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AH

A seriously experienced team has built *Ahpo*, a Caribbean-inspired family superyacht with an eye for perfection, says *Cecile Gauert*

P O

Cover boat

Photography GUILLAUME PLISSON



A lot of Ahpo's defining features are plainly visible, including the mast inspired by vessel funnels of the past (below), but others are reserved for guests, such as the mosaic-lined 8m-long glass-sided pool (opposite page). No details were overlooked, such as the LED lights integrated inside the stainless-steel poles near the pool



“D

etails make perfection, and perfection is not a detail.” This quote, attributed to Renaissance master Leonardo da Vinci, should be a maxim in the superyacht world, where, with each new build the bar seems to rise yet again.

Only four or five shipyards globally can get close to this perfection, says Robert Moran, whose company was involved from contract to delivery in the creation of the 115-metre Lürssen *Ahpo*, the brokerage firm's 61st new build project.

The details on *Ahpo* are the story. “We have thousands of materials, different woods, different kinds of GRP, paint, alloy, cable trays – so many cable trays – and also in the interior, so many different kinds of stones, woods, carpets, mother-of-pearl and wallpaper, it's unbelievable, and I guess not countable,” says Tanja Peters, the project manager for Lürssen, who worked closely with the owners' team.

Ahpo reunited owner Michael Lee-Chin, design firm Nuvolari Lenard, the Lürssen shipyard and Moran Yacht & Ship, the same team that had worked on the creation of the 86-metre *Quattroelle*, delivered in 2013. Moran had previously sold the Jamaican-born Canadian businessman and philanthropist the 58.5-metre *Capri* in 2003, which he kept for five years before embarking on the construction of *Quattroelle*. The owner loved it but received an offer he could not refuse shortly after taking delivery, giving him a bit of time to think about the next step.

This new build is a big step forward in terms of size (she is 5,257 gross tonnes compared to *Quattroelle*'s 2,925) and complexity. “The boat is magnificent inside and outside because it is not just an improvement on *Quattroelle*, but it is an entirely different world inside and outside,” says



“All the owner said about the exterior design was, ‘You know

what I like; make it more beautiful than Quattroelle”



A favourite spot of the owners, the well-protected enclosable "winter garden" with its abundant greenery, is pleasant all year round

interior designer Valentina Zannier of Nuvolari Lenard. "When you step up from an 86 to 115, it may sound like 29 metres is not that much, but on a boat, it is huge."

While conventionally powered, the yacht boasts advanced systems, such as super-efficient HUG after-treatment filters complementing the now mandatory SCR system, a dynamic positioning system, controllable-pitch propellers for precise manoeuvring at low speed and four massive Quantum fins, among others. In addition, its heat-recovery system is an efficient way of redirecting heat generated by the engines and generators' normal operation to warm the swimming pool, spa pool and other water systems. It works exceptionally well and saves thousands of kilowatts, according to one of Ahpo's engineers. Finally, optimal noise insulation yields impressive library-quiet sound levels in the guest areas.

"Our new construction team, led by Sean Moran, spent a lot of time writing the specifications for the insulation. Fortunately, working with Lürssen, their background is military, so they are ahead of the game," Robert Moran says. "The decibel levels of this yacht are incredible." At anchor, they range from a little over 31dBA in the owners' suite to just 40dBA in the main saloon.

The yacht's two custom 12-metre IC Yacht guest tenders, plus rescue tenders and a suite of water toys are hidden in a forward garage to save the transom area for an exceptional beach club/spa that leaves guests wanting for nothing. "It's the most amazing spa I've ever seen on a yacht," Moran says.



Above: Nuvolari Lenard designed the pieces in the white saloon on the owners' deck. Shells inspired the design of the tables, reflected in the ceiling's high-gloss "3D" lacquer finish.

Left: the geometric design in bronze over backlit calacatta marble framing the entrance to this saloon is replicated behind the bar (below). The bespoke carpet is by Tai Ping





Haute decor

Wallpaper: Founded in 1986 by Claud Cecil Gurney, de Gournay has carved an enviable niche in the rarefied world of “haute decor” wallpaper, with celebrities and well-known designers as devotees. All the scenes, from animals to botanicals or landscapes, are created by hand. “The paper is like silk. There is nobody better in the world to do such things and we have used them very extensively in this boat,” says Valentina Zannier of Nuvolari Lenard.

