



CAMATTE

FRANÇOIS

NAVAL ARCHITECT 1893-1960

CANNES



Camatte was known as a straight man . André Mauric recalled that in 1929 , François Camatte was the official measurer for the French Union des Sociétés Nautiques for Cannes regattas , « they all cheated a little except Camatte. » Well-versed and experienced in the regulations of the classification societies (Lloyd's and Veritas), François Camatte knew how to listen to the helmsmen and get the views of the crews .

BIOGRAPHY

François Camatte

In his early years he was already a designer

François Camatte was the youngest of five children and the only boy. His father died seven months before François was born so his mother had to run their small fabrics store alone in Cannes. From his early years, Camatte was interested in fishing and in traditional fishing craft.

Designs for small double-ended Provençal fishing boats dating back to 1911 were indeed found in his files. At high school, he was noted for his graphic design skills more than for his gifts at mathematics or latin translation.

He was 19 in 1912 when he signed up for 3 years probably to cease being a burden for his widowed mother. He was wounded at the battle of Verdun then joined the Eastern army and was finally demobilized in August 1919.

His first steps as naval architect in shipyards

In 1920, François Camatte was hired by shipbuilder Despujols in Arcachon – they specialized in motor yachts. In 1925, he left to go to Antibes where he started working in the shipyard managed by Henri Rambaud. There he had a work accident on the production floor and lost an eye. In Antibes he met naval architect Jean Quernel who will influence him in the choice of his career. He then completed his studies and designed the Queen Mary, a cruiser that offered passengers a tour in the Bay of Cannes. From 1925, François Camatte started designing for his own account and drew up the plans of his five meter racing sail boats M.O.C.A.T. The very same year, two of his boats, Dalhia and Bouscarlette stood out at the Cup Fiferlin in Menton. Thanks to this success, Camatte could start a career, designing world-class racing sailboats.

A naval architect of passion and intuition

François Camatte loved fishing and the one fishing boat he owned – a Provençal Pointu - was a traditional and non-motorized boat. In Georges Auzépy-Brenner's words he was an excellent helmsman and an accomplished racer on board the boats he had

been commissioned to make, which did not happen very often though.

On races' days when he was not on board, he could be seen at the end of the jetty in Cannes Harbour with a monocular in his hand, involved in keen discussions about the choices and manœuvres of the competing crews on the triangle.

His son-in-law, Edouard Ramoger testified that Camatte worked unaided and did everything by hand on a basic drawing-board, adding that these days when a boat whatever her size cannot be designed without computers, it is worth noting that not so long ago a man whose knowledge of mathematics was limited, was able to design excellent boats with only a set of templates « Camatte did all his calculations with a planometer and a slide rule.

A great listener

As for Jacques Taglang, he underlined the fact that Camatte's clients appreciated his capacity to listen to them, « he remained available when they needed him and kept informed during races with the coxswains and the crews. » Jacques Taglang added that « his rigour made him keep an eye on the building of most of his boats, visiting the shipyards as often as he could. » Moreover all along his career, he cooperated with some shipbuilders like Attilio Chiesa in Cannes or Bonnin in Arcachon.

Elegance

The lines, elegance and effectiveness of his yachts added to his talent were often mentioned in the races' reports that were published in Le Yacht. In 1929, British yachtsman Leslie Richardson wrote in the 11 May issue of the same magazine about Zip II that "It is even rare for a young architect to do so well with the first boat of a new serie."

A point of reference

Camatte was recognized by his peers, like naval architects Eugène Cornu (ten years his junior) or André Mauric (his close friend)

