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US EDITION

BOAT

International

**TECH,
TOYS AND
TENDERS**

THE 2026
ROUND-UP

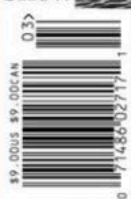
WHAT
MAKES A
VILLA IN
ST BARTHS
A SURE
BET?

STYLE ICON

THE ADMIRAL 72, GIORGIO ARMANI'S

PARTING GIFT TO YACHTING

ShowBoats



BEYOND CABO: THE LURE OF THE BAJA PENINSULA

VOL. 46 / ISSUE 3

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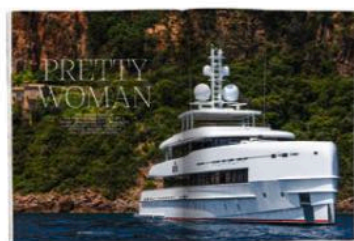
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On the cover: The Italian Sea Group's 237-foot Admiral Armani 72, photographed by Lorenzo Tampucci



PRETTY WOMAN

THIS AWARD-WINNING
164-FOOT HEESEN IS FRESH OFF A
TRANSFORMATIONAL REFIT, REVEALING
A SPORTIER EXTERIOR AND SOFTER,
JAPANESE-INSPIRED INTERIOR.
ERICA LAY STEPS ON BOARD

PHOTOGRAPHY Giovanni Malgarini





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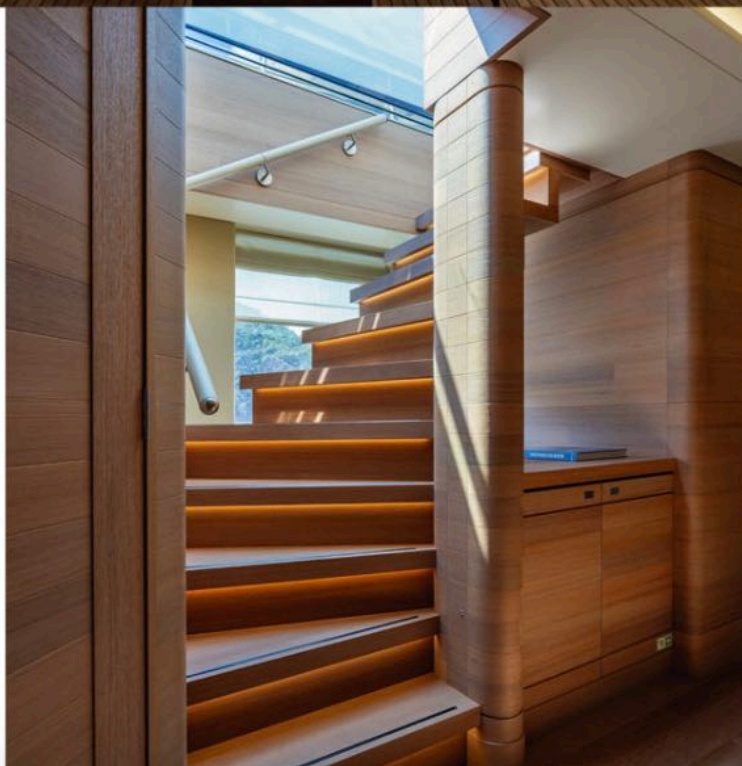
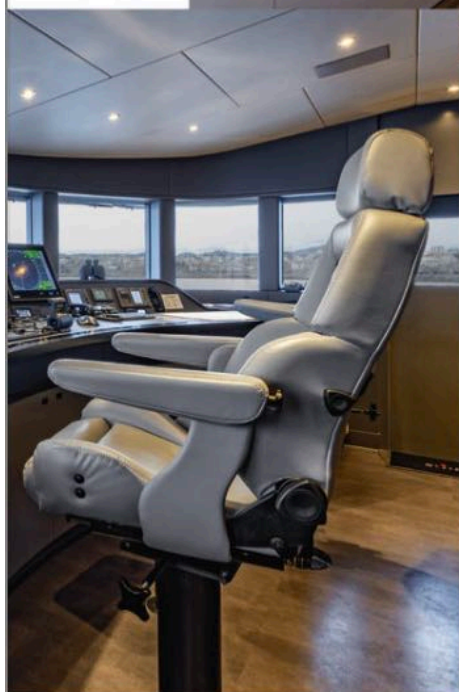
When Heesen launched the full-custom *Sibelle* in 2015, she was a yacht that turned heads. An all-aluminum, fast-displacement trailblazer with a distinctive plumb bow, she scooped up awards and inspired the yard's 164-foot semi-custom series. A decade on, her bones were still flawless, but her look? That was ready for a reset.

Enter *Bijin*, reborn and renamed after a mere nine-month transformation at Monaco Marine, now brandishing a sportier paint job and a fresher, more contemporary interior. This is not a refit story of ripping out bulkheads or tearing apart machinery. Instead, it's about intentional precision. Thanks to knowledgeable owners and a refit team who knew exactly how to make subtlety sing, *Bijin* shows how a refit that focuses on a reawakening can be just as successful as a project set on reinvention.

The first decision was non-negotiable: the existing oyster-white hull had to go. "It was the first thing we wanted to change," Eleonora Pitasso de Pundert says. "My husband, Wim [de Pundert], already had the eye



The sundeck is expansive, a multi-zone space that's also multifunctional. The white cabinetry hides DJ decks, a teppanyaki grill and wet bar. The wheelhouse (bottom left) remains consistent with the original 2015 design



— he said, ‘This boat in Matterhorn white will be fantastic.’” The owners both have a background in AMG racing – Wim founded HTP Motorsport with his son Reynier in 2007, later joining forces with Winward Racing to create HTP Winward Motorsport, now the largest Mercedes-AMG Customer Racing team. Eleonora, a keen racer who has taken part in AMG track events, wanted the yacht to carry some of that same sporting spirit. “We wanted to give her a real, performance-driven feel. The profile was already beautiful, slender, sleek. We just needed the right colors to bring that out.”

