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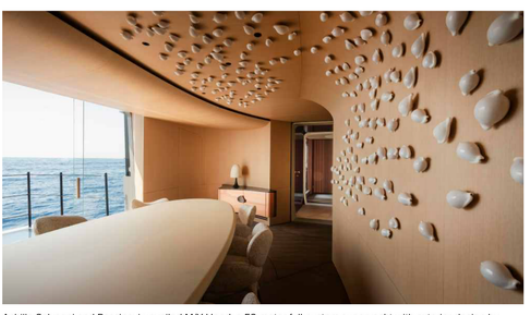
High-end, Quiet Design Steers Worldwide Yacht Industry to New Heights

Despite market challenges, Italy's superyacht industry maintained its global leadership status as sales in the country's recreational boating industry rose 1.4 percent to a record of 8.72 billion euros in 2025.

By SOFIA CELESTE OCTOBER 1, 2026, 1:00PM



Achille Salvagni and Rossinavi unveiled M/Y Heed, a 53-meter full-custom superyacht with exterior design by Alberto Mancini Yacht Design and interiors by Achille Salvagni Architetti. COURTESY OF ACHILLE SALVAGNI ARCHITETTI.

MILAN — As designers worldwide flex their potential in the nautical world, overall sales of the industry continue to rise amid one of the most complex economies of all time.

As the Genoa International Boat Show show kicked off in Italy on Thursday, industry leaders commented on the resilience of the high-end industry. Italy's recreational boating industry, the largest in the world, closed 2025 at a new historic high, with total revenue reaching 8.72 billion euros, up 1.4 percent from 2024.

Italian builders remain leaders on a global basis, accounting for 52 percent of global superyacht production in terms of projects ordered or under construction in 2026.

"Italian production is strongly positioned in high-end shipbuilding and in supplying equipment for superyachts — segments that continue to support the industry. This year confirms the Italian boating industry's ability to maintain an overall positive performance," explained Stefano Pagani Isnardi, director of the Research Department at industry association Confindustria Nautica.

Momentum in 2025 was driven by innovative design and expertise that continue to propel the competitive strengths of Italy's boating industry, the report said.

With yacht show season well underway, enticing interiors debuts by renowned pillars normally designing hotels and residences were at the forefront. From Port Hercule in Monaco to Genova's Levante Waterfront, the trend was driven in large part by the yachting community's penchant for soothing, homey environments on the high seas.

The Best in Interiors

A testament to the quiet luxury trend lending itself to the nautical world, Avigliana, Italy-based Azimut unveiled the Magellano 27M marking the nautical debut for Michele De Lucchi and his studio, AMDL Circle. De Lucchi's architectural approach to the sea was evidenced through understated, warm, wood-focused interior and an unprecedented loggia overlooking the water. Designed as a fluid space between indoors and out, the loggia turned the main deck into a Mediterranean-style retreat for long voyages and quiet anchorages.

A yacht from Azimut's Magellano Series with exteriors by Jarkko Jämsén and interiors by AMDL Circle & Michele De Lucchi. COURTESY OF AZIMUT

In a similar vein, Rome-based Achille Salvagni's studio Achille Salvagni Architetti and Viareggio, Italy-based Rossinavi unveiled M/Y Heed, a 53-meter full-custom, full aluminium superyacht characterized by sophisticated sofas that unfold like waves, armchairs recall pebbles and shells, while sculptural details appear to grow from walls and ceilings. Doors, wardrobes and handles were modeled as if they were shaped by water, pressure or wind.

Quiet luxury in the yachting world signifies "a return to a more cultivated idea of experience," Salvagni told WWD in an interview.

"Clients are increasingly less interested in things that declare their value and more drawn to spaces that reveal it slowly, through the quality of a material, the refinement of a detail, the way light falls across a surface, or simply the feeling of being completely at ease," he said, adding that greatest luxury is linked to a sense of calm, intimacy and having more time.

"On a yacht this becomes particularly powerful. You are surrounded by an extraordinary landscape, so the interior should never compete with it," he mused.

