

BOAT

International

US
EDITION


LONG-LOST YACHTS

TOP DESIGNERS ON
THE PROJECTS
THAT NEVER MADE IT



BRIGHT IDEAS

THE LATEST
SUPERYACHT
LIGHTING TRENDS



Why Mexico
is becoming the
hot new cruising
destination

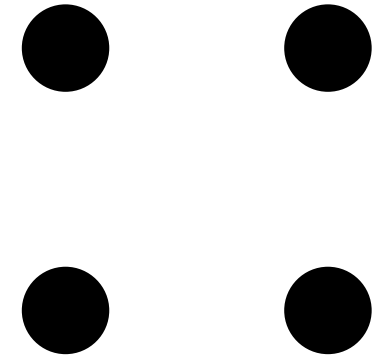
WORLD EXCLUSIVE

ON BOARD 262 FT

EXCELLENCE



Photography
Guillaume Plisson (exteriors);
Winch Media (interiors)



LOOK SHARP

“The owner saw a preliminary model at the 2015 Fort Lauderdale show, and said, ‘I want that boat,’” says designer Andrew Winch. Four years on, that owner has taken delivery of *Excellence*, as *Sam Fortescue* discovers



COVER BOAT



WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN YOU THINK YOU'VE BUILT

THE PERFECT 200FT YACHT?

WELL, NATURALLY,

YOU START AGAIN WITH SOMETHING EVEN BIGGER.

Or at least that's what the American owner of the *Excellence* series of six yachts chose to do. "The 60-meter [196ft] yacht that I had, *Excellence V*, was in my opinion the most beautiful, high volume, best performing yacht of her size that I was aware of," he tells me. "To build another 60-meter that was better, I believed was impossible. I decided to move up to 80 meters [262ft] and a more contemporary design. At one of the yacht shows I saw a rendering of a design that was to be a Winch/Abeking joint venture that I fell in love with."

This begins the rapid-fire story of the sixth *Excellence*, perhaps the most striking yacht ever to leave Abeking & Rasmussen's yard in Bremen, northern Germany. With her heavily reversed bow and acres of sheer glass windows reflecting back at me like a pair of aviator sunglasses, *Excellence* stopped me in my tracks as I gazed at her across the River Weser.

In fact, work on the boat was in progress several years before the owner decided he wanted a new yacht. Andrew Winch's design office had teamed up with Abeking to produce a radical concept. "The owner saw a preliminary model at the 2015 Fort Lauderdale show, and said,

"I want that boat," recalls Winch when I meet him in Bremen to tour the yacht. "He came to us because we helped him step out of the middle market and out of his comfort zone. He's had to be extremely brave and question whether he will like it in the end."

At this point, the design had some of its key features in evidence - that bow, the huge areas of glazing and the flying-saucer-shaped pods fore and aft of each deck. But in other ways, it has changed dramatically, growing shorter and losing its proposed helipad as the curve of the bow was stretched further aft. The process was surprisingly quick. "After so many builds the owner is a very experienced specifier," Winch says. "He works with a tick list and thinks it through methodically."

Somewhat counter-intuitively, the best place to really understand the striking exterior of this yacht is inside - the mezzanine on the owner's deck to be precise. Here, two decks have been cut away, so that your gaze falls 30ft to the main deck below when you peer over the balustrade. The 16ft-tall sheets of glass that form the mirrored external skin of the yacht are displayed in all their glory. Two slim steel frames are the only support for the edges of these vast panes. It is a view into the heart of an engineering problem that Abeking & Rasmussen at first considered



The stunning atrium (top) rises from the main deck all the way up to the owner's deck and proved a major engineering challenge for Abeking & Rasmussen. The atrium is enclosed by 16ft-tall vertical glass panels that create *Excellence's* distinctive profile (above), along with the reverse bow and the circular pods that house the exterior spaces fore and aft (left). Opposite page: some of the 80ft of perfectly smooth and reflective glass panels that surround the main superstructure

The eagle has landed

Reverse bows on yachts are nothing new, with Feadship's famous 238ft yacht *Predator* showcasing the design back in 2008. But *Excellence* sets a new standard, with its razor-sharp bow swooping back a full 33ft before joining the line of the main deck. "We call it an eagle bow – it's the exact shape of the beak of an American eagle," designer Andrew Winch says.