Mosaics: Maurizio Leo Placuzzi founded Sisis in 1987 to celebrate the classic art of mosaicking, but in 2016 the company debuted its first collection of fabric mosaics at Salone del Mobile. Zannier has incorporated Sisis’s classical mosaics, cut and glued in situ to create amazing backdrops for the bathrooms and colourful accents for walls, and she’s also embraced softer fabric mosaics to create singular pieces of art, such as the star portraits in the cinema or the headboard in the owners’ stateroom.



Above: a close-up of the mosaic work featuring the Blue Mountains of Jamaica in the boardroom (opposite page). Top: flamingos and cranes

are recurring features in the wallpaper. Right: each of the guest lobbies was designed with a different kind of wallpaper and marble



Above: the elegant boardroom is separate from guest areas and organised around a custom table that features an old map of Jamaica in bronze and resin

And, because there is no coming back from the views it offers, glass is an ever-present feature on *Ahpo* as well. Glass surfaces include massive doors wrapping around an aft deck winter garden where the captain says the owners spend most of their time on board.

“You literally walk in a garden that is enjoyable outside but is also covered, so you can have a formal lunch or dinner there. It is an outstanding feature that you don’t see often,” says Zannier, who worked closely with the couple to develop an interior vision that they readily embraced. She felt at ease with them, which gave her the freedom to unleash her creativity.

“When you already know a family, you don’t really need a brief because there is already an empathy there,” she says. “Madame is a delicious person, very feminine, so you won’t see anything straight and sharp.”

A large team is on board when I catch up with *Ahpo* in May, although it’s not apparent as they are scattered through the yacht’s six large decks, but Captain Nathan Mischewski is keeping a log and an eye on the tight schedule. The goal is to bring *Ahpo* to tip-top shape to meet with

the owners at the Monaco Grand Prix, and there are a few opened panels and sections of covered flooring. A perfectionist himself, he occasionally shakes his head as he walks me through the new yacht at the MB02 shipyard in Barcelona. “It’s a shame you can’t come when it’s all set up because it has a different vibe,” he says.

To my eye, *Ahpo* seems very close to perfect, from superlative guest areas to sizeable crew spaces and a gleaming engine room visible from a glass corridor leading from the beach club to the guest lobby and lift. It is no exaggeration to say you could eat off the floor in the two-level engine space. “We are always chasing perfection. This attitude permeates our entire process, from luxury areas all the way through to the engine room,” Moran says.

Project manager and engineer Robert Miller even named the two MTU 20V 4000 engines (as he previously did on *Quattroelle*). I look at “Federica” closely; despite two transatlantic crossings and several months of active duty, the engine looks brand new.

There is a personal touch on board, a good vibe, you’d say. In the crew area, an informal picture

collage celebrates a few special occasions on board with the entire crew and several with “the boss”, tall, fit and a bright smile on his face.

While he values his privacy, which influenced the layout, the owner is “a vastly experienced yachtsman”, according to Carlo Nuvolari, who understands that keeping the crew happy is vital to everyone’s well-being on board. Up to 53 people can share space on *Ahpo*, including the pilots of two helicopters. The yacht has a crew gym and a comfortable lounge that’s separate from the spacious crew mess, which could accommodate everyone in one seating.

The team of Nuvolari Lenard – with Zannier as the creative mind behind the nature-inspired, exquisitely intricate interior created with the owners – designed the yacht built under the project name Enzo. This code name was a nod to one of Lee-Chin’s passions – Ferraris.

The owner signed the contract in 2017 with one stipulation, Moran says: the yacht had to be ready for his mother’s 89th birthday on December 15, 2021. When Covid-19 hit, the shipyard had to adjust the schedule to reduce the amount of crew working on the boat all at once, but work never stopped. In late 2021, *Ahpo* left Rendsburg, Germany, for the owner’s native Jamaica and got there on December 13 in time for the planned celebration.

