



## The Ship-Shaper

Renowned British interior designer **Angus Addison** shows CAMERON DUECK around *Belle Isle*, a new superyacht currently under construction for a client in Hong Kong



ANGUS ADDISON WALKS through the yacht pointing out joinery, the finish of the light oak and highlights so subtle they remain unnoticed at first glance. It's a small floating world, an oasis of luxury and leisure that he's created specifically for his client. And Addison (pictured left) has a good sense of what the client wants, as it's the third yacht he's designed for him, along with homes and commercial spaces around the globe.

Addison, one half of the London-based firm Addison Nelson Design, has spent most of his career focused on the interiors of homes and businesses in Europe and Southeast Asia. But success with high-net-worth clients has brought them back to him when they buy toys and want them customised to suit their tastes. Addison has so far designed four yachts and a private jet, and is about to embark on yet another mega-yacht project.

On this day he's walking me through *Belle Isle*, a 25-metre yacht built by Kingship Marine in Zhongshan. The vessel is designed as an adventure yacht, with a longer fuel range than most of the shiny white playthings cruising Hong Kong waters on weekends. *Belle Isle* will be based in the Mediterranean, where her owner will use her to explore the coasts of France and Italy. When he's not on board, she'll be chartered out.

While the naval engineers have ensured

that the yacht has the power and range to meet the client's appetite for adventure, Addison is more concerned with making sure the interior matches the yacht's capacity for fun, while meeting the owner's sense of style.

The design concept was traditional New England, but there's also evidence of modern Swedish practicality and elegance in the colour palette. "The idea was to give it a holiday feel," Addison says.

The light colour scheme and uncluttered lines give the yacht a relaxed yet elegant look. The main cabin is lined in painted shipboard, combining traditional seafaring looks with Quaker-style simplicity.

"We wanted to give it a traditional feel, but keep it from looking heavy or dark," Addison says, pointing at the rattan-backed dining-room chairs as an example.

Most of the boat is finished in blonde natural wood tones, tans and moss greens, from the linen wall and ceiling coverings to carpets and cushions. In the main saloon and dining room, the silk ceiling stands out for its texture, not its colour, and the low saloon sofas have just a hint of colour accents to their cushions. The real splashes of colour come from the owner's works of art.

While at first the expanses of oak appear almost too simple, on closer inspection there are small stainless-steel trims and cock bead



ABOVE: CUSHIONS GIVE COLOUR ACCENTS. BELOW: THE MAIN CABIN IS LINED IN PAINTED SHIPBOARD







TRADITIONAL NEW ENGLAND MEETS SWEDISH PRACTICALITY

running around the wood panels, adding just enough for luxury but keeping a minimalist look that creates the visual space Addison was looking for.

Addison believes in designing for longevity. *Belle Isle* has its share of glitz, from marble baths and hidden televisions to deck-top hot tubs, but it also presents itself in a decidedly understated way.

“I like working without too much lacquer, leaving the wood to look natural,” Addison says, as he runs a hand over the natural oak woodwork. “We weren’t afraid to let the grain show.”

While a client’s tastes may be similar from home to yacht, meeting their demands brings a whole new set of challenges once they’re afloat. The weight of materials used is crucial, creating a need for honeycombed marble and light plywood construction that supports the beautiful oak veneers.

“All clients want to maximise 100 percent of the space on a boat,” he says, “unlike in a home where you don’t worry about three or four inches here, a foot there. On a yacht you really have to squeeze in everything.”

The restricted space and multi-level construction of a yacht of this size create what Addison describes as “the awkward spaces” where stairs, doors and companionways meet, and often create cramped and

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claustrophobic areas. Addison gave these places particular attention in order to maximise room and create smooth, easy traffic areas.

Addison was new to yachts when he tackled his first job in 1995, a 30-metre yacht by San Lorenzo in Italy. His first experience went smoothly, with an experienced yard providing shop drawings and making sure his design was executed as well as possible. But the more yachts he designs, the more he has realised that many yards ignore customer demands and simply don’t understand interiors.

“I began to understand that the yards can build the ship and put the technical parts in, but often when it comes to the interior they don’t realise how particular superyacht clients are, and they have to be guided.”

Yachts are renowned for having their own characters, and an owner with deep pockets is keen on making that uniqueness stand out, whether he’s restoring a classic yacht or building something new. In 1998, Addison helped a client restore a 1950s Trumpy yacht, regaining the boat’s former elegance and distinctive styling.

“If you buy a chateau in France or a river cottage in England, you’ll do them up differently. We do everything from penthouses to grade-one-listed buildings in England, and we always follow the footprint

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we started with. So if you’re doing a speedboat, you’d do it more like an Aston Martin interior. But if you want to do an expedition boat, then maybe you want it to be more traditional.”

That said, Addison describes the design of the *Belle Isle*’s bridge as having “a bit of an Aston Martin feel to it. Very masculine.

“The client is often quite demanding, as this kind of undertaking is quite unusual for them. It’s very different from commercial work. The money that’s being invested is their own private money, while on a commercial project things are not scrutinised so closely. When it’s their own private project, they’re fully on the project.”

Mix wealthy clients used to getting what they want with the confidence to express their design tastes, tasteful or not, and you can end up with some oddball ideas, he says. “We’ve had two clients in the past 18 years where we simply had to say, ‘We can’t work with you, our minds are too different.’

“You do some unusual things, some quite uncommon things. Every client’s demands are totally different from the next,” Addison says. “When it comes to designing his yacht, this is his major interest and hobby, so he gets heavily involved the project. When we’re doing his house he probably is more open and relaxed about it, and it’s less of a challenge.”



ABOVE: MARBLE BATHROOMS ADD A DASH OF GLITZ; BELOW: THE BRIDGE HAS A HINT OF ASTON MARTIN

