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INTERVIEW • SUPERYACHT STYLING

The ART of SUPERYACHT STYLING

THREE CREATIVE VISIONARIES
ON SOURCING, CURATING AND
SHOWCASING PRICELESS PIECES OF
ART AT SEA. BY **CHARLOTTE MCMANUS**

As the global fleet of superyachts continues to grow, many owners are faced with an enviable conundrum – how to personalise their prized vessel? After all, contemporary yachts represent the pinnacle of one's interests; travel, adventure and finer things, all wrapped in the comforts of home. Now, on-board art is becoming an increasingly popular fixture, as yacht owners – many avid collectors in their own right – choose to showcase their passion and individuality by elevating art from mere decoration into a definitive aspect of the design.

The ultimate status symbol for some – or, for others, a golden opportunity to showcase their

exceptional tastes, or find a home for a collection once it outgrows dry land – some superyachts even feature dedicated gallery spaces, where paintings, sculptures and bespoke works take a starring role. The value of such floating collections can match – or even exceed – that of the vessel itself, as big-ticket blue-chip pieces are curated alongside original artwork. Recent estimates indicate that the collective worth of art afloat on yachts has now rocketed to over \$4 billion.

Naturally, such specialist spaces require exceptional skill to shape, leading art-loving owners to enlist the talents of star designers and seasoned advisors to make their dream vessels a reality.



Kelly Hoppen

FOUNDER, KELLY HOPPEN INTERIORS

“For many of my clients, their yacht is a second home – sometimes a first. Art offers continuity between their grounded lives and their lives at sea. When you’re floating in the ocean, surrounded by infinite blue, having a sculpture that grounds you, or a painting that stirs a memory, becomes incredibly powerful.”

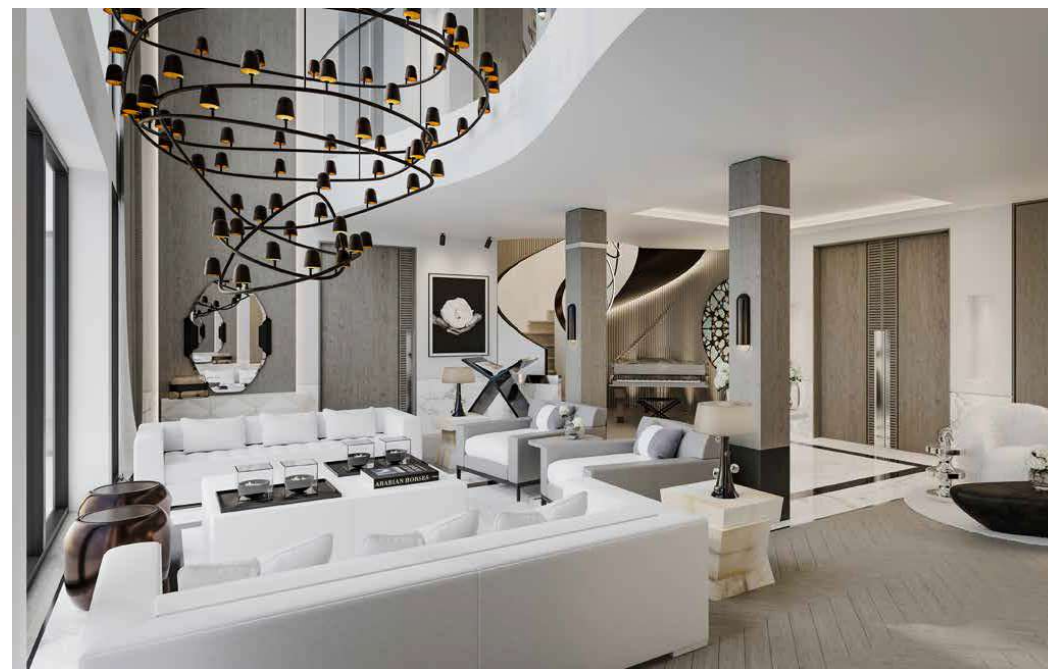
So says Kelly Hoppen CBE, the South African-born, London-based interior designer who designs for private jets, luxury residences and commercial properties across the globe. Yachts and cruise ships form a sizeable chunk of her glittering portfolio, decked out with interiors in Hoppen’s sleek, East-meets-West aesthetic.

