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TIME TO
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Why Conrad's new flagship deserves the spotlight

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Show Boats





PHOTOGRAPHY CONRAD SHIPYARD

PLAYING AN ACE

An international team collaborated on the build of Conrad Shipyard's *Ace* but, as the largest superyacht to emerge from the country, she's really Poland's triumph.

Cecile Gauert discovers how they pulled it off





It's December and the Old Town of Gdańsk in Poland is filled with weekend visitors as the snow falls thick and steady. Amid the festive ambiance, children slide on the frozen bank as their parents stop and stare at a gleaming white yacht, aglow with lights. This boat is the star of the waterfront and the proud shipyard is celebrating her launch.

"I have always had a passion for boats and the ocean," says the owner of the new *Ace*, who came to Gdańsk for the christening. He started with smaller boats but realized he would like to own a bigger yacht one day, then he took the time to deliberate. The new 145ft Conrad C144S is the product of a long quest for this owner and the shipyard too. She is the builder's new flagship and the largest yacht yet built in Poland.

Gdańsk has a healthy marine industry. Just a few minutes up the river that flows through the city, industrial cranes reach for the low-lying clouds. For the past two decades, yacht builders have joined the commercial yards, producing boats that take the made-in-Poland label to the far reaches of the world. And they are getting bigger and better all the time. "Gdańsk has always been known for shipbuilding, but it's time to say it out loud: the quality of yacht-building is world class," says Polish-born Radek Gendek, a charter executive for the Luxury Charter Group, who brought the Conrad Shipyard to the owner's attention.

Conrad Shipyard was born in 2003 as a sister company to shipbuilder Marine Projects (established in 1989 by former Gdańsk Shipyard employees) and delivered its first yacht, *Escape S* (now *Chillin*), for an American client in 2005. While it worked from the start with exterior designers, the yard did most of the interior design work. CEO Mikolaj Król, an architect and a perfectionist, personally worked with a few owners on their projects supervising an experienced team. The award-winning *Viatoris*, the superyacht that

preceded *Ace* from the yard, for instance, had naval architecture by Diana Yacht Design and exterior design by Raymond Langton Design, but its interior was done in-house. *Ace* was different. The owner surrounded himself with a solid team that included an interior designer and an owner's representative. Letting go of some of the design decisions wasn't easy. Król, who has an endearing gift for candor, will tell you that himself.

The owner already had a good impression of the artisanship that you can find in Poland, and he liked the people at Conrad, who came across as serious and motivated. He also appreciated their transparency. "It may be a bit risky to work with a little-known yard, but I felt that they were people who could be trusted. I did not have that impression everywhere," he says. "I told them we are going to build a yacht with European style, with floor-to-ceiling windows. I felt from the get-go that they had the heart to do it."

The 131ft *Viatoris* was the starting point for the project that would become *Ace*. The owner has known Gendek of the Luxury Charter Group for about 15 years. Gendek lives in Gdańsk and that's where he first saw *Viatoris* fresh out of the yard in 2018.

"Radek called me (and said) 'I saw an unbelievable boat, it will be in Monaco. Are you coming?'" the owner recalls. He was, and that's when his quest took a more definite turn. "As soon as I stepped on the passerelle, I could feel the quality," the owner says. The interior, on the classic side, wasn't his cup of tea, but he was impressed by the fit and finish.

Up to that point, he had been absorbing information, spending vacations on different types of boats, both catamarans and monohulls, in different destinations. "I have spent many years learning and observing. I wanted to understand this world of yachting. I chartered around the world, in Indonesia, Greece, the Exumas and the Mediterranean," the owner says. "When Radek took me around boat shows, I asked a thousand questions. And the next day, I would return to the boats and I'd ask the same questions again; he must have thought I was crazy," he says with a laugh.

"I spoke to captains, visited shipyards, spoke with builders, did my due diligence to try to understand the differences in quality," the owner continues. "There is what you see and what you don't. Often people fall for the nice furniture and decor, but what is also important is all that you can't see, the noise, etc. I took my time."

