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The *NEW* definition of MASCULINE DESIGN

SHIFTING CULTURAL CURRENTS ARE CHANGING THE LOOK AND FEEL OF TODAY'S FLOATING PALACES, PERHAPS FOREVER.

TEXT BY **LOUIS POSTEL**

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Men offer more input into the look of areas to which they can retreat, says Evan K. Marshall, who designed the 187-foot *Lady Linda*.

IN THE 1959 HIT *SOME LIKE IT HOT*, the yacht that Tony Curtis, playing Joe, claims to own draws his co-star Marilyn Monroe, playing Sugar, like a bear to honey.

"It looks so small from the beach," she exclaims in her breathless way, "but when you're on it, it's more like a cruiser or a destroyer.... It's exquisite, like a floating mansion."

Whether Curtis has furnished the yacht's salon in damask or denim makes no difference to either one of them. Size and speed is what it's all about—those traditional projections of heroic power, signifying manly success in a competitive world.

There's nothing wrong with that, had Joe been for real, but traditional projections of masculinity—symbolized by ebony panels, brass sea clocks and heavily shellacked marlins adorning the bulwark—aren't the whole story these days.

Leading yacht designers as diverse as Evan K. Marshall, Sylvia Bolton, Marc Thee and Stefano Pastrovich are all seeing departures from the stereotype of what constitutes a manly yacht interior. Hastening those departures are some powerful cultural currents. Among them:

▸ Bigger yachts entail exponentially more options.
Back in the 1940s and '50s choices were limited. The lady would go into a specially designated room at the shipyard to make her choices. Walnut or mahogany, chenille or suede, nickel or brass—and that was it. Now, for the larger yachts there are just too many options for a shipyard to get involved. You need a skilled designer as well as a high tolerance for information overload.

PHOTOS BY BUGSY GEDLEK (THIS PAGE); GIOVANNI MALGARINI (OPPOSITE)

▸ Prior to the 20th century, ladies made few design decisions.
According to cultural historians, it was men who dominated the decorating game, mainly because they held the design purse strings, and ladies were considered much too delicate to make major purchasing decisions. The title of Thomas Chippendale's 1754 classic *The Gentleman & Cabinet-Maker's Director* speaks volumes about this.

▸ Our understanding of masculinity has become far more complex and difficult to define.
In this century, courage, strength, endurance and other historically manly virtues have become everyday, anonymous acts. Soldiers, rescuers, researchers, adventurers all melt one by one into the bush. Sailors circumnavigate the world singlehandedly with only a blip of a YouTube video to mark the occasion.

What, then, does today's masculine design look like?

Designer Stefano Pastrovich, responsible for such creations as the WallyPower range, *Life Saga* and *Zulu* from his Monaco studio, sees his best work as a happy union between masculine and feminine, based on an equal, loving status, but with emphasis on the feminine as the main influence on the interior.

"Look," he says, "a guy with a nice Ferrari calls on a girl for a date. As soon as she's inside, he floors the thing. He wants to show off how fast it can go. Whether there's glove leather detailing inside means nothing. It's the same with megayacht interiors, which are almost always female, and the exterior male. Ladies shop, they know fabrics, they know how something should feel when it touches their skin, they know how to make themselves beautiful. A guy just puts on a pair of jeans and that's it."

But, he points out, there has to be a happy marriage between the masculine outside and the feminine inside for the megayacht to be a success. "Too often," Pastrovich says, "you see a division—one designer doing the outside and one the inside—and they are at cross purposes, each trying to dominate the other. *Life Saga* represented a real turning point for us. We designed a continuity between in and out. Now when I talk with new clients, I sometimes draw a sketch of the continuity I'm talking about. I draw a beach house, which is totally enclosed from the elements representing the closed part of the yacht, then I draw the beach, which like a deck on a yacht is totally exposed to the sun and wind. Then I draw a patio in between with tables and chairs, part shade, part sun—that's the ideal spot for their mutual pleasure and relaxation."

Renowned for *Dream Catcher*, *Mazu*, *Alexis* and many other yacht interiors, designer Sylvia Bolton, based in Seattle, Washington, feels that modern style fits men perfectly. "Although ladies are braver about exploring modern and men are more occupied with toys and radar and electronics, the modern style itself has the oomph factor men are looking for. It's cleaner, simpler, less complicated, the colors very soft or all white. The overall effect is casual—like a resort—but also very powerful."

