

COMPOSITE MARINE DECK DISPLAYS ADVANCED QUALITIES

Esthec initiates new design esthetics

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Aiming to gain a considerable market share in marine deck topping, Bolidt Composites introduced their new product 'Esthec' at METS. A seminar titled 'Nature Reinvented' was held to cheer the launch of the composite deck surface. Esthec is a marine deck composed of a multitude of polymers and other composites, offering impressive anti-slip qualities, wear resistance and creative aesthetic possibilities. Bolidt presented their innovation as an alternative to teak. "Or rather, we do not want to stick to comparisons," says Bolidt-CEO Rienz Bol, "We like to consider Esthec a concept in itself."

text: Hans Buitelar

Esthec decks come in pre-fabricated compartments, that can cover large surfaces like the whole foredeck on a sailing yacht or the whole

aft deck on a motor yacht. It's surface is designed to be extremely anti-slip, yet feel comfortable under bare feet. At the same time it is flexible

and somewhat bouncy to help increase impact absorption, softening the 'feel' of the deck. The bottom, glued to the deck structure of the yacht, should have qualities that resemble the hull material in terms of dilatation. These characteristics are hard to combine. Bolidt has engineered a mixture of polymers to achieve this unlikely mix of features.

Product evolution

A known supplier of anti-slip floors in ferries and cruise ships, Bolidt developed Esthec specially for the yachting market. The decks and indoor floors aboard passenger ships are gushed on as liquids. This is a good process with large surfaces. Aboard yachts however, deck surfaces are usually smaller and divided into more different

levels. "Pre-fabricating complete deck surfaces, ready to be mounted to the yacht's structure has multiple advantages," Bol explains. "Based on computer designs, we can make decks that fit to the ship like a glove. Delivering complete pre-fabricated decks to yards reduces production time at new builds and refits considerably. Installing an Esthec deck takes only one sixth of the time the installation - strip by strip - of a teak deck takes. To us, a big advantage is that by in-house pre-fabrication, we can apply components into the product that improve product performance. Those components are not suitable for use when we install the floor as a fluid onto the boat."

Deck esthetics redefined

Deck surfacing, even if it consists of prefabricated composite plates, often follows the classic pattern of teak planks. Keeping up the classic looks of grand yachts, this is at present the most asked for pattern, even for a modern material like Esthec. But possibilities are virtually limitless. The pattern can be changed to any desired form or colour. Sponsor logos, on modern regatta yachts often projected over both mainsail and jib, can now even be extended to be also projected over the yacht's deck.

Functional qualities for the crew - unparalleled grip - and esthetic possibilities for designers and sponsors combine. Bol has approached designers to make them aware of the new possibilities his composite deck offers. "Luca Brenta was very enthusiast. To him, Esthec offers great new possibilities to create stunning designs. On the other end of the market, a series production yard like Dehler Yachts has expressed its interest in Esthec. To a yard like Dehler, Esthec is not only a functional deck surface, but the unlimited options in color and design make it a very practical way to customise each yacht at owner's request."

Yachtsman's ethics

Using composites like polymers for deck surfacing avoids the use of the rare natural resource teak wood. Teak deck planking was the traditional choice yachtsmen made because no other material had such anti-slip, weather resistant and esthetic qualities. However, the kind of wood needed for deck planking is running out of stock. To have the right kind of hardened, single direction fibre teak wood, one needs to use only the core of Tectona Grandis trees, that have grown for at least sixty years. Knobby qualities of teak wood are available from plantations in Thailand and Indonesia, but the wood from the younger trees that are grown there is only suitable for furniture. The right quality of teak wood comes from massive deforestation in Myanmar, formerly known as Burma. The fierce military regime in that country forces men from the country to do this work, and therefore kidnaps them from their homes. To gain teak, ancient rainforests are chopped down. By forced workers under a hostile regime. This inclines



that the choice for teak has ethical connotations. Especially aboard pleasure craft, a choice for materials that do not have this kind of connotation and even have better functional and esthetic features seems only logical. For the end user, having Esthec installed is just a bit less expensive than teak. With the Myanmar crisis, teak prices keep rising so the difference may increase.

Apart from Esthec, alternatives to teak are offered with products like Flexiteek (vinyl-based decks) Marine Deck (cork-based) or Tredmaster (less esthetic, often used on performance sailing yachts). Added qualities of Esthec are its resistance to chemicals and other hostile fluids, the easy way it can be cleaned and its light weight. Reduced weight is a big advantage of any alternative to teak. Specially aboard performance-orientated sailing yachts, it is at the least not an advantage to add the considerable weight of teak planking on top of the decks. Using a lighter anti-slip surface helps improve sailing performance.

Regatta tested

Although ambitiously launched at METS, Esthec is not totally new. Sailors in the Dutch regattas may have mentioned 'No Limits', Bolidt-director Rientz Bol's racing yacht. It has the company name prominently in the sails and the product on its decks. The yacht has been sailing for about a year now. Esthec has also been on trial with the team of ocean regatta sailors that will compete in the next Volvo Ocean Race.

Team captain Bouwe Bekking of the next Spanish boat in the VOR, is convinced by Esthec. The deck will be installed on the training boat at first hand, probably even on the racing yacht itself when the next edition of VOR is coming up. Bekking shared his experiences at the launching symposium of Esthec. He also sailed with the Team No Limits on Bol's yacht during the first season.

More information: www.bolidt.com / www.esthec.com