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A WORLD OF IMAGINATION

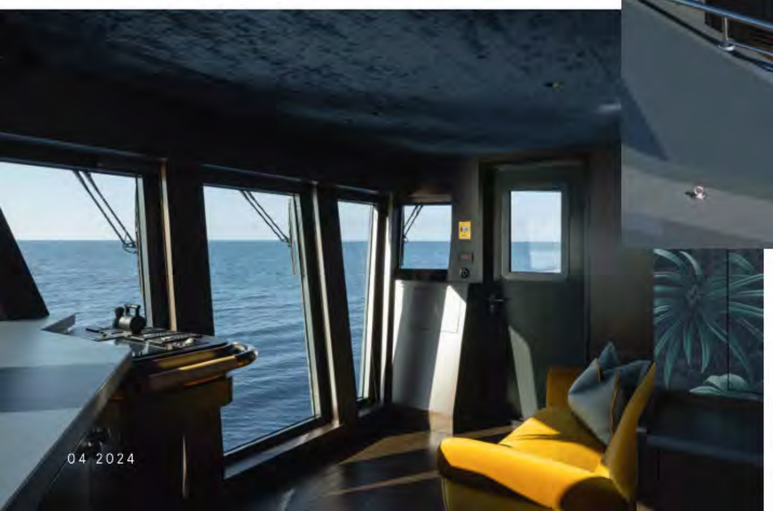
THE NEWEST SEAXPLORER BY DAMEN YACHTING WAS CUSTOMISED FOR AN EXPERIENCED CLIENT WITH A TASTE FOR ADVENTURE AND FANTASTICAL DECOR. *CECILE GAUERT* DISCOVERS THE AMAZING WORLD INSIDE THE NEW *PINK SHADOW*

Cover boat

PINK SHADOW

PHOTOGRAPHY **BLUEIPROD**

She is way more yacht-like than a support vessel, but is by no means dainty. "We took it through some serious weather and it handled very well. It's an incredible platform"



Pink Shadow is a custom evolution of Damen Yachting's SeaXplorer 55 model. A challenge for the builder and designer was to keep a strong family resemblance with other SeaXplorers, such as the larger La Datcha, *yet give it the high level of individuality the owner desired. Her colour scheme and bow plate make her instantly recognisable*

It's a big day at Damen Yachting's yard in Antalya – but the celebration is not for *Pink Shadow*. The morning sun shines on the crowd gathered to witness the latest Yacht Support vessel make its way to the water. A buzz gives away the mini drone flying overhead to capture the occasion. Watching the proceedings intently is Anthony Hsieh, owner of this 53-metre, which is a new addition to his fishing-focused *Bad Company* fleet. Nearby, already in the water and also humming with activity, is another yacht, the still-mysterious SeaXplorer *Pink Shadow*. This is the boat we're here to talk about.

Aside from coming out of the same Damen Yachting facility in the Free Trade Zone of this Turkish sea resort, these two vastly different vessels have something else in common. Professor Hans Georg Näder, the owner of the new 58-metre SeaXplorer *Pink Shadow*, previously owned a 45-metre Yacht Support vessel (the former *Pink Shadow*); he sold that boat to Hsieh in 2021 – it is now part of his *Bad Company* fleet – and the fact that he liked it so much is the reason Hsieh is here today, toasting the launch of a bigger version.

The Yacht Support was a gateway of sorts to large motor yachts for Näder too. He loves boats of all kinds and is an enthusiastic sailor (and owner of the Baltic Yachts shipyard) who decided, just before the Covid-19 pandemic hit, to make the leap into this large expedition yacht.

His long-time captain Oscar Vallejos made the transition from the 54-metre Baltic sailer *Pink Gin VI* with him. "We had so much fun," says Vallejos of the time exploring the possibilities of a motor yacht able to go faster, longer and take on more guests for dockside parties. And so when a Damen Yachting salesperson presented them with the SeaXplorer 55, he had an attentive audience. Captain Vallejos remembers the decision as swift – but there was work to do.

