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LÜRSSEN'S 279-FOOT SOLANDGE

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American Icon*

**THE
BEAUTY
OF THE
BUILD**

A photo essay



Riva Mythos 122
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THE *ULTIMATE* CHARTER MACHINE

Lürssen's 279-foot *Solandge* promises guests a definitive experience on the water.

BY JUSTIN RATCLIFFE

KLAUS JORDAN PHOTO

The problem with perfection is that it leaves no room for discussion. That makes writing about it hard and reading about it harder, even boring. So it was with great pleasure, and no small amount of trepidation, that I stepped aboard the Lürssen motoryacht *Solandge* in Monaco. Arguably the world's preeminent custom superyacht builder, the German brand has founded its reputation on exemplary execution that is nearly impossible to fault. With *Solandge*, the yard has created what could be the last word in luxury yacht chartering.

Approaching the yacht by tender provided ample time to study her exterior profile, which is utterly different from her similarly sized predecessors such as *Phoenix2*, *Ace* and *Quattroelle*. So different, in fact, that there is little to suggest she is based on a similar technical platform, which would seem to vindicate the Lürssen logic of building to a tried-and-tested formula and still having, for all intents and purposes, a fully custom yacht to show for it. Interpreting the owner's personal preferences to achieve this effect depended on the artistry of Espen Øino for the exterior styling and on Fort Lauderdale-based Aileen Rodriguez for the highly individual interior design. The common link among the parties was *Polar Star* (ex-*Northern Star*), the 207-foot (63-meter) motoryacht designed by Øino, launched by Lürssen in 2005 and later acquired by the owner of *Solandge* and refitted with a Rodriguez interior.

"Having previously owned the explorer-style *Polar Star*, the client was looking to soften the exterior lines with more curves," says Kristian Pascoli, Øino's project manager on *Solandge*. "Rather than producing curves throughout, we came up with a gentle longitudinal profile that still contains some transverse section knuckles and angles."

These harder edges are so tightly integrated into the overall design that they are difficult to spot until pointed out by Pascoli, who indicates the knuckle that follows the hull sheer from forward of the owner's suite on the main deck and wraps around the transom. Painted the same white as the superstructure to distinguish it from the dark blue hull, the styling motif catches the light to accentuate the imposing grace of the sheerline. Other design nuances include the cutaway in the hull amidships to allow natural light into the main salon that is bisected by a polished stainless steel handrail, which was inspired by the classic side vents of the Aston Martin DB9.

To maintain the seamless transitions and clean lines of the superstructure styling, Øino was keen to introduce flush doors and window mullions on the side decks. This went beyond Lürssen's customary practice and was initially resisted, but once the aesthetic advantages had been pointed out, the shipyard embraced the notion and modified other protruding elements. The owner was also insistent that noise and vibration should be minimized both inside and outside the yacht, which affected the technical design in terms of ventilation and exhaust routing, and consequently the exterior styling.

"We achieved a hushed 42 decibels in the guest areas in harbor mode with just one generator running," says Richard Masters, CEO of Master Yachts, who acted as the owner's representative during the build. "But all the air intakes and exhaust gases, including those



CLOCKWISE FROM MAIN PHOTO: The entrance to the main salon is flanked by backlit wall panels of amethyst quartz; the hot tub on the sundeck doubles as a disco dance floor; the owner's suite features backlit window mullions that have been painted by hand with Oriental-style motifs.





The owner's vast marble and mosaic-tiled shower stall. RIGHT: The 52-foot light sculpture that runs through the stairwell.



ANY CUSTOM YACHT IS THE RESULT OF A LONG SERIES OF COMPROMISES DEvised TO MEET THE CLIENT'S PERCEPTION OF PERFECTION.

from the galley, have been routed to and from the top deck and radar mast to avoid noise and fumes or cooking odors collecting on the open aft decks.”

Solande was conceived from the start to function as both a private yacht and a commercial vessel for charter, which meant designing flexible functionality into the exterior and interior arrangements without diluting the personal experience for her owner and his family. A prime example of this multifunctional approach can be found on the capacious sundeck, which hosted a New Year's party for 60 guests in the Caribbean last season. Under the radar arch is a horseshoe-shaped bar clad in gold Bisazza mosaic tiles and flanked by glass windbreaks and a cozy, cushioned “den” for those who want to take a nap or read in the shade. The afterdeck is set up with a barbecue and Nikki Beach-style lounge under a draped canopy.