The result is striking: hull and superstructure in crisp Matterhorn white and jet-black glazing, sliced through by a bold sunfast red bootstripe and a red rising sun over the nameplates, inspired by the Japanese flag. The new palette sharpens the yacht’s existing lines into something that looks faster, leaner and more purposeful – even while moored.

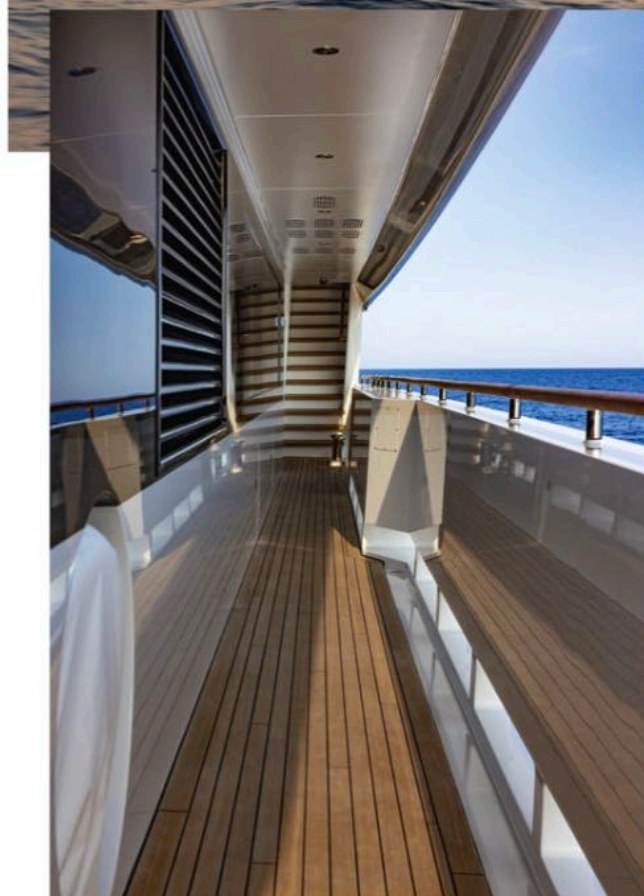
“Superyacht painting is a highly technical discipline, but it’s our bread and butter,” Alexandra Menardo, who worked at Monaco Marine during the project, says. “Flawless finishes are a mix of science, logistics and letting painters do their magic.” The exterior details mattered too. Carbon poles, anthracite gray biminis and awnings continue the sporty theme. The yacht is dressed for the fast lane.

With a background in yachting as a former Burgess broker, Eleonora isn’t the kind of owner who hands over a brief and waits for results. She has a thick black book of contacts and knows the industry inside and out, so she knew exactly who to call and what to expect.

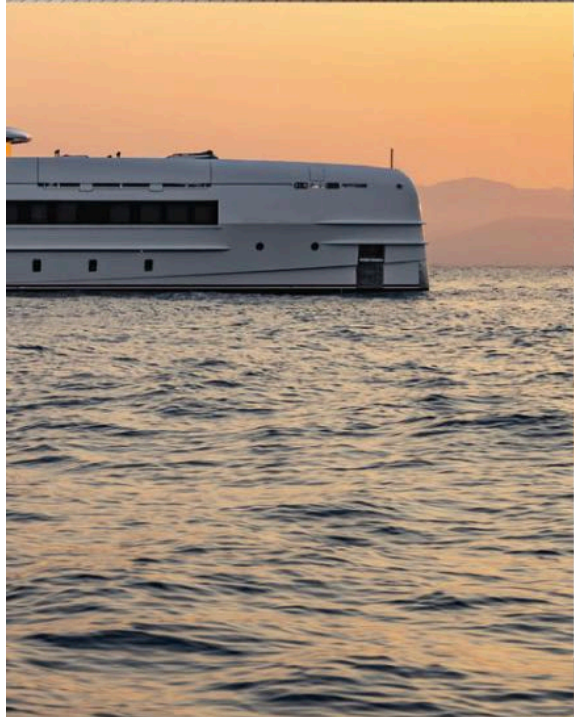
“I’ve known Antonio and Enrico [of Hot Lab] since their firm’s inception,” she says. “I met them literally when they were walking around Monaco with their laptop cases and backpacks, telling brokers, ‘We’re a young design studio, give us a chance.’ I’ve been working with Antonio for 20-plus years.” When it came time to restyle *Sibelle*, she didn’t bother shopping around. Hot Lab knew her taste, and she knew they could deliver.

The same applied to selecting the right yard. “We tendered with a few refit yards, but our first choice was really Monaco Marine,” Eleonora says. “When I was a supplier, I worked many years with them and had a great relationship. It was the obvious choice.” That familiarity paid off. By the time the purchase was finalized in October 2024, the plan was already rolling. The yacht went straight into the shed, and nine months later, she was ready for a partial charter season and a Monaco Yacht Show debut in September 2025.

“Flawless finishes are a mix of science, logistics and letting painters do their magic”



ADDITIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY: EMILIO BIANCHI



A paint job was high on the priority list for the owners. She now sports a Matterhorn white hull and superstructure with jet black accents and a red bootstripe that evoke a racing feel. As seen on the bridge deck aft (top), the owners retained some of the original furniture; carpenters stripped the wood back and oiled it to revitalize it



Five details that make Bijin beautiful



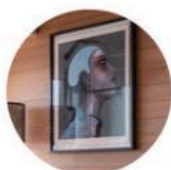
THE RED BOOTSTRIPE

A flash of sunfast red cuts through the hull's Matterhorn white and jet black. It's a motorsport detail borrowed from the owners' AMG racing world: subtle but loud in impact.



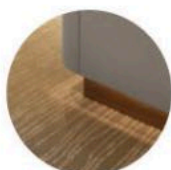
RHODESIAN TEAK FLOORS

Most refits would replace the flooring. Not here. The pink-tinged teak stayed, preserving the yacht's soul and giving warmth that neutral palettes can't match. "This wood is very different to the usual. It has a relaxed feel," Pitasso de Pundert says.