Elsewhere, the industry's appetite for wellness enhanced vessels was evidenced by a landmark project in a collaboration between biohacking and antiaging city clinic network The Longevity Suite, Italian luxury shipyard Benetti — part of the Azimut|Benetti Group — and the Luca Dini Design & Architecture studio. The 230-foot yacht's design was ideated with wellness throughout, from ensuring purified air and maximum comfort during sleep to the study of color schemes for different times of the day.

Inside the 230-foot yacht "Clear Waves," a collaboration between biohacking clinic The Longevity Suite, the Luca Dini Design & Architecture studio and historic Italian luxury shipyard Benetti. ALESSANDRA PARISI

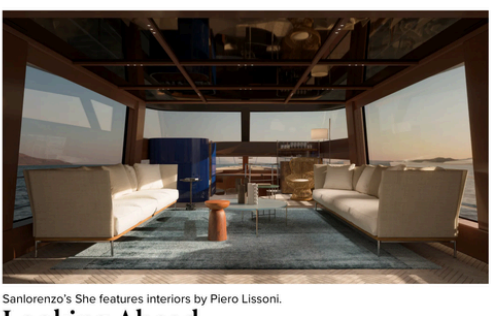
Quiet Luxury Grows

Due to the discretion required by the high-end clients the yachting industry serves, interior design projects are rarely made public, but over the years, firms like Milan-based Dimorestudio and Venice and Paris-based Chahan Minassian have been known to outfit homes on the seas with their curations and or inviting designs. Salvagni has also been designing yacht interiors since the early 2000s.

Off the Italian and French rivieras and in the U.S., New York-based firm Meyer Davis made headlines with their latest book, "The Language of Home," which focused on their flair for creating modern homes tailored to their surroundings. The text also highlighted the Seawolf X, envisaged with Rossinavi and Fulvio De Simoni Yacht Design. Conceived as a luxury home at sea, the 140-foot catamaran blends the signature elements they honed in the world of hospitality with expansive indoor-outdoor living areas, while also incorporating home comforts like a private office, a warmly lit, wood-wrapped staircase and a fitness area.

The dialogue between the nautical and design worlds depended when Ameglia, Italy-based Sanlorenzo, the second-ranked builder by length, appointed architect Piero Lissoni as its artistic director in 2018. Over the years, the market leader has famously forged ties with leading architects and designers like Rodolfo Dordoni, Patricia Urquiola, Antonio Citterio, Patricia Viel, John Pawson and Christian Liaigre — to shape each yacht line and support their geographically diverse community of clients in creating bespoke vessels.

At the Cannes Yachting Festival which closed Sept. 13, Sanlorenzo unveiled She (an abbreviation for Sanlorenzo Heritage) designed by Piero Lissoni. The interiors balanced proportions, carefully considered volumes, abundant natural light and continuous connections between indoor and outdoor spaces, with living areas spread across three levels, including a mezzanine. The company also unveiled new models from Bluegame and Nautor Swan, reinforcing its broader portfolio.



Sanlorenzo's She features interiors by Piero Lissoni.

Looking Ahead

In its first-half 2026 report, Sanlorenzo shed light on the medium term. The results released in July said the firm's order intake for the first half of 2026 totaled 496.4 million euros, up 18.3 percent from 419.5 million euros in the same period of the previous year. The firm outperformed the overall market, with net sales up 3.8 percent and growth driven mainly by the superyacht division and a significantly more diversified geographic mix.

Leaders here say the next 12 months require a degree of adaptability, given that growth in the industry has slowed to 1.4 percent in 2025 versus 13.6 percent in 2023.

Reflecting on the global situation, Confindustria Nautica's president Piero Formenti commented on the rapidly changing international environment. The ongoing crisis in the Middle East has impacted the economies in some of its fastest growing single markets.

"The leadership of the high-end segment and the extraordinary international focus of our industry continue to be strengths, while small-scale boating is more affected by the uncertainties and difficulties facing the middle class worldwide. Being a leader also means knowing how to interpret and anticipate these changes," he said.