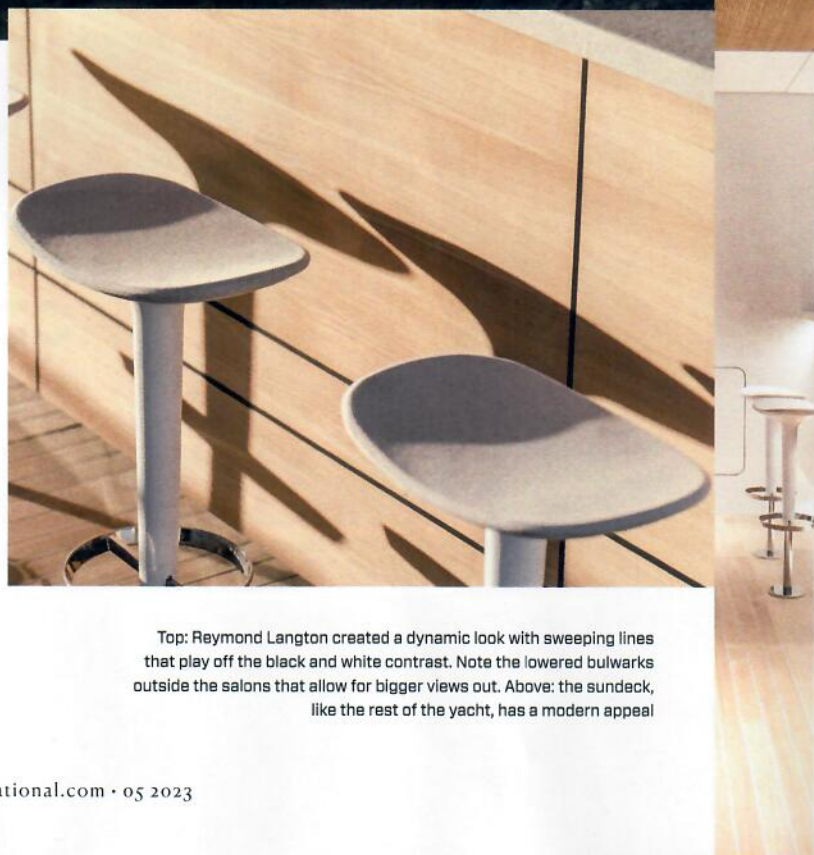




A friend introduced him to Nicolai Yacht Consulting, and he called co-founder Nicola Nicolai over to have a look at *Viatoris*. It got a thumbs up, and from there the search intensified. The owner, Gendek and Nicolai visited more yachts to get a better handle on his wants, likes and dislikes. It took about another year and a half before they signed the final contract.

Diana Yacht Design and Reymond Langton Design reprised the roles they had played for *Viatoris*, as naval architect and exterior designer, respectively. And as they worked to develop the concept, the team grew to include Italian design studio m2atelier, one of several designers Nicolai had suggested.

M2atelier founders Marco Bonelli and Marijana Radovic, both architects with different backgrounds – she was born in Serbia, while he’s from Italy – make an interesting duo. Although they have worked in yachting, including on a 190ft Codecasa, they have not been able to show much of their work in this arena; they are better



Top: Reymond Langton created a dynamic look with sweeping lines that play off the black and white contrast. Note the lowered bulwarks outside the salons that allow for bigger views out. Above: the sundeck, like the rest of the yacht, has a modern appeal



known for their residential work and luxury boutiques. Their modern architectural style appealed to the owner, but he wanted to know more. "I invited them for a weekend in the mountains. I had a good feeling with them," he says. "They are very organized and detailed."

While *Viatoris* was a starting point, it's obvious the C133 (as the builder refers to its previous superyacht) and the C144S (*Ace*), are very different yachts. The owner, who enjoys golf, wanted more storage space, comfortable cabins for his guests, a more modern look and better spaces for the crew, especially since he would be offering *Ace* for select charters.