GER DOORNINK ARTWORK

Discovered by chance in Amsterdam, the Dutch artist's portraits of Japanese-inspired figures now line the walls. His style complements *Bijin*'s own blend of soft elegance and sporty edge.



LIGHTING YOU DON'T NOTICE

Hot Lab recalibrated the lighting plan so moods shift imperceptibly with the time of day. Guests may not see it, but they'll feel it; it's a hidden layer that adds to guest comfort.



CHARTER-FRIENDLY AMENITIES

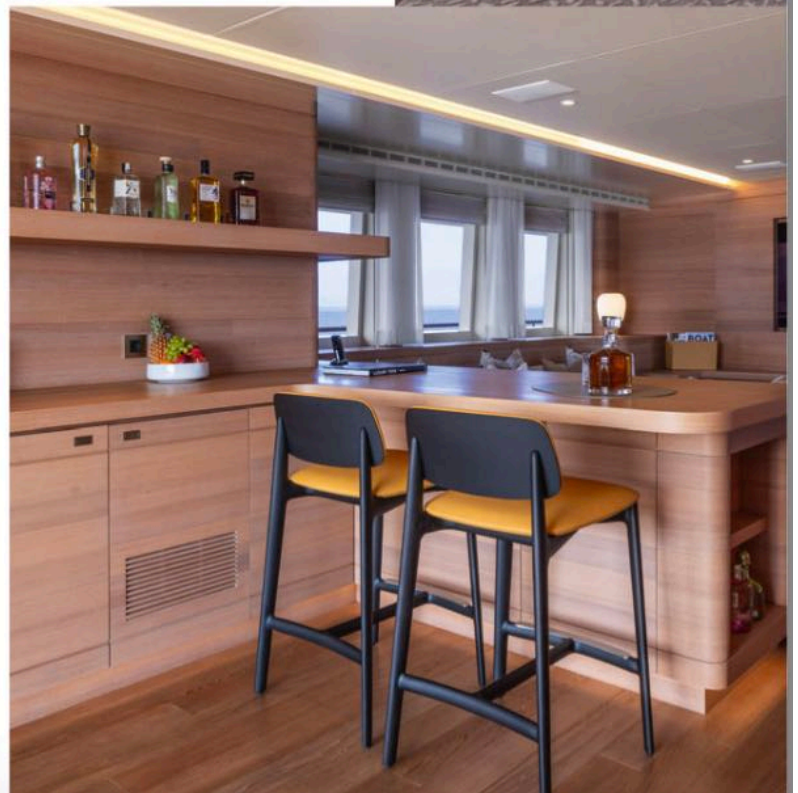
By day, the sundeck is an expanse of loungers and sea breeze. By night, it transforms: full DJ decks stand ready to get the party started. Add a gym, sauna and a garage packed with toys, and *Bijin* is every bit as fun as she is serene.

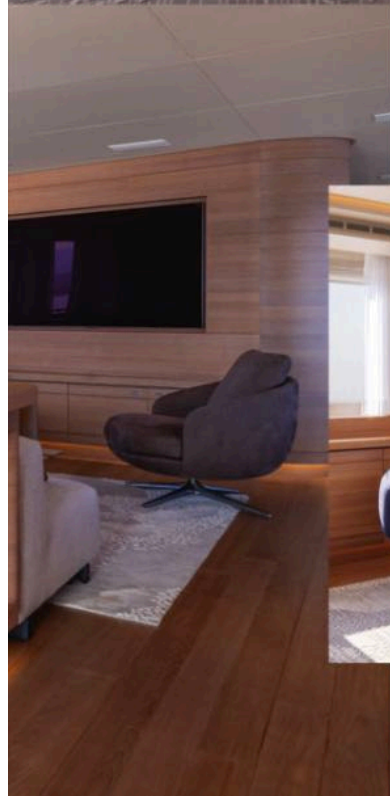




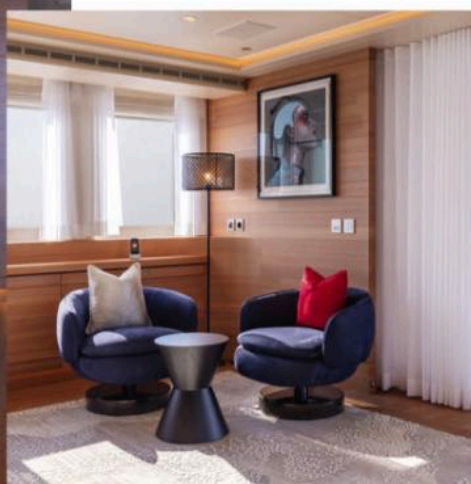


“Although the amount of wood was commented on, we agreed we wanted to retain the soul of the boat”





The team focused on the fittings, furniture and artwork to create the Japandi vibe, adding splashes of red and dark blue, as seen in the skylounge (above and below), the owner's office (opposite page, top) and main salon (bottom center)



In the world of superyacht refits, where deadlines slip and budgets balloon, pulling off a 164-foot transformation in nine months is no small feat. Eleonora credits the crew for their involvement, helping to manage details, chase suppliers and keep the project moving. "It's all been a very smooth operation," she says.

Step inside *Bijin*, and the high-contrast, motorsport-influenced exterior gives way to something altogether softer. Hot Lab's partner and design director Enrico Lumini calls it "Japandi" – a hybrid of Japanese minimalism and Scandinavian warmth – and it runs through every cabin, curtain and color choice.

"The idea was to be surrounded by an organic, naturally blending design, which would help our guests find relaxation and peace," Eleonora says. For her, the name came first. *Bijin* means "beautiful woman" in Japanese, and the word resonated long before the refit began. "Japan is hugely traditional. Its culture is always an ode to beauty. There's even a genre of art called *bijinga*, dedicated to painting beautiful women. That elegance inspired me, so we named her first, then the design followed."

