

Ribelle with a cause

After a succession of ever larger yachts, Paola and Salvatore Trifirò craved a smaller, faster sailing boat that would bring them closer to the sea. The 32.6 metre Ribelle is their rocket ship to a brave new world, discovers Marilyn Mower

Paola Trifirò tells the story of when she was a student and she announced to her father that she wanted to study architecture. He said no, she wouldn't be able to understand the maths. She picked law. That was probably the last time someone successfully told her no. But she did graduate with a law degree, and that has made all the difference. Not only did she meet and marry a dashing young lawyer named Salvatore Trifirò, she married his passion for sailing as well. And to bring life full circle, sailing has allowed her to exercise her passion for architectural design, their latest yacht being a case in point.

On a beautiful spring day earlier this year at the Monaco Yacht Club, the Trifiròs hosted a debut party for their 32.64 metre *Ribelle*, inviting friends and colleagues to celebrate the newest chapter in their long love affair with sailing. Salvatore introduced Paola to sailing on his small dinghy, a lake boat, which she recalls as being

“dangerous”. After that, the couple steadily increased the size of their boats and their adventures began - first to a series of coastal cruisers, then to a classic wooden sloop, which they completely refitted, through to a pair of Jongerts that allowed them to cruise as far from their home port of Valletta as Alaska. Each boat allowed the couple to add sea miles and memories. And here the story makes a gybe...

Returning to Porto Cervo in 2004 with the second of their Jongerts, Salvatore one day wondered aloud what it would be like to race their yacht. Well not this one, Paola thought. It was steel and too heavy to race. Engaging a broker, they asked what kind of yacht they could race and cruise. The answer was *Kokomo of London*, an Ed Dubois designed 40 metre built in New Zealand at the late, great Alloy Yachts. And so, at the time in their sailing careers when many racers become cruisers, the Trifiròs took the opposite tack and







Ribelle's designer Malcolm McKeon was keen to soften the look of her wide deck at the stern. To that end he spilled the teak from the main deck over the lip and down towards the transom, the vertical lines detracting from the impression of width. A reverse chine extends all the way along the

topside to break up the freeboard and enhance the perception of length. The cockpit nestles neatly into the profile created by the all-glass canopy and guards the companionway down into the stunning saloon. A fold-down platform allows for easy boarding

started to learn about racing on the superyacht circuit. *Kokomo* whetted their appetite and sparked some ideas about what they might do differently with a custom yacht. In 2008, they phoned Dubois for a meeting to discuss a successor.

Their 49.7 metre *Zefira* was built at Fitzroy Yachts. She picked up prizes at the Dubois Cup, the Loro Piana regattas and St Barths Bucket. She also scooped up awards for design and naval architecture including Best Sailing Yacht of the Year at the World Superyacht Awards in 2011. They could have gone on winning regattas and cruising in alternate years but they began to feel the boat was too big; its needs were driving them instead of the other way round. "After the big boats, we wished to go back to a smaller sailing boat, to feel the direct contact with sea and sails, like we used to as young students," says Paola.

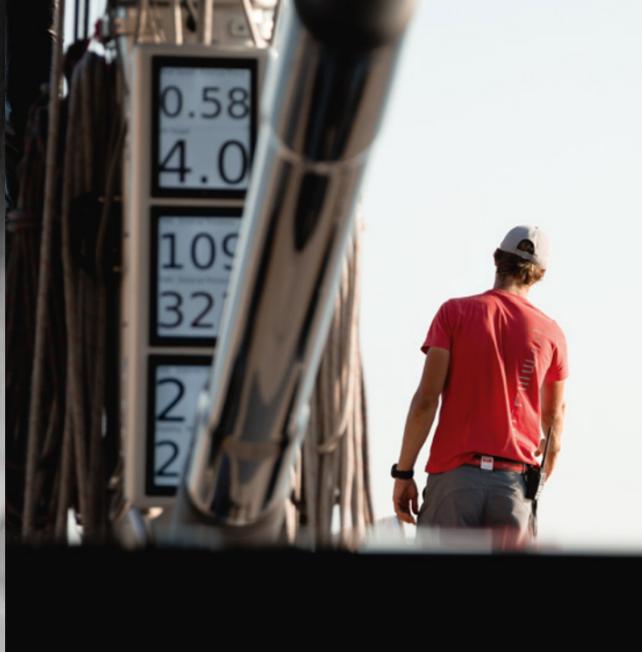
They had met Malcolm McKeon when he was working as right hand man to the late Dubois. His portfolio includes 200 yachts, sail and power and many racer-cruisers. "Originally the boat was a bit bigger but with the reverse bow and exceptionally wide beam, and without the intrusions of frames that came with the aluminium hull of their last boat, they realised they could fit everything they wanted into a surprisingly small package," he says.

