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How love at first sight led to the transformation of 50m Perini Navi sailing yacht *Almyra II*



CUTTING THE JEWEL

RISA MERL DIVES INTO THE REFIT THAT TRANSFORMED A 30-YEAR-OLD
FEADSHIP INTO *EMERALD*, A 50-METRE REIMAGINED FOR MODERN LIFE

PHOTOGRAPHY Julien Hubert





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There was no wading in slowly for the owner of the 50-metre modern classic Feadship motor yacht *Emerald*. For his first-ever yacht renovation, he dived right in, embarking on an extensive rebuild that included a stern extension, sundeck and upper deck restructuring, exterior restyling and interior decor overhaul. But the crux of the brief was a new layout that reimagined a vintage Feadship for modern use.

"Spending the summer on boats for the past 15 years, a refit was always a dream project and a Feadship was at the top of the wish list," says *Emerald's* owner. As a longtime Feadship admirer, the owner deemed it important that the rebuild be sympathetic to the original design. A careful balancing act was achieved to maintain the quintessential Feadship styling while updating the yacht to meet the needs of her outdoors-loving owner, future charter clients and her crew.

Launched by Feadship in 1990 as *Alfa Alfa*, the yacht has gone through many a name change in her 33-year history, from *Kisses* to *Mayan Queen*, *Marion Queen* and, most recently before her sale in 2021, *MQ2*. "MQ2 was particularly interesting with her general layout and large deck space, which provided the perfect base to rebuild a yacht to our modern needs," the owner says.

Emerald is a stark contrast to the owner's first boat, a fast-flying Itama 75 open yacht. "We kicked things off by going for speed and open spaces," he says. "The Itama was perfect for cruising around Corsica and Sardinia with the family, exploring all those charming little bays and beaches." To nail down what he wanted to achieve in a refit, he chartered a variety of larger yachts. At the same time, the hunt was on for a Feadship that would be suitable for the job. David Westwood of TWW Yachts helped the owner find *Emerald*, which was listed for sale with Merle Wood & Associates.

"It's a Dutch boat with Dutch heritage, so it was important to maintain Dutch craftsmanship," says James Hall of TWW Yachts. "We've not ripped the soul out of it, instead the refit is giving the yacht another 20 years of life." The owner pulled together an all-star team of Dutch

It was essential that the feeling of the original classic Feadship styling was maintained both inside and out during the refit





ADDITIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY: STUART PEARCE

“The trick is to create as much change as possible working with the existing structure and systems, leading to a vastly improved yacht that feels authentic”



The upper aft deck (top and opposite, bottom) was extended and streamlined, with one 3,000kg-capacity crane replacing two smaller ones. The spa pool has been moved forward on the sundeck (opposite page, top)



engineering know-how and craftspeople. Balk, the chosen shipyard, introduced Jim Boot of WMC Superyachts to serve as owner's representative, and Mulder Design provided the naval architecture. Updating the exterior profile and interior design fell to Design Unlimited in the UK, introduced to the client by TWW – the one departure from having a fully Dutch team.

“The brief was to enhance what was there – to be sympathetic to the yacht's original lines and enhance it with the use of contemporary finishes and tasteful modifications,” says Marcus Rayner, design lead at Design Unlimited, who worked on this project with his colleague Sophie Porteous, interior designer at the studio. “The trick is to create as much change as possible working with the existing structure and systems, leading to a vastly improved yacht that feels authentic. We identified the areas that needed to be changed to improve the function of the yacht and carefully reconstructed those areas to offer 21st century amenities yet styling them using period details.”

Mulder Design engineered the 2.5-metre stern extension that brought *Emerald* up to 50.4 metres. Those extra few metres went a long way, expanding the exterior decks, opening up the stern for better water access, providing space for the addition of a lazarette aft of the guest cabins,

and elongating *Emerald's* already elegant lines.

The yacht had decent-sized deck space for the time she was built, but it wasn't quite expansive enough for today's yachting lifestyle, which puts a premium on outdoor living. Prior to the extension, the aft deck had a C-shaped sofa paired with a few small tables; *Emerald's* aft deck now welcomes guests to unwind al fresco with a deep built-in sofa set aft and a 12-seater dining table.

A well-stocked toy garage was a priority both to *Emerald's* owner and in making a popular charter yacht. The entire stern was reimagined to make way for an impressively sized lazarette – stocked with a bounty of water toys – which has direct access to the swim platform. The stern was restyled, too, doing away with the semi-enclosed, boxy transom to create an open swim platform that juts out beyond the forward-raked stern. This new stern shape changes the profile of the vessel and gives the illusion of forward motion. Adding a second staircase leading from the main deck down to the swim platforms lends symmetry when viewing her from the rear.