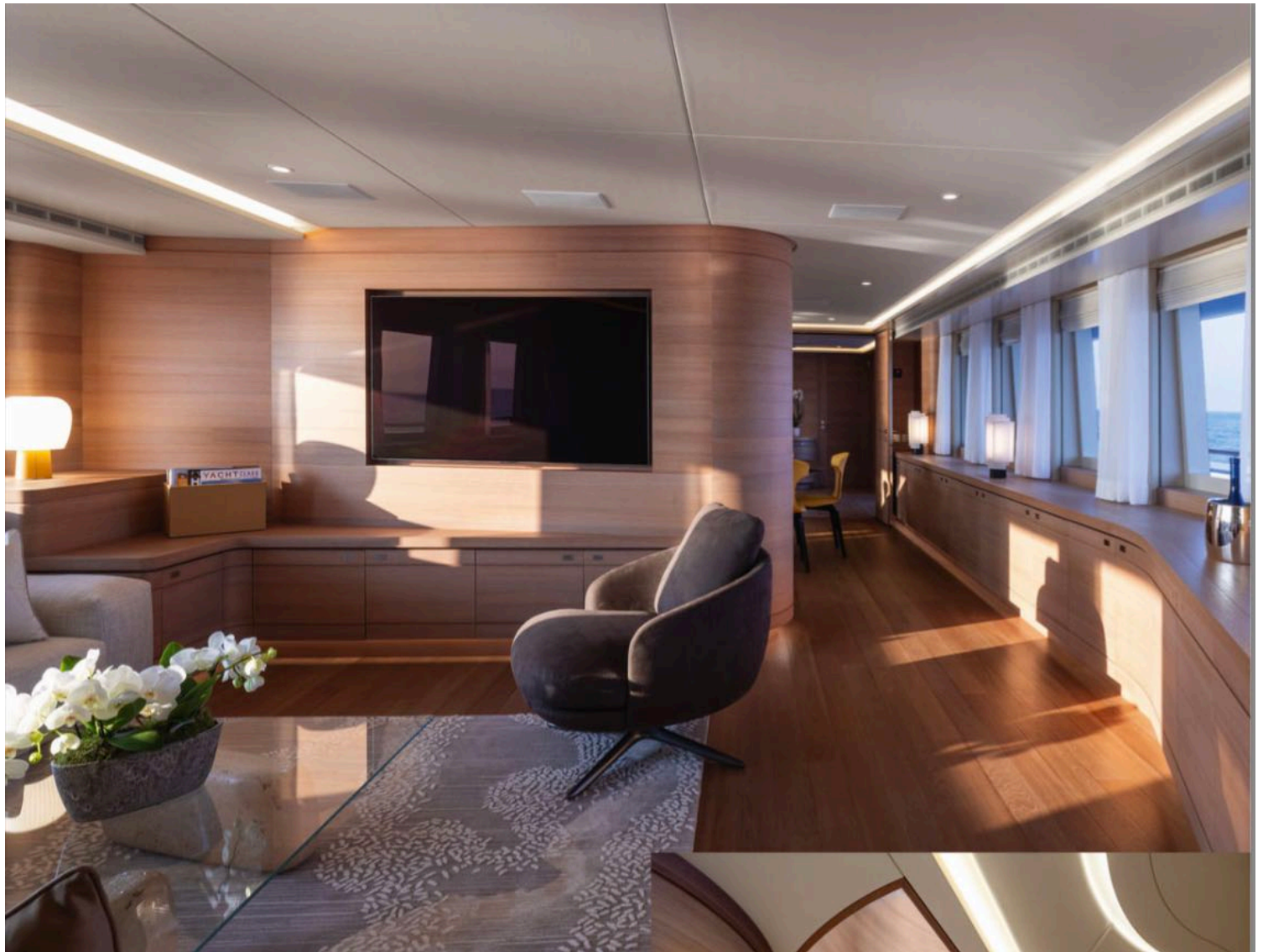
Her fascination with Japan runs deep. As a teenager she was drawn to sketching manga, then later as an adult she visited the Yokohama Boat Show, Kyoto's temples and cherry blossom festivals. At home, Wim even keeps one of the world's largest private koi carp collections. The new interior became a canvas for their personal Japanophile passions.

For Lumini, the challenge was to enhance the yacht without reinventing the wheel. "With a yacht like *Sibelle*, the starting point is respect," he says. "She already had an award-winning design with proportions and layouts that worked beautifully. Our role was to listen to the yacht – to identify where her identity was strongest and should remain intact, and where a contemporary touch could elevate her without erasing her character."

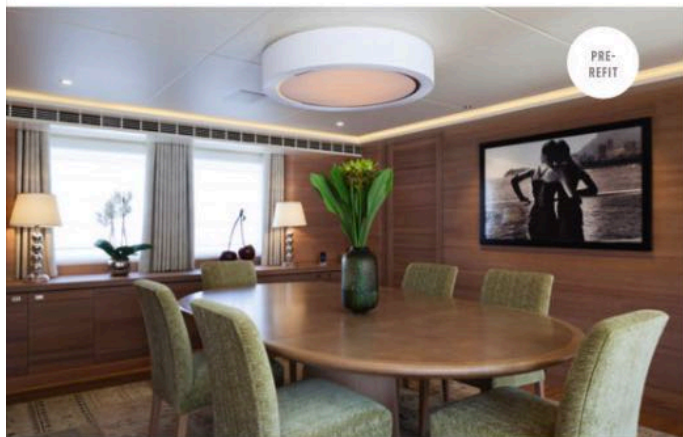
That restraint is what gives the interior its calm authority. The team focused on the "skin" rather than the "skeleton" – new beds and headboards, lighter carpets, thinner curtains, neutral tones replacing heavier shades. The original Rhodesian teak flooring, with its pinkish hue, stayed put. "Although the amount of wood was commented on, my husband and I agreed we wanted to retain the soul of the boat," Eleonora says. "This teak is very different to the usual. It gives a relaxed feel."

