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House and Yacht: the Aesthetics of the Interior as a Link between Different Sectors

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Abstract: The large boat market is particularly interesting as it continues to grow, displaying an ongoing positive trend since 2010 with motor yachts constituting the major segment. These boats offer several points for consideration, particularly regarding their interior design, a topic of great interest in the fields of both architecture and boats. In the last twenty years there has been a real revolution in the interior yacht design: this sector has come extremely close (aesthetically speaking) to that of land-based homes.

The study of materials, composition, colour, and aspects of light and shadow have taken on new meanings, as they affect the perception that the end user has of the space. The projects involve more and more “soft” features for higher sensory expression and aesthetic features play a fundamental role in the sensory experience. What are the new aesthetic perspectives of the interior in this continuous exchange between home and yacht?

Keywords: Interior Yacht Design, Interior Design, Aesthetics, Materials, Perception

1. Introduction

This paper focuses on a new field of aesthetics, that of interior design in motor yachts larger than 24 m. Such yachts are considered to be “super yachts” if they are more than 30 metres long, and “mega yachts” if over 60 metres.

This field is particularly interesting from a commercial viewpoint: the sector is growing, confirming a positive trend that has been ongoing since 2010 (source: Altagamma and SBI), with motor yachts constituting the major segment (89% of the entire portfolio). Within this aforesaid segment, flybridge models are the most popular; the analysis conducted by Deloitte as part of its Business Advisory & Commercial Due Diligence section clearly shows that the market is moving more towards the large yacht industry; between 2008 and 2016, the 60 metre market segment has grown by an average of

3%, confirming the theory that the *high-end* sector appears to be more resilient to any crisis in international markets.

In this paper, these particular boats are compared with a specific type of home, that of the “villa”, which is a residential building also distinguished, (like yachts), by purposes such as leisure, recreation and rest, i.e. factors which are not so much material as psychological and ideological.

The affinity between the project of a villa and that of large boats is that in both cases the designer's task is to establish a balance between nature and culture that responds to both their own sensitivity and beliefs and those of their clients.

This type of boat is part of what is called "luxury design" or an "extreme" field of design where "man is allowed to experience very special conditions and where the phenomena are revealed with such emphasized and special characters as to make the rules that govern them appear clearer". (Celaschi, 2005). The concept of luxury has changed with the times and is no longer simply the most vulgar materialism, now luxury is designed to be "lived" because the idea of luxury is linked specifically to the desire to live a special experience, rather than to possess (and show off) a certain item of value, may have been the case in the past. In fact, the term luxury today has various meanings also inherent to immaterial concepts; it refers not so much to the satisfaction of a need but to the search for pleasant or fulfilling experiences.

In these yachts, aesthetic beauty assumes an important meaning as it becomes a great catalyst of emotions: the aesthetic result must astound, aesthetics must involve the end-user, and arouse excitement.

The aesthetic product has to catapult the end-user into another dimension: a dream.

2. First signs of change: a rift with tradition

The first large private and pleasure motor-yachts date back to the 1920s when the highest aim of interior design was to recreate a family/home atmosphere. In the same period, a sector of the architectural community began to study the potential of life on the water as a source of ideas for the future. In *Vers une Architecture* (first published in *Espirit Nouveau*), Le Corbusier sought to learn from the steamers a great lesson in industrial sobriety; not surprisingly, the CIAM (*Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne*) of 1933, during which the Athens Charter was drafted, took place precisely on board the ship *Patris II*. Thus his architecture would absorb various references from the world of steamers.

The boats for private use, however, sought to copy a home environment, but they referred to the land-based interiors of the past in an attempt to find familiar stability in historical roots.

On April 2nd, 1921, the *Delphine*, a mega-yacht of 79 metres with a steam engine, the most representative and impressive of its period, was launched. Large boats were built generally in America since "as early as 1914, the US was the world's largest economy" (Hobsbawm, 1994). The interiors (Figure 1), with their traditional wood constructions, reflected the prestige that the boat had to have. Bulkheads, dunnage, and the ceiling were entirely built of wood (mahogany in most areas - an expensive and precious wood which, when polished, produces an elegant, velvety surface that made it one of the favourites for luxury interiors between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries). The furniture echoed that of the past and, as with houses of the late nineteenth century, there was "copious seating upholstered with different fabrics such as lampas, velvet, brocade and various tapestries". (Praz, 1964).