Of *Viatoris*, Król says, "It was a beautiful project, but it had very limited crew space. The owner uses it privately, so it was not needed," he says. "[For the new yacht] we tried to do different profiles, and we tried it with a plumb bow and suddenly it became a completely new boat. A lot of models on the market have a lot of complicated details; this boat cannot be compared to that. But I like these lines a lot because the boat looks like a sculpture. It's a timeless boat."

Andrew Langton and Pascale Reymond, co-founders of Reymond Langton Design, see several positives in a vertical bow. "We positively encourage clients to adopt the vertical bow not only for aesthetic reasons [but

because] it was proven to improve seakeeping abilities in both the 68- and 98-metre (223ft and 322ft) *Aviva* yachts we previously designed," Langton says. On the new *Conrad*, "the near-vertical bow created a huge amount of volume for the crew accommodation. This bow shape was discussed with Mikolaj Król early in the conception of the C144S to increase the crew numbers and make the yacht look strong and dynamic."

It meshed well with the owner's vision. *Ace* is, to an extent, a compilation of some of his favorite features. "We redesigned every single area, every single space, every single room to adapt it to (the owner's) requirements," Nicolai says. The straight bow design allowed "a proper laundry, a cold room and an enclosed galley" to be added. In other areas, the engineer on *Ace* enjoys a soundproof control





The owner wanted the opposite of flashy.
The interior is “politely elegant”



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The main salon exemplifies the less-is-more philosophy of m2atelier's design. Although many pieces are custom, these sofas are by Minotti. Lighting is by Luce5 with Lutron controls. A much larger yacht inspired the owner to ask for floor-to-ceiling windows, which are tinted. Mirrored sections on the ceiling amplify the views



ADDITIONAL PHOTOGRAPHY: M2 ATELIER - LORENZO PENATTI




In the spacious main deck owner's suite speakers covered with fabric are hidden in the ceiling. The main foyer's stairs (bottom) lead to the sky lounge (opposite page, bottom), where a sliding wood panel conceals a large television.



room (not common on a yacht of this size). The salon doors are over 8ft high and the gangways 31.5in wide (the standard found on a 200ft yacht). These details, in combination with the floating furniture and big vistas, make it easy to forget that the yacht is 145ft.

For the owners, who spend a lot of time outside, the designers created enjoyable spaces, chief among them an 80ft-long sundeck with a recessed pool that doesn't block the view, a large bar and an extra-large television that stores in the overhead. An interesting detail in the pool is that the designers chose a micromosaic from Nero Sicilia that is made with glass recycled from television and computer screens.

The owner wanted large windows and they are spectacular. "The purely white color scheme contrasted with the black glass window shapes, and sweeping lines from bow to stern, together with our signature undercut 'rolling wave' forms on the superstructure, create an elegant yet dynamic aesthetic," Langton says. "We minimized the height of the bulwarks outboard of both salons to improve the views out and enhance the owner's connection to the sea."



Diana Yacht Design worked on the naval architecture of the new hull, which cruises at 14 knots, modestly powered with twin Caterpillar C18 ACERT engines. "We had to make sure that with the new and different weight distribution and total weight, we could meet the performance of the yacht," Nicolai explains.

Sister company Marine Projects built the steel hull, and Conrad did almost everything else in-house. Some minor stainless-steel work had to be subcontracted but the shipyard kept a firm handle on the project. The carpentry, fairing and painting were done at the shipyard. Even the interior panels that decorate the guest cabins were scored and painted on site, under mzatelier's guidance, to emulate the look and feel of leather found in other areas. Dutch noise and vibration specialist Van Cappellen worked with the shipyard on efficient insulation.