Accompanying them on this new adventure was

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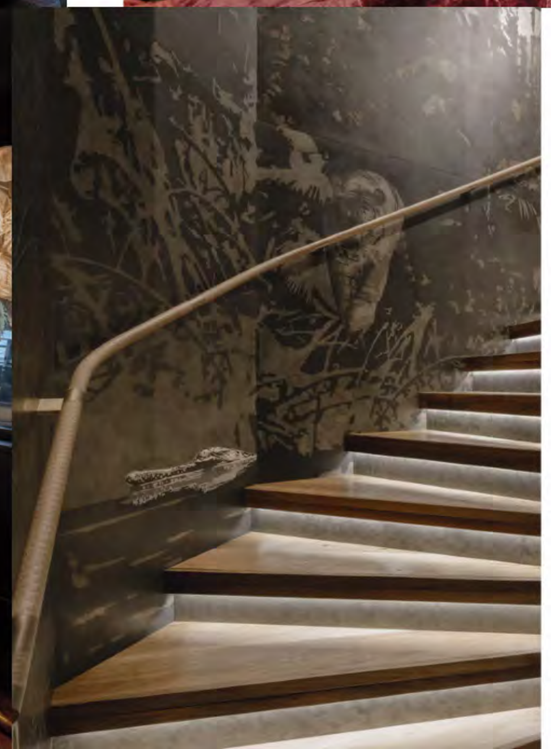

The staircase tells a story as it goes up the decks, and so does each space on board. On the upper deck, the Fitzcarraldo lounge and dining room (opposite page) is on the opposite side from the Habana cigar lounge (above)

Mark Tucker, the founder of Design Unlimited, and his team. He's known Näder since 2002 and worked with him on seven projects, but the new *Pink Shadow* surprised him.

"I didn't know anything about the project at all until we sat on the old *Pink Shadow* in Antigua and pulled out the plans," Tucker says. "Oh my, we are doing that, are we?" he recalls saying, as he grasped the project's scope.

In 2015 Damen Yachting introduced the concept for an expedition yacht suited to cruises from the tropics to the northernmost latitudes. They had developed it with Azure Yacht Design and expedition leaders from EYOS, aiming to create a crossover between a professional vessel and a superyacht with up to 30 days of autonomy. The first SeaXplorer was a 77-metre delivered as *La Datcha*, and in 2018 they introduced the SeaXplorer 55 as a spec project. It was the starting point for the new *Pink Shadow*. It carries two big Rupert tenders, a car, motorcycles, a container full of gym equipment, a plethora of toys and has a certified helipad (experts will say there is no other kind worth mentioning). She is way more yacht-like than the Yacht Support vessel, but is by no means dainty. This is a capable expedition platform with a range of 5,000 nautical miles, plus the comfort of a luxury seagoing hotel and a gross tonnage equivalent to that of a 65-metre yacht. "We took it through some serious weather, and it handled very well," says Captain Vallejos, who went from Antalya to Montenegro, across to the Caribbean in 2023 and will take it back to the Med for the summer. "It's an incredible platform."

As he developed the project with his design team, the owner saw the need for customisation, something that Damen Yachting is wont to do. Extended nearly three metres from the original concept, *Pink Shadow* features a large beach club with a pool and a stainless steel bow plate that distinguishes her from other SeaXplorers currently on the water.

The first step on board is enlightening, from the immaculate flooring (a teak alternative by synthetic decking specialist Bolidt, featuring

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The key was to balance the rugged SeaXplorer DNA with yacht-like refinements, making it "strong and robust, yet playful and elegant"

Pink Shadow *carries two 9m Rupert tenders, a car, motorcycles, a container of gym equipment and plenty of toys*

The baroque, fun and unexpected interior is an invitation to the journey before you even leave the dock. The inspiration is the 1982 epic adventure film *Fitzcarraldo*

Design Unlimited split the owner's suite into a cosy bedroom and a comfortable private seating area and lounging space (opposite page, top). Wallpaper makes every space colourful and fun, each cabin features a unique wallcovering and every en suite has its own stone and fittings

complex designs) to the first sighting of a bar, which could have been lifted from a tropical beach. The wind and sun seeping through side louvres, painted a dark copper colour, enhance the impression. It was named Tahiti Plage as a nod to the totems that frame it.