But it is the forward sunbathing area and Jacuzzi that really come alive in full entertainment mode. The hot tub can be converted into a raised dance floor by adding a Plexiglas platform and side stanchions. With party lighting inside the tub, a special housing for a disco ball on the radar arch and a professional disc jockey mixing desk, the area provides for full-on partying (even the perfectionists, Lürssen even conducted strength tests on a dance pole that can be fitted in the center of the platform). Alternatively, equipped with an

integrated projector and a mountable screen strung between two carbon fiber poles and designed to resist winds of up to 25 knots, the space can be set up as an open-air cinema—in addition to the dedicated cinema on the tank deck.

It would take a whole book to describe adequately the interior design by Rodriguez. Eclectic, intricate, elaborate, exuberant, meticulous and spectacular are all words that spring to mind, but one (under)statement from the designer—“They like bright color”—provides some idea of what kind of statement the owner was looking to make. The materials list runs to several pages of densely packed typeface and includes 25 or more veneers, from straight-grained maple, sycamore and walnut to more complex madrone, elm and redwood burls, half a dozen mother-of-pearl inlays, surfaces clad in alabaster and honey onyx or pinta verde, nero assoluto and calcita blue marbles, hand-cut Murano glass light fixtures and ornaments, even semi-precious stones such as amethyst and red carnelian. No wonder the asking charter price is over a million dollars a week.

The showcase feature of the interior design is a gold-painted lighting fixture in the foyer known as the “Tree of Life” that runs through the full height of the stairwell. Illuminated with pinpricks of light produced by hundreds of LEDs encased in glass petals, the 52-foot (15.8-meter) sculpture was made in California. It has its “roots” on

KLAUS JORDAN PHOTOS



TOP TO BOTTOM: This profile shot reveals the white-painted knuckle along the sheerline and Aston Martin-inspired cutaway in the hull; the swimming pool on the bridge deck; the beach club sauna.

the tank deck and extends all the way up to the bridge deck. Along with gilded brocades and bullion fringes, the interior décor could easily have been overpowering, but by some clever quirk of design Rodriguez has achieved a sense of order and serenity out of complexity and abundance. The farther up the yacht you go, for example, the calmer the spaces become so that the private study on the owner's deck is one of the most restful rooms on the yacht.

Although Rodriguez formerly worked on the interior refits of *Polar Star* and 47.5-meter (156-foot) leadship *Princess K*, the much-higher-volume *Solandge* was her first new build and required a helping hand from Dölker + Voges, a design company in Hamburg, Germany, that has collaborated with Lürssen on previous projects and specializes in netSPACE engineering, an important tool in maximizing the onboard living space and communication among the various parties during construction. Delivering the netSPACE drawings on time required a dozen personnel working on the design package full-time for four months. Moreover, the size and scope of the project involved not one but two specialist interior outfitters, Vedder and Sinnex, both based in Germany.

The contract for *Solandge* was signed back in 2006, more than three years before construction began. This was at a time prior to the financial crisis when all the top northern European shipyards, particularly Lürssen, had long waiting lists for build slots. They say all good things come to those who wait, and *Solandge* undoubtedly benefitted from the extra design time. Is she perfect? On most yachts you might find a wobbly door handle here or a hard-to-get-at hydraulic valve there, but not on a Lürssen. So from an engineering and execution perspective, she is as good as it gets. But the truth is that any custom yacht is the result of a long series of compromises devised to meet the client's perception of perfection. As far as the owner of *Solandge* is concerned, his yacht is nothing short of miraculous. **Y**

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LÜRSEN SOLANDGE

LOA: 279ft. 2in. (85.1m)
LWL: 241ft. 2in. (73.5m)
BEAM: 45ft. 3 in. (13.8m)
DRAFT: 12ft. 8in. (3.9m)
CONSTRUCTION: steel & aluminum
DISPLACEMENT: approx. 2,296 tons
GROSS TONNAGE: 2,900
ENGINES: 2 x 2,682-hp (2,000-kW) Caterpillar 3516
FUEL: 58,118 gal. (222,000L)

WATER: 9,378 gal. (35,500L)
SPEED (max.): 17 knots
SPEED (cruising): 12-14 knots
RANGE: 6,000 nm @ 12 knots
GENERATORS: 1 x 570 kVA @ 1500 rpm; 2 x 455 kVA @ 1500 rpm; 1 x MAN 240 kVA
STABILIZERS: Quantum XT fin blades OC 2400 XT
CLASSIFICATION: LRS, + 100A1 SSC Yacht (P) Mono G6 + LMC UMS

NAVAL ARCHITECTURE: Lürssen Yachts
EXTERIOR STYLING: Espen Øino Design
INTERIOR DESIGN: Rodriguez Interiors
GUEST CABINS: 1 master, 6 guest
CREW: 29 crew in 15 cabins
BUILDER: Lürssen Yachts
YEAR: 2013

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