Modifications such as extending the brow of the wheelhouse, replacing the mast and lengthening the superstructure on the upper deck have subtly changed the yacht's profile as well. “The fashion plates were also modified to modernise the looks

of the yacht,” says Boot. “And she’s had a complete new paint job above the waterline.” The deep green colour from paint manufacturer Jotun is called Orion Green, befitting her new name.

The upper deck benefited from an extension of both the aft deck and superstructure, the latter of which afforded space for a larger saloon, a new pantry and improved captain’s quarters and nav station. The upper aft deck has been streamlined, replacing two smaller cranes with one three-tonne crane capable of launching the seven-metre Williams Jet Tender. Forward, the bridge was completely updated with new equipment.

The sundeck underwent a transformation by moving the spa pool from its previous position tucked away in a portside corner to a forward position, where guests can take in sweeping views while enjoying a soak. With its wet bar and al fresco dining, the sundeck is a favourite space on board, and the owner’s children have even enjoyed sleeping outside here at night, watching shooting stars fall from the sky.

As crew comfort was a goal from the outset, the owner chose to remove a lower-deck VIP cabin that was set forward of the engine room in order to expand the crew quarters. The four existing crew cabins were updated, and a double-berth engineer’s cabin was added, along with a laundry, walk-in refrigerator and freezer, and a large crew galley and mess. “The crew mess, which has increased considerably in size, will contribute to a happy crew,” says Boot.

In terms of functional improvements, there was no inside access to the engine room, only an outside door on the main deck with ladder down. The project added a direct access door from the crew area to the engine room. The result is much improved routing via two staircases from the wheelhouse all the way down to the crew and engine room.

But guests haven’t been forgotten. The designers seem to have performed a magic trick in relocating the VIP cabin aft of the full-beam owner’s cabin on the main deck. Both cabins are of excellent size, which will attract dual charter clients seeking equitable accommodation. To make this magic, the entire layout forward of the dining room bulkhead was started nearly from scratch. Crew access staircases were moved and consolidated to one internal staircase, and the previously narrow galley running vertically along the yacht’s centreline was replaced with a modern galley amidships, now benefiting from a window so the chef can have natural light – a specific request of the owner’s wife. The owner’s cabin itself was reconfigured, positioning the bed on the forward bulkhead and moving the en suite to alongside the VIP bath in between the two cabins.