"The add-ons we made for the client are a hydraulic swim ladder and a big swimming pool. It was his requests [that led to] the change in the layout," says Enrique Tintore, the SeaXplorer design manager for Damen Yachting, as he shows me the boat. What was essentially planned as tender and toy storage became a versatile entertainment area.

"Knowing how the owner uses the boat and that the [tenders] are almost always in the water, it just made sense that there was something to introduce you to the boat," Tucker says, who treated this area a bit like a luxury hotel lobby. When they are on board, the tenders fit snugly between the bar, its totem pillars and the bulwarks. The glass-sided pool required the builder to abandon the slipway originally planned to get the tenders on and off the boat, but they kept the height the original launch system required, to great effect.

Articulated bulwarks expand the space, creating several smaller areas in which to lounge. The designers found good use for the overhead tender cranes, which the crew use to suspend beach chairs when the yacht is anchored somewhere nice. I can picture myself spinning gently in the breeze with my toes grazing the water below. But what if it's blowing out?

"The owner wanted this space to be protected from things like high winds," Tintore says, but "he loved the idea of extending the deck to the sides. These bulwarks that you see stop halfway, so 90 degrees [forming balconies], and then come down completely when you launch the tenders. And these louvres are electrically controlled from behind the bar and are independent, so you can choose what you want to do."

Design Unlimited came up with the concept of the louvres and together with the owner developed the unusual exterior colour scheme. That green, Tucker says, "is an NCS colour. We took all the paint colours to the old *Pink Shadow* and laid them all out in the sun so we could get a real true reflection of what the boat would look like. Our original visuals had the copper colour on the louvre doors and [the owner] decided that was what he wanted to keep specifically because it would mark the boat, if you will," Tucker says. "It's a very solid, purposeful exterior design and I think it needs that sort of colour."

Captain Vallejos wasn't quite sure at first, but he came around. "I can't believe [the owner] had the vision to imagine what it was going to look like. It's stunning," he says, but the attention the boat got in the Caribbean surprised him. "Captains and

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The glass-sided pool (right) was a driver to rethink the tender launch and retrieval system, now done via overhead cranes and side-opening bulwarks

Way more than a tender garage, "Tahiti Plage" on the main deck aft is a fun, multifunctional space anchored by a bar

crew from other boats – even big ones – came over to ask about it," he says.

For Damen Yachting and Azure, the key was to balance the rugged SeaXplorer DNA with yacht-like refinements, making it "strong and robust, yet playful and elegant", in the builder's words.

"The commanding vertical bow adorned with the SeaXplorer 'S' symbolises her ability to conquer any challenge. Faceted shapes, both top-down and in profile, create a distinctive silhouette. Horizontal lines lend a sleek quality to the vessel, while visible life rafts and the prominent bow plate add industrial flair, making *Pink Shadow* appear even bolder and more formidable," says Azure designer Karel Nguyen.

It worked, evidently. *Pink Shadow* won a BOAT Design & Innovation Award for exterior design and a judges' commendation for the beach club (*see page 43*).