“There’s been a shift from simply decorating to truly curating art aboard yachts,” she reveals. “Today’s owners are global, cultured and intensely individualistic. They want their vessels to reflect that – floating galleries are an extension of who they are. It’s less about ticking boxes and more about creating an immersive, emotionally-charged environment.”

As part of the designer’s collaboration with Pearl Yachts, Kelly Hoppen Interiors curated the artwork aboard the 25-metre pilothouse vessel Pearl 82. Hoppen’s contemporary concept interweaves striking monochrome photography – sourced from Trowbridge and KING & McGAW – with abstract prints, alongside graphic accessories by KOSE Milano and IOI Copenhagen. Meanwhile, an Ignem Terrae sculpture tops a stainless-steel plinth, a bespoke fixture commissioned by Hoppen.

She notes that custom-made fixtures like this are vital to successfully incorporate art within the notoriously changeable environment of a seafaring vessel.

“The motion of the sea is a big challenge,” she says wryly. “Everything must be secure, breathable and resilient to changes in temperature. Then there’s humidity, salt air, engine vibration...



Things like framing, mounting and placement are engineering exercises disguised as design.”

When it comes to designing marine galleries, Hoppen explains that a degree of sensitivity is crucial. “I’d begin with how the owner wants to feel in the space. Because of the limited square footage, spatial fluidity would need to balance with visual pause. Lighting is critical, both natural and ambient, because sunlight plays very differently on water, while materials need to be marine grade without compromising on elegance.”

Another notable project saw Hoppen create a series of penthouses for Njord, a 287-metre superyacht colossus designed to whisk the denizens of its 117 exclusive private residences to destinations in exceptionally opulent style. As with Pearl 82, Hoppen incorporated pared-back tones; a conscious aspect of her signature design approach.

“I always work with a calm, neutral palette to allow the art to breathe,” she explains. “Also, artwork scale is critical – oversized works can overwhelm, but the right piece can anchor a room. Everything must feel considered, not just placed.”

kellyhoppeninteriors.com





Katharine Pooley

FOUNDER, KATHARINE POOLEY LONDON

“Art is the ultimate form of expression. It brings individuality, depth and soul to a space – particularly on board a yacht, where every detail is curated to reflect the owner's identity,” says Katharine Pooley. “Incorporating art transforms a yacht from a beautiful vessel into a deeply personal sanctuary.”

As the eponymous founder of the award-winning Chelsea studio KPL, Pooley's luxurious interiors grace historic castles, five-star hotels and grand country estates alike. Though her Yacht Division is relatively new, Pooley's services are already in high demand, leading to commissions on vessels ranging from 30 to 156 metres.

