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Spectre

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Inner strength

NATURAL MATERIALS BRING THE INTERIOR OF 33.5-METRE *MIMI LA SARDINE* TO LIFE THANKS TO AN OWNER WITH AN EYE FOR THE ORGANIC AND A BOARD ON PINTEREST. *ROGER LEAN-VERCOE* TOURS AN EARTHY EXPLORER DESIGNED WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM SOCIAL MEDIA

Photography Stuart Pearce

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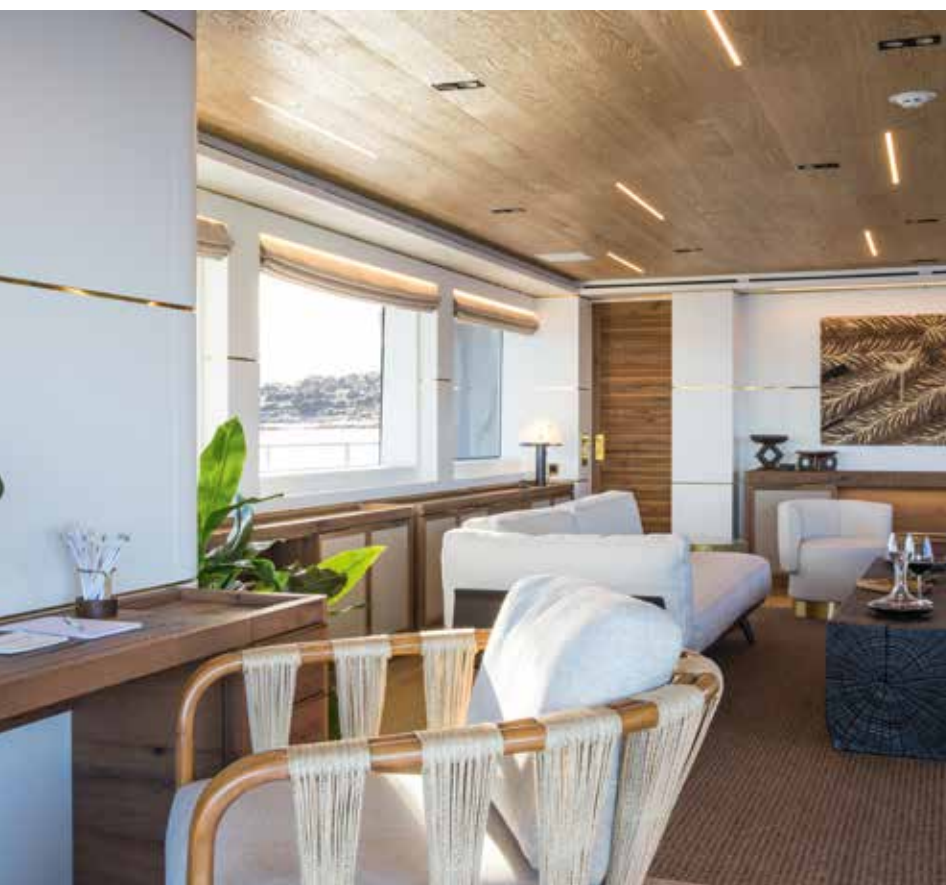
The technology used to plan and build superyachts is constantly evolving, so why shouldn't the creative inspiration that also shapes them? When browsing photo inspiration site Pinterest recently for interior design ideas, I was intrigued to stumble across an elegant mood board based on natural materials and beachcomber finds. Beyond the gorgeous images, what struck me most about the collection was its title - *Mimi la Sardine*... because I had just been asked to visit a yacht of the same name. Could there be a connection? Could a superyacht's decorative scheme be developed on a social media platform?

Mimi la Sardine is an explorer built by Cantiere delle Marche in Ancona, Italy, last year for a company created by Nick and Maxine Leslau. Maxine, who took the lead in conceiving the interior of their new yacht, is a bubbly character - a sculptor from the American Midwest, full of life and enthusiasm. "Our first three yachts were Princesses, the last a 95-footer [29 metre], but to tell you how we got to where we are today I have to step back to 2000 when we were in a very bad yachting accident," she says. "We were chartering [41-metre sailing yacht] *Mirabella III* in the Caribbean when we lost our mast. It was in a storm and there was lots of drama - extremely scary stuff, especially with our three small boys aboard."