Figure 1. The master stateroom of the *Delphine*, 1921. The interior reflected domestic environments and the prestige that the boat had to have.

As regards "smaller" super-yachts (about 30 m), the manner of interpreting the interior remained unquestionably opulent, with abundant use of expensive leather, thick carpet, gilded picture and mirror frames and, above all, the ubiquitous polished cherrywood. It hardly felt like being onboard a boat at all and, perhaps this was precisely the intent. There were constant and little-hidden references to land-based interiors - indeed, at times, such references were even in plain view, as in the case of the chandeliers.

From the Thirties onwards, there was an initial move to simplify interiors, mirroring the trend for house interiors at that time. The production of this type of boat was based mainly in the United States of America and in Germany. The view of American interiors *in toto* can be contrasted with some experimental domestic interiors of the beginning of the century, such as the dining room made entirely of cedar wood by Eugène Vallin, circa 1905 (Figure 2).



Figure 2. The American motor-yacht *Discovery* (1931) and (on the right) the dining room made entirely of cedar wood by Eugène Vallin, circa 1905. Both of them had the same view in toto.

German interiors, however, which were very simple yet elegant with the early signs of diversification in upholstery and casing, can be compared to domestic spaces that, in Germany, had been influenced by Hermann Muthesius' book, *Das Englische Haus*. The book was published in Berlin in 1904, and reproduced a photograph of the house by Philip Webb, *Great Tangle*. Muthesius greatly admired this interior: not stifled by ornaments, like much of the reformist decorations, but simple in features and with visible structure, it exerted great influence on those who were educated in the picturesque and were tired of traditional classicism.

Gradually, however, in the history of interior yacht design, the fashion for imitation of land-based interiors was gradually replaced by a more specific nautical line: lacquered mahogany for furniture and bulkheads, white ceilings, blue and white stripes in fabrics, and bright brass handles all make up what has been called "Old Navy Style", which established the interior and exterior design of the yacht for decades.

During the second half of the Twentieth Century the image uniformity on larger boats was lost: while the exteriors followed the evolution of techniques and materials, the interior, in most cases, were tied to a traditional style.

"We can say that it is only in the last twenty years that there has been a real change of direction in the design of the interior of the boat, with an update and real research that finally unite together in one overall project". (Dardi, 2009).

There are three fundamental points that form the basis of a new concept of interior yacht design: the renewed interest in the dialogue between the languages of domestic interiors and the nautical, the search for materials and technologies and a willingness to open the boat to the external.

The contamination between the boat and the house gave rise to unusual design codes and aesthetic expressions in the interior with an enrichment for both parties, of knowledge and styles.

The introduction of home automation systems and materials designed for increasingly "soft" results, like most sensory expression, have led to a different way of living the interior.

Finally, the possibility of expanding the physical boundaries through large openings and folding

terraces revolutionized not only the design of the interior, but also the Man-sea relationship, increasing the feeling and the real dialogue between the user and the surrounding nature.

A crucial point in the history of interior yacht design and aesthetic renewal occurred with the super yacht Blue Velvet of Italian Codecasa shipyard in 1994. After the Eighties and Nineties in which there was an excess and, sometimes, a redundancy of materials, there was a desire to break with the design philosophy of the period: different possibilities arose because some owners wanted to move in a new direction for the interior and toward a new aesthetic culture, much closer to the home environment. The Blue Velvet was presented in a simple and clean form with materials which created a minor stir at the time, as the interiors were made of one single material: just Danish leather for bulkheads, ceiling, and dunnage, thus creating a unitary aesthetic concept, compact and snug for the end-user. The perception is that of a modern and uniform environment that perhaps, rather than taking styling cues from the immediately preceding boat, goes back instead to the minimalism of the Thirties as in the design of the Canim, super yacht of 30 m built by American shipyards Lake Union Drydock in Seattle, Washington, in 1930. Although coated with different materials (Danish leather for Blue Velvet and wood for the Canim), the visual perception and clean lines of their interiors are very similar. The Blue Velvet interiors also included, perhaps for the first time, the typical furnishings of the sedentary world as well as iconic items of the world of design. An example would be the Spartana chair designed by Master Hans Coray in 1938 in perforated and curved aluminum, produced by Zanotta.

