



PHOTOGRAPHY Guillaume Plisson

BACK



FROM THE FUTURE

Nearly two decades after her launch, SKAT is on the market for the first time. Marilyn Mower takes a look inside the trendsetter



Look at these pictures and you either get *SKAT* or you don't... but you won't forget her. This yacht has been provoking discussion since her launch in 2002, and as Lürssen sales director Michael Breman notes, nearly 20 years on she is just as unforgettable and still fulfilling her owner's brief for a yacht "*pas tout à fait comme les autres*," a yacht like no other.

Gray, straight sides, high bow, faceted superstructure, a conning tower of a mast and launched by a builder renowned for military vessels – the number 9906 emblazoned on her side like a warship led to years of speculation about all sorts of ominous things.

The reality couldn't be further from the truth. A Danish and Norwegian word for treasure, *SKAT* can be used as a term of endearment; 9906 stands for naval architect Espen Øino's sixth design commission in 1999 and gray is the owner's favorite color. And while not exactly mainstream, *SKAT*'s unique look has mellowed over the years, or perhaps we have.

So how did a brilliant mathematician and computing genius who prefers to stay out of the limelight enter yachting with a boat so striking that it is a yacht-spotter magnet?

"He reached out to me through a mutual connection," says Stuart Larsen of Fraser Yachts, the client's broker. "His concept was so visionary that there was nothing on the market to satisfy the amazing futuristic needs of how he felt he should live on a yacht. He was ready to build a yacht and he asked me who I thought we should ask to design it. I thought about who was young and thinking outside the box and I suggested contacting

HEAD-TURNER

Over time, military lines have become more appreciated in yachting. Early on, *SKAT*'s appearance

caused a naval vessel to delay its entry into port when officers spotted the "unknown naval ship"



LEISURE DECK

Above the bridge deck is a gym deck with a well-equipped workout space and a spa pool



Keeping fit

SKAT has benefited from an active maintenance program, the crew building long-term relationships with refit partners such as Other Angle and ACA in Marseilles along her cruising routes. "With *SKAT* spending a lot of time in Northern Europe and Scandinavia, we identified another excellent partner with Royal Huisman's refit division, Huisfit. Over two stops they did a full tear-down and completed the most comprehensive refit of *SKAT* to date," the captain says. This includes mechanical rebuilds, modifying the gym deck to fit a larger spa pool and increasing the holding tank capacity to 50 tonnes for extended cruising time in zero-discharge areas.

Espen Øino. I didn't even name any other designers."

"It would have been the *Octopus* connection," Øino notes. "Lürssen had held a competition to see who would design *Octopus*. I won and that's how Stuart, who was also that owner's broker, saw how I work." Larsen briefed Øino on a project that as yet had few boundaries, "other than something about not wanting a boat looking like it was carved out of a block of cheese – and that I needed to see the client's house to understand. It was the

end of April when I flew to meet him in the Pacific Northwest. He was so gracious and showed me every detail of the extraordinary house [a masterwork of late modernist architect Wendell H Lovett]. We talked about the boat, how he expected to live on it and that he likes circles, arcs, flat planes and straight lines – nothing extraneous. He didn't want complicated shapes. He said if we are working with steel and aluminum, let's respect the materials. I did explain that for the sake of hydrodynamics there would have to be a few curves in the hull surfaces."

Øino was given four weeks to prepare a concept and he shares that on the flight home, reflecting on the client and the scope of the project, "I wondered what I had gotten myself into." Precisely four weeks later a meeting was arranged in Monaco. It was the week of the Monaco Grand Prix and the client had chartered the 154ft *Andale*.

"I arrived and there was a party going on, the boat was full of really important people. He invited me inside and we sat at a table reviewing my plans. All of a sudden, it started raining and everyone rushed inside. The salon of that boat is not so big. The next thing, everyone was crowded around and I was making my presentation to all these people. "I wasn't so confident then as I am now," says Øino, laughing at the memory. "I wasn't sure I could get through it.

"When I finished. I think I pushed the drawings toward him and waited in silence. Then he said, 'I like it. Let's do it,...on the spot.'"





Øino began with the GA, which was also unlike anything he had ever presented before. Design, he says, is about problem-solving and in this case the challenges involved putting the guest and owner's cabins on the main deck, maximizing crew areas, creating a large guest workspace, bringing as much natural light into the boat as possible, not stowing tenders on deck, incorporating a helipad and a gym and having clear sightlines. Fortunately the client appreciates multi-functionality of things and spaces.