"Yes," adds Vitters boss Louis Hamming, "but it still has to be a superyacht and in 32 metres. The challenge is how do you get owners to understand the complexity of balancing their desire to go fast with their equal desire to have a showpiece?" Although Salvatore speaks several languages, English is not one of them, so Hamming took Italian lessons. Design meetings were often conducted in French, with Paola or their captain and project manager of 17 years, Federico Biatturi, translating for McKeon and the subcontractors.

This time they wanted to build closer to home than New Zealand. From racing, they had come to know the owners of 33.4 metre *Inouï*, launched by Vitters in 2013. She was its fourth carbon composite boat. Carbon fibre hulls and superstructures are built by Vitters' sister company, Green Marine, in the UK and transported across the Channel to Zwartsluis for finishing. The yard's fifth carbon boat, also designed by McKeon, was in build. Even though carbon fibre would be new to the Trifiròs, the yard had proven its capability.

There was no question that they wanted Rémi Tessier, who designed *Zefira*'s interior, for this boat also. Dubois had recommended Tessier, but the designer





initially declined, pleading too heavy a workload. The owners tracked him down in Paris and, speaking to him in his native French, convinced him to come to Milan and discuss the project. The story goes that when he took one look at their modern apartment in a 17th century building, he said yes. For Tessier, this challenge would be discovering how to articulate the design they developed together within a weight budget well below slim. *Zefira* had displaced 370 tonnes; the new yacht would weigh just 86.

Ribelle's theme is light - both the visual kind and the absence of kilograms. The traditional deckhouse superstructure has been replaced by a glass canopy supported by carbon fibre frames; the interior feels as open as the sky above. A lot of attention went into the transition from on deck to below. The companionway is wide and welcoming, with gentle steps and plenty of handholds. It ushers guests into what is truly another world.

First comes the impact of the glass canopy and how it bridges the space, but the second note is even greater: the carbon support beams are wrapped in gleaming copper. The coolness of the light through the tinted glass warming as it bounces off the mirror-finish metal is an inspired, jaw-dropping combination. "It's about getting as much light into the boat as possible," said McKeon. All the pieces of the canopy are compound curves and by using smaller sections the canopy actually weighs less than it would have with fewer larger pieces. Exterior framing elements in high gloss black match the dark glass so well as to appear all one continuous unit.

"They didn't tell me too much what to do," Tessier says. "It is obviously smaller and they didn't want to feel cramped. They said they wanted it as nice as *Zefira*, but different. Light but not cold. Sporty chic style, sort of an Aston Martin.

"The best thing for limited space is a limited palette," continues Tessier. "I just used two types of teak - matt and gloss. The gloss teak gives a sense of vintage glamour, like an old Riva. Leather is good for curves; I use it like a skin over the structure and picked a colour close to the teak that reminds me of a vintage Porsche." Vintage materials yes but, as Tessier says, "the way they are used as details make it seem so fresh. Fresh, but it doesn't hurt your mind when you look at it."

This philosophy informed the choice of the interior metal. "Copper is vintage but we have used it in a modern way. You haven't seen it for the last 20 years. As a reflective surface, it seems to enlarge the space, but its primary impact is warmth. When the sun hits it, you get a sunset, a soft colour and a good feeling."