A lot of *Ahpo*, a term of endearment meaning grandmother, is about family. Although she will charter on occasion – for 2.5 million euros a week plus expenses – *Ahpo* was designed for family use. The family’s strong bonds are poetically represented, for example, in the chain-link motif that



Opposite page, bottom: the owners wanted a blue and red theme in the formal dining room. The circular ceiling soffit, made by List, is made of laminated wood; it’s repeated in the main saloon (above). Above right and below: the professionally equipped gym and 12-seat cinema were must-have amenities



decorates the stairs linking the two levels of the owners’ apartment. Two identical bedrooms with different colour schemes for twin girls are close to their parents’ bedroom oasis, a supremely comfortable space in a blend of gelato colours with two private terraces and two spectacular bathrooms with handmade metal bathtubs from Catchpole & Rye, mosaics inspired by the work of Gustav Klimt and crystal chandeliers by Lasvit in the style of Baccarat. For senior members of the family, the designer created a spacious and ultra-restful lower deck cabin.

Another big part of the yacht is fitness and wellness. The owners’ private duplex includes a gym that puts to shame most luxury hotel gyms, with furniture in red lacquer, attractive synthetic flooring, TVs hidden behind mirrors, equipment by Technogym and bikes by Peloton, plus custom-made dumb-bells provided by Gym Marine. All of it is personalised for *Ahpo* with the Nuvolari Lenard-designed logos. Aside from input from Gym Marine, Moran says the owners had considerable say into the design as they are very active and live a healthy lifestyle. The side decks on the sky lounge deck are exceptionally wide, like a proper promenade on a cruise ship, and 100 metres all around, allowing the owners to take walks in the fresh air without returning to shore.

The owner enjoys looking up at one of the yacht’s defining features, a great mast. “That mast is huge; you can put the whole crew inside. It’s three levels, and there’s so much storage up there,” the captain says, providing a sense of scale to the yacht’s crowning feature.

About all that the owner said in terms of guidance for the exterior design was, as Nuvolari recounts, “You know me, you know what I like, make it more beautiful [than *Quattroelle*].” He also asked if we could make one feature that ties the two designs, and those are the semi-circular windows.” However, these are so distinctive that





Left: the owners particularly enjoy the views, light and privacy of the sky lounge deck



Below, left and right: the two VIP cabins that are part of the owners’ deck are identical except for their colour scheme. Ginkgo leaves on the walls and leather bed frames are a motif of the rooms. Right: the playful seat is the Bomboca Sofa from Louis Vuitton. Above: each guest bathroom features a different marble or stone, and all but two have bathtubs

when the first photos appeared, it was an immediate tip-off to the small but enthusiastic group of people following the yacht industry that it had to be the “new *Quattroelle*”.

So, when they created the exterior for *Ahpo*, the Nuvolari Lenard team, including designer Simone Feltrin, strived to make an elegant ship – because a yacht of 100 metres or more, Carlo Nuvolari says, is a ship. “Nowadays in yachting we see many extravagant things looking to architectural buildings for inspiration.” However, he and his business partner, Dan Lenard, disagree with this trend. “A boat is a boat, a yacht is a yacht,” Nuvolari says. For the yacht’s finishing top hat, they studied the funnels of vessels of the 1950s and 1960s.

Another characteristic feature is the bow, which is quite defined with the yacht’s logo at the tip but is just long enough to give the yacht the right proportions. “Long flowing lines are a signature of our designs,” says Nuvolari, who adds that the bow is just part of the whole. “We never look at one single item, but we look at overall proportions. After a few proposals, we found that this offered the right balance, and it goes well with the concept of a serious ship.” It’s truly amazing to consider that the yacht appears lean and graceful with deck heights of 2.4 metres and 2.7 metres in some places and six decks stacked one on top of the other. No mean feat.

A contrast of black and white paint emphasises the swooping wraparound decks and creates a visual cascade from the top to the forward fully certified helipad (one of two on board), with a similar feature aft. This signature helps make *Ahpo* recognisable from anywhere.