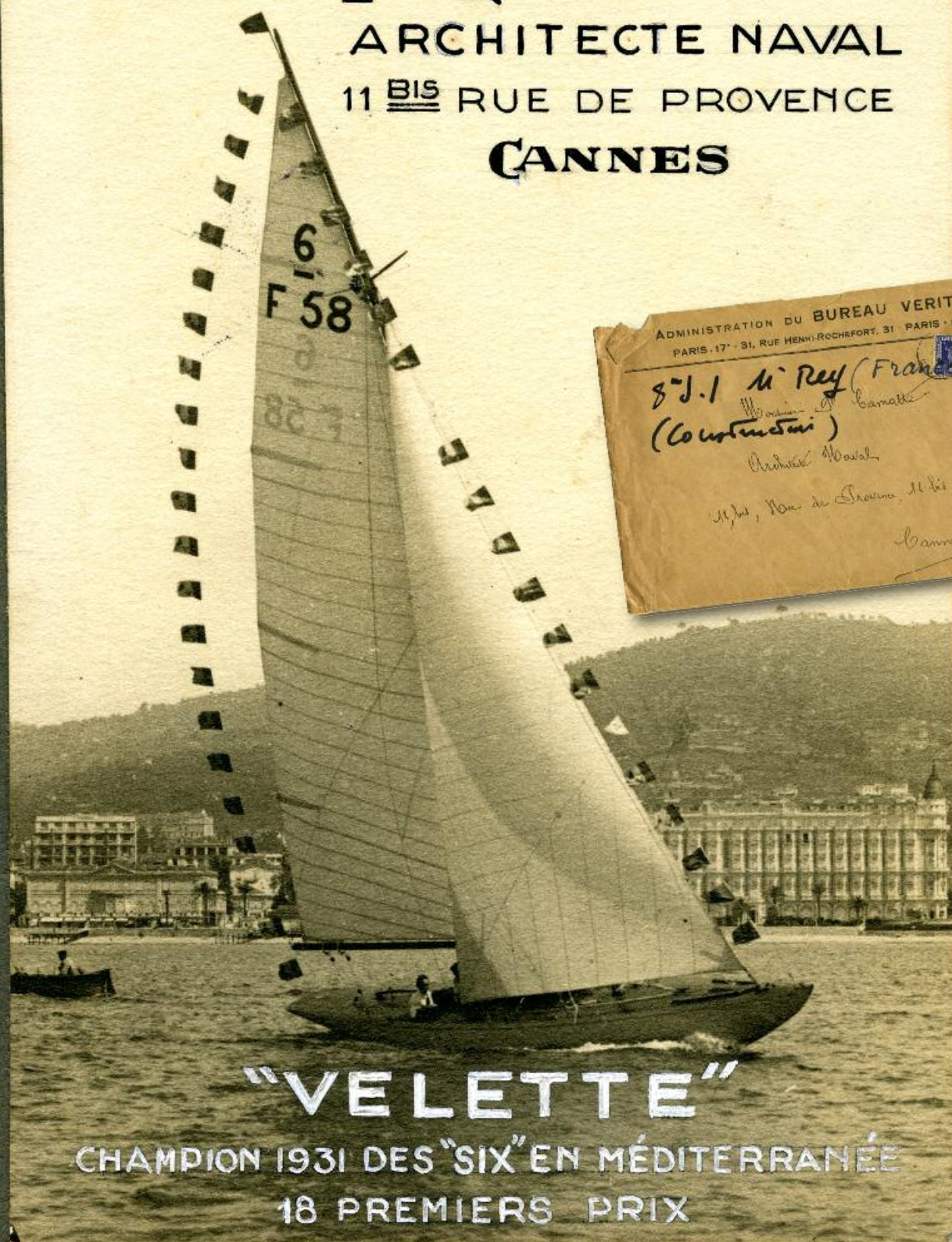
Discovering the plans of Morwak in 1980, yet another naval architect, Maurice Amiet said, "François Camatte was older than me and as he specialized in international classes, I did not know much about this fellow designer, his route was very different from mine. When I drew the lines plan of Mowak at a scale of 1/20, I was extatic! Before that day I used to consider François Camatte as an amateur, a negligible architect or not much better. I realized then he was a 'big boss'

Writing about his father-in-law, Edouard Ramoger says that "François Camatte can be placed in the category André Mauric described as "the purely intuitive creators, guided by their esthetic sense they use as technique."



