

FANCY

that

What happens when seasoned owners imbue a sailing yacht design with their lived experience? Risa Merl boards Fancy, the 33-metre Nautor Swan built for real life





Nautor, together with Micheletti + Partners of Milan, styled the shapes and technical surfaces of the low coachroof, modelling the exterior lines to reach a point of maximum balance by playing with aerodynamics and proportions. Compared to the Swan 120, the new 108 has a 14 per cent higher sail-area-to-displacement ratio, resulting in dynamic performance. Above: Fancy's owners chose the option of an extra-large beach platform, formed by the transom plus part of the aft deck



When the owners of the first Swan 108, *Fancy*, sat down to think about their ideal yacht, they started by writing a list of everything that frustrated them about their past sailing boats. *Fancy's* owners, Alexandre and Nathalie Nicaise, don't seem the types to dwell on negativity. But as avid sailors and long-time owners of smaller boats, they are experienced enough to know the truth: "On each boat, you will undoubtedly have some frustrations," says Alexandre. "So we listed all of our frustrations, and said 'We have to fix this one, we have to fix that one.'"

The list became the basis for their brief. There were design challenges to solve, such as the fact that the Nicaises are a very tall family requiring suitable headroom inside, yet they wanted to comfortably fit inside without forgoing a sleek coachroof above. They also had some specific aesthetic wishes, such as the request to see the mast in the interior.

They were not shy about embracing innovations proposed by Nautor Swan, such as the builder's new design for an extending swim platform. And, after years of owning bare-bone racing boats, the French couple wanted something comfortable and safe for cruising with their children. The result is a yacht that is an evolution of a classic Swan Maxi, blending excellent seakeeping and comfort with sailing prowess, while offering new solutions to common



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frustrations that future owners of this series boat will appreciate as well.

The Nicaises first had a few competitive sport boats, including a 9.5-metre J/97 and 11-metre J/112. After this, they made the leap to a cruiser-style sailing boat with a Beneteau Oceanis 62. The Beneteau was certainly a step up in comfort, but they discovered that after a two-week holiday – hosting family while managing every aspect of the trip, from the sailing to the cooking – they were left utterly exhausted. “We decided to get a bigger boat so we could have crew,” says Alexandre. They planned to charter their new yacht to offset the cost of having a crew of five.

As owner’s rep Ulysse Harin recalls, “One day [Alexandre] called me and said, ‘I want to change the 62.’ I said ‘OK, great, you want a 70?’ ‘No.’ ‘An 80?’ ‘No.’ ‘A 90?’ ‘No, keep going.’” Working with Harin, the owners spoke to all the leading builders of high-end cruiser/racer sailing yachts, trying to find the sweet spot between proven design and customisation options.

The timing was right as Finnish builder Nautor Swan had just announced the Swan Maxi 108, which, at 33 metres, fits nicely into the middle of the Swan Maxi fleet. “They approached us with the idea of cooperating with the

shipyard in building hull No 1 and making her more ‘personal,’” says Nautor Swan CEO Giovanni Pomati. “Therefore, they became an active part in developing the 108 project, focusing on making her liveable and comfortable in every condition.”

The Nicaises valued the proven pedigree of a Swan Maxi, which melds cruiser comfort with racing abilities. Like other Swans before her, naval architecture for the 108 came from Germán Frers, while exterior design is by Micheletti + Partners. “Commissioned by Nautor to create a new blue-water yacht, our primary aim was to seamlessly blend the virtues of speed with elegance, strength, reliability and, above all, to create a hull that ensures comfort and safety while sailing in conditions likely to be encountered on middle-distance passages,” says Frers. Using CFD analysis, he compared hull design options that would provide a smooth ride in heavier conditions versus their effect on overall speed.

Vanni Galgani, head of product marketing for Swan and Maxi Swan, agrees that the 108 is designed to be a joy to sail. This is especially important for owners like the Nicaises, who will often sail the yacht themselves and not just

PHOTOGRAPHY: MAURIZIO PARADISI



“WHENEVER WE VISITED A BOAT LIKE THIS, WE NEVER SAW THE MAST. TO ME THAT WAS A PITY. IT’S A BEAUTIFUL FEATURE”



The gleaming black mast on display in the main saloon is a feature, and the empty space around it opens up the views to the cosy snug a few steps down



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leave it to the crew. “You should have a lot of fun steering the boat – we never compromise on that,” says Galgani. “Whatever you see on board, from the winches to the ergonomic steering pedestal, it has been designed around how our clients will really use and sail the boat. We want to replicate the feeling of steering a small boat even in this size.” One way the builder achieved this is by choosing a traditional steering circuit, where the dual steering wheels are directly connected with the rudders on a single surface, which gives authentic feedback to whoever is at the helm.

Fancy’s modern sailplan was conceived according to the displacement, stability and speed that Frers considered to be “proper and in harmony” with this type of yacht. With sails supplied by North Sails, she flies a total sail area of 1,448 square metres and boasts an upwind sail area of 649 square metres. Hall Spars provided the carbon spars and the Future Fibres ECsix carbon rigging.