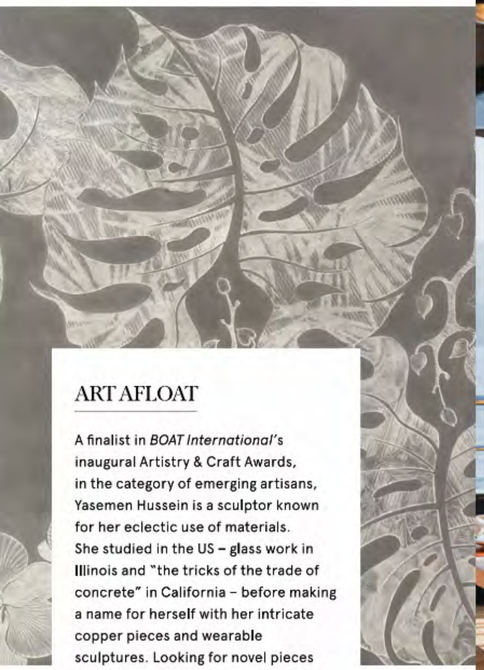
Beyond the amazing beach bar, the baroque, fun and unexpected interior is an invitation to the journey before you even leave the dock. The inspiration for it is the 1982 epic adventure film *Fitzcarraldo* by German director Werner Herzog, which tells the story of an opera-loving European who, seeking his fortune, hauls a steamship over a hill thick with jungle in Peru. The unforgettable scene is reproduced on the bespoke carpet in the saloon.

Tucker returned to the UK after that first meeting with a loose brief that mentioned the film, and he and his team ran with it, knowing this owner seeks the unexpected. His previous *Pink Gin VI* famously had glittering crystal chandeliers in the main saloon. Although not a literal interpretation, the memorable interiors display some of the film's darkness, exoticism and rich atmosphere.

Aside from the film, references are to places the owner's boats have been, "Saint-Tropez, Sardinia, the Caribbean, Cuba. All very decorated places, all full of colour and interest," Tucker says.

I walk behind Tintore, who unlocks rooms that have been carefully finished, appreciating the ease of movement throughout (and noting the accessibility for wheelchair users) and delighting in surprises at every turn.

