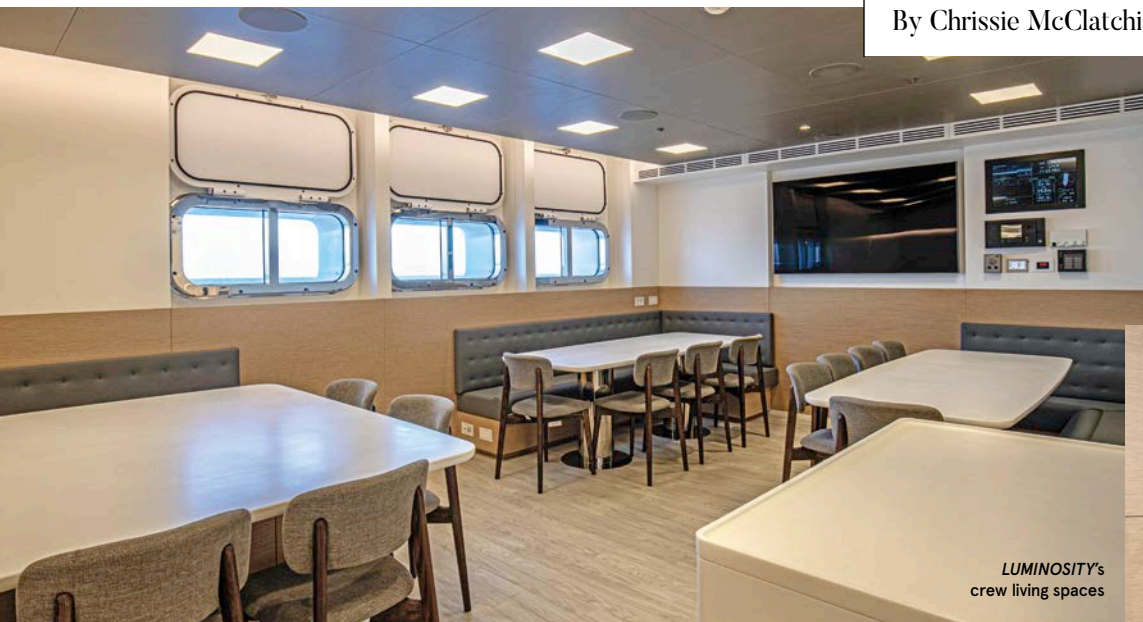


# Below Deck

How do the leading yacht designers approach crew quarters?

By Chrissie McClatchie



LUMINOSITY's crew living spaces



**From a deep dive into the crew areas** on board Benetti's M/Y LUMINOSITY with Zaniz Jakubowski, to Espen Oeino's insider tips on crew storage, and the most frequent challenges Winch Design faces, *Dockwalk* talks crew design with three of the industry's brightest lights.

## Best Amenities, Best Crew

Here's a tip from Espen Oeino: if you're looking for a secret place to stow away some of your belongings, your best bet is to try the overheads in the crew cabins. "The big crew cabins are normally in the forward part of the boat," he explains to *Dockwalk*. "You also have fewer arterial services, such as air-conditioning ducts and cables, here, so quite often you end up with big volumes of space that can be nice to use for crew storage."

The renowned Norwegian yacht designer is the figure behind many of the world's most recognizable yachts. Yet, no matter how many new builds he has seen from concept to construction, some things never change — namely the challenges of space management. "Even though we use 3D, the design process isn't as efficiently well-developed to identify every possible space early enough," he says. Instead, it's a matter of trying to be "as alert as possible, as early as possible. And using as much common sense as you can," he says.

If anything is different, however, it's that the crew areas are now firmly positioned at the front and center of the process. "You're definitely thinking more about it from the outset," he says. "At the start of my career, you would kind of use a space left over for crew or you wouldn't go into the same kind of detail as you do now."

Today, one of the first tasks in any new project is to figure out how many crew are needed to fully cater to the client's needs. "That can

be very different for a quiet family boat compared to a 24/7 party boat," he explains. Once the brief has been agreed, he gets to work on the general arrangement. "We start planning out the various areas, trying to draw up something logical and nice," he says. Crew circulation and well-considered workspaces are the types of thoughts that are omnipresent across the whole design process.