Its sheer scale required Abeking & Rasmussen to spend many long hours perfecting and tank-testing the naval architecture behind it. Close to the waterline, the stem is machined from a solid piece of stainless steel, before the flare takes over and it blooms outwards. Something as mundane as launching and recovering the anchors had to be completely rethought with this novel structure.

In fact, she has a bulbous bow to increase buoyancy forward and improve wave-breaking, but it is completely hidden below the waterline. The result, according to Abeking naval architect Philip Augener, is a boat that handles at least as well as a traditional hull shape.

"She has the wake of a slipper launch," he says. "We did tank-testing up to 28ft waves. You only have seas like that around Greenland and, in reality, you don't go out in that stuff."



**"WE CALL IT AN EAGLE BOW – IT'S THE EXACT SHAPE OF THE BEAK
OF AN AMERICAN EAGLE," SAYS DESIGNER ANDREW WINCH**

Excellence's knife-like bow (left) stretches back 33ft before it reaches the level of the main deck. She also has a bulbous bow below the waterline to aid buoyancy and wave-breaking



Opposite page: the three-story atrium is spectacular whatever deck you view it from and glass balustrades add to the sense of light and openness. This page: the marble-rich main deck lobby (above) and the entrance to the owner's stateroom (below). Overleaf: the bridge deck lounge, complete with Cadillac-grille couch

too difficult to solve. "It was a nightmare," says senior project manager Jens Bottke before remembering himself. "Really a challenge."

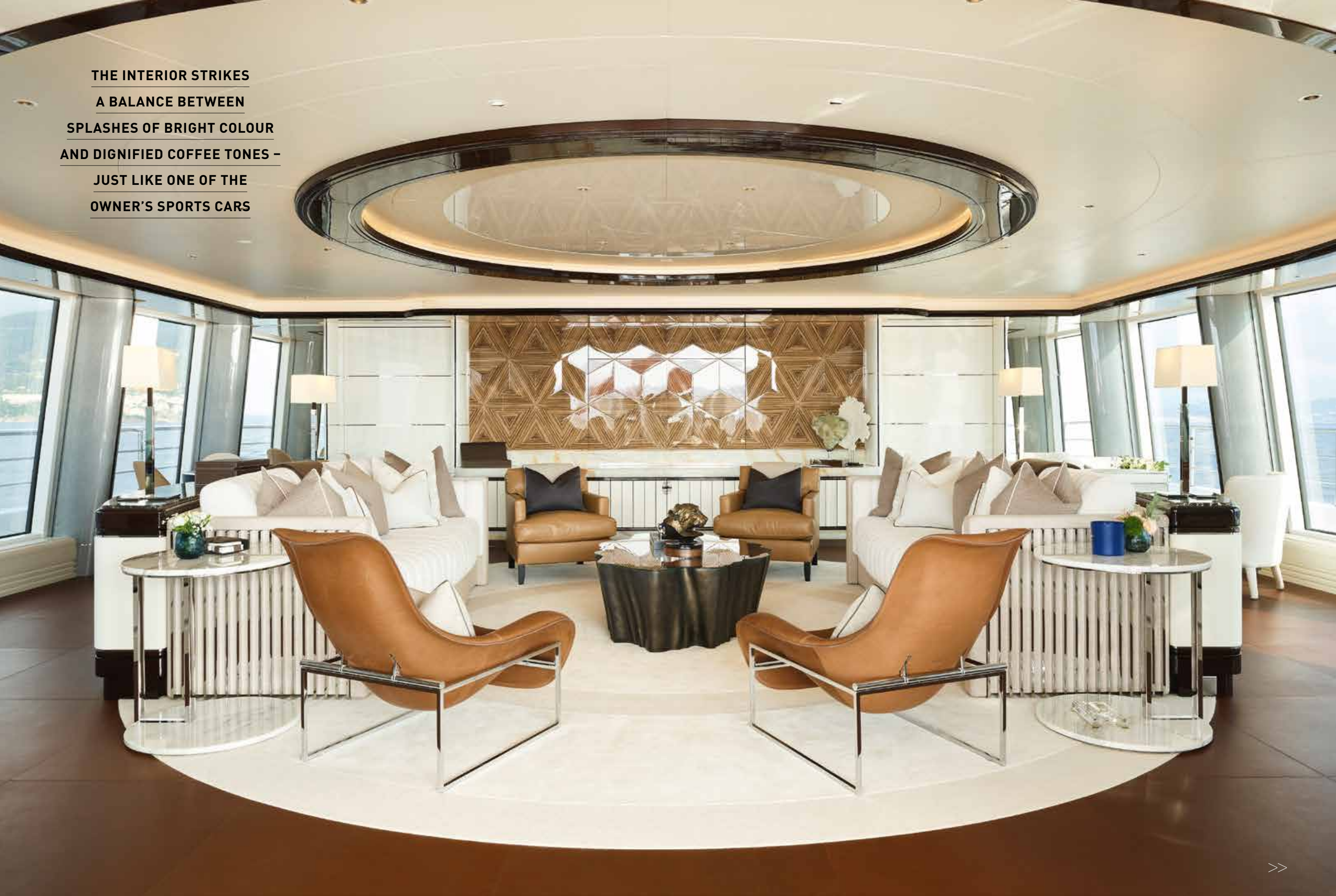
Despite the expansion and contraction of the aluminum superstructure, and the obvious movement caused by the yacht's motion, it was not the fixing of these 1.4-tonne glass panels that presented the greatest problem. It was the fact that they needed to be perfectly rigid on the outside, so as not to distort the mirror finish, and provide excellent insulation to spare the yacht's air-conditioning. "The glass packages are actually four to six panes, complete with insulation layers and finishes," Bottke says. At their thickest, they are 2.75 to 3.15 inches thick. Add to that the need to create three-dimensional curves in places and you have a huge challenge that could be overcome only by using German technology and Italian engineering.