Just after making her debut at the Monaco Yacht Show in September 2023, *Fancy* spread her wings on a transatlantic passage from the Mediterranean to the Caribbean, putting her sailing capabilities to the test in steady winds. “We kept the spinnaker on day and night for more than 12 days,” says Harin, who was on board during the voyage. “We reached peak speeds of over 21 knots without really doing anything on purpose.”

The Swan 108 offers multiple cockpit configurations, including a standard layout with two sofas and tables facing each other and an optional layout with a large U-shaped sofa at the centre of the cockpit, to name just two. While *Fancy*’s owners opted for the standard cockpit, they took Swan up on the option for a new design



PHOTOGRAPHY: DAN ERIK

in which a portion of the aft deck transforms into a swim platform. “This isn’t just the transom opening,” says Galgani, demonstrating how the aft deck lifts up and lowers down to sea level to create an 18-square-metre swim platform and beach area. “The whole mechanism was designed by us and fully built in Finland.”

The Swan 108 is the first of the fleet to have a new style of coachroof designed by Milan-based Micheletti + Partners. On either side, arches of carbon fibre, painted silvery grey to match the hull, extend the length of the roof to define its curvaceous shape. These seem to be floating over the teak coaming, which keeps water out of the cockpit.

Notably, the mast is set on top of the coachroof, rather than in front of it. The roof extends forward of the mast, with a curve of glass at the front that’s inspired by automotive design. The multiple windows in the roof help illuminate the saloon below. And, rather than being greeted by a forward bulkhead when entering the saloon, the mast is on full display, featured like a piece of art.

“Whenever we visited a boat like this, we never saw the mast,” says Alexandre. “To me that is a pity, because we are not in a motor yacht, we are in a sailing boat. It’s a beautiful feature that you really want to highlight.” And highlight they did. The black carbon mast rises up from the forward sideboard, and the open space around the mast gives the impression of extra volume inside.

But it was more than the illusion of volume that was important to the Nicaises. “They are a very tall family,” says Harin. “The owner and his son are both two metres tall – and his son is only 16 years old, so he’s going to get bigger.” Low ceilings would be a frustration, so the in-house design team worked with structural engineers to optimise deck stiffeners and push ceiling heights to the limit. All of the main living areas have more than 205 centimetres of clearance.

The owners’ brief for decor was to create a fresh yet timeless interior with a sophisticated combination of materials. The interior design is by Nautor Swan’s in-house team, headed by

Misa Poggi, in collaboration with the owners. “We sought space, light and luminosity,” says Nathalie. “We wanted it to feel comfortable and not overly luxurious.” The contemporary interior showcases a balance of shadow and light, of plain and textured materials. “Light colours and materials are used on the verticals, contrasted by a grounding earthy colour of the lower furniture and floor,” says Heini Gustafsson, senior project architect for styling at Nautor Swan.

All of the wooden furniture on board is made of quarter-cut European oak, custom stained to a “sand” tone, with a satin finish. The floorboards are a crown-cut European oak in a brushed finish dubbed “sandy beach”. To find the perfect hue for the stained wood, the joinery department produced samples and tests for client approval. Other furniture, as well as the ceilings, are finished in a clean white colour, for an open feeling.



Extra-high shower stalls from Laminam’s I Naturali collection suit this tall family. The forward master (opposite page, top) has a sofa and dressing table. The saloon’s portside sofa can convert into a wide chaise longue (bottom)





The galley has Corian countertops, Miele appliances and custom refrigeration by Frigonautica. It's an open concept space along with the crew mess and nav area. Fancy's owners appreciated that Swan uses real wood veneers



Soft furnishings in white and cream give luscious burgundy leather and bronze accents centre stage. Another focal point is the intricate artwork, such as the seascape that sits on the forward bulkhead next to the mast. "It's a powder of gold used to make a reverse painting that's carved into the glass," Nathalie explains. "It was commissioned especially." There are three paintings like this on board, each depicting the elements of sea, earth and air.

Just past the mast, steps lead down to a cosy snug with a TV and a foyer opening onto a VIP cabin to starboard and the owners' suite forward. Swan offers flexibility to customise the cabin configuration, within the limitations of the structural platform. "For example, if a VIP is not required, we may investigate a super-suite for the owner, occupying all of the forward of the yacht," says Gustafsson. "This opens up the possibility for a spa area, library or lounge."

A further two cabins with twin berths are found amidships, while crew quarters are all the way astern. The generous crew quarters include

the galley, a crew mess and three crew cabins. "The well-being of crew was also highlighted by the customers, hence attention was paid to create an open concept galley/crew mess and navigation area," says Gustafsson.