After dark, the interior of the yacht takes on a rich, sophisticated quality. The rhythmic and repetitive nature of the design by mzatelier is soothing and, while beautiful, is visually unobtrusive. What is left to appreciate is the volume, the high ceilings and the landscape seen through these huge windows, on this occasion fat snowflakes drifting against Gdańsk's festively lit big wheel. It's hard to imagine how different the feeling will be when *Ace* cruises through the blues of Sardinia or the Exumas, reflected in the mirrored ceilings, but no doubt it will be spectacular.



"We redesigned every single area, every single room and every single space to adapt it to the owner's requirements"





Metallic details are what Bonelli calls a *fil rouge* – a central theme. Mirrors, back-painted glass tile, nubuck and oak with an interesting knot are the primary materials. The owner wanted the opposite of flashy. For an interior that is “politely elegant,” Bonelli says. “We whispered the details.”

He describes the work as a long process that involved finding out what materials would work best for lasting beauty. Surprisingly perhaps, nubuck is a resilient material that can be easily buffed, he says. “We tested it.” The thought process went into details such as applying a thin wood laminate to the metallic blades in the air conditioning vents to prevent rust from condensation. He points to the treatment in the front cabin where a triangle meets a curve at the intersection of the port-side window and the bed, done to maximize the space.

These qualities will also make *Ace* a good option for charters. “She provides much more volume than yachts of a similar size and certainly rivals some of the larger vessels,” Gendek says. “The multiple entertainment options across her three decks will satisfy the most experienced guests looking for a luxury

getaway. To name a few: a magnificent sundeck with spa pool and 100-inch outdoor theater screen; a generous swim platform for easy access to the ocean; and a garage fully stocked with all the latest water toys. *Ace* also comes with a sleek 34ft Nor-Tech Sport chase tender.”

As in a theater, where you ignore what is behind, above and below the stage, it’s easy to forget that *Ace* is a complex mix of machinery and technology, especially since the shipyard has taken great care in hiding all the technical elements, following the design’s imperatives. In the owner’s suite on the main deck, for instance, the speakers are invisible, concealed by linen stretched over them. “We did a lot of research and found speakers that work with plywood and fabric to produce good-quality sound. You will not see anything here, but it sounds perfect,” says Conrad project manager Pawel Polak.