F. CAMATTE

ARCHITECTE NAVAL
11 BIS RUE DE PROVENCE
CANNES



HIS SAILBOATS

The 6mJl serie and their prestigious awards

Mr Crestin of the Société des régates de Cannes ordered his first 6mJl, Pampero, with François Camatte. Over the course of 25 years, he designed more than 60 boats. Some of them will win prestigious awards – Thema came first in 1936 with fourteen first prizes. Ponant, built in 1929 for Mr Vermorel was later bought by Virginie Hériot who gave her a new name in 1930, Petite Aile IV.

An 8mJl, winner of the French Cup

Between 1929 and 1950, he designed some tens 8mJl. The first one was built for Mr Frederick H. Prince, she beat Sirena – designed by William Fife – in Nice. In 1931, Virginie Hériot ordered another 8m boat, Aile VII to win back the French Cup lost to the English in 1930, to no avail.

His most famous 8mJl was to be France, built in 1935 for Mr Rey by Chiesa shipyard in Cannes. The boat won the French Cup in 1937 in Ryde after seven years of British hegemony. She beat Felme, a boat designed by Fife. The Yacht-Club de France sent their congratulations to Camatte on the 20th of July 1937.

However the Cup was lost the following year and it was not until 1949 that another boat designed by Camatte won it again. She was called Gaulois and had been built in 1938 by Bonnin shipbuilder for Mrs Léon Cotnareanu.

In February 1949 in Cannes, Gaulois and two other boats designed by François Camatte competed to be selected for the French Cup, Moira and Silk. Gaulois was the best and sailed to Genoa to compete with Miranda III, designed by Costaguta in 1938. In Genoa, Gaulois won three times in four rounds, recovering the French Cup and crowning Camatte.



World-class 5 mJls

François Camatte did not only design 6m and 8mJl sailboats, he also designed the first French 5mJl and together with Eugène Cornu, he is one of the few able to design good 5,50mJls, a world-class created in 1950. In 1956, Phérousa missed the French Cup by a fraction in Geneva, she was beaten by Twins VII designed by Italian architect Baglietto.

In 1932, Camatte came up with a one-design sailboat called As Côte d'Azur for the French Union des Sociétés Nautiques who chose her. Until 1961, nearly 200 boats of this type were built, most of them in the Chiesa shipyard in Cannes.

Cruising sailboats, a tradition

Alongside international classes, Camatte made about a dozen cruising sailboats for coastal cruising, which doesn't seem much over a 35 year-career. Among them, Odyssée, a 22m sailing ketch designed for Mr Rey in 1934 and built the following year by Lemaitre shipbuilder in Fécamp. André Mauric, a naval architect in Marseille, modernized her rigging in 1972. She became Illiade and is still sailing. In 1950, Camatte designed Nagaïna, a 16.50 cutter built by Chiesa shipbuilder and she is still sailing too. Finally, Morwak, a 14.50 cutter was built in Bénodet by Craff shipbuilder for Mr Lepage.

François Camatte's exceptional sailboats is the name of the association his grandson founded in 2015.

The project of this association is to promote French naval architecture and skills that are illustrated by Camatte's creations. His favourite rating rule, the 6mJl is probably the most elegant and liberal formula ever.

Achieving excellence: design - plans - wood - fittings

François Camatte was a remarkable designer and builder of his time. His plans are precise and itemized, in particular the framing plans demonstrate his expertise in conventional building. At a time when no standardized deck fittings could be found – they have only been available since the beginning of the seventies – his drawing files show detailed studies of a diverse range of deck fittings and rigging. He had such an attention to details that he kept a close eye on the building of his boats. As Eugène Cornu will do later –like most renowned naval architects –François Camatte closely guarded his plans in particular the lines plan. It appears no was ever published in a magazine or even communicated to those who had commissioned her. They could still who could have a look at the plan in his office.

Tradition meant a demand for quality building

The quest for performance was paramount and so was elegance for the shapes of his boats. Was it about the architect's affectation or the reminiscences of the famous capians of the boats sailing on the Mediterranean ? On each of his world-class yacht as well as on "As Côte d'Azur" which is a reference to tradition that wasn't needed but made boat lovers even more fond of her.