Touches of luxury add comfort to the calm interior motif, with supple Saffiano leather, updated bathroom fittings and curated artwork by Dutch

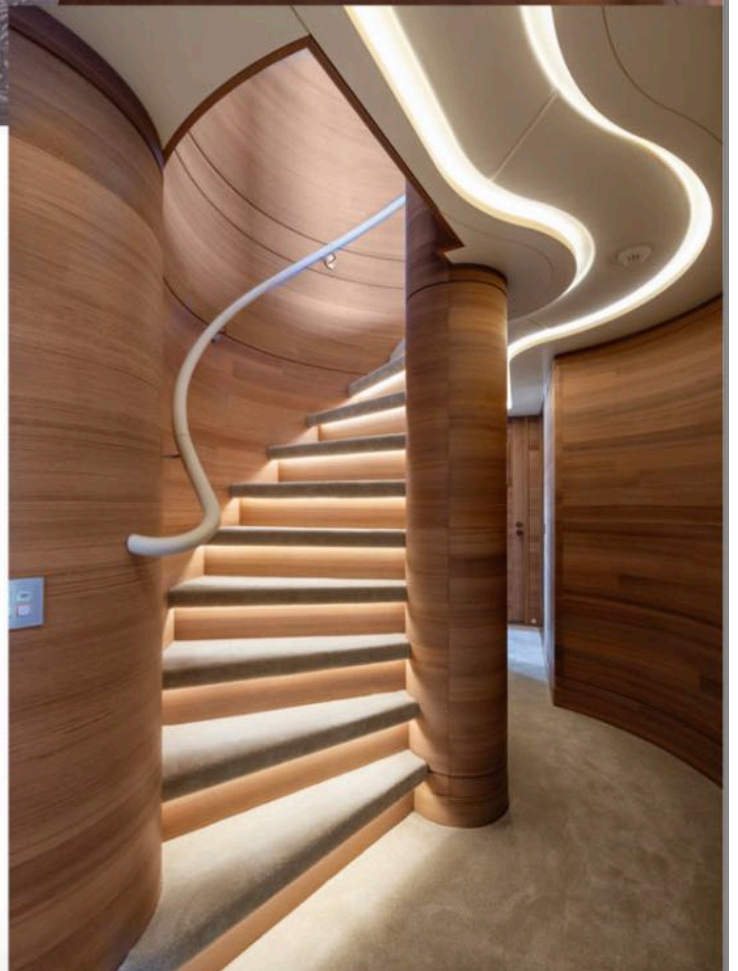
ADDITIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY: EMILIO BIANCHI

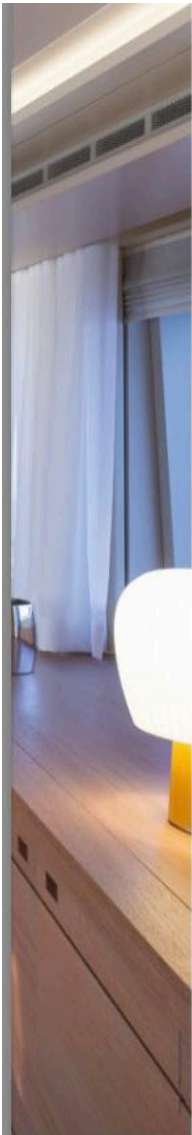


“The idea was to be surrounded by an organic, naturally blending design which would help our guests find relaxation and peace”