Heading out on to the side deck, I marvel at the soft line of perfectly smooth glass. Bremen's industrial riverscape is perfectly reflected from top to bottom. Life rafts are hidden in a bulwark cabinet so as not to spoil the majestic lines of the yacht. And you won't find any hint of a ventilation louver in the exterior, either. They are all disguised behind mirror-finish stainless, blending in perfectly with the windows. Abeking also had to design some smart exterior doors to account for the superstructure's bevel and curvature. Each set uses a slightly different mechanism, swinging silently open on different-sized arms or gliding out on a single curved support. "I think there's only one standard exterior door on the whole yacht," Bottke says. "Structure and design-wise, it's been our most challenging project."

Challenges aplenty awaited inside, too: from details such as how to make an electric blind for a window that gets thinner as it goes up, to weaving filaments of precious silver into a composite that resembles metallic carbon fiber. The unifying theme for the interior is luxury cars, a nod to the origin of the owner's fortune in car dealerships. "The boat has car detailing throughout," Winch says. "There are many things you might recognize." It ranges from the black-and-white concentric circles on the salon floor and ceiling that recall the tires of a classic car, to the double-stitched leather detailing in the cabins. The ventilation louvers in the cabins are designed to look like the grille of a hood, and there are tire-track patterns carved into the wooden paneling of a dayhead.



**THE INTERIOR STRIKES
A BALANCE BETWEEN
SPLASHES OF BRIGHT COLOUR
AND DIGNIFIED COFFEE TONES –
JUST LIKE ONE OF THE
OWNER'S SPORTS CARS**





The owner's stateroom (above) features wool carpets with crocodile pattern by Oliver Treutlein and Macassar ebony paneling. Below: views and light are maximized in the guest suites. Bottom right: the main deck sauna



The interior strikes a balance between splashes of bright color and dignified coffee tones – a bit like one of the owner's favorite sports cars, in fact. Besides noble woods and fine Italian leathers, marble is the stand-out material on board. "There are over 30 different marbles on *Excellence*," says Winch interior designer Lizzy Hart. "And about 30 percent is golden onyx." The soft honey-toned stone is quarried in Chile and appears everywhere aboard – from the main guest corridor to the his-and-hers owner's bathrooms. Here, the effect is particularly striking: the space glows as if it contained a hoard of gold.

Every cabin has a unique character, with its own feature headboard, and every public space has its own rarefied list of marbles, precious woods and leather. There are woods I've never heard of – tamo ash, blue ombre rippled sycamore, amboyna burl – and novel leather finishes. Minute detail is everywhere you look. In the owner's stateroom, it is Macassar ebony paneling, wool carpets with crocodile pattern by Oliver Treutlein, and woven silver wire that makes the window mullions look like precious carbon fiber. And yet practicality is never far from the surface. All the high-tread areas are in limed oak, for instance, not vulnerable carpet.

