strong. When considering all three brands, we are very pleased with this excellent period for Cantiere del Pardo. We are positioned in a unique niche and so have been less affected by the market downturn that is being caused by a generational preference for motorboats over sailing, given that the passion and ability to sail are not being passed down.



Grand Soleil 65 LC



Grand Soleil 65 LC

The racing world has always protected us. The Grand Soleil has always won lots of races and is seen as a racing boat. We've won a world championship with a boat made here in Forlì for three years in a row now. As for non-racers, they are still buying a boat with the performance of a world champion – fast, fun, while featuring the amenities of a non-racing boat. The hardest part is just that – mixing performance and comfort.

Despite the basically opposite approach to how to navigate the seas, is there crossover between sailing and motor vessels?

We would never have been able to build these boats if not for our know-how in the sailing world. First of all, because a shipyard capable of producing 200 boats a year doesn't get off the ground in just three years – we would have needed three years just to build a new hangar.



Pardo GT75

The fact that we already had an active construction site allowed us to launch more quickly. Plus, developing and building sailboats is very complex, so making motorboats was actually an easier task for us. The way we optimize space on the vessels also comes from our habit of using every inch available, which comes from making sailboats. Also, when it comes to construction – the materials, the structures, the adhesives – everything that is normally used in sailboats goes for motor vessels as well.



Pardo GT75

Another significant event in 2023 was your acquisition by the Oniverse Group.

This marks the achievement of a new level for us. It's such a large group, and pays such careful attention to communication and innovation, something we identify with very much. This happened in part by chance, because the Veronesi family owned one of our boats. For us, joining their group is an opportunity to grow further, especially in terms of product quality. Besides developing new models, one of our main goals is to improve product perception and placement.

In Forlì, you have a very strong connection to the local community. Does this connection also depend on the idea of the manufacturing site as a 'creative workshop'?

Even though we are an industrial business and aim to industrialize our manufacturing processes as much as possible, we want to maintain a very high standard of quality and have tried to translate industrialization into craftsmanship. While it is much more preferable to have a well-industrialized product than a poorly made artisanal one, the problem is how to industrialize it properly, to make it so beautiful that it almost seems handcrafted. This is more or less our goal, precisely because our history comes from craftsmanship; for example, craftspeople still assemble our furnishings by hand.

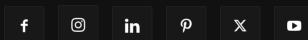


Your history includes craftsmanship and also established collaborations with external design studios.

Another good fortune I've had since I started working in products is that I met Mario Pedol and Massimo Gino from Nauta Design. We've formed a wonderful working relationship. It was a stroke of luck for me because it was not easy to get in contact with them. Then came others – Matteo Polli for hydrodynamics in sailing, with a concept by Cantiere del Pardo and external lines, interiors and layout by Nauta Design. For motorboats, the firms Zuccheri Yacht Design and Leone Yacht Design, water line designers, with exteriors designed either completely by us, as for the earliest Pardos, or by Nauta. Two years ago, I wanted to try a new studio, Burdisso Capponi, and I'm very happy I did. I was eager to explore something different in interior design. This choice was especially important because they worked on the new Endurance 72, one of the boats we'll give to Luna Rossa for the America's Cup (together with the Van Dutch 48 and the Pardo 50) for the sponsor Pirelli.

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