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THE
MAN AT
THE SHARP END
OF YACHT DESIGN

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ARKSEN EXPLORER RANGE

A wave of yacht owners permeated by founders or owners of tech unicorns is starting to change how yachts are designed, used and even thought about. This generation is more likely to be looking for meaningful experiences in places and situations where they can make an impact, and they bring with them an appetite for disruptive thinking. A fascinating example of this is new company Arkсен.

Arkсен was set up by British entrepreneur Jasper Smith, whose background is in the games and tech industry (see right). He has put his venture fund, Vala Capital, behind the start-up to build a range of explorer power vessels linked, unusually, to a very explicit ethic.

The concept is much more wide-ranging than the vessels themselves, and includes a scheme to encourage owners to support environmental and ocean projects with the use of their own boats.

The yachts themselves are designed from the outset to use sustainable materials and to be

recyclable after their 50-year design life.

The range comprises an Arkсен 70, Arkсен 85 and Arkсен 100, aluminium explorer vessels. The designs are conceived to be able to cruise efficiently over large distances – in the case of the Arkсен 85, up to 6,000 miles at 11-14 knots on 16,000 litres of fuel – and to offer solar and hybrid power solutions.

Smith points out that in many destinations,

especially at high latitudes, a large amount of time is spent under engine, a very inefficient mode on most sailing yachts. Hull efficiency is therefore a linchpin of these designs, and Arkсен is working with Humphreys Yacht Design, with Design Unlimited on the interior.

The first Arkсен 85 will begin building at Wight Shipyard in Cowes in April.

Owners of Arkсен yachts will be part of an Explorers' Club and will pledge to donate 10% of their boat's sea time each year to projects supported by the Arkсен Foundation. This not-for-profit organisation will provide grants and funding, and facilitate scientific research, photo journalism and film-making for projects to "find solutions to ocean problems," Smith explains.

The Arkсен range will have reconfigurable interiors so that each boat can reasonably quickly be converted from an owner's set-up, with extra Pullman berths and lab or office space suitable for groups of scientists.

Read more at arksen.com

THE MAN BEHIND ARKSEN

Arkсен brings together the experiences of 53-year-old tech entrepreneur Jasper Smith. Trained originally as a sculptor and shaped in his youth as a volunteer with the pioneering Operation Raleigh, Smith started out restoring cars before being lured away to build a sales network for Sky TV. From there he moved into telecoms and then TV networks before investing in a succession of gaming companies such as PlayJam and PlayStack.

Smith's passion for exploring remote places was ignited by a voyage in 1989, when he was part of a crew that sailed a 55ft yacht from Australia to Alaska via Kamchatka – and along the way climbed 11 mountains.