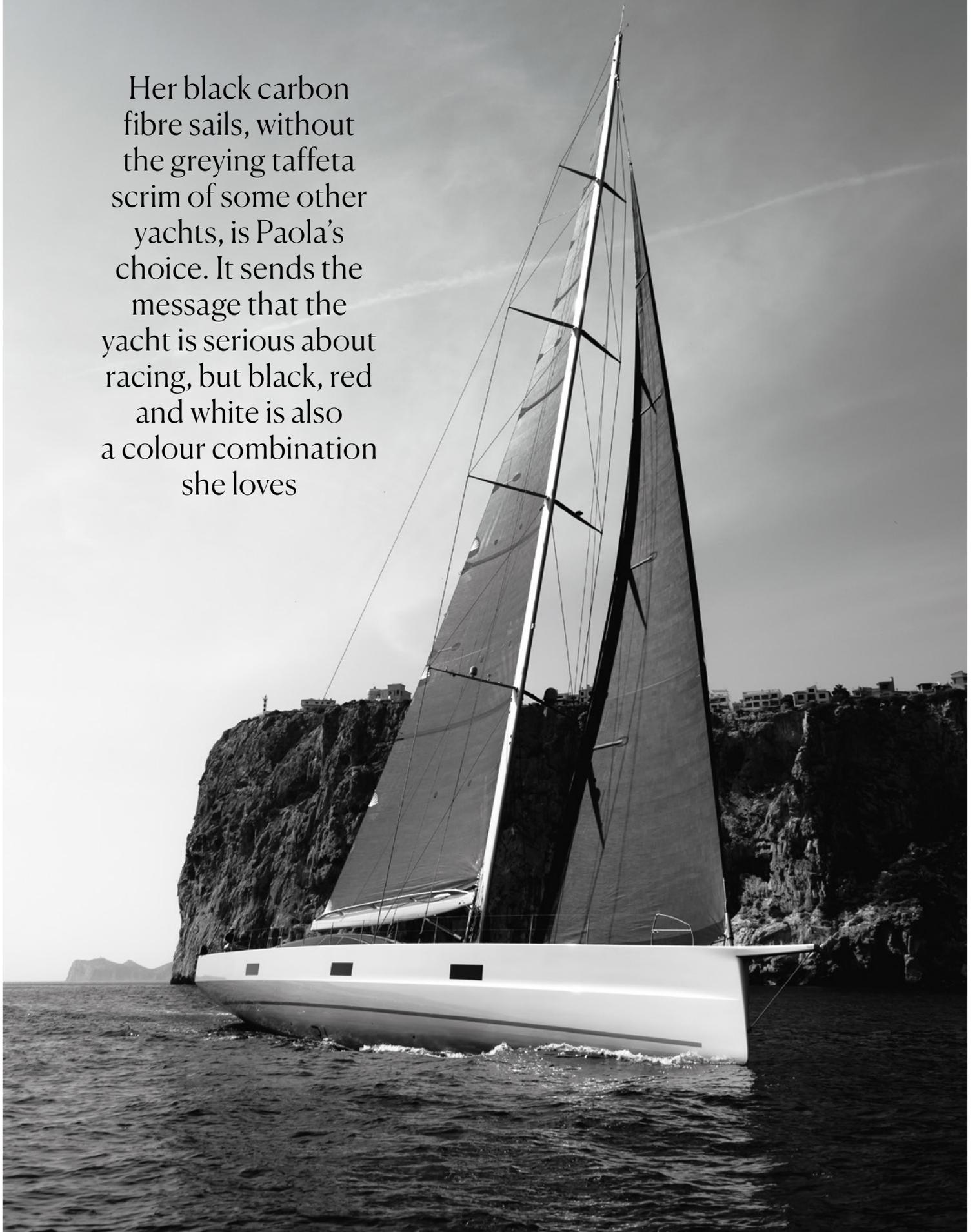
A good feeling now, but at the time it was proposed Hamming had no idea how difficult it would be to find a supplier. They went through about eight vendors, rejecting all the samples, until he found a specialist who makes custom





"People who visit Ribelle look totally surprised, enthusiastic and fascinated by the copper," says Paola. "We wanted to let into the boat all the light, all the reflections of the sea"

Her black carbon fibre sails, without the greying taffeta scrim of some other yachts, is Paola's choice. It sends the message that the yacht is serious about racing, but black, red and white is also a colour combination she loves





Clockwise from above: Paola Trifirò gave much time and thought to designing the galley so that it could accommodate three ovens, a big induction hob, a blast chiller and a 2m island; the copper of the saloon contrasts beautifully with the bleached teak joinery and smooth warm leather used by interior designer Rémi Tessier; the bed floating in the centre of the owners' cabin allowed separate bathrooms further forward; the detail in the owners' cabin shows why they were so keen to use the French designer



metal treatments for Bugatti. "He had the secret," says Hamming.