The entire design process took just six or seven months to complete. "Working with this fascinating client was a wonderful experience. To him, nothing was a problem, merely a challenge," Øino says.

"With the basic GA in hand, I prepared a preliminary spec," says Larsen, who sent the bid package to five shipyards before Lürssen was selected. In 1999 Lürssen's yacht division was still gaining traction. It had built *Be Mine*, *Limitless*, *Izanami* and *Coral Island* but the projects were usually coming along one at a time. "Lürssen was supervising the construction of *Octopus* at HDW in Kiel because she was too big for its yard, and I thought SKAT might be a good fit for the Lemwerder [Bremen] yard. I also thought, that with its military projects, it might be a bit more creative on technology," he adds. That last part turned out to be especially true when it came to meeting requirements for a super quiet yacht.

Lürssen's project manager, Jörg Buttscher, elaborates. "We knew reducing noise was very important so we approached it in two ways, and yes, we used military technology. We designed the engine room so that all of the equipment would be elastically mounted to a steel raft [an enormous steel structure that floats on resilient mounts]." This included the engines, generators in their soundboxes, watermakers, air compressors – virtually everything that produced noise and vibration. Elastic mounts were specified based on the frequency of each engine or machine. The raft was in turn floated off the structure of the engine

THE HANGOUT

The bridge deck lounge is multi-functional with three areas to convene plus an office and library just forward



DOUBLE DUTY

The dining salon provides two small tables or one large one and can also be used for business

conferences. Below: the main salon also functions as a movie theater with a large screen dropping from the overhead

room's lower level on shock mounts. All conduit, pipes and exhaust lines running from the equipment on the raft were isolated as well.

"We insulated the entire two-level space from the rest of the yacht's interior," Buttscher says. "We used a technical material we had used before but on other yachts we probably used about 60 percent of the amount we used on SKAT." The proof is in sound levels that measure far lower than most owners demand or yards deliver: 34dB in the master at cruising speed.

One of the granular details of the SKAT build was how few changes were made to the specifications and design once construction started, despite the fact that the owner visited the yard monthly. "We had never had a client show that much attention to the process before," Buttscher says. It became a mark of pride with the build team. "We took our time with the planning. The bridge was mocked up 1:1 for example so he could see exactly where everything would be before we built it. If you don't plan properly, problems come up and the owner loses the fun of building."

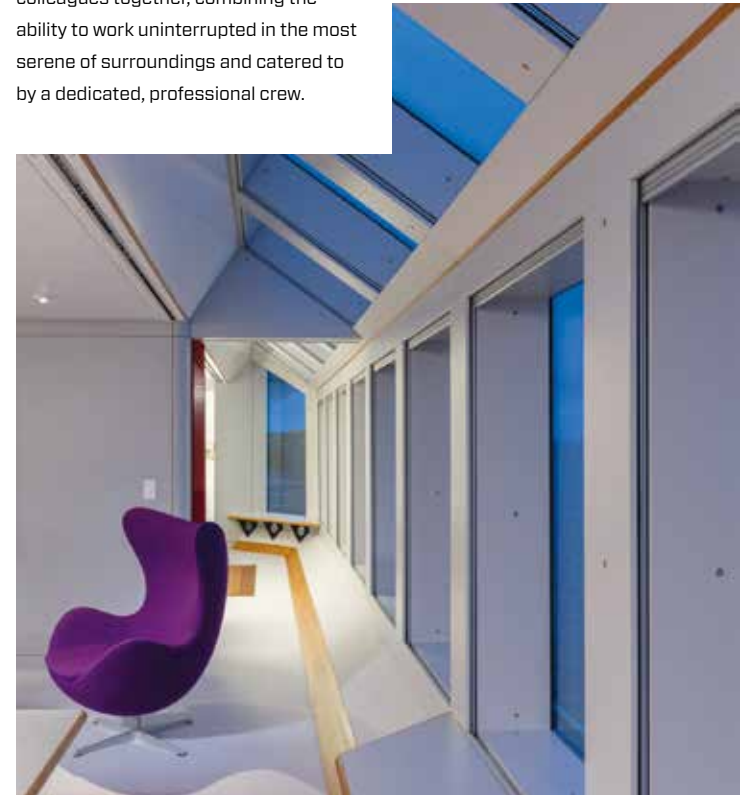
SKAT's interior is also one of a kind. "I recommended Marco Zanini for the project," Øino says. The pair had worked together earlier on an unusual conversion project called *Amazon Express* and on two smaller boats and Øino believed Zanini, who had been a designer for famed architect Ettore Sottsass before becoming a founder of the iconoclastic 1980s design powerhouse Memphis Group, would be a good fit.