Clever use of mirrors throughout the interior serves to extend sight lines and broaden perspectives. In the main salon, for instance, mirrors behind the louvers make the casing around the ventilation shafts disappear. There are also thin-mirrored strips all the way around the top of walls in the cabins, which fool the eye into seeing more space. It has meant being equally cunning with the use of indirect lighting.

Though the owner runs *Excellence* as a charter business, he was adamant that the boat was built entirely to his own taste. "*Excellence* was built to be a sporty, modern, comfortable yacht that could become a classic," he tells me. "The interior is not designed for charter – it is luxury with tremendous space, beautiful fabrics and is comfortable to spend time on."

All the same, he knows some of his guests will need to work, so he has put in a library/office where previous *Excellences* made do with a desk in a corner. There are tobacco leaves on the wall here, pressed into a rich pattern and trimmed with laser-cut silver leather. Birdseye maple is the feature wood, alongside cappuccino marble and tan leather tiles underfoot. It is a very calming space. And he specified the six guest cabins to be 270 square feet and of very similar comfort, to avoid any competition for "the big cabin." The gym on the main deck had to be bigger than on the previous boats, and the spa area is among the brightest I've seen, with great views out of the sauna through the huge windows. There's also a dedicated nine-seat cinema.

For all the richness of the finish, the atmosphere on board is comfortable and

The library/office on the bridge deck caters to charter guests who have work commitments and features birds eye maple detailing and leather floor tiles



Driving inspiration

The grille and other design elements from a **Bugatti Royale (1927-33)** are found in the forward dayhead on the main deck



The **Ferrari 365 GTB4 "Daytona" Spyder (1968-73)** has inspired the main deck aft dayhead vanity design



A tire-track pattern from a **Bentley EXP 10 Speed 6 Concept (2015)** is found in the bridge deck dayhead

The grille design and classic fender wings of a **Cadillac** are recalled on the upper lounge's couch





Clockwise from opposite page, top: the lounge on the owner's deck; the main deck salon with its onyx-trimmed coffee table; the bridge deck lounge that opens on to the extensive aft deck; the vertiginous main staircase; the main deck dining room



convenient. Take the main salon, where you are greeted by deep cream-colored sofas and a 6ft-diameter coffee table. As we sit down, I have to check the natural urge to put my feet up. The owner anticipated this and requested golden onyx for the rim of the wooden table precisely so that it would resist wear and tear. On the bridge deck, aft of the 14-seat outdoor table, there is a relaxed bar. And so it doesn't block the view, it is sunken into the deck allowing guests to look over the top. The pool on the main deck below has removable bar seating in it.

This same pool also spreads dappled light onto the beach club below through a glass floor panel. Most guests will approach in this way, so the owner insisted on a space that at once welcomes them and showcases all the delights the yacht has to offer. He's done away with the usual fold-up transom door: *Excellence* features instead two curved sliding doors that give access from the large beach club into the tender garage.

And this is no ordinary garage. It has been designed and fitted out with a bar, seating and lined with the yacht's best toys. As you step aboard, you spot the dive gear and wetsuits, Seabobs and RS200 sailing dinghy. You're already excited about the experience that lies ahead. "I have spent a great deal of time on yachts and it is truly my passion," the owner says. "I love spending time on board."

The boat started in the Med and was due to cross the Atlantic to make the Fort Lauderdale Boat Show - she easily has the range to do that. With this project, the owner has completed a different sort of journey, building a yacht that will look edge for decades to come. And though he is clearly very proud of the result, there is one thing he didn't get quite right: "I felt the design would be very polarizing, but I was wrong," he tells me. "It appears that better than 90 percent of the comments are extremely positive." ▣