On the inside, “the main theme of the boat is nature,” says Zannier, who incorporated plants beyond the winter garden. Most are excellent fakes because plants don’t do so well in salty air, but no matter, it works beautifully.

The upper level of the owners’ duplex is a quiet haven, with his-and-hers desks custom designed by Valentina Zannier. The chain motif on the banister of the private stairs represents strong family bonds





*"The main theme of the boat is nature...
Madame is very feminine, so you
won't see anything straight or sharp"*

Left: the owners' suite enjoys very low decibel levels, even when under way, and has two private balconies (below), accessible through automated sliding doors. Her bathroom (right) is a bit more romantic than his en suite, with flowers and birds in mosaics, and blends three types of onyx as well as Venetian glass and mirrors. The bathtub is from Catchpole & Rye



Below: the entrance to the owners' suite has the theme of maple trees with blue birds. The beautiful fabric wall covering is done like a mosaic by Sici. Opposite page, bottom: the blue flamingo VIP suite, tucked away on the lower deck, is situated for motion-sensitive guests

In the spa, created by interior outfitter List, the theme of nature is ever-present. "It is all about curves, leaves and waves, and the main feature of this area, including the massage room and the beauty salon, is bamboo," Zannier says. The bamboo (fake leaves on natural stems) is encapsulated between two glass panes, and it is backlit, creating a beautiful backdrop for a bar and the massage room. "It is very relaxing and very Zen," she says accurately. In the hair salon, the bamboo was hand-painted on wallpaper by the artists of the fine wallpaper and ceramics company de Gournay. On the spa's ceiling, huge leaves made of walnut are lit with a border of LED lighting. "There are no spotlights in the leaves themselves because we prefer not to use them extensively, so we always try to find alternative light sources," the designer says. Teak stripes undulating behind a plunge pool guide the water that falls with a quiet gurgling sound. The wellness space also includes a Turkish-style hamman with vibrant mosaics by Sici and a fountain in ivory onyx and mosaics. Fibre optics in the ceiling create myriad little stars. Azul macaubas and sodalite are two of the stones found here and repeated throughout the yacht, including on the mullions. The curvaceous sauna has Himalayan salt bricks inserted into its walls.

Another delectable space is the 12-seat cinema. Sici created three portraits of the owners' favourite actors and artists - Dorothy Dandridge, Sidney Poitier and Sammy Davis Jr - from photos they selected, in black and white fabric mosaics that add a touch of vintage Hollywood to the elegant space with a starlit ceiling.

The decor incorporates numerous personal references. For instance, the desk in the boardroom - unconventionally positioned aft on the main deck - is an oval table with a top done by Based Upon that incorporates an old map of Jamaica engraved in bronze among blue resin. On the walls, more mosaics represent Jamaica's famous Blue Mountains.

Elsewhere, birds - cranes and flamingos - and feathers take flight. One of many stunning pieces on board, and one that the Lürssen



project manager singled out as one of the great achievements in the interior is the spiral staircase. Vedder made the complex balustrade that represents an olive tree growing over several decks, piece by piece. On the wall is a bas-relief that runs over five decks, each with its own colour theme. The staircase wraps around an elliptical sculpture whose central column supports delicate feathers handmade of crystal that appear to fall to the floor. The steps themselves incorporate backlit calacatta marble, leather and Tai Ping silk carpeting.

There is much more to this beautiful yacht, including the grand dining room with a spectacular custom table made by List. Its glass top was created by DKT Artworks using the French technique of verre églomisé with a theme of water lilies, which is repeated in the chandelier and on the doors.

The design book is as thick as a phone book and, incredibly, the finished product is very close to the original renderings. For the owners, the result was love at first sight, and they spent 65 days on board after delivery. Such level of details, and perfect combination of technology and craftsmanship – nay, art – can only be seen in the superyacht world these days.

“Anybody can build a plane, anybody can build a house, but a yacht of such detail and such quality, I think is the pinnacle of achievement,” Moran says. And as the story goes, details make perfection. ■



The decor of the spectacular spa is all about curves, leaves and waves. The leaves on the ceiling are in walnut and the bamboo wall is made of real stems, encapsulated in glass