The Damen Yachting team added a lift that



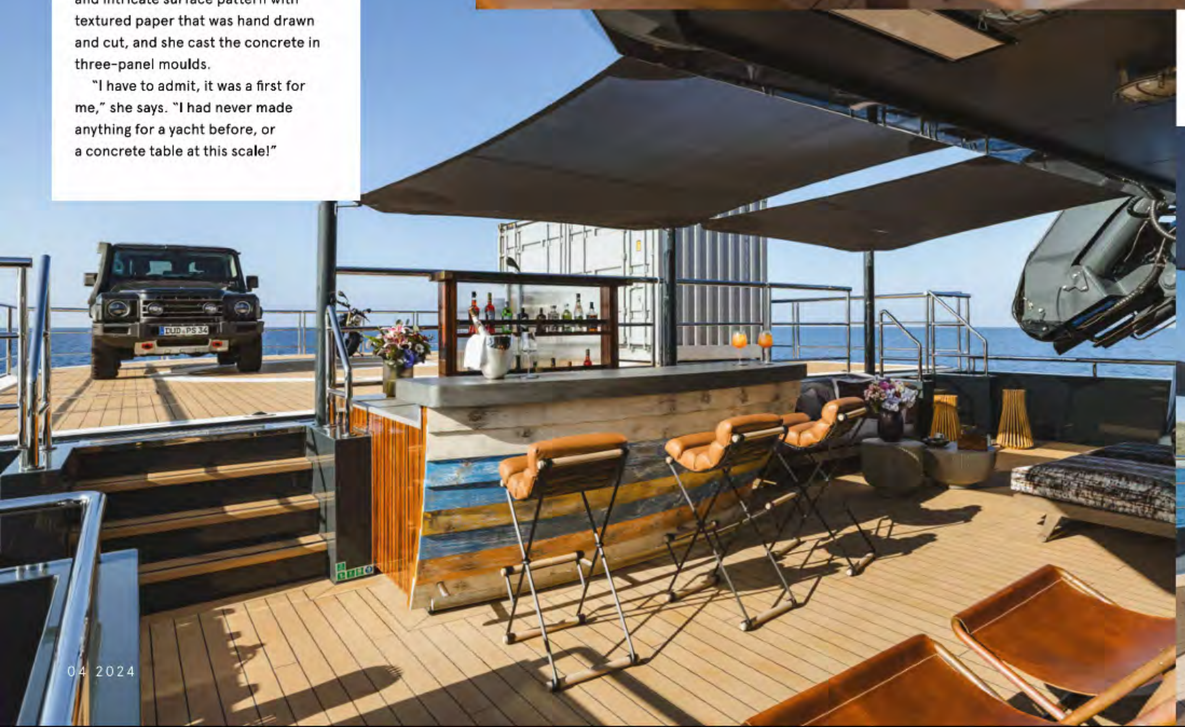
ART AFLOAT

A finalist in *BOAT International*'s inaugural Artistry & Craft Awards, in the category of emerging artisans, Yasemen Hussein is a sculptor known for her eclectic use of materials. She studied in the US – glass work in Illinois and "the tricks of the trade of concrete" in California – before making a name for herself with her intricate copper pieces and wearable sculptures. Looking for novel pieces for *Pink Shadow*'s exceptionally rich interior, Design Unlimited asked the London-based mixed-media artist to create a 3.6-metre-long dining table. The designers wanted a concrete table edged in wood and decorated with vintage botanical illustrations.

The artist created the table's tactile and intricate surface pattern with textured paper that was hand drawn and cut, and she cast the concrete in three-panel moulds.

"I have to admit, it was a first for me," she says. "I had never made anything for a yacht before, or a concrete table at this scale!"

The bridge deck has a couple of bars and a spa pool, but it's the bar on the upper deck (opposite page, bottom left) that required the most ingenuity to incorporate receding shelves



goes to the bridge deck, where doors open to reveal a wild jungle (decoratively speaking). The main staircase is an amazing feature. "You get that whole mood of walking from underwater," Tucker later explains, progressing up "through the mangroves, into the trees where the monkeys are, and then into the canopy where the birds are. That staircase is a piece of art, which we did here in the studio, and that [the builder] created in the metal paint finish."

On this detailed and colourful interior, Damen Yachting and Design Unlimited worked with one of Turkey's leading yacht outfitters, Ulutas, but the designers called on artisans from around the world. In part, it was due to the challenging schedule, but it also made sense due to the boat's very nature. "It felt right to go and buy handcrafted [pieces] from various parts of the world, from the UK, from Portugal, from America, all over the place," Tucker says.

Even the dayheads offer quite unique experiences. A particularly memorable one features a hand-painted thunderbox in front of a De Gournay wallpaper.

Wallpapers create varied ambiances throughout the boat. For instance, each cabin has a distinctive wallcovering and bed frame. "What I love is that every single wardrobe has a different pattern on the inside," says Tintore as he opens one solid door after another. For the wardrobes, Design Unlimited asked Italian high-end furniture specialist Promemoria to customise pieces according to their designs. The bathrooms all have different stones and fittings as well.

Near the bow on the main deck is the full-beam owner's cabin, a large suite that's cleverly organised to create a cosy space within it. There are six cabins in all on the main deck – none of the guests are on the lower deck, which is dedicated to the ship's operations, from the pristine, professional-grade engine room and abundant storage spaces to the well-organised crew area, also decorated with interesting wallpaper and paint. "[Prof Näder] didn't want white, hospital-like cabinets. All the crew area and the crew mess are decorated," Captain Vallejos says.

The main saloon, known as the Fitzcarraldo lounge, is up one floor above. I don't get to see the Habana lounge, but I can picture it when I am told it features a red Chesterfield sofa and a custom-made humidor, one of several pieces crafted at Baltic – the shipyard that built *Pink Gin VI* – plus a cabinet for special spirits. It's connected via a door to the covered mooring deck with seating, which offers a great viewpoint. "It's a fun area to be," Vallejos says. Also on the upper deck are the captain's cabin and the ship's office.