All of this was added while maintaining the size

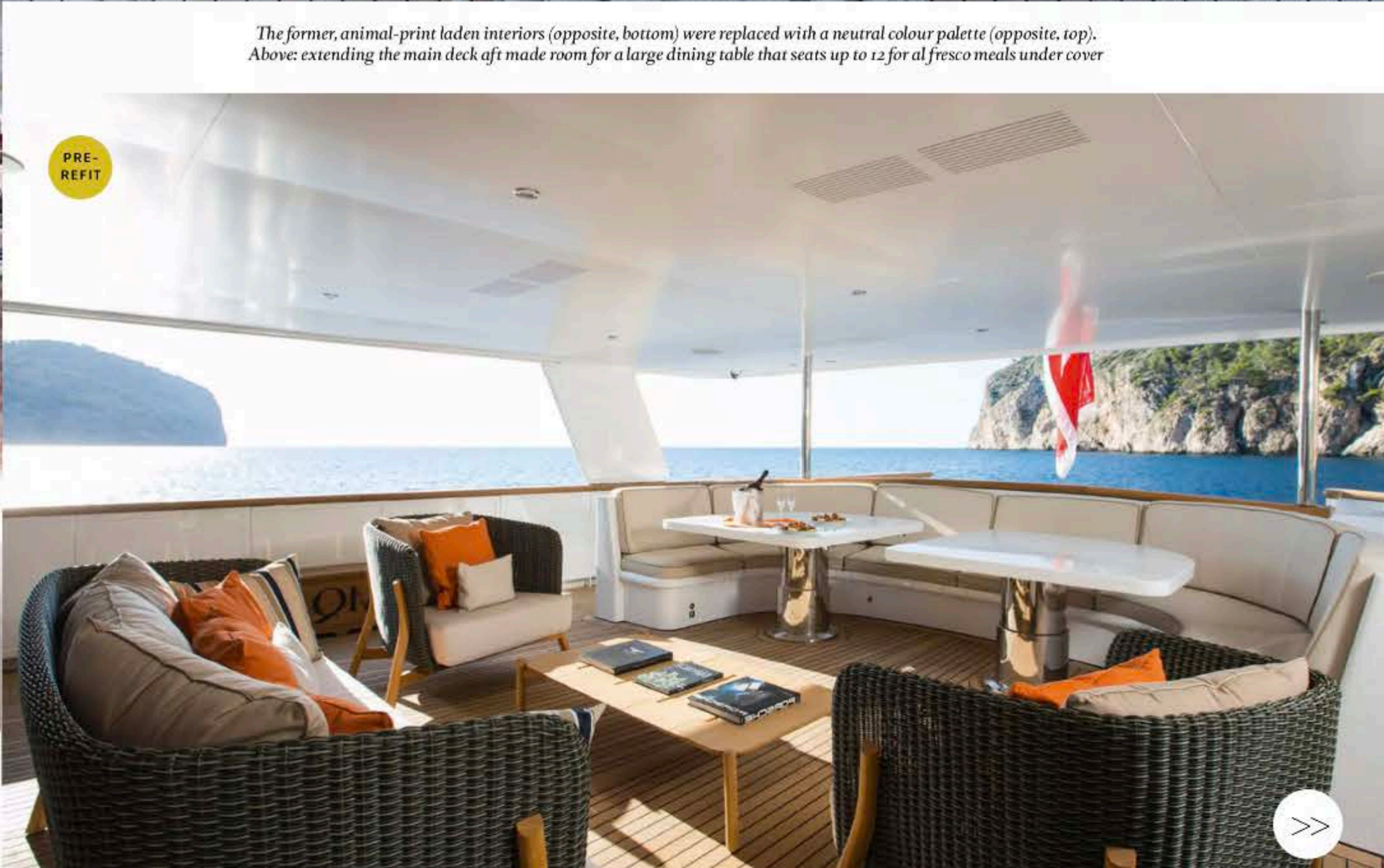




and layout of the original main saloon and dining area. "Achieving the layout and function the clients desire within an existing yacht's platform is always a challenge," says Rayner. "To ensure a smooth implementation, we use research, original ship's drawings and the latest scanning technology and 3D CAD software to reduce the unknowns before the build starts."

The interior decor was developed to be personal to the owners yet have universal appeal for a demanding charter market. Prior to the refit, MQ2 had an art deco-inspired interior, filled with high-gloss woods, woven leather ceilings and a smattering of animal print. *Emerald's* interior is a breath of fresh air in comparison, brightening things up with a neutral colour palette and white ceilings and walls. A dark, matt-finished wenge timber is used throughout to contrast with the lighter soft goods and furnishings. Bespoke metal work was used as a detail in the furniture, and each en suite features different stones hand-selected by the owners to give each cabin its own identity.

Before the yacht went to Balk, she was stripped out in Malta so the team could see what was lurking underneath. It's not unusual to find rust



The former, animal-print laden interiors (opposite, bottom) were replaced with a neutral colour palette (opposite, top). Above: extending the main deck aft made room for a large dining table that seats up to 12 for al fresco meals under cover