As is striking a balance between safe access for washing down the boat and the client's wishes for a "sexy boat and lovely services," he says. In more recent years, much more emphasis has been put on crew safety and wellbeing, a step Oeino applauds. "On the bigger boats you now need outside resting areas as well, which I think is a great move forward," he says. "It's very sensible to want your crew to be fit, healthy, and tanned."

It's a move that can, in part, be attributed to the introduction of the Maritime Labour Convention (MLC), 2006, but there's a larger shift at play. "We understand the value and importance of the crew more today," he says. "There also seems to be a shortage of really good, highly qualified crew. It's all the better, then, if you can offer something the boat next door doesn't have, which is not necessarily money, but a better crew cabin or a crew gym. By offering the best crew amenities you can, you will get the best crew."

He warns, however, that if a yacht is too biased on the crew side, it may struggle on the secondary market. "I've come across a number of boats in the past that were owner-operated or where the owners and the crew have been like a big family and they have been hard to sell later because, in the mind of most people, crew and owner and guest circulation should be separate," he explains. "Like many things in life, it's about striking the right balance."



## The Word from Winch

"Thanks to recent regulations, crew areas are becoming more uniform across different types of vessels," says Ignacio Oliva-Velez, senior partner, Yachts at Winch Design – although the function of the vessel does play a role in determining the crew requirements and location. "For example, depending on the rig complexity, a sailing vessel will require a minimum number of sailing crew to handle the sails, while an explorer will require a good number of crew specialized in handling a wide array of tenders, like Jeeps, submarines, fast powerboats, landing craft, motorbikes, Jet Skis, etc., not forgetting the aircraft pilots," he explains.

He adds that, across all vessels, the challenges are found in planning the crew accommodation, services access, and circulation, particularly of food. "Especially on bigger yachts, when a Michelin-starred chef plates the food three decks and 75-meters away from the aft dining area and the food must arrive at the right temperature and freshness. Not forgetting that, at the dining table, there could be 24 discerning guests waiting to experience and enjoy the unique food made on board," he says.

## A Shining Light

The pointy end of an airplane was where leading designer Zaniz turned to for inspiration for the crew quarters on her latest yachting project, *M/Y LUMINOSITY*, built by Benetti in Livorno, Italy. "I used the idea of traveling first-class to make sure the crew could escape to their own world with all their personal belongings beside them."

To make the crew as comfortable as possible was one of the priorities of the client – an experienced yacht owner with significant new-build experience.

## Fancy That!

One of the first yachts Espen Oeino designed after starting his own studio is also the one he names as the most memorable for its crew design: The 71-meter *M/Y SKAT*, launched by Lürssen in 2002 (and, at the time of writing, for sale). "It was a very clean floor plan for the time," he says. "We dedicated the whole lower deck and tank deck to crew and services, and we put all the guest cabins on the main deck, which was quite unusual at the time."

Not only did this allow for big feature windows for the guests, but it made a clean and logical layout for the entire vessel. "The client was one of the first to really understand the importance of giving the crew good spaces and he felt that they should have the best possible amenities in the cabins. Some of them are very generous in terms of space. Also, all the surface materials used in the crew area were the same as for the owner and guests."

It's the portholes in the crew mess and crew lounge that still stand out in particular nearly 20 years on. "The position of the portholes was carefully laid out so that when the crew were seated, they would have a view," he explains. "You don't really spend that much time standing in the crew mess or crew lounge, so we lowered them.

A lot of thought and observation went into it."

"We were told to give the crew areas the same attention to detail as guest areas, to consider their private spaces, and to give them acoustical and visual privacy," she says. Luminosity, a theme across the vessel (as its name suggests), was also an integral part of the brief: "You don't feel like you're going to a lower deck as you enter into a place full of light."

The British-American designer was both part of the exterior design team (along with Hugo van Wieringen from Azure Naval Architects, Andrew Langton from Reymond Langton Design, and Giorgio M. Cassetta), as well as the sole interior designer on the 107.6-meter project that was nearly a decade in the making. Launched in 2020, *M/Y LUMINOSITY* was built to the Passenger Yacht Code (PYC) and can accommodate 27 guests in 12 staterooms.