Just outside the Fitzcarraldo lounge is the helipad (accommodating an Airbus 135,

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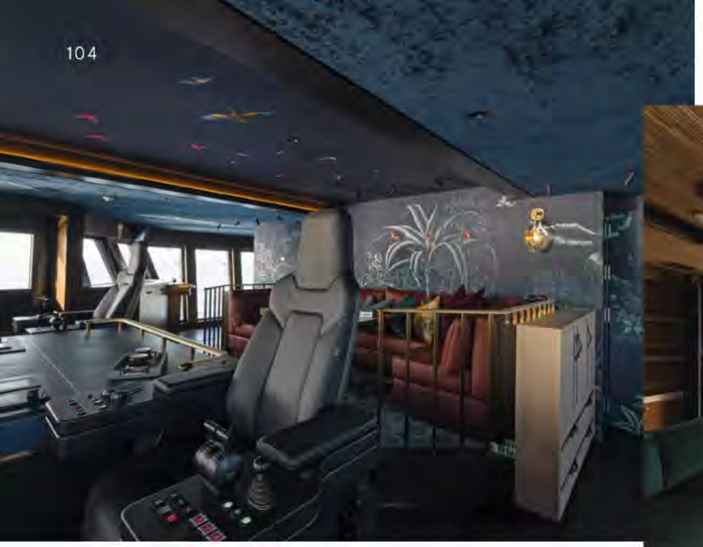


"I see a lot of boats, and it's rare that I step on board and just go 'holy cow'"

AgustaWestland or similar) and because of it, the shipyard had to find a solution to lower the profile of the outdoor bar. "It has telescopic liquor shelves," Tintore reveals of the piece of furniture, which was made by Baltic.

One deck up, the guest-friendly wheelhouse offers another wow moment. Decorated with refinement, it features comfortable seating under a ceiling depicting birds in flight. "The guests love this space," Vallejos says. Fully equipped with the latest navigation equipment and electronics, it also gives the captain plenty of comfort and satisfaction.

And topping it all is another observation lounge, which I can surmise offers fantastic panoramic views.

Pink Shadow is a full-displacement boat that cruises at 12 knots and tops out at around 14.5, Tintore says. It's adapted to all situations and locations, with boarding access on the upper level because you never know what the infrastructure may be like in locations without yacht marinas.

For the first time in his boating life, the owner has agreed to charter the boat. After his Caribbean season, Y.CO is planning to display *Pink Shadow* at the MYBA Charter Show in Genoa in April, where brokers can discover what the buzz is all about.

"We're very, very excited to have it in the fleet," says Y.CO charter manager David Price. "I am in a position to see a lot of boats, and it's rare that I step on board and just go 'holy cow'," he says with a laugh. "The builder and designers did an amazing job."