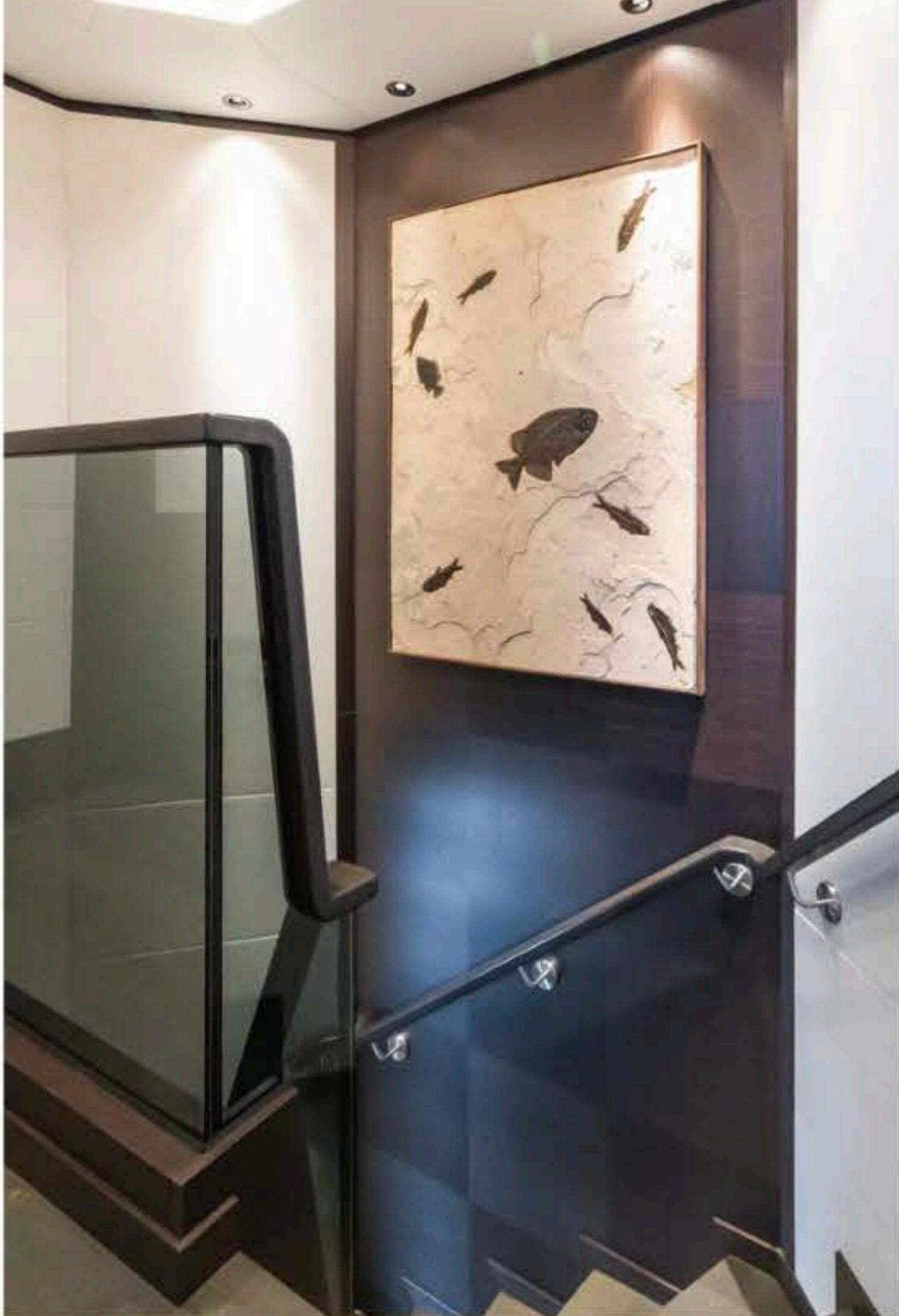
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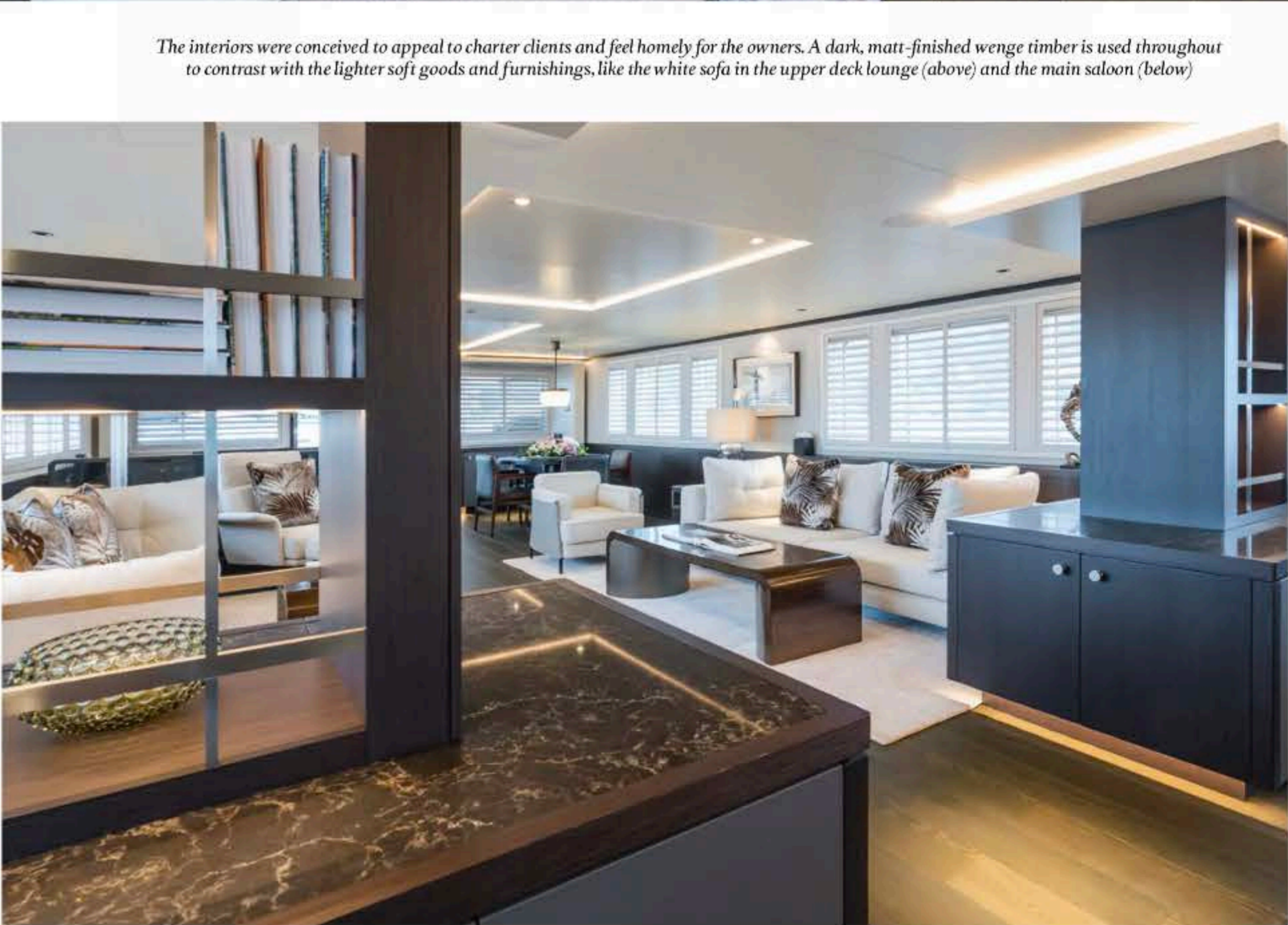
and hull degradation in a classic vessel, but as a testament to her original Feadship build quality and her constant upkeep over the years – the last refit was in 2015 – there was no major damage to report. The yacht was structurally sound. Even the original teak decks had to be only partially replaced. The parts that were preserved were re-sanded to perfection and re-caulked to match the new decking. “In a world of sustainability, why do things that don’t need doing?” says Hall of the choice to preserve as much of the decking as possible. The main engines – twin 850-horsepower Caterpillar C32 diesels – and the generators were also fairly new and didn’t require replacing.