Ribelle has two guest cabins plus the owners' suite forward. Originally, the master bed was all the way forward, facing aft. But wedging the bed into the hull's tapering shape was not proving popular with Mrs Trifirò. "As we like to have more air and room around us, we asked Rémi to find a different solution. So he presented an upside down cabin... giving us also the possibility to have separate bathrooms." Tessier flipped the layout, floating the bed in the centre of the space so you can walk around it and putting everything else forward. The headboard adds privacy when the door is open.

In Tessier's words, the space now seems "organic" and the continuity of the design scheme between the bed and bath make it look bigger. In fact, Tessier placed the bed on a low platform to diminish its appearance. "Yes," says Tessier, "you

look over it and your brain just ignores it and the space seems so much larger."

Throughout her time on boats, Paola has insisted on good cooking. "Even in our first cruising boat where I only had one pot, we always had a hot meal," she says. As a result, when she is acting as a WSA and Design & Innovation Awards judge, she always makes a beeline for any candidate's galley. As I venture inside *Ribelle's* galley, sure enough she is holding court - opening drawers, sliding doors and revealing secret compartments that use space better than a genie in a bottle. "*Zefira* had a giant, impressive galley, all steel and black marble. Different boat, different weight and room. So, having not so big a space, I personally designed a clever layout. I chose a pale, sweet white for the furnishings with a little but important help from some sapient mirrors. The result is an astonishingly great galley, full of daylight as we positioned the





[exhaust] hood under the induction burners, which gave us room for a real window. I managed to have in my galley three ovens, a big induction cooktop, a blast chiller, a working island two metres long and much more.”

Our conversation naturally returns to performance. *Ribelle*'s profile doesn't just look fast, it is fast. The hull and its lifting keel were extensively tank tested with the prediction that the boat will sail to 20 knots in a moderate breeze. Upwind has proven her best point of sail. The decks and cockpit are wide, in fact so wide that McKeon sought to break up the look at the transom by wrapping the teak deck down the stern, its vertical stripes obfuscating the proportion. In the topside, a reverse chine extends from the bow to the stern, its sole purpose to create a shadow line that breaks up the freeboard and extends the perception of length.

Ribelle will fly a simple self-tacking jib and furling downwind sails for short-handed cruising, while a high-tech racing wardrobe comes aboard for regattas. Her black carbon fibre sails without the greying taffeta scrim of some other yachts are Paola's choice. It sends the message that the yacht is serious about racing, but black, red and white is also a classic colour combination she loves.

“At one time, I thought we should call this boat *Open Mind* because we had to approach all the new ideas and materials with an open mind. We were looking for a strong, easy name. Then one day trying to explain the philosophy, I said I want to rebel against all the old things. Then let's call it *Ribelle*,” Salvatore said. In fact this name represents in some way our character - never leave, never stop, always look to the future and no regrets. It also includes the word 'belle', a compliment to the beauty of our boat.”

Speaking at the Monaco presentation, Paola says: “My husband and I always have a dream. This time our dream was to experiment with new materials, with carbon and titanium. We also want to feel at home on the boat because it is going to be our home on the water.” To which Salvatore adds, this time surprising us with his English: “*Ribelle* is not an evolution of our [other] boat. With this boat we are going to another world.”

And if the prizes in their first two regattas are any indication, *Ribelle* is indeed their rocket ship. ■

The deck layout and sailplan of Ribelle have been designed for both racing and short-handed cruising. The cruising set-up includes a simple self-tacking jib and

furling downwind sails, while a full high-tech racing wardrobe is reserved for regattas. She has a lifting keel, with a draught of 6m with the keel down and 4m with it raised