In the opening decade of the new millennium there has been a real revolution in interior yacht design: experimental project designs focus on the materials and light. The projects of Pab by Admiral shipyard, the Sai Ram of Benetti shipyard (Figure 3), the Nina J (Figure 4) by Baglietto shipyard, the Mikymar (Figure 5) of Canados shipyard and Stella Maris of Viareggio Superyacht shipyard are the vanguard of an innovative aesthetic culture, much closer to the land-based environment. They derive in fact from domestic furniture and are no longer tailor-made (as is usual in the naval sector) with unusual materials for the yachting field, such as the faux plaster finishing or solid Zebrano wood. The selection of materials aims in these projects for an unprecedented sensory experience: not only visual but also tactile and olfactory. It is possible to make a comparison with what happened in the Seventies in other fields, where the importance of sensory experience changed the aesthetics (for example in the House of the Five Senses of Marie Claire presented in the Eurodomus in 1972 or in the Divisumma 18 by Mario Bellini for Olivetti in 1972). The sensory experience plays a fundamental role in the aesthetics: impacting the main sense, i.e. vision, means being able to communicate, to affect the perception of space and to generate emotion. Super yachts erred towards "emptiness" as opposed to "fullness", differently from preceding trends, thus producing better aesthetic results. The visual sense is continuously stimulated by the particular textures of the materials, or by elements that amplify the natural light or, finally, by features that are used as the neutral base for special artificial light games.



Figure 3. The super yacht Sai Ram, 2003 (on the left) is really close to the land-based environment, like (on the right) the Villa in Positano, 2002.



Figure 4. The aesthetics of the Nina J, 2005, by Ivana Porfiri, was based in the full sensory involvement.

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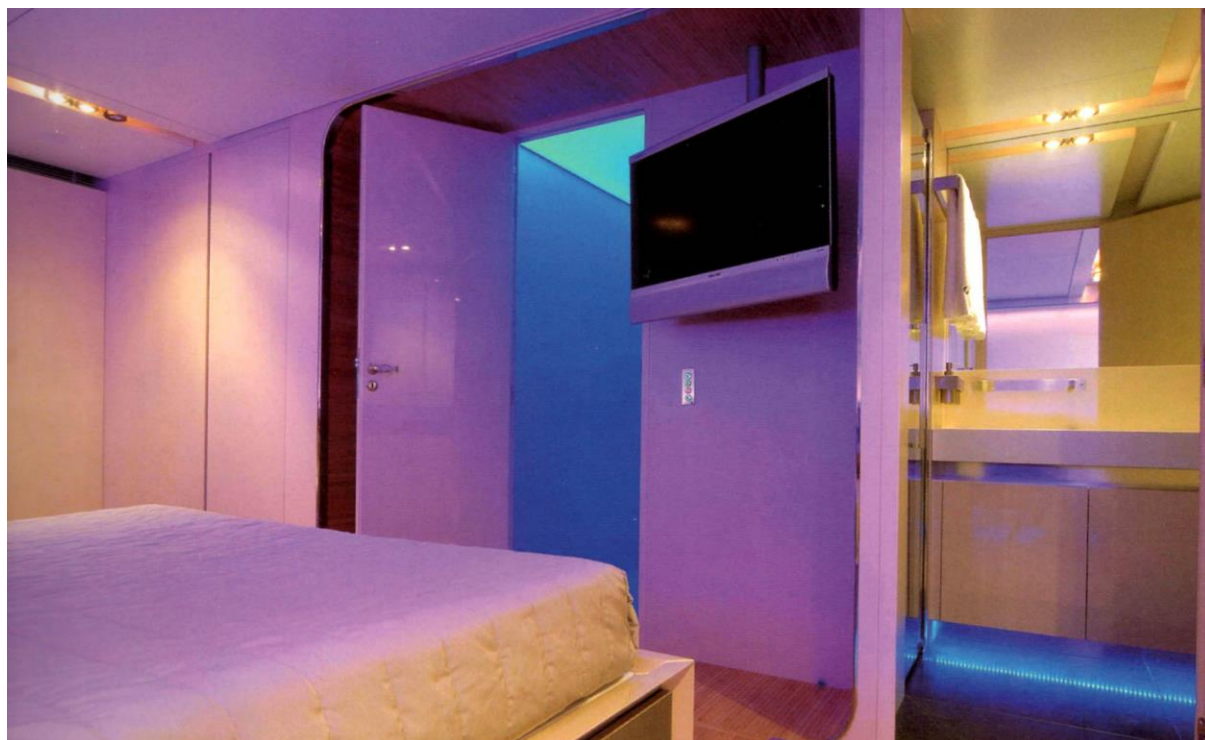