Clean, clutter-free design doesn't mean there can't be art or personal expressions and accessories. "The main thing is to keep the clutter organized," says Bolton. "And the earlier we start planning for it, the better it goes. For example, one client had a collection of two hundred fishing lures. We displayed them in their own panel under glass. Another client had a huge amount of family photographs. We turned them all a uniform sepia color in antique frames on one wall in a walkway. A usually boring area soon became everyone's favorite spot."

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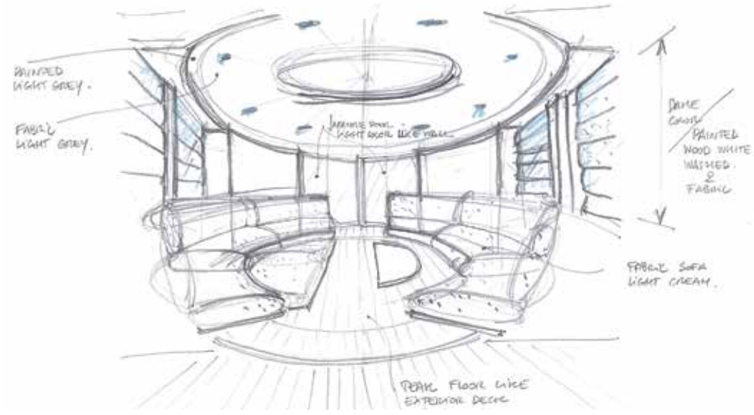
The happy marriage between the masculine outside and feminine inside is crucial, says designer Stefano Pastrovich, who sketched *Life Saga*'s main salon to illustrate this continuity.



"The modern style itself has the oomph factor that men are looking for. The overall effect is casual—like a resort—**but also very powerful.**" – SYLVIA BOLTON, INTERIOR DESIGNER

Marc Thee of design firm Marc-Michaels Interior Design does everything luxury from French restaurants in China to private jets as well as megayachts like *Abbracci*, *Belissima* and *Bossy Boots*. Reached at his main studio in Winter Park, Florida, Thee says he sees an increasing involvement of men in today's yacht interiors. "While many men will name their megayachts after their wives, out of all project types we do at the firm, the male is the most involved in their yacht design. Very often the yacht is a symbol of the success he has achieved.

"The manliness trend is very much menswear inspired with emphasis on colors like classic palominos, saddle shades, creams, navies and things that have been in style in menswear forever. Houndstooth, chalk stripe, chevrons, etc., are menswear patterns but they are kept to a minimum on these megayachts," add Thee. "Since yachts usually exist in warmer climates, the color palettes tend to be on the light side and take into consideration oceanic tones. In any case, a typical menswear palette used to be very saturated in color... such as deep forest greens, wine reds and colored leather. Everything has cleaned up. The whole era of ornateness and heaviness is gone and people are enjoying living cleaner and more minimally."

Millennium, *Lady Linda*, *Opus II*, Evan K. Marshall's yacht interiors capture the new manly design in ways that are quite personalized for many reasons but for one reason that really stands out. Before Marshall puts even the roughest of sketches on the proverbial back of the envelope, he first gets to know his clients as best he can, spending considerable leisure time with them, preferably well outside his London office. He joins them at clubs, or on the links, or in their homes getting to know his clients in casual ways, while at the same time extracting key information that will ultimately lead to a very formal set of blueprints.

"We just look, listen and ask questions. I can say, for example, 'I just love that sculpture,' and the man might reply, 'Oh, really. I hate it, but it's my wife's and I just can't get rid of it.'" For Marshall, this offhand remark can be a critical element in building up a picture of the client, filed away with additional data: how extroverted is the client, how meticulous, etc.

"In general," adds Marshall, "the man takes a greater interest in the exterior styling. They're both involved with interior, but with the wife taking the lead, particularly in spaces dedicated to social occasions, cocktails and dinners. Men are more interested in an onboard retreat where they can get away to watch Formula One, for example, and smoke cigars."

Are megayacht interiors man-centric? Hardly, as Marshall and the others have said. But what's different about them these days is that they reflect the fact that men have become more comfortable expressing themselves through design, and more comfortable working with women to achieve that beautiful space between sun and shade so dear to Pastrovich.

Meanwhile, the stereotypes of what constitutes manliness and manly interiors have gone begging, perhaps ever since Marilyn Monroe famously exclaimed in *Some Like It Hot*, "I don't care how rich he is, as long as he has a yacht, his own private railroad car and his own toothpaste."

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Traditional masculine design focuses on the use of deep menswear-inspired hues, like on *Shemara*'s bridge (right). Yet many yachts, like *Mazu* (left), take their design cues from the ocean environment, calling on neutrals whose simplicity, says Sylvia Bolton, appeals to men.

PHOTO BY JEFF BROWN (TOP RIGHT)