



## YACHTS MAGAZINE

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# Minimalism Takes Center Stage

Rooted in part in Japanese culture, minimalism or one of its many incarnations is a movement that has evolved since World War II. "Less is more" has dictated most modern design since German Architect Mies van der Rohe coined the phrase. It has gained wide acceptance worldwide, influencing U.S. architecture in a big way, but in Europe it has soared, perhaps as a cultural reaction to the continent's rich baroque architectural heritage. Designers and architects have latched onto an idea that has allowed them to break free from a centuries-long tradition of rich decorative arts and search instead for expression in its purest form.

Minimalism has influenced European yacht design especially for the past decade. Achille Salvagni, whose firm has designed yacht interiors for Italian yacht builder Canados, says that many designers once considered yachts as mere "containers of superfluous things." When they became more accepted as objects of design, they too began reflecting the design trends of the day. From architecture, to sculpture, painting and home interiors, minimalist design has hopped onboard yachts. Italy, for one, has embraced the stripped-down style thanks to a strong design culture supported by influential events such as the Venice Biennale. Teaching institutions including the Milan Design School, which offers a Master in Yacht Design degree, influence the country's healthy yacht building industry. The Italians, however, are not alone; today minimalism—or one of its derivatives—has come to define what one means by a "European-style yacht."

It is difficult to pinpoint exactly when or where this started. Minimalism has had a big impact on sailboat design, and many credit Luca Bassani and his firm Wally as a driving force in this area. Examples of Wally's work include the 100' sloop cruiser Dark Shadow (with an interior by British firm Foster & Partners) and the more recent 143' all-carbon Esence with naval architecture by American Bill Tripp and interior design by Odile Decq. Andrea Valicelli's and Philippe Starck's carbon vessel Virtuelle and Luca Brenta Design and Piero Lissoni's Ghost built by Vitters also showcase minimalism.

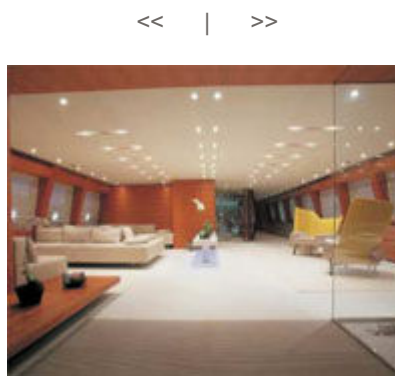
But the spare, modern look also has become part of many motoryachts' interiors, not only at yards known for their quest for modernity such as Wally and Baglietto, but also in shipyards known for more classic yachts, such as Codecasa and Benetti. The yacht Izimami (now named Ronin), designed by Sir Norman Foster in the early 1990s and built by Lürssen, broke new ground with its exterior styling and, although its interior is seldom seen, a photo from the aft deck suggest the yacht's interior has a unadorned look as interpreted by one the U.K.'s master in the minimalist genre. From the late 1990s on, many other yachts explored the avenues of minimalism, including Baglietto's 1999 Blue Ice with an interior by Milan firm Cerri & Associates and Giorgio Armani's private yacht Mariu built by Codecasa in 2003, and designed by the famous fashion icon himself. Baglietto's association with the designer Francesco Paskowski produced Blue Scorpion in 2003 and Blue Princess in 2004, both illustrating the trend toward simpler elegance. Benetti's Sai Ramis a classic yacht influenced by minimalism—if not minimalist—that appeared in 2004. Bassani's Wally explored the far reaches of the genre as applied to motoryacht design by releasing in 2005 the 118 WallyPower a yacht that is minimalist inside and out. Even an exploration yacht, Mondomarine's Tribu, slated to debut at the Monaco Yacht Show this September, has adopted a minimalist interior courtesy of prolific Italian designer Piero Lissoni, whose work has cultivated the art of understatement for over 20 years. "My highest goal is simplicity, knowing that simplicity holds a great inner complexity," Lissoni says. "Sometimes I place a stronger emphasis on dimension, color or proportions, but most of the times my concepts lean towards the elementary."

A few of minimalism's attributes are geometric shapes, light, natural materials, space. A successful minimalist design is a result of a good balance of these elements, designers say, but it comes at a higher cost that you may think.

Essential planning in the concept phase is a necessary and expensive step. Yachts have many structural implements, cabling, wiring and plumbing in the interior—not to mention cleats, winches, antennas, domes and anchor systems on the exterior—most of which need to be concealed in the quest for a minimalist look. Yet the visual experience must not be at the expense of functionality or comfort. Another challenge is that the minimalist look tends to favor straight lines and cubic shapes, which are rarely in accord with the basic shape of a yacht hull, explains Franck Darnet, who owns a French design firm with offices in Miami. Since space is at a premium, exacting measurements are essential. Light is also paramount to a successful minimalist look. While concealing all structural elements and clutter, the interior must also allow for big expanses of natural light and accent lighting that, again, will reveal any defect. "Minimalism cannot stand approximation," says Darnet, who has worked on classic motoryachts and minimalism-inspired catamarans. "Details must be perfect."

Modern, sleek yacht interiors often still use wood—teak continues to be a favorite—in as pure a form as possible. The design favors large surfaces, perfect angles, flat finishes and solid colors. All tend to emphasize any defect in a cabinet, a table or a door frame. Often the finish will be light, emphasizing natural veneer, or will be a rich lacquer. Fixtures and knobs will be few and far between, in favor of doors and drawers with touch-latches. Highly-skilled and time-consuming carpentry is an essential part of a successful modern interior, as is the quality and natural beauty of the wood used.

"Minimal is not poor, it is essential," says Sarah Oikos, who set out to become an architect but embraced yacht design when she discovered that her Genoa design school offered the course. She wrote her master's thesis on the evolution of megayacht design and has since launched the firm Italstyle with a few other young architects. "You may use two elements, but they may be very precious." Essential in this case means that few materials set the stage for perhaps one or two important focus pieces. The quality of materials and workmanship must be outstanding, which also means expensive.



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ST. PETERSBURG

THE YACHT AND  
BROKERAGE SHOW

PALM BEACH BOAT  
SHOW

SUNCOAST BOAT  
SHOW

ST. AUGUSTINE BOAT  
SHOW

PAST EVENTS

Minimalist yacht interiors often include materials that are light, yet durable and flexible, such as carbon fiber that the 118 WallyPower uses liberally. Carbon fiber is a manufactured material in great demand in aeronautics and many high-tech industries thanks to its structural attributes, but it is produced in small quantities and at a high cost. Other favorite materials include stainless steel, chrome, leather and lacquer. Technological evolution has opened up new possibilities, Salvagni says. "There are virtually no limits...lightness is the essential requirement."

Today's designers and architects do not see minimalism as a passing fad. "Our existence is too complex for us to complicate it much longer," Salvagni says. "Simple and easy things help us live easier, let us express more, enrich our souls."

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