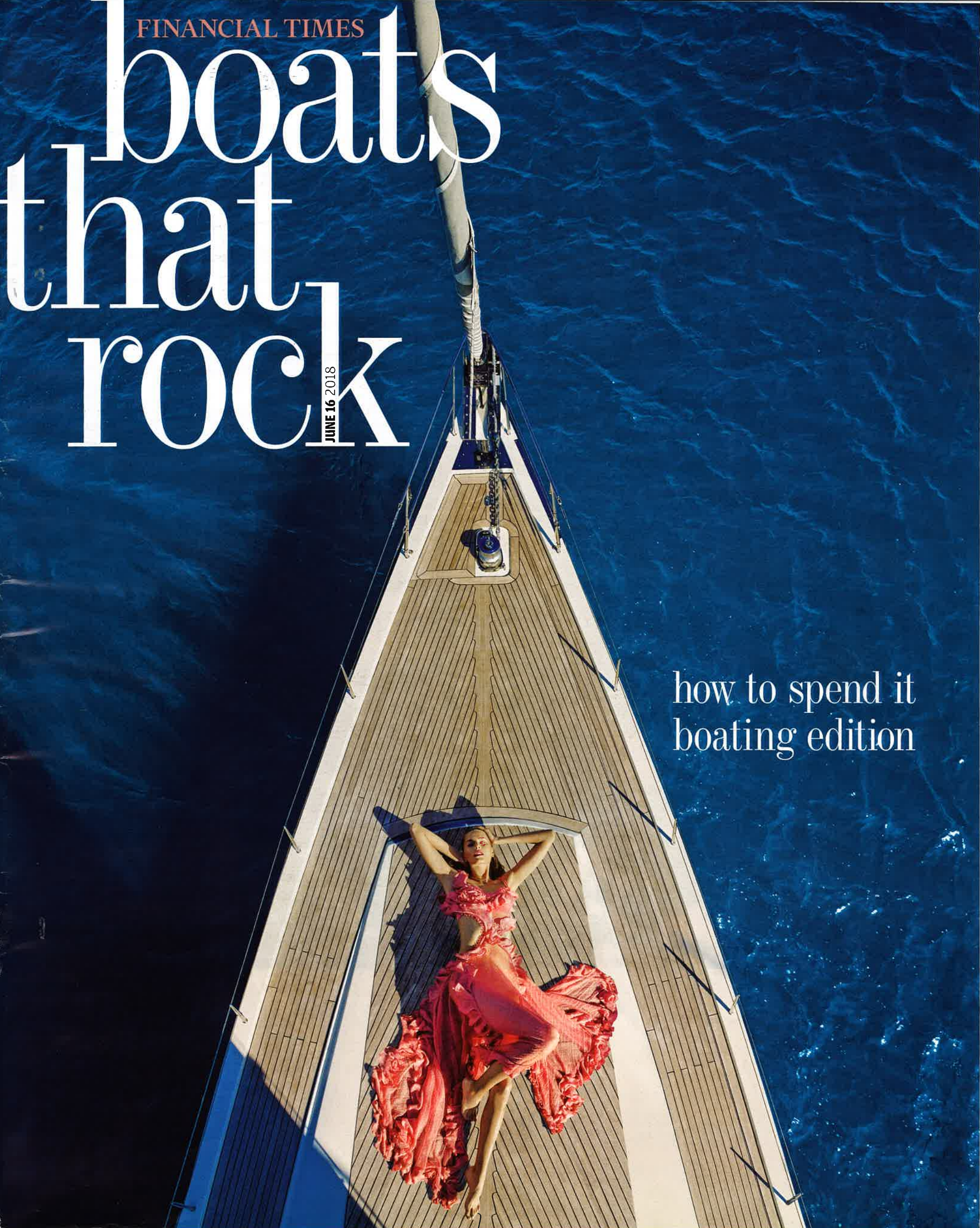
FINANCIAL TIMES

boats that rock

JUNE 16 2018



how to spend it
boating edition

less is moor

New-generation superyacht owners are steering design towards a laidback aesthetic, anchored by a blend of organic simplicity and cosy sophistication. **Charlotte Abrahams** reports