Figure 5. The aesthetics of the Mikymar, 2007, by Salvagni Architetti was distinguished by the use of artificial light.

3. The contemporary scene

The nautical shows of 2016 have demonstrated that an aesthetic dialogue between home and yachts is becoming increasingly popular, creating a common aesthetic approach. It has gone from sporadic cases, such as those mentioned above, where some designers from schools of thought not strictly related to the nautical world (such as Ivana Porfiri, Lazzarini Pickering Architects, Achille Salvagni and Michela Reverberi) have become increasingly involved in designing boat interiors to other situations where certain shipyards have made this a true market strategy. There are more and more cases, in fact, where the design of motor yacht interiors is planned by the most famous and prestigious names in design and furnishing companies.

In fact there are many established partnerships, not only for the supply of furniture, but also for coverings, cabinets, bathrooms and kitchens, either made to size or adapted by contract divisions under the leadership of the interior and technical departments of nautical companies.

This revolution is well known by Sergio Buttiglieri, who has dealt with interior yacht design since 2006 when, after more than twenty years as a director of the Driade brand, he became involved with the Sanlorenzo shipyard of Massimo Perotti. The historic brand of Ameglia, recently expanded in La Spezia with the acquisition of Cantiere San Marco, now occupies second place in the annual world rankings for the number of boats produced over 24 metres, and is constantly expanding. Ten years ago he began to collaborate with designers and to introduce into his yachts Italian furniture brands (Artemide, B&B Italia, Boffi, Flexform, Flos, Paola Lenti, Minotti, Roda, etc.) for an interior design approach with contemporary guidelines.

"I simply connected different worlds, contaminating the imaginary, to change for the better perception of the yacht and reconnect to our time" said Buttiglieri. "At Sanlorenzo we know that the Made in Italy seal of approval is the best way to attract a clientele of international ship-owners, made up of great entrepreneurs who love the sea and who want to live with the sophistication and taste that have always distinguished our country. It is not just to introduce prestigious brands, with

all their specific aesthetic imagination and their highly specialized knowledge of the best materials to be used for the furniture; we must constantly communicate with these strengths, to grow together in quality, and provide products borrowed from their catalogues which are adapted to our extreme marine requirements". And the results have been clear since the first collaboration in 2008 gave life to SL 100, with interiors designed by Dordoni Architetti. Winners of the ADI award for design and innovation, this firm introduced completely innovative stylistic features, creating, in the words of Buttiglieri: "A new theatrical dignity to spaces with perspective effects, lighting effects and unexpected optical illusions." Such an experience has been recreated for the newly-launched SD 112 and for the Explorer (46 metres) which is still under construction (designed by Antonio Citterio and Patricia Viel), as well as the future SX 88, which kicks off in 2017 and bears the signature of Piero Lissoni.

The aesthetics in interior yacht design take on a crucial role: the yacht becomes, in fact, an autonomous microcosm where a person can escape from everyday life, a "dream-like" reality designed specifically for the end-user. The dream brings with it, then, not only the material satisfaction linked to owning a luxury item, but also (and perhaps especially) all the abstract joy that is offered by living an experience far removed from everyday life.

The exceptionality of the boat lies in the fact that it can be defined "as a house but more than a house" as it offers everything that a person can find in a land-based dwelling, but with something extra, additional, and this is related to the movement of a constantly evolving environment and surroundings.

4. What's next in aesthetics? Concluding remarks and future visions

The role of aesthetics in interior yacht design will be increasingly decisive and the ongoing exchange between house and boat will continue to stimulate the user's sensory involvement.