That’s not to say the rebuild was entirely without challenges. “We did face some hiccups, like shortages of materials for the teak and Covid-19-related delays that caused price hikes and delivery issues, but the team at WMC Superyachts always found a way around these obstacles,” says the owner, who tried to be on site at the yard as much as was feasible in the midst of the pandemic. “Our in-person check-ins weren’t too frequent, but having top-notch representatives on site like WMC Superyachts’ Jim Boot and Bas Hardam made all the difference.”

In *Emerald*, the owner has traded speed for classic good looks and comfortable seakeeping,

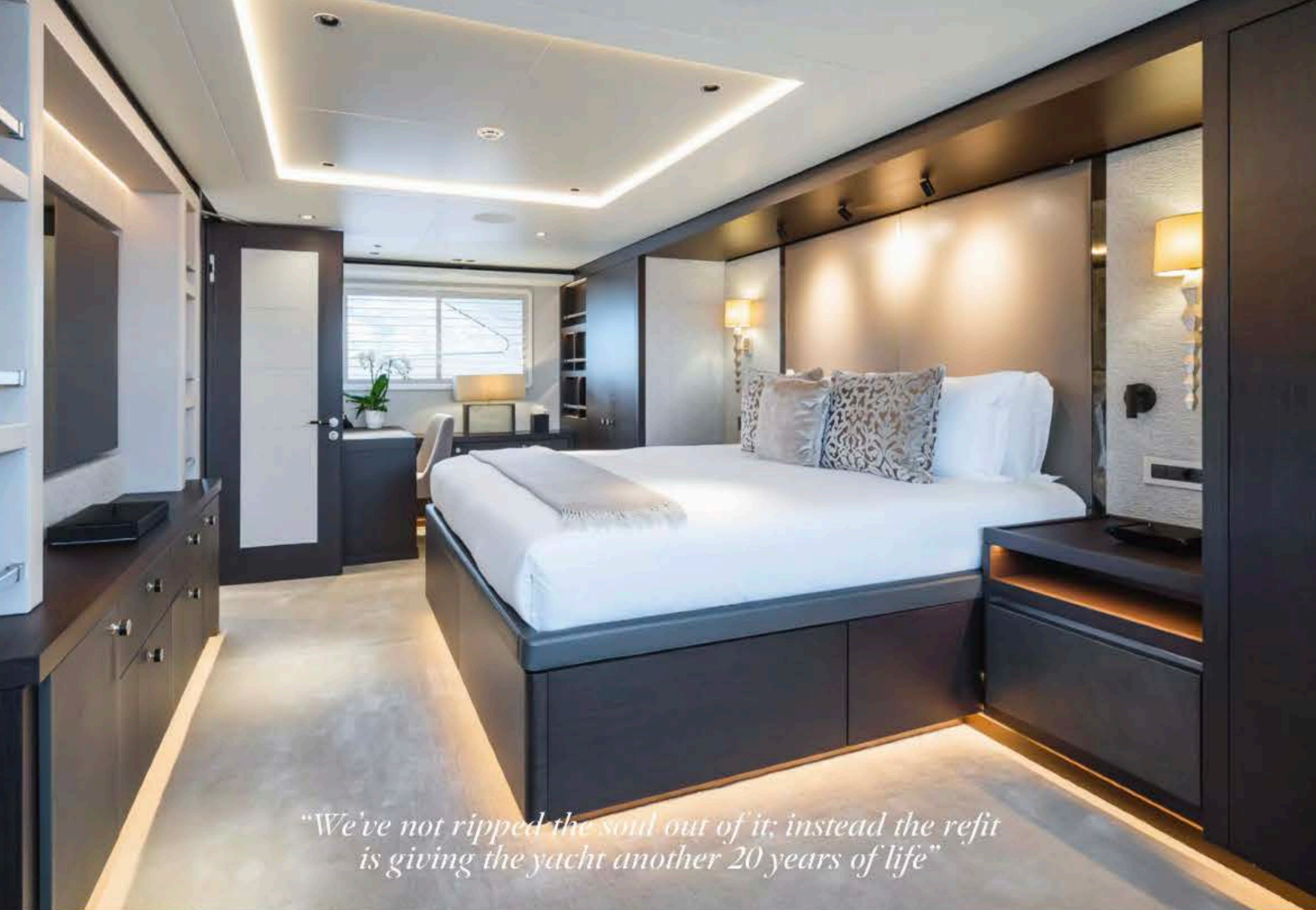


“A refit was always a dream project, and a Feadship was at the top of the wish list”