There are changes afoot on the rarefied decks of the world's superyachts. Once temples to excess, the latest launches are more clean-lined than overtly ornate. Take design house Liaigre's latest project, *Cloudbreak* (pictured on final page). This 75m yacht, built by the German shipyard Abeking & Rasmussen, might boast a helideck, ski room and cinema, but the interior decoration is subtle and restrained – all fluid shapes, muted tones and light wood, much of it humble pine, albeit expertly scrubbed and sandblasted to reveal its natural beauty. "Superyachts used to be associated with lots of visible wealth," says Guillaume Rolland, Liaigre's head of yacht design and the man responsible for *Cloudbreak*'s interior. "But the new generation of owners want to really use them, not simply own them as statements of status – and that is changing the interior design."

Cloudbreak's owner is typical of this new breed. An adventure seeker, he wanted a yacht that could travel the world and act as a base for both heli-skiing and surfing. "The owner is going to use *Cloudbreak* in areas where the weather can be extreme, so his main request was for a place that was soft, warm and welcoming at the end of the day," says Rolland. "Every shape and detail – from the curved bed head in the owner's cabin to the cedar-clad walls in the spa – was chosen to give the maximum pleasure and comfort." (The yacht can currently be chartered from €750,000 per week through YachtCharterFleet.)

Francesca Muzio, co-founder of Italian design studio FM Architettura d'Interni, which specialises in the interiors of superyachts, luxury hotels and high-end residences, describes this new aesthetic as "cosy chic" and, like Rolland, credits the shift in tastes to the rise of the millennial owner. Market research conducted by luxury shipbuilder Rossinavi supports this, revealing that owners are on average now 10 to 15 years younger than they were two decades ago, with the median age of superyacht owners expected to shift from 45-55 to 35-45 in the next 20 years. "Yacht trends have been stuck in a time warp for years," Muzio says, "but this new generation has changed everything. Whereas in the past, the first conversation we had with a client was always about the interior style they wanted, it's now focused on how they want to experience their boat. It's less about how things look and more about how they feel."

One obvious response to this brief is the move towards contemporary schemes where texture is prioritised over polish. FM Architettura d'Interni's refit of the 65m explorer yacht *Polar Star* (pictured overleaf) saw Muzio and her team strip out much of the original, glossy decor to make way for bleached oak floors and lots of leather-clad walls – some of them, as in the entrance to the main saloon, decorated with hand-stitched, three-dimensional shapes to create an additional layer of tactility.

Winch Design's scheme for Dutch shipbuilder Amels' Limited Editions 272 superyacht *Here Comes the Sun* (charter from €1.2m per week through YachtCharterFleet; pictured overleaf) is equally touchy feely. Even the entertainment saloon,

From top: Oceanco's new 115m Tuhura concept has pared-back interiors designed by Achille Salvagni. The superyacht's streamlined exterior is inspired by ancient Polynesian canoes

traditionally the most glitzy of all the superyacht's many rooms, is a cocooning and sensual combination of silk and wool carpets, leather-clad columns and brushed bronze – the texture echoed in the deeply grained wood panelling on the ceiling.

But the new generation's desire for an experiential interior goes beyond surface decoration – it also influences the layout and interior architecture of their vessels. "Owners are now much more aware of the physical environment their yachts are in – and they want to be part of it," says Kate Maclaren, senior manager, interiors at Winch Design. "We're being asked again and again for floor-to-ceiling windows so our clients can sit in bed, or in one of their lounges, and enjoy a panoramic view of their surroundings."

Designers are also being asked to turn many of these windows into doors, thus creating a seamless connection between the indoor and outdoor spaces. Interiors that bring the outside in (and vice versa) have become commonplace on dry land, but, somewhat surprisingly, superyacht design has taken some time to

"These new superyachts are for those who want to venture to remote Pacific islands or the polar regions, as well as host glamorous parties on the French Riviera"

catch up. "Interior and exterior areas were traditionally quite separate," says FM Architettura d'Interni's Muzio. "Now the interaction between the two is seen as very important. Everyone wants more and more doors that open right out."