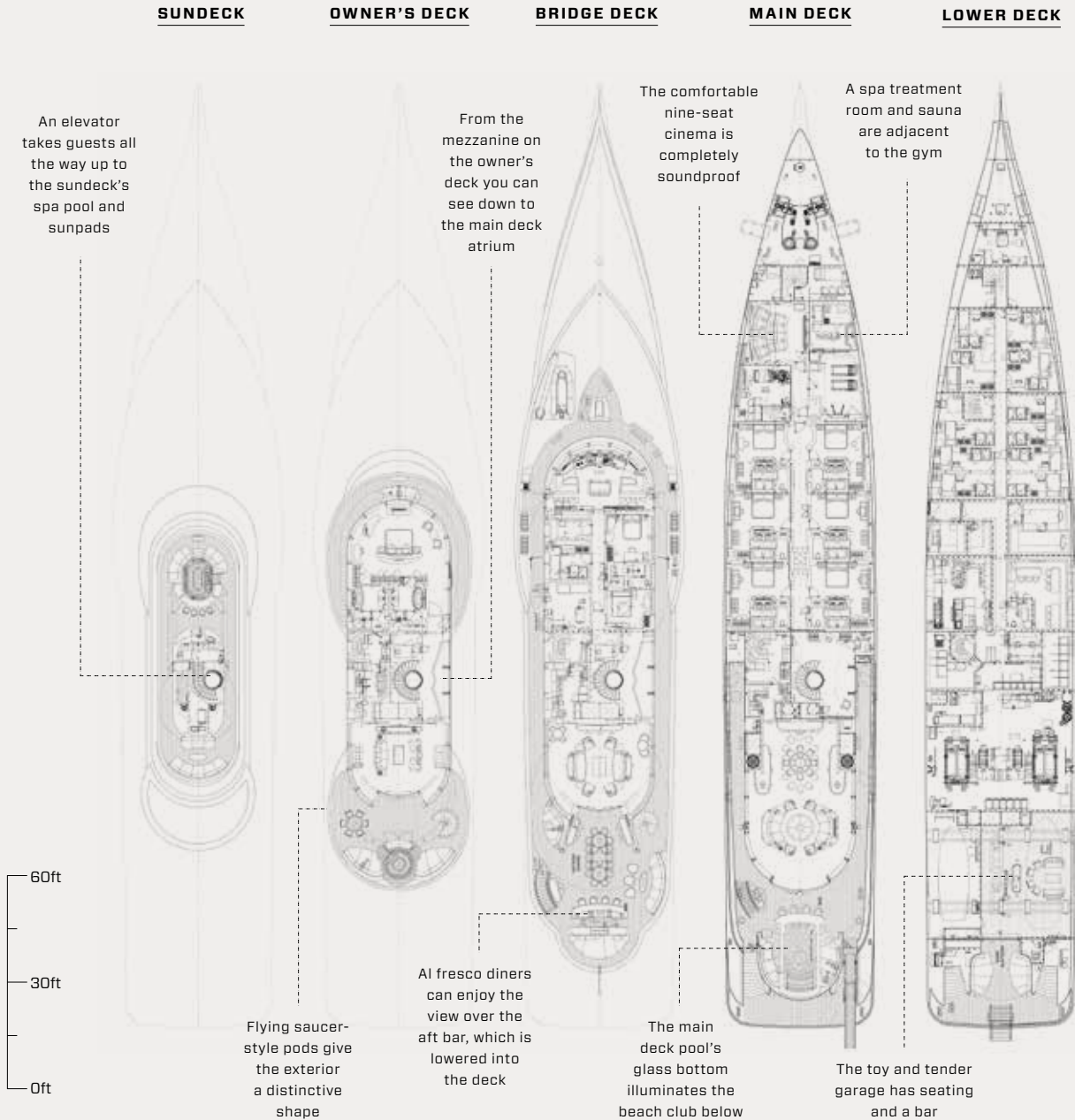


"THE INTERIOR IS NOT DESIGNED FOR CHARTER. IT IS LUXURY WITH TREMENDOUS SPACE, BEAUTIFUL FABRICS AND COMFORTABLE TO SPEND TIME ON"



EXCELLENCE

ABEKING & RASMUSSEN



LOA 262' 3"
LWL 260' 7"
Beam (max) 47' 5"
Draft (full load) 11' 3"
Gross tonnage
 2,115GT

Engines
 2 x MTU 12V
 4000 M65R
Speed max/cruise
 14/17 knots
Range at 13 knots
 4,500nm

Generators
 3 x MTU 12V 2000
 M41A 575kW;
 1 x Caterpillar C7.1 LXE
 20 164kW
Fuel capacity
 44,775 gallons
Freshwater capacity
 7,925 gallons

Tenders
 1 x 31' Hodgdon
 Limo Tender; 1 x 26'
 Hodgdon Open Tender
Owners/guests 14
Crew 21
Construction
 Steel hull; aluminum
 superstructure

Classification
 LRoS
Naval architecture
 Abeking & Rasmussen
Exterior styling
 Winch Design
Interior design
 Winch Design

Builder/year
 Abeking &
 Rasmussen/2019
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