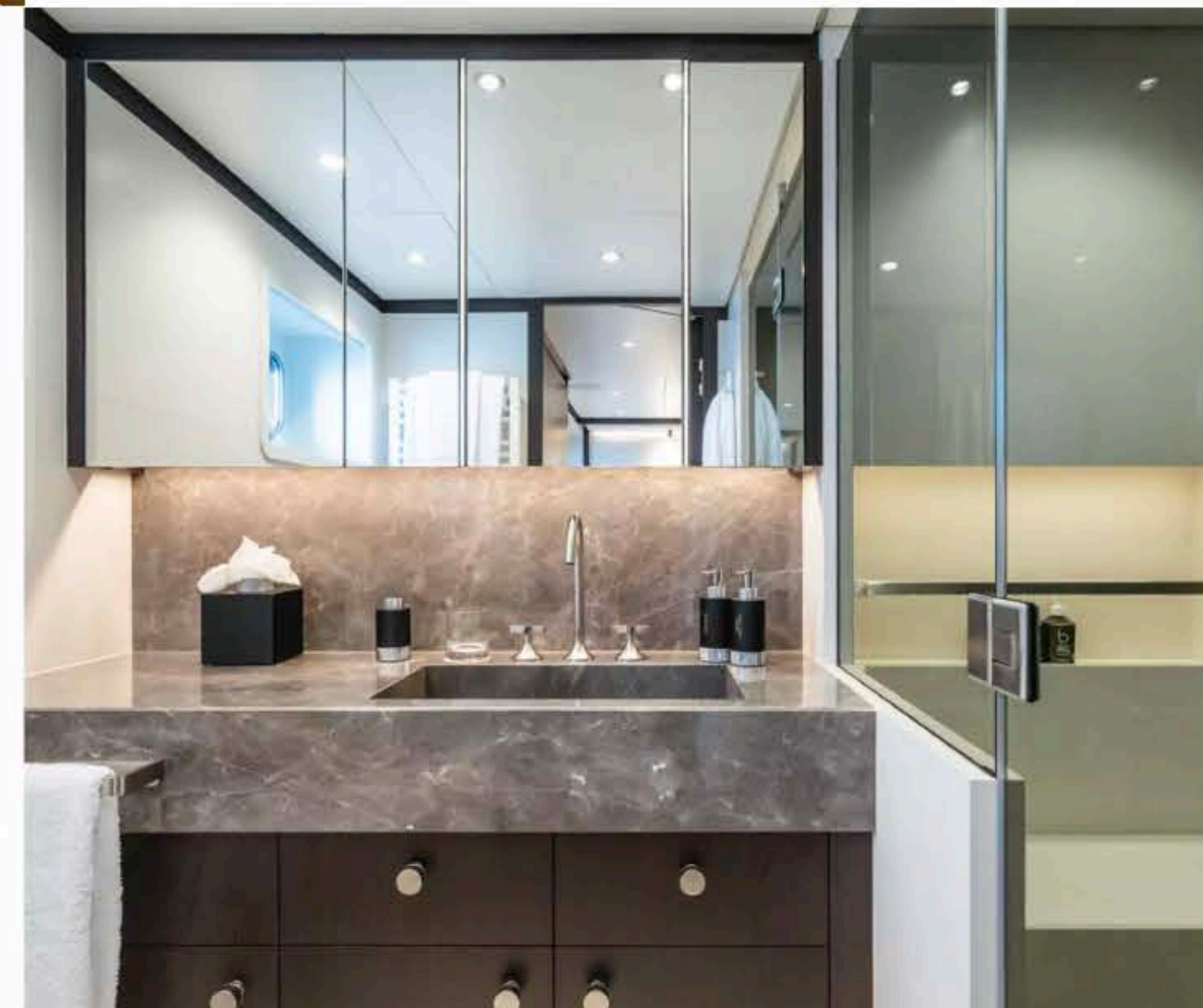


The interiors were conceived to appeal to charter clients and feel homely for the owners. A dark, matt-finished wenge timber is used throughout to contrast with the lighter soft goods and furnishings, like the white sofa in the upper deck lounge (above) and the main saloon (below)





The layout was reconfigured, moving the VIP (opposite, bottom) from the lower deck to the main deck by the owner's cabin (opposite, top). On the lower deck (above), four aft guest cabins were updated, and a guest cabin that was set forward of the engine room was removed to expand the crew quarters



One of the refit must-haves for his wife was zero-speed stabilisers, and *Emerald* now benefits from two Quantum XT fins. "While I would have loved some more knots," he admits, "this time we went for comfort." The owner plans to spend at least six weeks on board every summer in the Med and has already enjoyed *Emerald* this year with family and friends. "Our friends have been amazed by the outdoor spaces on board," says the owner. "And we've had a very busy charter season this summer - feedback from guests was that they enjoyed the vast outdoor areas, the different watersports options and the young, energetic crew paired with an experienced captain." Offered for charter by TWW Yachts, *Emerald* has plenty of bookings for the Caribbean winter season.

Renovating a modern classic Feadship like *Emerald* to modern standards was a dream fulfilled for her owner, and it may have whetted his appetite for more projects. "An intensive refit seemed like a once-in-a-lifetime project," says the owner. "However, having done one now with the help of a great team, we might consider doing another in the future, should any suitable opportunity come by - who knows?" What is certain is that diving headfirst into a massive rebuild has paid off for *Emerald's* owner tenfold. ■



Four benchmark modern classics from Feadship

1. IMPROMPTU

Launched in 1988, the 43.43m Impromptu (now Mysorah) had hard-edged exterior lines inspired by automotive design, as was the burgeoning trend at the time. Impromptu inspired the exterior of later Feadships Alfa Alfa and Sea Sedan.

2. LE PHARAON

Designed by Frits de Voogt and launched in 1989, this 55m Egyptian-inspired yacht stood out in the Feadship fleet thanks to the addition of large bronze Tutankhamun head sculptures fitted on the transom and both sides of its funnels.

3. ALFA ALFA

The original Emerald, launched in 1990 as 45.55m Alfa Alfa, displayed sharp angles at the forward part of the superstructure along the main deck. The refit has softened and elongated the lines of the yacht, providing a respectful refresh.