This blurring of boundaries is evident in many of the latest bespoke superyachts, including the just-launched expedition yacht *Utopia IV*. Designed by Enrico Gobbi, founder of Team for Design and built by Rossinavi for an American client (priced €53m), it features a main saloon that stretches out into a covered teak deck and onto the ocean itself. But designers are not simply responding to the requests of a handful of private clients. As a sign of just how seriously the industry takes this change in tastes, three superyacht specialists have incorporated the demand for simpler, more relaxed and environmentally connected vessels into their latest concept yachts.

Last year, London-based boat builder Vitruvius Yachts launched six concept motoryachts, ranging from Mediterranean to full-scale Expedition (the price of a full custom superyacht depends on its design and specification, but the industry average is €1m to €1.3m per metre, according to the firm). "Our job is to look at trends in society and then apply them to superyachts," says designer and naval architect Philippe Briand, founder of the company's motoryacht line. "There is an overall shift towards more natural, healthy lifestyles and this new series supports that. It is aimed at a new type of owner who wants to venture to remote Pacific islands or even the polar regions, as well as host glamorous parties on the French Riviera or the Greek islands – and who therefore wants a yacht that feels like a yacht, rather than an apartment in London or Paris, while responding to the requirements of its environment." In the case of the Mediterranean concept, that means using lots of glass walls in the interior to ensure there is a sense of communication between the inside and outside spaces."

From top: Winch Design's cocooning and sensual scheme for the Amels superyacht *Here Comes the Sun*. FM Architettura d'Interni stripped out much of the original, glossy decor when it refitted the 65m explorer yacht *Polar Star*

In March, Rosetti launched a new fully customisable concept 48m Supply Vessel (pictured overleaf) with an interior-design scheme based entirely around shades of caramel and natural materials such as ecological leather, wood and sandstone. The result is as wonderfully soothing as the sound of the lapping sea beneath it. And two months earlier, British boatyard Princess launched its S78 sportbridge (pictured overleaf). Although marketed as "the ultimate yacht for entertaining", the S78 is a clean-lined vessel with wraparound windows

Clockwise from left: the interiors of Rosetti's custom-made 48m Supply Vessel are based around shades of caramel and natural materials. Light woods dominate Christian Liaigre's design for *Cloudbreak*, built by Abeking & Rasmussen. The clean-lined Princess S78

and a laidback, Scandinavian vibe in the main saloon. "When someone walks onto the boat, we want them to feel extraordinarily comfortable and at home," says Princess' executive chairman Antony Sheriff. "People are realising that it isn't very relaxing to go into a saloon where they feel like they're stepping into their grandmother's drawing room and can't touch anything. They now want to be in an environment where they can jump straight out of the water in their bathing suit and not feel afraid to sit on the sofa."

Function may be in fashion, but exquisite form matters as much as it ever did. "The luxury may not be as immediately obvious," says Winch Design's Maclaren, "but it is still very much there. Owners want light, relaxed spaces, but they also want the very best materials and finely crafted details."

Oceanco's new Tuhura concept (pictured on opening pages), which was unveiled at the Dubai International Boat Show in February, is a perfect example of this new, discreet take on luxe. This 115m superyacht has a strikingly streamlined exterior inspired by ancient Polynesian canoes, yet conceals high-tech wizardry such as advanced glass technology that ensures its windows appear transparent on the inside but are the same colour as the hull when viewed from the outside.

This elegant blend of sophistication and organic simplicity continues inside the vessel. "It's a brushed-teak habitat," says the designer-architect and superyacht specialist Achille Salvagni. "The curved volumes appear as if they could have been formed by the wind or the water." Indeed they do, but Salvagni is known for the exceptional quality of his materials and the exquisitely crafted detail of his designs, and the interior he has created on Tuhura is true to form. The natural tatami-mat floor in the main saloon, for example, is inlaid with bronze and oak, while the stone-and-glass fireplace has a bronze trim with 24ct gold leaf. "The language of superyachts has changed," Salvagni says. "The approach now is about being soft and natural – reflecting grandeur in simplicity." ✦

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