PRE-REFIT



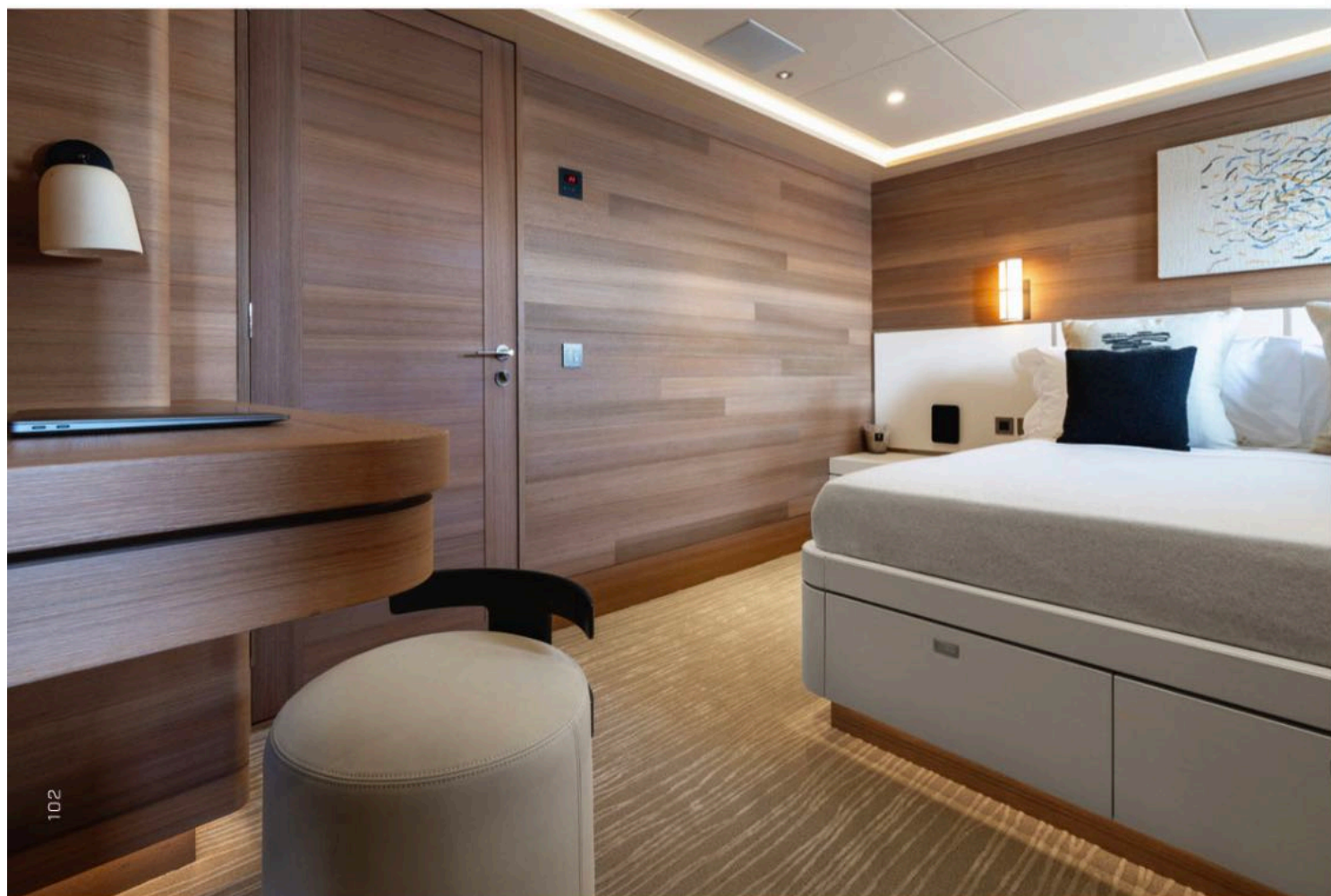


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The original Rhodesian teak that covers the floors and makes up the cabinetry that divides the main salon's lounging and dining areas lends itself well to the calm, relaxing milieu created by the refit redesign

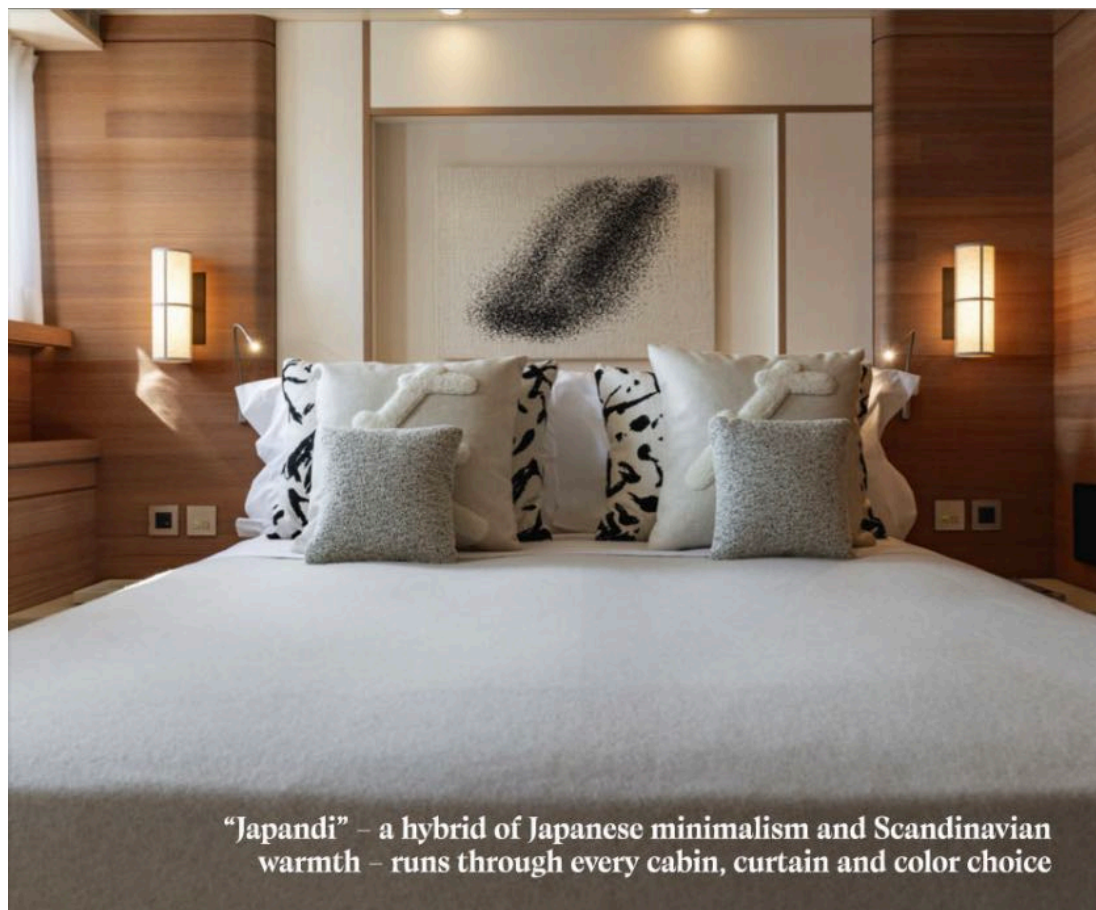
ADDITIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY: EMILIO BIANCHI



painter Ger Doornink, whose work was shaped by his own time in Japan. "Designing for longevity is always about balance," Lumini says. "Freshness doesn't come from bold statements but from harmony, comfort and enduring quality."