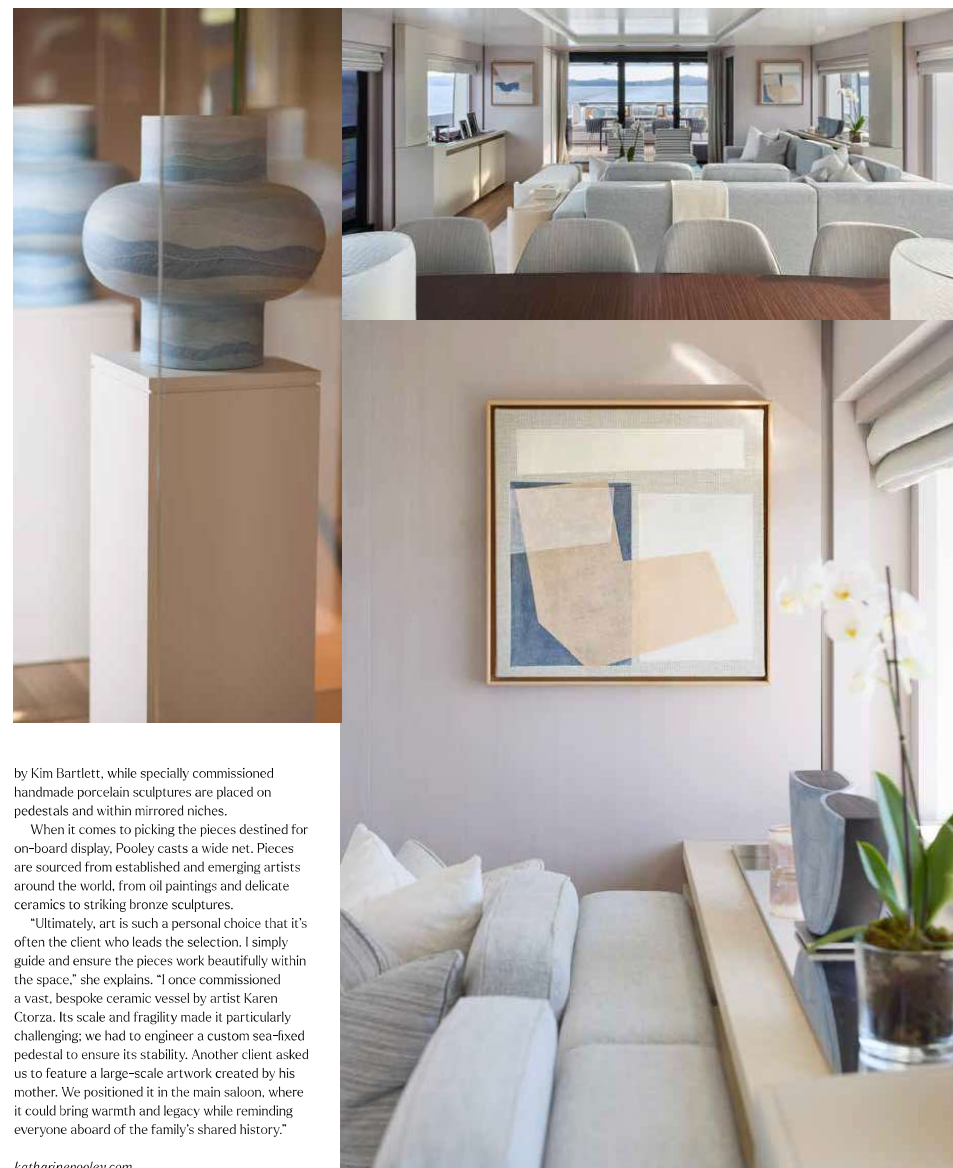
“Many clients are passionate collectors who view art not only as an investment, but as an essential part of their everyday environment,” she says. “There's a growing desire to be surrounded by pieces that tell a story or evoke treasured memories, even when at sea.”

Pooley adds that onboard art should work symbiotically with its environment, with art factoring into plans from the very start of the design process.

“Far too often, art is an afterthought, but it should be woven into the vision from day one,” she says. “Once materials such as timbers and textiles are selected, we begin sourcing artwork that enhances and harmonises with those choices. Art is integral to the storytelling of the space, complementing the interior design, palette, textures and narrative.”

She adds that, as with any interior – afloat or otherwise – the choice of artwork “must resonate emotionally” with their owner. “Some clients want curated collections; others seek pieces that reflect their travels, heritage or personal milestones.”

Case in point, look to Pooley's designs for the 32-metre Custom Line 106 Ferretti, a vessel its owner intended to enjoy with their family on Mediterranean holidays. In response, KPL created nautical interiors inspired by the flowing waters and clement evenings of the Med. Reinforcing the theme, artwork includes coral sculptures, a ceramic shell vase, and an eye-catching collaged artwork