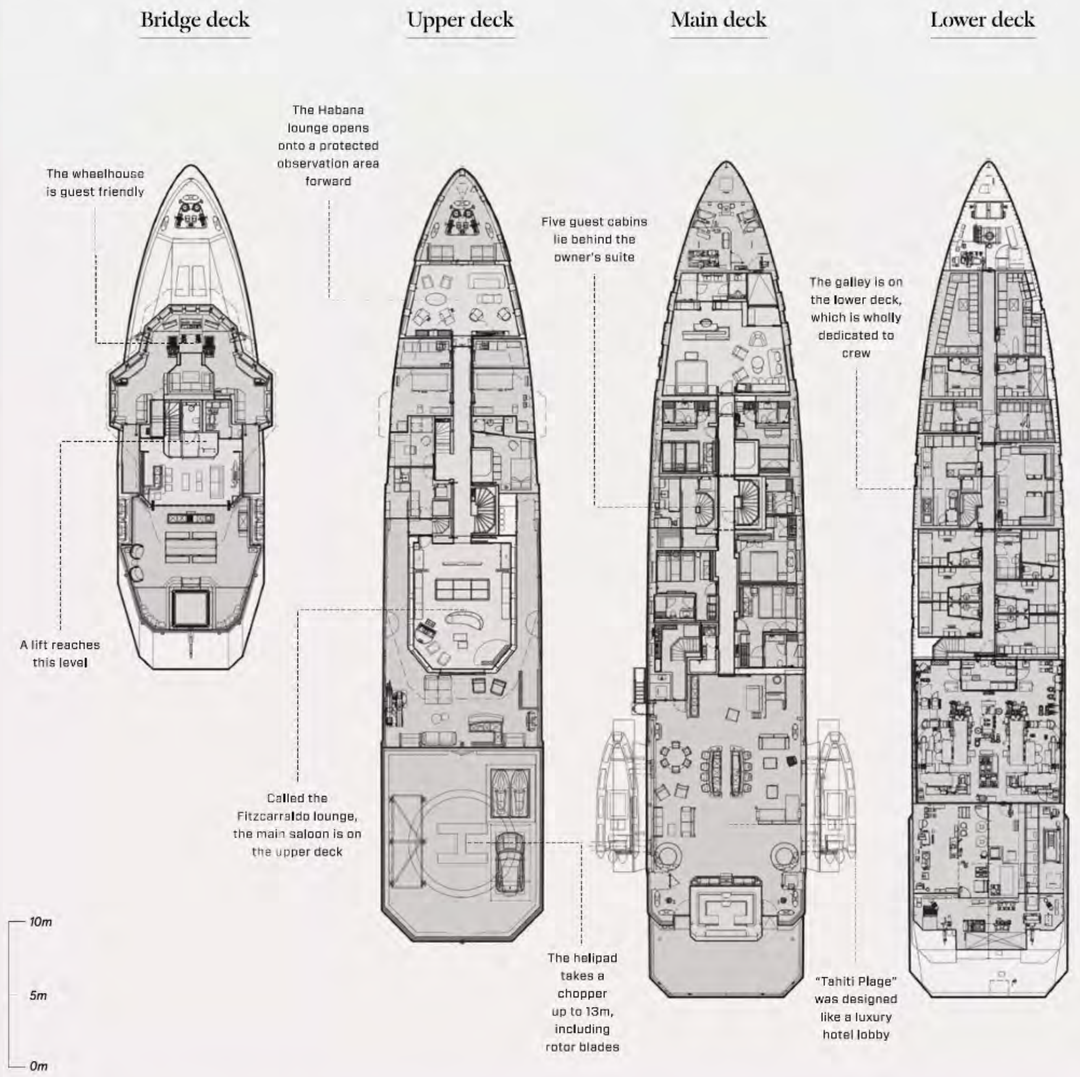
With its certified helipad and adventurous credentials married to an extraordinary interior, this brand-new expedition vessel is a rarity on the charter market, and the itineraries will be interesting as well.

"It won't go to the regular stomping grounds," Price says. "For next winter [in the Northern Hemisphere], we're looking to go down by South America and maybe into Antarctica."

It is doubtful that, with all her appeal, *Pink Shadow* will have a mountain to climb to attract charter interest. ◘

Surprises await guests at every level, from the guest-friendly pilothouse, to the bridge deck lounge and a guest lobby on the lower deck

Pink Shadow — Damen Yachting



LOA 58.3m
LWL 55.6m
Beam 11m
Draught 3.6m
Gross tonnage 1,091GT

Engines 2 x 1,492kW MTU 12V 4000 M65R
Generators 248kW Scania
Speed (max/cruise) 14.5/12 knots
Range at 11.5 knots 5,000nm

Fuel capacity 188,000 litres
Freshwater capacity 35,700 litres
Tenders 2 x Rupert R9

Owners/guests 12
Crew 17
Construction Steel hull; aluminium superstructure
Classification Lloyd's Register

Naval architecture Damen Yachting
Exterior design Azure Yacht Design
Interior design Design Unlimited

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