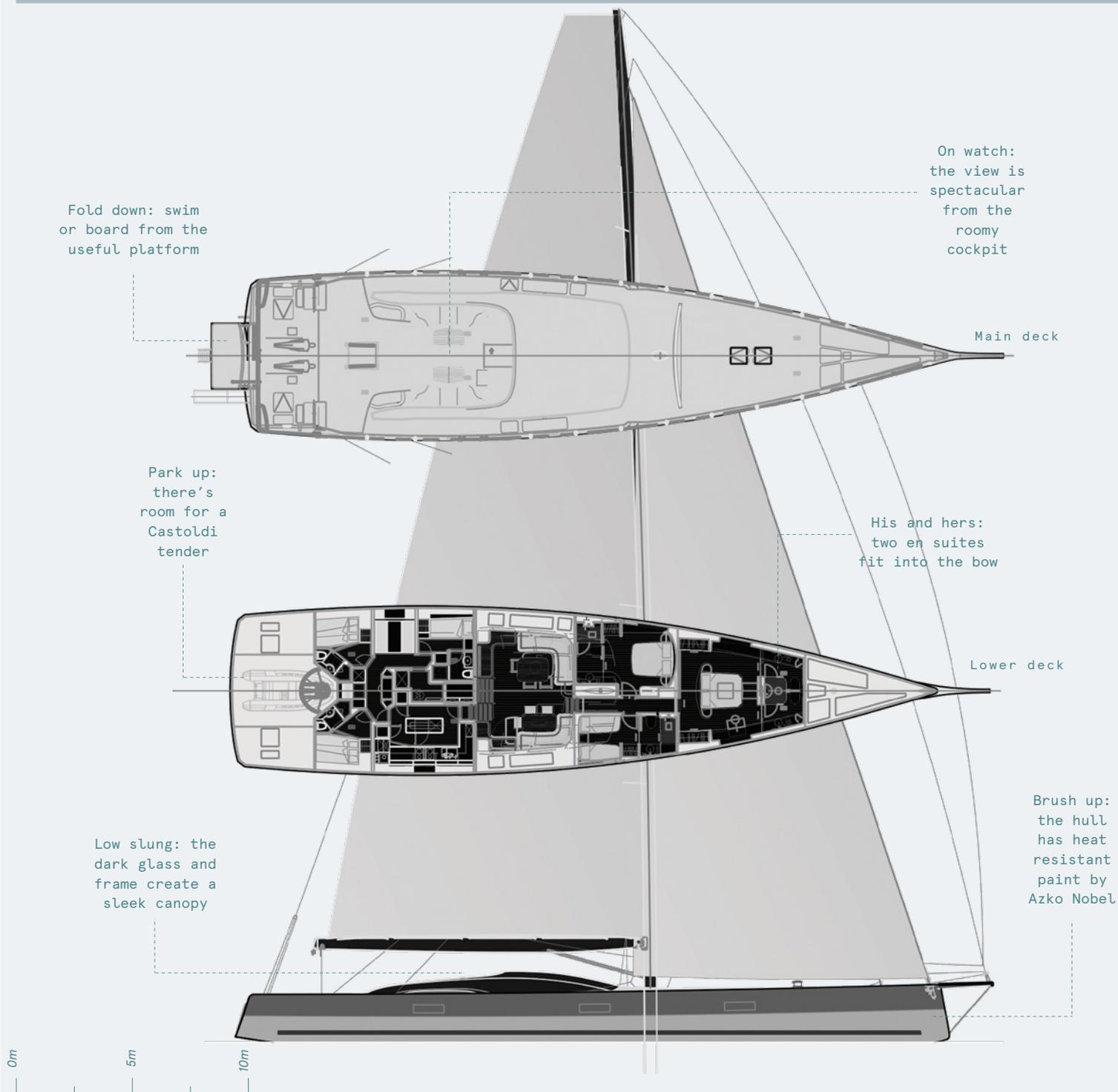
Watch the behind-the-scenes video boatinternational.com/ribelle



S P E C S

RIBELLE

VITTERS



LOA 32.64m
LWL 30.2m
Beam 7.72m
Draught (keel up/down)
 4.05m/6.05m
Displacement 86T
Gross tonnage 135GT

Engine
 Volvo Penta DC7 TA
Rig
 EC6 carbon
Mast and boom
 Southern Spars
Sail area
 Main 373m²; Blade
 273m²; Caribbean

jib 204m²; Code 1
 557m²; Asymmetric
 spinnaker 1,039m²
Sails
 North Sails
Generators
 2 x Kohler 28kW
Fuel capacity
 6,155 litres

Freshwater capacity
 3,860 litres
Tenders
 1 x Castoldi
Owners/guests 6
Crew 5
Construction
 Carbon composite

Classification
 DNV-GL hull
Naval architecture
 Malcolm McKeon
Exterior styling
 Malcolm McKeon
Interior design
 Rémi Tessier Design

Builder/year
 Vitters Shipyard/
 Green Marine/2017
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