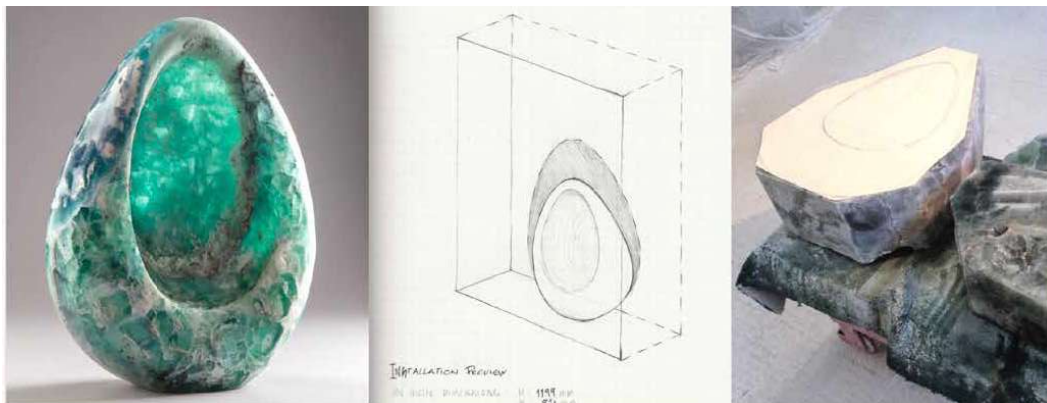


by Kim Bartlett, while specially commissioned handmade porcelain sculptures are placed on pedestals and within mirrored niches.

When it comes to picking the pieces destined for on-board display, Pooley casts a wide net. Pieces are sourced from established and emerging artists around the world, from oil paintings and delicate ceramics to striking bronze sculptures.

“Ultimately, art is such a personal choice that it's often the client who leads the selection. I simply guide and ensure the pieces work beautifully within the space,” she explains. “I once commissioned a vast, bespoke ceramic vessel by artist Karen Ctorza. Its scale and fragility made it particularly challenging; we had to engineer a custom sea-fixed pedestal to ensure its stability. Another client asked us to feature a large-scale artwork created by his mother. We positioned it in the main saloon, where it could bring warmth and legacy while reminding everyone aboard of the family's shared history.”

katharinepooley.com



David Knowles

FOUNDER & CREATIVE DIRECTOR, ARTELIER



When it comes to the intricacies behind curating floating art collections, few are better placed to comment than David Knowles of Artelier. Specialising in bespoke contemporary works, the international art consultancy and advisory firm has been enlisted on over 40 superyachts to date, handling everything from commissioning and installing to sourcing entire investment-grade collections.

"In recent years, we've observed a strong shift toward more personal, meaningful collections," he says. "Yacht owners are no longer just seeking statement sculptures or attention-grabbing installations; they're investing in pieces that reflect their tastes and values. It's not unheard of for us to work with blue-chip legends from the 1980s New York scene, such as Basquiat and Warhol, or the St Ives School movement, like Barbara Hepworth or Peter Lanyon. These pieces may be valued between \$1 million and \$195 million, so it's exciting to commission works that will stand alongside these legendary pieces."

In a sector where money is often no object to its clientele, Knowles and his team are well versed in accommodating even the most extravagant of requests for one-of-a-kind pieces, thanks to their extensive network of talented artists and artisans.

"Increasingly, custom-made artworks are being commissioned to suit the yacht's exact spatial and stylistic parameters, often becoming the

focal point of key spaces," he explains. "One star attraction is the central staircase, a showpiece that clients constantly request commissions for. Such bespoke pieces, whether it's a lift sculpture or a sculpted glass installation, can cost anywhere from \$400,000 to \$1.5 million. For example, we've incorporated original paintings that stretch across all four decks, as well as hand-embroidered designs in leather and silk."

Though the particulars of Artelier projects are often tied up in NDAs, Knowles shares details of a curved, custom-made feature wall for the bedroom of 67.6-metre M/Y Neninka. Its shimmering, Mt. Fuji-inspired design features hand-applied gold leaf layered with specially formulated pigments, which took several months to apply in a Hamburg lacquering workshop. On another vessel, Artelier commissioned a large porcelain artwork to display above a jacuzzi, festooned with hundreds of intricate, hand-sculpted flowers.

Having overseen the creation of such sensational pieces, how would Knowles decorate a yacht of his own?

"Controversially, I wouldn't have any art," he replies. "The yacht would be my ultimate escape, with the ocean, sunset and the vastness of the sea being a work of art in itself."

artelier.com