Remote working

The office deserves a special mention. With floor-to-ceiling windows on one side, whiteboards on the other and two desks, it offers as many as six uncluttered workstations. The setup, which also makes a fantastic classroom, was originally envisioned by the boat's then-bachelor owner as a place to bring colleagues together, combining the ability to work uninterrupted in the most serene of surroundings and catered to by a dedicated, professional crew.

"After Espen proposed me and one other designer, the owner asked us to design one room. Then he asked me to come and see his house and I flew there with Jörg," Zanini says.

"He said, 'Look, this is my house, this is my plane. I want a





FAMILY TIES
The owner's suite of rooms includes the stateroom (pictured), large bathroom (below left) and two further cabins for children



ACCENT COLOR
The interior decor relies on a neutral backdrop that allows the onboard pop art to shine. Occasional chairs are the only other source of color



“To this fascinating client, nothing was a problem, merely a challenge”

seamless experience from my house to my jet to my yacht.’ He’s very mathematical. I understood how his mind works in an hour. The rest was details. For example, he questioned why wall switches are always arranged as a horizontal instead of vertical like outlet covers? He’s right of course, it’s much more logical.”

Once he understood the goal, Zanini says, “it was easy. Clean, precise, uncluttered, practical, useful and if possible multi-useful. I designed for him a yacht that sails, not a Tudor palace. I suppose it helps that I had been sailing for years. The interior is extremely modern, in tune with the owner’s vision of the world and the outside design of the ship.”

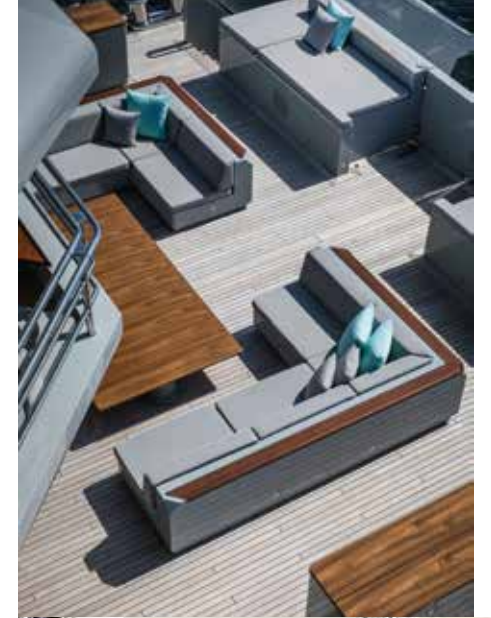
Zanini realized that to the client, gray is a neutral color – his favorite neutral color, and that elements of his art collection, mostly Pop art by Victor Vasarely and Roy Lichtenstein, are so bold that they demanded a neutral background to be appreciated. Instead of wall panels and cabinets in intricate grains, he proposed solid sheets of Wilsonart laminate outlined geometrically in teak bands and a few counters of gray Guanabara granite.

“Plastic laminate is seaworthy, comfortable and practical,” Zanini says unapologetically. “We worked out the thematic colors – gray, dark blue, red and white – and he took to the idea of the smooth laminate quickly.” The surface material may be common, but that does not mean there was not a lot of intricate design to the flat panels, consistent teak banding, reveals and tight tolerances of the interior crafted by interior outfitters Zago and Deutsche Werkstätten Hellerau. Aside from the art, the only other interior color comes from a few occasional chairs. The space is restful and speaks with one consistent design language.

Zanini gives considerable credit to Brazilian designer Flávia Alves De Souza who worked with him on SKAT. “She did most of the actual design of each space, built mock-ups [the salon was also mocked up 1:1], developed details and followed the execution... I may have read [the owner’s] mind and had most of the basic ideas, but she did hundreds of drawings and worked hundreds of hours to get it right.”

At launch, SKAT’s extensive use of glass nearly caused necks to snap. The 270-degree surround of windows on the bridge deck created a conservatory effect heretofore unseen but perfect for viewing surroundings and brightening the interior. Port and starboard the bay windows stand proud of the superstructure and angle inward to join the overhead. The amount of glass was such that class insisted on exterior water cooling spray rails linked to the fire system. “Thankfully, they have never been needed, but they allow for fast washdown,” the captain quips.