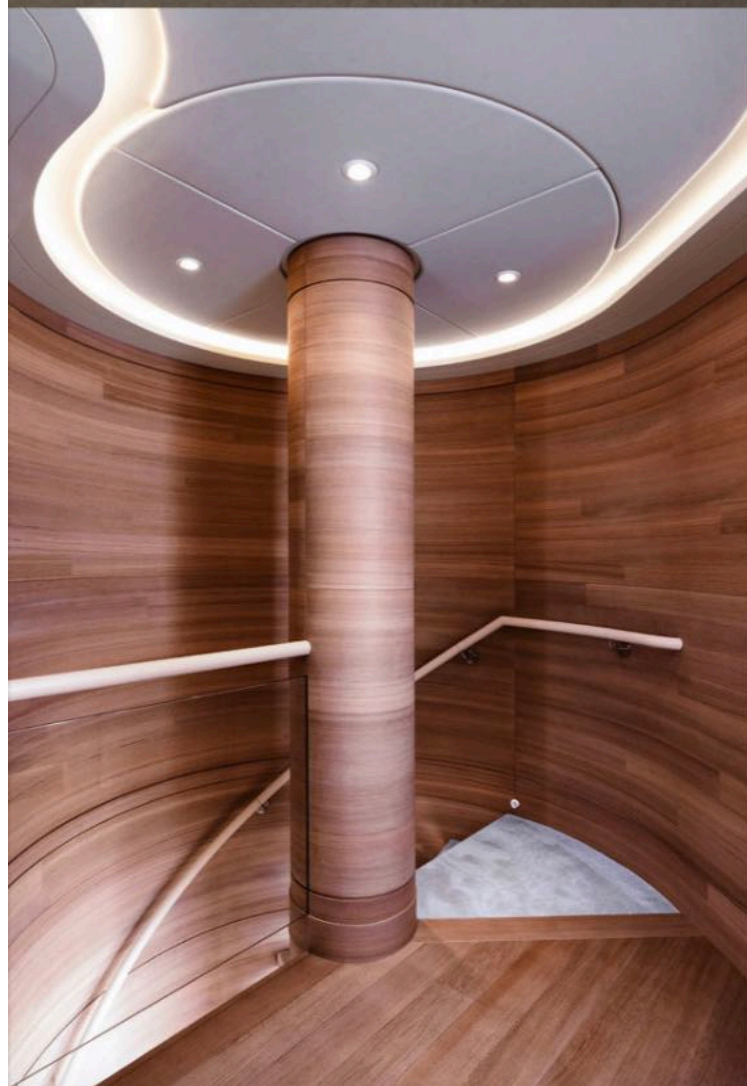
The harmonious design process itself mirrored the refit's design ethos. The long-standing trust between owner, designers and yard allowed decisions to flow naturally, with no creative friction and no ego clashes. Hot Lab's partner and business director Antonio Romano sums it up well. "Sometimes, a project is more than just work – it becomes a dialogue between the dreams of the owner and the soul of the designer," he says. "I've known Eleonora for over 15 years, and creating something together was not just a collaboration but a deeply emotional journey."

If the design brief carried emotional weight, the shipyard's job was to keep emotions out of it. At Monaco Marine, Menardo's team approached the project with clear communication, daily updates and what she calls "positive pressure and good leadership." Ambitious but realistic deadlines were



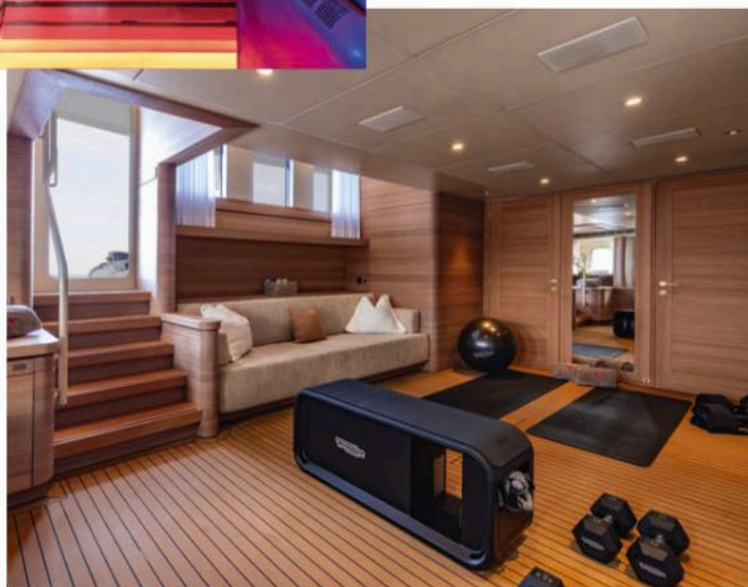
“Japandi” – a hybrid of Japanese minimalism and Scandinavian warmth – runs through every cabin, curtain and color choice

In the four guest cabins found on the lower deck, new beds and headboards create a lighter, airier feel. Opposite page, bottom: the owner's his-and-hers en suites are both generous in size





Just past the boarding platform lies a well-equipped fitness space and an adjacent sauna that cater to active guests



“We created spaces that feel real, warm and effortless. That’s what makes guests want to come back”

met, and the atmosphere stayed collaborative throughout. “The big picture is what makes me proud,” she says. “Every box ticked, on time, in a calm but energetic environment.”

That calm extended right through to delivery. Unlike many refits on older boats, this one revealed no hidden surprises or 11th-hour headaches, thankfully. Technically, the boat was brought up to the modern moment with new generators installed and systems optimized. She was relaunched precisely on schedule – with even Wim himself at times taking the controls of the Travelift.

Menardo sums this project up in a single word: “Serenity.” As refits often come with their fair share of dust, rust and delay, that’s a rare boast. For *Bijin*’s owners, it meant one thing: a 164-foot yacht handed back exactly when promised, ready to earn her keep on the charter market.

Bijin may measure 164 feet in length, but she carries herself like something larger. The absence of a walkaround deck gives an extra six-and-a-half feet of interior beam, creating surprising volume inside. Guests who might normally opt for a 180- or 197-foot yacht have already chartered her and, according to Eleonora, have been impressed. “She has such good volume and feels much bigger,” Eleonora says.

Her charter record is a testament to this. Offered on the market at the end of June 2025, *Bijin* immediately secured six weeks of charters – more than expected. And it was achieved despite arriving late to the summer charter calendar. “Normally, for a yacht newly on the market, we’d expect four weeks and be happy with that. But we signed charters straight away,” Eleonora says. “We could have done more, but we kept September free for boat show prep and press.”