The yacht has earned its stripes as a *BOAT International* cover star and shone the spotlight on a designer who so often remains hidden behind ironclad non-disclosure agreements. But what has been less publicized is that Zaniz focused the

same attention to detail in designing the space for the crew of 37 as she did for the guests. "It's a subject I could talk forever about," she says.

Zaniz starts with one of her favorite spaces: the double cabins. "The standard rooms are quite special," she says. It's here where her vision of a private world for every crewmember finds its form in the spacious sleeping "pods," as she refers to them. "We built secret compartments into the wooden frame that surrounds the beds," she explains. "We used every center of space we could find." Also recessed into the paneling of each pod is a television, safe, and foldaway tray table.

Within each compartment, an iPad controls the lighting and sound (AirPods have also been supplied to each crewmember) while, next to the head rest, cup holders and charging areas have been seamlessly incorporated into the framework. Each bunk is fitted with a privacy blind that serves a dual

purpose: "When drawn, it individualizes the pod but also means that people aren't affected by their roommate moving around the cabin," she explains.

The theme is utility with a design twist: the flooring is luxury vinyl tile from Amtico and the skirting, bedside panels, and ladder details are a statement in dark bronze. A full-length mirror on the back of the door, foldout desk, and individual-locked closet, fully outfitted with shoe drawers, shelves,



Espen Oeino



Ignacio Oliva-Velez



Zaniz

and hanging space, complete the double-cabin arrangement. “The concept was to put everything away and to give the crew as much storage space and as much breathable area as we could,” Zaniz adds.

The single cabins for officers and engineers follow the same principle, although the layout allows for a door that sections off the sleeping area from a seated lounge area with a sofa, desk, fittings for electrical equipment, and bookshelf. “These spaces feel enormous,” she says.

Particular attention was paid to the bathrooms, which are striking for the large shower enclosure with fold-down bench. “I felt that a good bathroom was one of the most important things to have,” she says. “People often forget about how essential a decent shower is for crew.” Guest-standard Toto washlet toilets with built-in bidet are another distinct feature.

From hidden laundry baskets to recessed tissue boxes and even matching shelving areas so that, in the double cabins, neither storage nor product has to be shared, “every little detail has been thought out,” she continues. “Making the space feel as large as possible was part of the objective, along with correct lighting and easy-to-clean surfaces,” says Zaniz.

The names of the occupants of each cabin are engraved on interchangeable wooden door plaques – a small but important detail on a yacht that could expect a high crew turnover. Rosewood handrails and marine-grade satin, stainless-steel

door handles with an easy grip are other design flourishes in the hallway. “The idea was to have these neutral spaces that we would then dress with large-framed photographs of the boat industry,” she explains, adding that the walls when these images were taken had yet to be dressed.

Away from the sleeping quarters, Zaniz makes particular mention of the window in the sleek, stainless-steel crew galley. “I didn’t want the people working in there to feel like they were underground,” she explains. There’s also what she describes as a “phenomenal” laundry room built for 24/7 use, complete with specialist cashmere-drying equipment. Other crew facilities include a lounge, deck seating area, and use of the guest gym at designated times.

Like in the cabins, smart partitioning is also at play in the crew mess and adjoining pantry. “When you come through the door to eat, it’s like going to a buffet service,” she explains. “The food is already laid out on the counter in bain-maries and there is also a retractable stack of plates, cutlery containers, and even compartments for bottles.” As soon as mealtimes are finished, fitted covers over the inserts transform the surface back into to a countertop, a metal drop-down screen can be drawn and doors closed to separate the pantry from the mess. “That way, there’s no noise or food smells while the area is being cleaned up,” she says. “When it’s not being used to eat, the crew mess [is] actually a nice place to go to watch a movie or read a book.”

The captain and crew “are critical, and they need to be taken care of,” Zaniz says. “Without them being happy, a large boat is not the same. As a designer, you’ve really got to ensure that the back of the house is well laid out and taken care of.”



Oeino made M/Y SKAT memorable for its crew quarters.

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