“Life for us is all about finding the balance – enjoying what we have worked hard to get, but not leaving a trail of environmental destruction in our wake”



Maxine and her husband are, as she puts it, “obsessed with the water” and were soon back on it, but the experience left its mark. “I had a bit of post-traumatic stress and I always worried about tipping over,” she says. This meant that when it came to choosing a new yacht to buy, safety was the first priority and the couple looked for a really solid boat with a steel hull. Nick saw an explorer for sale but Maxine was not convinced. “I thought,

OK, but is that just going to look like a bath toy because, being an artist, lines are very important to me. If I’m honest, I hadn’t imagined the next boat looking like that!” she recalls. “But when we went out on it we were impressed with her chunkiness and feeling of solidity and stability. It felt so safe at sea, and it had so much space inside – it really felt like a house, with everyone having enough room to do their own thing. We didn’t buy

her as there was so much work needed to bring her up to standard, but she did, eventually, lead us to Cantiere delle Marche for the next boat.”

Cantiere delle Marche has carved a name for itself in the explorer yacht market since it was founded in 2010. Its boats are more than white yachts with a chunky look; they boast truly rugged steel-hulled construction and exceptional range, together with seaworthiness and stability beyond

reproach: items that were identified as essentials of the breed by the yard’s founders, Vasco Buonpensiere and Ennio Cecchini. “Two years after a huge recession was not the most opportune year in which to start a shipyard,” admits Cecchini, the CEO of the company, “but we found a client who believed in us, and now, nine years on, we have delivered 20 yachts – and won awards for them.” The seaworthiness of these vessels is

The owner describes the interior style as that of a “Bohemian boutique hotel”, as seen in the main saloon (opposite page), while equally stylish exterior spaces grace the three decks (above)





One of the owners is an artist whose sculptures incorporate impressions of organic materials such as bark, shells and flowers. She used Pinterest to create a mood board for the interior

decor, which transcended the language barrier with the yard's Italian-speaking design department. Her influence shows in many of the yacht's interior details





The unusual style presented some challenges for Maxine, the largest of which was making the yard understand exactly what was wanted. "I don't speak Italian and a lot of the design team didn't speak English, so my Pinterest file where I gathered my ideas was very useful in the many meetings when I was getting this message over," she says. "I even arrived with pieces of tree saying, 'Look, I really want to have this texture; don't give me any flat surfaces.'" Maxine's persistence, together with her Pinterest board, certainly delivered the interior that she wanted, so much so that she literally jumped for joy when she saw the completed interior for the first time.

As soon as you enter the main saloon you are encased in organic serenity – the oak floor is repeated in the deckhead, while the built-in furniture is also crafted from weathered oak, a huge bulk of which forms a rough-cut low table between a pair of stylish Scandi-style sofas. Vast windows and bright walls light the room and its many pieces of art, while connecting it with the ocean beyond. It certainly achieves the aim of a family-oriented beach house style. But, unusually, there is no dining table, since the eminently sensible decision was taken to make dining the function of the upper deck saloon while, moving aft through wide doors, the aft deck of the same



Wooden deckheads add to the warmth of the interior decor, which is composed of natural materials throughout the yacht. The owner initially resisted the shiny brass strips that intersect the white wall panels but it turned out that these were a construction necessity, so they were signed off – providing they were allowed to oxidise in the same manner as the bronze taps in the bathrooms. Vast windows and wide openings to the exterior connect the indoors and out



epitomised by one of their early yachts, a Darwin 96 class that was caught in Hurricane Sandy as she approached Fort Lauderdale where she was to take part in the boat show. "She was taking six-metre waves on the stern," says Cecchini, "but she rode them out very safely and arrived just 12 hours before the show started – and she was still ready in time for the opening!" The yard still offers the Darwin class in lengths up to 32.6 metres, but *Mimi la Sardine* is a 33.5 metre in the Nauta Air class. As ruggedly built as the Darwin, this handsome, semi-production vessel has an extremely efficient steel hull from Sergio Cutolo at Hydro Tec topped by an aluminium superstructure. The styling of the yacht and its interior layout were the work of Nauta Yachts, while Maxine became intimately involved in the interior decoration from day one, working closely with Cantiere delle Marche's interiors boss, Filippo Bevilacqua.