Part of *Bijin*’s charter appeal lies in the lifestyle found on board. The sundeck is expansive, ideal for soaking up sun or doubling as a party hub with a full set of DJ decks. A gym and

sauna in the beach club cater to active guests, while the tender and toy lineup ups the adrenaline factor with a fleet of Seabobs, foiling boards, sailing dinghies, diving equipment and high-performance tenders. With tenders and toys hand-picked through Eleonora’s supplier network, the toy box is designed for guests who like their luxury with a dose of horsepower.

The final package meets that often-elusive blend of being personal enough to reflect the owners’ tastes while still designed with the charter market in mind. For Eleonora and Wim, who selected every material and finish, the yacht represents the ideal balance between business and pleasure. “We created spaces that feel real, warm and effortless,” she says. “That’s what makes guests want to come back.”

Bijin is also proof that refitting can be the smarter choice. “You give a yacht a second life, and it’s much quicker,” Eleonora says. “In nine months, this is what you can achieve.”

If *Sibelle* was the yacht that defined Heesen’s 164-foot platform a decade ago, then *Bijin* shows what happens when you respect that DNA but aren’t afraid to refresh it. She’s still the same award-winning yacht, but now ready for the next chapter. ■

BIJIN

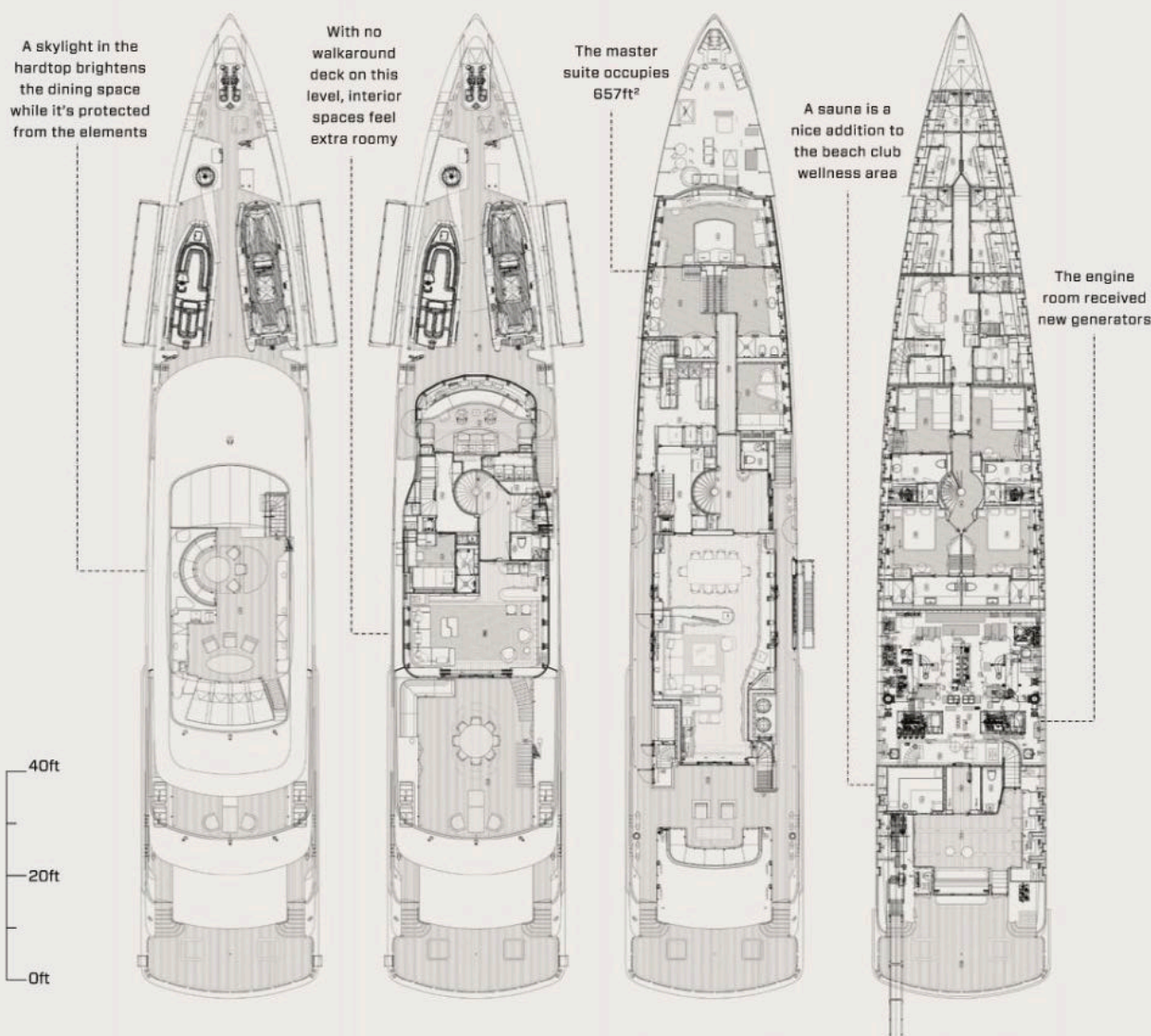
HEESEN YACHTS

SUNDECK

BRIDGE DECK

MAIN DECK

LOWER DECK



LOA 164'
LWL 163'9"
Beam 29'6"
Draft (full load) 7'10"
Gross tonnage 498GT
Engines 2 x MTU 8V 4000 M63
Generators
2 x 120kW John Deere/Kilopak

Stabilizers
Quantum fins, Zero-Speed
Speed (max/cruise)
18.5/15.3 knots
Range at 11.8 knots
3,084nm
Fuel capacity
12,152 gallons

Freshwater capacity
3,699 gallons
Tenders 1 x XTenders; 1 x Whitmarsh
Owners/guests 10
Crew 11
Construction
Aluminum hull and superstructure

Classification
ABS; A1 Commercial Yachting Service; MCA LY3 compliant
Naval architecture
Van Oossanen Naval Architects
Exterior design
Omega Architects; Architectural Bureau

A-B Studio
Refit interior design
Hot Lab
Original Builder/year
Heesen Yachts/2015
Refit yard/year
Monaco Marine/2025
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