

New Masts, Rigging & Sails Yacht Mir Returns to the High Seas! *by Christopher Dolphin*



Christmas Eve - Mir complete with new masts & rigging!



Mark Van Thillo & Christopher Dolphin



Working with ASL Shipyard to install the masts

Our world is constantly changing. As much as we may like to have things continue to stay the same we cannot control it and thus we all fall victim to the great force that is entropy. Nobody knows this better than those that live and work on boats. Any sailor will tell you that without constant maintenance their boat will not stay afloat. What they may or may not tell you is that every few years there is also the much needed 'big job' that comes around, where one must lift their ship out of the water, roll up their sleeves and do the real dirty work. For Biosphere Foundation and their sailing ship *Mir*, 2016 happened to be that kind of a year.

Biosphere Foundation has been working for the past eight years to fully restore a 32 metre 117 year old steel hulled ketch tall ship called *Mir*. Eight years ago the ship was in the Mediterranean Sea, in Malta, completely neglected and ready to be cut up for scrap. The final reconstruction arrived in November of 2016, when we took *Mir* to ASL Shipyard to pull her out of the water for the fourth time and complete the final stage of her restoration. The objective of this dry-dock was to install two brand new aluminium masts and new stainless steel rigging with shiny new white sails!

Heading into dry-dock I knew this experience was going to be a once in a lifetime opportunity as well as a test of my strength both mentally and physically. I knew it would be a moment when I would get to see both a true transformation of our ship

as well as myself. Once in the trenches of the shipyard's day in and day out routine of being covered in the perpetual grit, I found that it helped to envision the end result when we would sail with this new rig, enjoying the brand new equipment as it gleamed in the sun and with the newly painted dark blue hull making her way gracefully through the open ocean under full sail.

In total, *Mir* stayed on dry-dock for just over forty days and forty nights. Most days ended in complete exhaustion and most mornings I awoke feeling as though I was readying for battle with my battalion. Together, we would put on our boots, long socks, coveralls, masks, helmet and gun, which varied depending on the day. Sometimes it was needle gun, sometimes a grinder, a host of tools or a paint brush. On Christmas Eve, *Mir* sailed back into Raffles Marina with her crew of eight having completed the impossible and eagerly readying themselves, and the ship, for the upcoming New Year when *Mir* would embark on her maiden voyage with a new rig to Bali, Indonesia.

Our gratitude and great appreciation to all our sponsors who have made this possible and who year after year match our work with smiles and care: ASL Shipyard, Deepblue Pte. Ltd., Mencast Marine, SunLink, Dokar Mast Builders, Jotun Paint, Viking Life Raft, Venus Express, Che Joo Marine, Seagull Marine, and our dear friends at Raffles Marina **who sent us off and welcomed us home each time.**

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