What made his boats special: a harmony of shapes

The originality : a great harmony of shapes

Beside this brilliant line of superb race yachts, Camatte's work includes few cruising yachts, a ten or so, during about a fifteen years phase. When designing a cruiser, the architect is released from any class rules constraint and so can give free rein to his creativity.

Looking at a Camatte's cruiser design – he called them "racing cruisers" * - we are struck by elegance of so pretty well balanced curves. * in english in original french text

Camatte's race boats influence on his cruiser yacht designs As a common characteristic of these beautiful yachts, one can pick up large overhangs (up to 30% of length over all), a moderate beam, significantly narrower than contemporary cruisers, a very soft chine, a pronounced sheer line curvature with less freeboard, which is generally less than 8% of waterline length (LWL) and located between a quarter and a fifth of LWL. Forward hull part is pretty narrow (waterlines wedging between 22 and 24 deg.), with sections more deep-V shaped than his race boats. Aft hull part shows generous butt, with tight buttock lines, center one having often a slope lower than 20 deg.

Lower sections have a range of slopes between 28 and 35 deg above horizontal, with heaviest displacement hulls corresponding to the range end. Apparently, Camatte's preference is to increase depth instead of width (likely due to his habit of International Class rules).

With their usually moderate draft (around 20% of LWL), these yachts are rather quite ballasted (around 40% of displacement). With regards to sail plan, either sloop or cutter, they have a fractional rig, around 80%, like his race boats.

In summary, and it seems pretty natural, Camatte's cruise yacht designs have been largely affected by his huge and prolific experience of race boats.

Heritage

François Camatte was one of the best naval architects of his generation, indeed his clients placed their trust and confidence in him repeatedly while his renowned fellow-builders – the best in his time – paid tribute to him. At the Jouet shipyard in 1965, ten years younger Eugène Cornu expressed his appreciation and told a journalist of the Cahier du Yachting "he had inherited the spirit that guided men like Joseph Guédon, Talma Bertrand et François Camatte. They were rivals but before anything they were friends."

The photo below shows Azais that is being restored by the association. She was built in 1933 by Chiesa shipbuilders for Mr Martin, chairman of the Société Nautique de Genève between 1906 and 1917 , who had placed an order with François Camatte.



THE EXHIBITION

Basing on the proven quality and renown of Camatte's work, we would like to promote the inventiveness, skills and craftsmanship that building exceptional sailboats requires.

The exhibition will highlight this man's genius. It will demonstrate how special, how original his creations were. They'll be shown in the larger historical context when they were designed and more particularly that of the races where his boats stood out.

The exhibition will promote our cultural and craftsmanship heritage and will be shown at venues yet to be decided. We'll set it up thanks to detailed record, images, texts and photographs, plans, scale models, tools, and furniture that belonged to François Camatte. They will be displayed in an original scenography around a 6mJl fully renovated in her original aspect.

Finally, we'll meet the man through his skills and the singular history of his life.



This exhibition could be presented in Paris, Cannes, in harbour towns as well as in museums.

RESTORATION

Two 6mJl will be restored to their original aspect on a renowned shipyard.

Four of F. Camatte's sailboats – Elfe – Silk - New Life - Naguaïna Racer Quiser – bear the label BIP (for heritage boats) bestowed by La fondation du patrimoine maritime et fluvial. Elfe was classified as a historical exhibit in June 2002.

On the photographs above Cupidon Fou, that the association intends to save, supported by the Fondation du Patrimoine des Alpes-Maritimes. Cupidon Fou is typical of F. Camatte's work. She has an outstanding record and used to belong to the Rothschild family.

Why should F. Camatte's boats be restored?

In order to include in the exhibition an original sailboat restored to her original aspect (museographical heritage) and sail her at 6mJl races together with the other sailboat. We are considering creating a Camatte Trophy.

This living heritage can testify tangibly to the efficiency and inventiveness of this naval architect's genius. It is an acknowledgement of the man and his craftsmanship notably as regards frame work and marine joinery, sails and metalwork on shipbuilding facilities.



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VOILIERS D'EXCEPTION

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