4. LA MASQUERADE

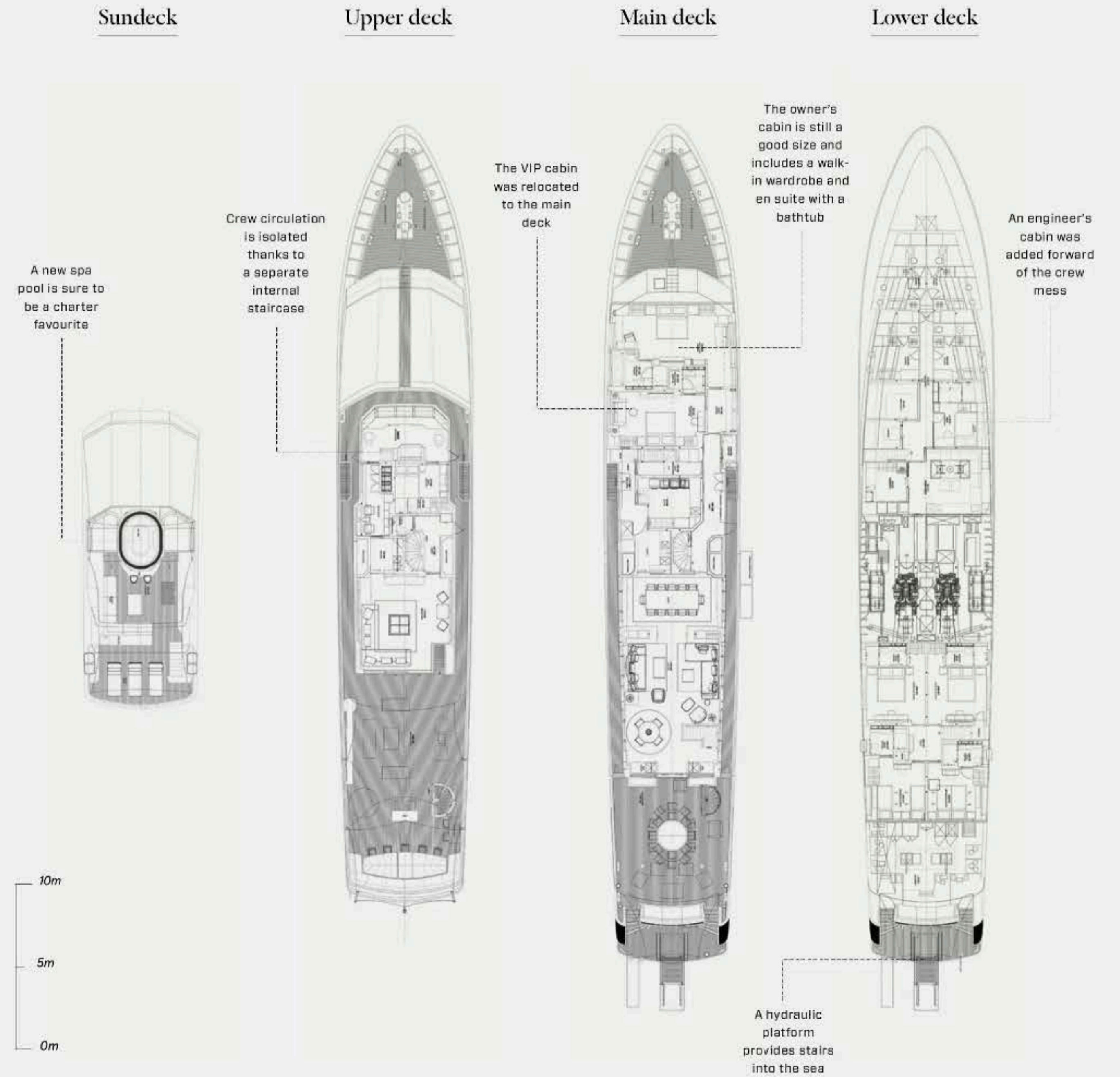
This 1997 Feadship (now called La Mascarade), designed by Terence Disdale, showcases an evolution of automotive-inspired styling in the 1990s. Curved lines and a black band of wraparound windows on the main deck owner's cabin convey a feeling of speed.



PHOTOGRAPHY: FEADSHIP

Emerald

Feadship



LOA 50.4m	Engines 2 x 850hp Caterpillar C32	Range at 11 knots 6,200nm	Construction Steel hull; aluminium superstructure	Refit naval architecture Mulder Design	Builder/year Feadship/1990
LWL 45.1m	Generators 2 x 125kW Kohler 125EF0ZD	Fuel capacity 52,900 litres	Naval architecture De Voogt Naval Architects	Refit exterior design Mulder Design; Design Unlimited	Refit yard/year Balk Shipyard/2023
Beam 8.18m	Speed (max/cruise) 14/11 knots	Freshwater capacity 18,400 litres	Exterior design Studio De Voogt	Refit interior design Design Unlimited	Urk, the Netherlands
Draught 2.7m		Owners/guests 12			+31 (0) 527 681 741
Gross tonnage 478GT		Crew 10			balkshipyard.com
					For charter twyyachts.com