"As an artist, I'm very interested in plaster and clay sculpture," says Maxine, "and my work often

incorporates impressions of bark and natural organic materials, like shells and flowers." This new boat, the first they had built from scratch, had to embrace this style. "We are quite earthy people and are not interested in an interior full of shiny, polished surfaces. We wanted to create the feel of a family holiday home, with the close-to-the-water feel of a relaxed beach house. I wanted to use plenty of natural materials like reclaimed wood and fabrics like hemp, linen and bamboo, and we even insist on organic soaps and candles." What they did not want was "Wedgwood porcelain or white-gloved stewardesses constantly offering you coffee". Luxury was essential but she describes it as "Bohemian boutique hotel" or "rich hippy" rather than formal glamour. "Life for us is all about finding the balance – enjoying what we have worked hard to get, but not leaving a trail of environmental destruction in our wake," she says. So *Mimi la Sardine* is an economical displacement yacht with that ethos running throughout – they jettisoned plastic straws, for example.



Exploring the world with a smaller footprint

Owners are slowly but surely becoming aware of the need to reduce the environmental impact of their yachts. The most laudable example of this is perhaps the ultra-cool, three-masted 107-metre *Black Pearl* – the world's largest sailing yacht – that boasts the unique ability (for any yacht, motor or sail, of more than 30 metres in length) to cross the oceans without the use of any carbon-based fuel. But going greener doesn't have to involve such revolutionary boatbuilding. With *Mimi la Sardine*, the Leslaus have replaced a "gas-guzzling" semi-displacement yacht with a larger but eminently cleaner and more economical displacement vessel. Two 1,800kW diesels (typically MTU 16V 2000 M93s) are generally used to power a 29-metre, 28-knot, semi-displacement motor yacht. These will have an approximate fuel burn of around 600 litres of diesel per hour (yacht brokerage advertisements for semi-displacement yachts usually shy away from providing consumption figures) at a cruising speed of about 20 knots. Of course, powered by a pair of 533kW Caterpillar diesels, *Mimi la Sardine* is much slower, offering a normal cruising speed of 12.2 knots when she consumes just 163 litres per hour, while at 10 knots she sips just 72 litres per hour – but what a saving in both monetary and ecological terms. On a long-distance delivery her comfortable 7.5-knot cruising speed is even more economical, giving her a massive range of more than 12,000 nautical miles. This yacht can see the world in comfort and style while reducing her impact on the planet.



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Above and right: the owner's suite features a spa-like en suite closed off by sliding louvre doors on either side of the dual vanity. Below: the Nauta Air design by Mario Pedol and Massimo Gino of Nauta Yachts for Cantiere delle Marche is an elegant rendition of the robust, go-anywhere explorer



level is the yacht's main outdoor dining area. This organic elegance extends throughout the yacht from the master cabin, positioned traditionally, forward on the main deck, to the four lower-deck guest cabins.

Equal attention was given to the deck areas, which were arranged for maximum functionality and style. Aloft, the sundeck includes a spa pool, sunbathing and bimini-shaded dining served from its own barbecue, while forward-facing seating gives the grandstand view when under way. Another large sunbed, ideally positioned to obtain a cooling breeze while at anchor, is found on the foredeck but, for many, the main deck aft will be the yacht's real outdoor attraction. *Mimi la Sardine* was lengthened by a metre over her earlier sistership *Narvalo* to provide a larger bathing platform for watersports, but shares her wide stairway descending from the aft deck, a feature that provides intimate connectivity between the

aft deck and water. “I love this area,” enthuses Maxine. “You can sit and draw in shaded comfort on the aft deck and still be part of the watersports or fishing that is happening on the bathing platform; this boat is all about being together as family and friends and close to the water.

“We feel this is a perfect yacht,” she continues. “It accommodates a family in all the style and comfort

it needs and gives everything you want without disrespect to the planet. *Mimi la Sardine* is, for sure, the largest yacht I have helped create and may be the last, but we shall see.” What Maxine did not say, was that it was her hard work that achieved her dream. The shipyard and its professional design team fully acknowledge this, writing on its website: “A special tribute must be paid to Maxine

Leslau, whose enthusiasm, charisma, knowledge of design, materials and manufacturers were pivotal to the extraordinary result achieved. Her exquisite taste and capability to share her vision helped create *Mimi la Sardine's* unique interior design and decoration.” Of course, a modicum of praise must extend to Pinterest, which also played the part of translator in all this. ▣

Located forward on the main deck, the master suite uses almost all of the yacht's 7.5m beam and enjoys the brightness provided by the large windows