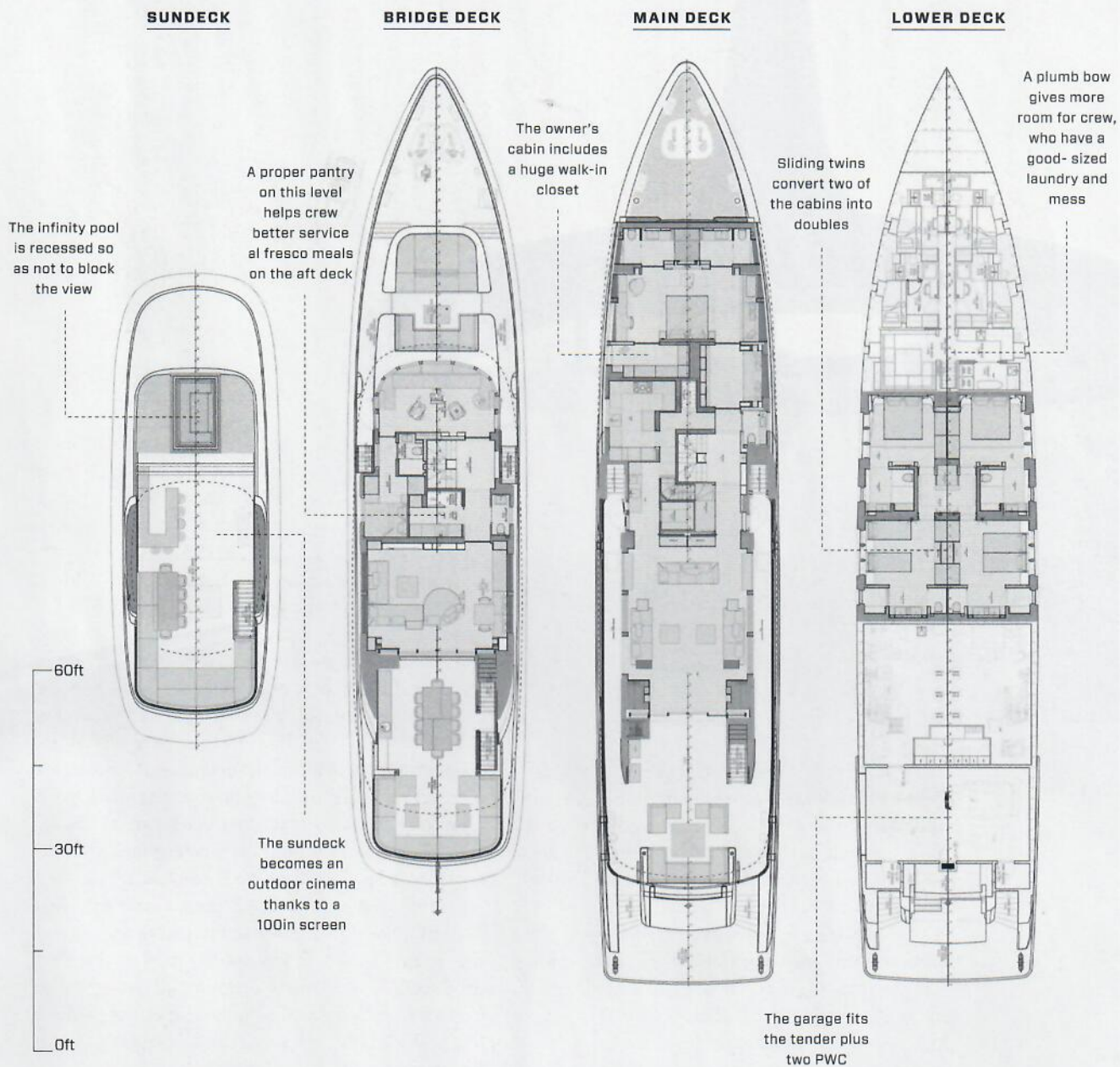
One of the keys to success in a project that was started during Covid-19 – and involved so many people around the world – was the detailed 3D models the yard produced. Owing to its commercial background, Conrad has a firm handle on the engineering side of things and it is plain to see, from the elegant bridge to the spacious engine room and garage.

Hull No 2 is already sold and in an advanced stage of construction. The owner of that one had been looking for a long time and fell in love with the concept he saw advertised in a magazine. It will be very similar in both look and feel. It took time, a lot of back and forth, many meetings in person and behind computer screens, but, as the owner of *Ace* says, “everyone pulled in the same direction.” And thanks to a team motivated to deliver the best, with this new C144S, Conrad Shipyard has truly played an *Ace*. ■

Metal inserts are an interior leitmotiv, as are mirrors. A “soft touch” finish on lacquer tempers any harshness. Warm gray is a prominent color, even on the wood finish

ACE

CONRAD SHIPYARD



LOA 145' 3"
LWL 141'
Beam 29' 2"
Draft 8'
Gross tonnage
 497GT

Engines
 2 x Caterpillar C18
 ACERT, B-RATED-
Generators
 2 x 118kW
 Caterpillar C7.1
Speed (max/cruise)
 13/11 knots

Range at 10 knots
 5,100nm
Fuel capacity
 13,552 gallons
Freshwater capacity
 3,093 gallons
Owners/guests 10
Crew 9

Construction
 Steel hull; aluminum
 superstructure
Classification
 Lloyd's Register @
 100A1 SSC YACHT
 MONO G6, [@] LMC,
 UMS, MCA REG

Naval architecture
 Diana Yacht Design
Exterior design
 Reymond Langton
 Design
Interior design
 m2atelier

Builder/year
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