“The bridge deck is where everyone hangs out and it’s been designed for multiple functions,” Larsen says. More organized than divided, most of the area aft of the main staircase is open plan. “The thought that went



into it is fantastic.” Two functional areas, the library on port and the guest office to starboard, can be closed from the rest by pocket doors or allowed to cleverly flow along the bay windows aft on to the informal salon and a bar/games/snack area. This in turn opens through glass doors to the aft deck shaded by the helipad above. Here are breezy options for large or small group dining, napping or views out over the stern.

Like the captain, many of the yacht’s crew have been aboard for many years and that, too, is part of the plan. Long before MLC 2006 mandated better working and living environments for mariners, *SKAT*’s owner understood that the boat wasn’t just his home on water but the crew’s home also and was determined to provide a good living space. As a result, the entire lower deck, save for the beach club and dive store, is dedicated to crew. Their double cabins are spacious, each has a desk and wardrobes and an en suite head with enclosed shower, something that was uncommon in 1999. A comfortable crew lounge is separate from the crew mess; both are separate from the galley. An extra plus is the dedicated workshop with more than enough space and storage for all manner of tools.

There is just one elevator on *SKAT* but it has two doors, one opening on to guest corridors and one to the crew side, and it extends from the gym deck all the way to the tank deck. The elevator’s wall panels hide fold-out shelves that crew employ during guest meal service. Instead of jockeying



SHADES OF GRAY

SKAT may be gray but there are actually two tones. Unlike matte-finished naval ships, it’s full gloss

topped with a clear coat. Bottom left: the helipad aft on the deck can handle an EC135 or Agusta 109 in private use



around a bulky food cart, crew flip up the shelves and put the plated dishes and service items on them to whisk them from the galley to service pantries on the main, bridge or gym deck.

The finish of the crew quarters uses exactly the same practical surfaces and attention to design detail as the guest areas. “I’m proud to be part of that egalitarian effort,” Zanini comments.

Nearly 20 years down the line, the yacht’s interior and layout have remained close to the original apart from substantial refreshing of sofas, chairs and other soft furnishings as the interior transitioned from a bachelor’s yacht to a family home. “The owner’s office became a child’s cabin, the large spa bathtub was reduced in size, a guest cabin was modified to be convertible to a kid’s cabin and a door was added to allow the family cabins to be a private wing. And we found a place for a swingset, trampoline and sea pool,” the captain notes.

The plan wasn’t to build an innovative yacht, just a highly personal one. “That yacht was a lot of firsts for us, first helideck and our first yacht with all the accommodations on main deck or above. The arc at the bow was difficult to build and it was also a difficult boat to paint with all those unforgiving flat surfaces. It was hard to make it perfect,” Breman says.

“It was a difficult design to understand on paper,” Øino says. “Remember there wasn’t 3D modeling or photorealistic renderings 21 years ago. There was one fellow at the launch who, when the boat came out of the shed, was really surprised. He said from the drawings he thought it was going to be the ugliest boat ever, but seeing it he said, ‘It’s cool.’” Or perhaps, “*spændende*” is more appropriate for such a treasure. ■



SKAT

LÜRSSEN

GYM DECK

BRIDGE DECK

MAIN DECK

CREW DECK

LOWER DECK

The open-air gym deck has a roomy spa pool for post-workout soaks

The guest office has whiteboard walls and doubles as a classroom for children

The main salon, main deck aft and gym deck can be set up as onboard cinemas

A platform elevator was installed in the garage to load supplies directly to the crew deck

Among other cold stores, the wine cellar can hold approximately 700 bottles

A crane doubles as a diving board, as does the passerelle. Both have custom railings when in use

60ft
30ft
0ft

LOA 232' 11"
LWL 205'
Beam 46'
Draft (full load) 12'
Gross tonnage
1,998GT
Engines
2 x 2,682hp MTU
16V 4000 M70

Speed max/cruise
18.1/14.3 knots
Range at 14.3 knots
4,600nm
Generators
2 x 280kW MTU 8V 183; 1 x 220kW MTU 6R 183

Fuel capacity
59,174 gallons
Freshwater capacity
16,378 gallons
Tenders
1 x 28' custom Blue Spirit RIB; 1 x 26.5' custom Rupert RIB; 1 x 16.5' Nautica Widebody RIB

Owners/guests 14
Crew 20
Construction
Steel hull; aluminum superstructure
Classification
Lloyd's + 100A1; SSC; Yacht (P); Mono G6, ✱ LMC; UMS; MCA LY3

Naval architecture
Espen Øino; Lürssen
Exterior styling
Espen Øino
Interior design
Marco Zanini, Flávia Alves De Souza

Builder/year/refit
Lürssen/2002/2019
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