Mimi la Sardine

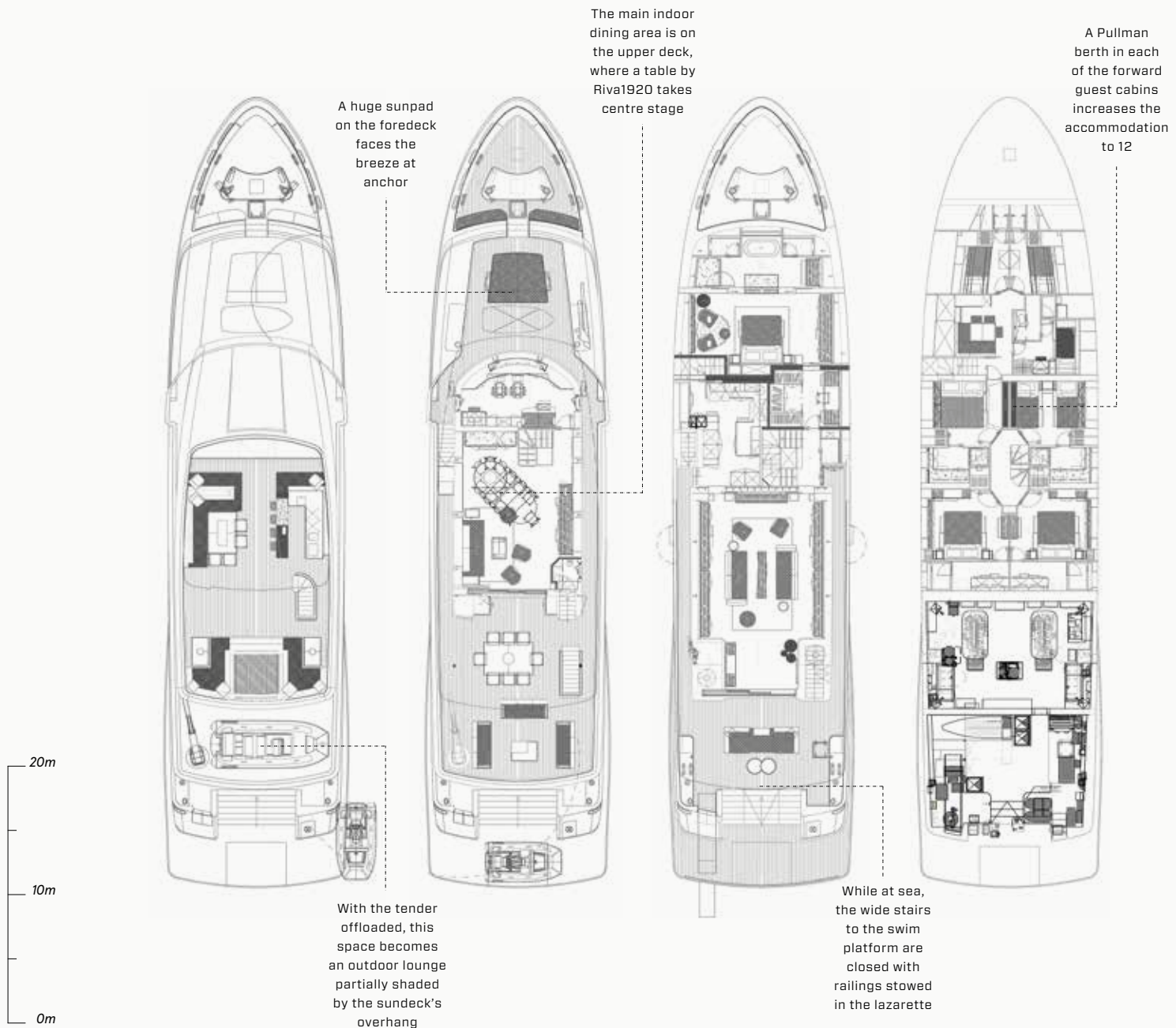
Cantiere delle Marche

Sundeck

Upper deck

Main deck

Lower deck



LOA 33.5m

LWL 30m

Beam 7.5m

Draught (full load) 2.35m

Gross tonnage
299GT

Engines

2 x Caterpillar C18 ACERT

Speed max/cruise

13.5/12 knots

Range at 9 knots

5,500nm

Generators

2 x Kohler 55kW

1 x Kohler 23kW

Fuel capacity

48,000 litres

Freshwater capacity

6,000 litres

Tender

EXT 645 by Extender

Owners/guests 10-12

Crew 6

Construction

Steel hull and aluminium superstructure

Naval architecture

Hydro Tec

Exterior styling

Nauta Yachts

Interior design

Nauta Yachts

Builder/year

Cantiere delle Marche/2018

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