In a world that increasingly encourages sensory experience, the interior yacht design sector will also be involved and, as has happened in the past, may also act as an experimental platform. As demonstrated in recent years, the worlds of interior design and interior yacht design will maintain a strong position, each creating a liaison and a new concept of comfort, that recently is being renewed; the projects will involve more and more "soft" features for higher sensory expression, moving away from the previous preference for minimalist ergonomics based on the use of space, in favour of a full sensory experience. This possibility of spatial exploration offers "the possibility of entering in the work, become active in it and live its throbbing with all the senses" as Wassily Kandinsky argued in other fields.

The innovative aesthetic culture will be generated from materials that will involve the user to a greater extent. Changes in contemporary society, technology, and production have led to a reformulation of the interior design process: suffice to think of the possible new aesthetic scenarios that some materials are opening.

Future trends in interior yacht design will involve the employment of more and more reflective materials, metallic materials, materials that generate surprise, soft comfort, interactive materials, smart materials, and three-dimensional materials, which are also becoming popular in interior design (thus requiring new collaborative links between the two fields) .

The reflective materials will generate, like the house, reflexes that stimulate end-user perspective.

The use of metallic materials for large surfaces will produce an aesthetic where natural light will be expanded by the reflections which create the effect of larger spaces and brightness.

The surprise effect will be generated through the use of “false” materials, namely materials that aesthetically mimic others for surprising effects. One example is provided with the experimental pieces made by Diego Grandi for Lea Ceramiche (especially those in the Slimtech collection, which are particularly suited to boating thanks to their minimal weight). Materials imitating wood have special characteristics, with patterns of undoubted aesthetic quality, and an invitation to tactile experience, revealing their identities only once the sense of touch is added to the sense of sight.

Soft comfort will be guaranteed mainly by textile design that stimulates the senses, thanks to its quality.

Finally, interactive materials will change the appearance of the interior to ensure the end-user receives immediate responses from the surrounding environment. In the Palazzo Bovara of Milan, during the last Fuorisalone, the House of Tomorrow was presented through an interactive and digital exhibition-installation, whose main features can also be transferred to interior yacht design. The installation, the result of a reflection on housing, on the changes taking place in the home, offered its own vision of the future to come. The title “Soft Home” refers to the double meaning of the term, both as a soft tech abbreviation, and the attributes of a cosy home, soft and comfortable. The immersive path, allowing the visitor to live a real experience in the rooms furnished with items from the history of design, was animated by a sophisticated but intuitive technology which indicated the infinite possibilities of the latest technology applications. The project was researched and developed by H-Art, creative atelier of Roncade (TV), and integrated into a project of interior design by Marcante Testa/ Uda Architects. The aim of the exhibition was to engage the public and allow them to experience the most innovative trends of living, currently existing or in progress, and to reflect on the idea of domesticity in a world that has 24/7 connectivity, its strong point. This socio-cultural path was based on the themes of contemporary life, full of stimuli and active cognitive experiences.

Thus, smart materials, changing their characteristics based on external stimuli, act to influence the aesthetics and perception of space. The Light Touch Matetters (LTM material), for example, are bright and sensitive to the touch materials, thanks to very thin and flexible OLED, and to a new generation of highly adaptable plastic piezo sensors that can record pressure levels.

The aesthetics of the interior will also be affected by three-dimensionalism, a feature that is more and more often recreated in interiors. One example is the domestic projects by Sako Architects that involve the end-user in a dynamic space.

While, on one hand, artificial materials will dominate, on the other hand there will also be a return in the new aesthetic to natural materials that will create a frill-free environment, and that will involve the end-user in a sensory experience increasingly in contact with nature. This is the case, for example, of the recent Wally House (the fourth unit of 26m Wallyace series), or the Amel 100 Quad. Both these boats are characterized by interiors that take shape only thanks mainly to wood, creating a new aesthetic linked to the origin of these floating homes but interpreted in a new contemporary perspective that is in fact typical of villas surrounded by nature.

Even if generated by different materials, it is certain that the next aesthetic trend of interior yacht design will take the role of cocooning the end-user, and the impact will create a sensory experience that is as participatory as possible with the environmental surroundings, not least with the marine environment that characterizes living on a ship.

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