

Outside the Lines

The 262-foot Abeking & Rasmussen *Excellence* is a study in custom details for an experienced yachtsman.

story Jill Bobrow interior photos Winch Design



JEFF BROWN/BREED MEDIA

Bow on, as she cuts through the water, the 262-foot (79.9-meter) Abeking & Rasmussen *Excellence* looks like a spaceship. Winch Design gave her a reverse bow, double-height mirrored glass and flying-saucer-shaped pods that are visible fore and aft on each deck.

The bow swoops back a full 33 feet before joining the line of the main deck. Ignacio Oliva-Velez, head of interiors at Winch Design, compares the shape to the beak of an American bald eagle. At the waterline, the stem, machined from a solid piece of stainless steel, had to be constructed with a particular angle of flare. To increase buoyancy and improve wave-breaking, there's a bulbous bow hidden below the waterline. Underwater lights are angled backwards, to exhibit forward motion even at anchor.

The yacht, overall, is built with many innovative design details, all of which helped her earn the distinctions of finest yacht and best exterior at the Monaco Yacht Show. Quite a few of the ideas incorporated into *Excellence* required custom solutions.

The bow configuration, for instance, took two months to get just right and needed a new approach to launching and recovering the anchors. Ventilation louvers are hidden behind the mirror finish of the glass superstructure, blending in with the windows. Abeking & Rasmussen also designed exterior doors that work with the superstructure's bevel and curvature.

"In structure and design, she has been our most challenging project to date," says Jens Bottke, senior project manager at Abeking & Rasmussen in Germany. "Even the passerelle is a unique feat of engineering. Transformer-like, it telescopically extends from underneath one of the lower-deck staircases, with the staircase moving upwards, to allow space for it to extend forward."

Sixteen-foot-high glass panes supported by two thin steel frames form an integral part of the yacht's exterior. The amount of glass presented a particular challenge for Abeking & Rasmussen, which had to account for the expansion and contraction of the aluminum superstructure as the yacht moves through the water.

Then, there was the fixing of the 1.4-ton glass panels that needed to be rigid on the outside, so as not to distort the mirror finish. At the same time, the glass needed to be insulated so the yacht's air conditioning would not be overtaxed. The solution? Each glass panel is composed of three layers, with the mirrored portion behind the top layer. Walking down the side deck, guests see 82 feet of precision glazing, with the mirrored glass reflecting the outdoor scenery.



The dramatic atrium spans three decks. Glass is used everywhere, including the elevator.

EXCELLENCE

LOA
262ft. 6in. (79.95m)

BEAM
42 ft. (12.8m)

DRAFT (full load)
11 ft. (3.4 m)

CONSTRUCTION
steel and aluminum

GROSS TONNAGE
2,115

SPEED (max./cruise)
17/14 knots

RANGE
4,500 nm

NAVAL ARCHITECTURE
Abeking & Rasmussen

EXTERIOR STYLING
Winch Design

INTERIOR DESIGN
Winch Design

BUILDER
Abeking & Rasmussen

The light and bright bridge deck lounge is a relaxed space with comfortable couches that have sides designed to emulate Cadillac grilles.



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In fact, glass and transparency figure into the interior design, too. Standing in the mezzanine on the owner's deck, guests can peer over the balustrade into the salon 33 feet below. In the triple-deck atrium, long, steel beams support the mirrored glass that enhances the contemporary interior design. Clever use of mirrors throughout the interior extends sightlines and broadens perspectives. In the salon, the ventilation shafts disappear, hidden behind louvered mirrors.

A vessel the caliber of *Excellence* is a lifelong culmination (perhaps) for an experienced owner like Herb Chambers, who has owned yachts from Broward, Hatteras, Trojan, Pershing, Mangusta and Feadship. *Excellence* is his fourth collaboration with Abeking & Rasmussen. In 2001, he built the Donald Starkey-designed 188-foot (57-meter) *Excellence III*. In the course of building his next yacht, a 288-foot (78-meter) motoryacht—*Excellence IV*—he switched gears, sold midproject and kept *Excellence III*. He took delivery in 2012 of the 197-foot (60-meter) Raymond Langton-designed *Excellence V*.

"After designating my last *Excellence* as *V*, I stopped counting," he says. "I figured it was a getting to be a little much."

His tastes have evolved with the years. *Excellence V* had a dark hull and traditional profile with overhangs, while *Excellence* has a futuristic white hull with a reverse bow. The previous yacht had an Art Deco interior, while the new yacht is modern, light and replete with glass.

"I remember when I first saw [390-foot Blohm+Voss] motoryacht *A*, I thought, What in the world is that? It is so awful, it looks like a military boat or a submarine," he says. "A year or so later, I saw her again, and I thought, Hmm, it's really not so bad. Then, the third time I saw her, I said to myself, Wow, that boat is incredible."

On *Excellence*, he wanted the interior to be luxurious, yet happy. "I want to be somewhere relaxing, in a bright environment with pops of color," he says. "I want a happy boat, not a palace."

And, while *Excellence* is offered for charter, Chambers says all the materials and fabrics were chosen for intrinsic beauty, not for durability. There are myriad exotics woods, textiles and stones, but the overall impression is cohesive and calm. The principal wood is bleached sycamore, and the core marble is honey onyx—two of Chambers' favorite materials that he has used liberally on other yachts.

In keeping with Chambers' profession as an owner of car dealerships, there are automotive references throughout the yacht's interior. For example, in the sky lounge, the backs of the deep, cream-colored sofas take their inspiration from Cadillac seats; they have shagreen-embossed leather with metal grille detailing on their sides. The handles on the salon cabinets mimic the emblems on the front of premium cars, while black-and-white concentric circles on the salon sole and ceiling recall the whitewall tires of 1950s classics. The Bugatti Royale and



Guest staterooms are all equal in terms of comfort, light and space. Facing (top to bottom): The main deck pool's glass bottom illuminates the beach club below; The owner's suite features macassar ebony paneling, wool carpets with crocodile pattern, and a high-gloss inlaid sunburst headboard.



Above: The main deck foyer features a 7-foot-tall rabbit sculpture. **Right:** Owner Herb Chambers is known to have an exuberant sense of humor, and his overriding brief for the yacht was to have it be a "happy boat." **Facing page:** *Excellence's* clean, smooth and curvaceous lines are particularly prevalent from overhead.

Ferrari Daytona Spyder inspired the main-deck day heads, and tire-track patterns are carved into the wood paneling.

The master stateroom is on the upper deck with ventilation louvers that are a nod to car grilles, and the six guest staterooms have double stitched leather detailing, similar to that of luxury car upholstery. It goes well with the onboard sculptures from Chambers' whimsical art collection, including a 7-foot-tall white rabbit in the main deck's central foyer.

There also are more traditional boating spaces. The sunken pool on the main deck has an adjacent bar, so guests can enjoy a drink with an uninterrupted view of the ocean. There is an office/library for quiet moments, a gym on the main deck; and a spa with a sauna that has views through large windows. There is also a dedicated nine-seat cinema. Aft on the bridge deck are a 14-seat dining table and a bar.

The bird's-eye maple observation seating in the wheelhouse is one of Chambers' favorite places aboard. Underway, he enjoys spending time on the bridge with Ray Shore, his trusted captain of many years, as they head wherever Chambers feels like going next. ♦

For more information: abeking.com, (for charter) burgessyachts.com