One of the reasons that the owners opted for a yacht in the 30-metre range was that they saw a gap in the charter market. "They noticed there were some 120- and 130-footers (37 to 40 metres) for charter, and also many 80-footers, but not so many 100ft sailing boats," says Harin. Fancy has already booked 10 weeks of charters at the time of writing. After finishing in the Caribbean in April 2024, she will be heading back across the Atlantic to spend the summer in Greece.

Their first venture into semi-production yacht ownership has been a success for the Nicaises. "It was not very easy for Swan to have a client like us with such specific ideas, but we always felt we could share our point of view, and it was a fantastic experience for us," says Alexandre. And as for that list of frustrations? "At the end with Fancy, we had fixed the whole list." ■

PHOTOGRAPHY: MAURIZIO PARADISI

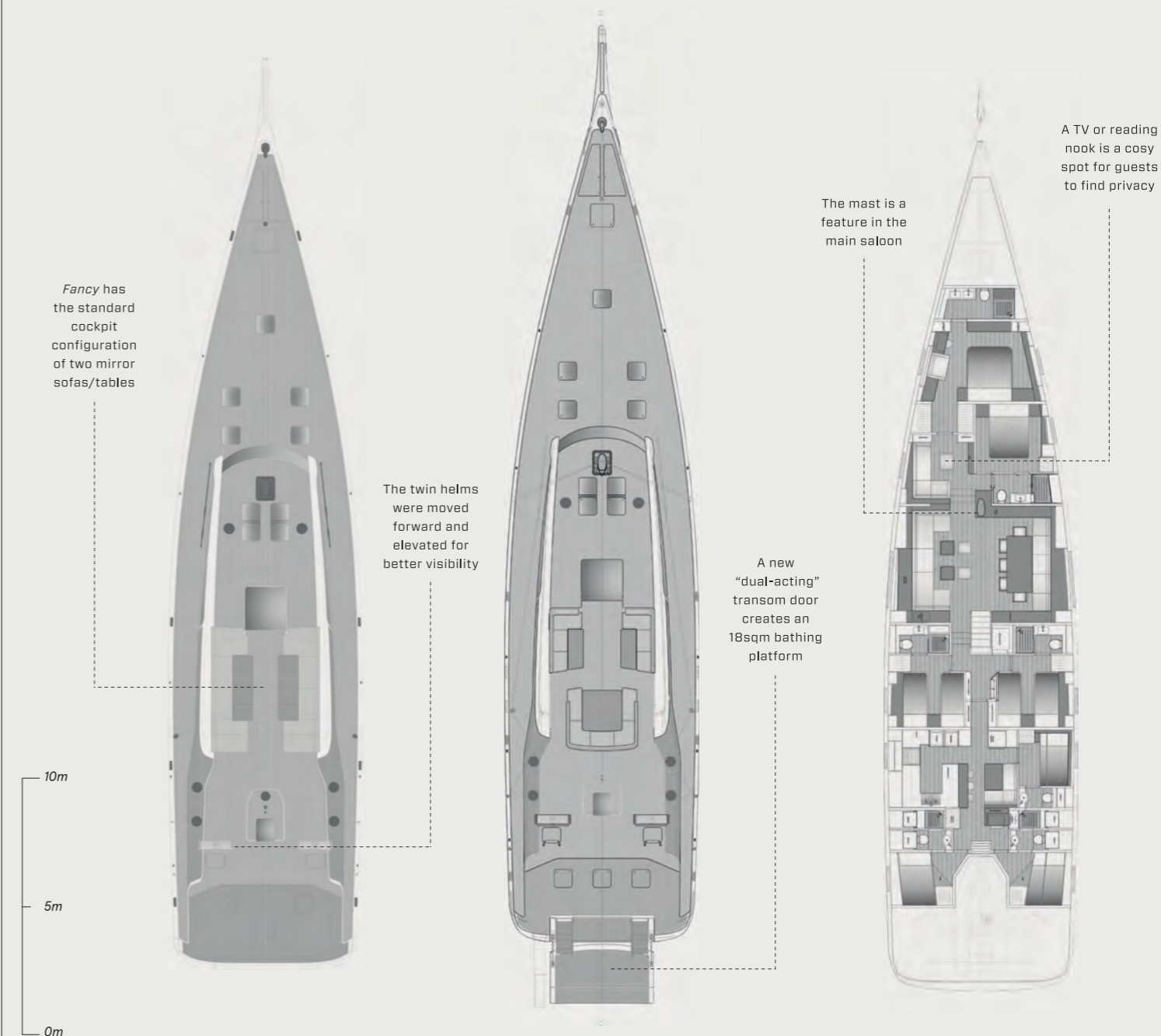
Fancy

Nautor Swan

Main deck (standard)

Main deck (optional)

Lower deck



LOA (without bowsprit)
33m
LWL 30.56m
Beam 7.55m
Draught (keel up/down)
3.4m/5.2m
Gross tonnage
130GT

Engine
257kW Scania DI13
Generators
2 x 26kW Northern Lights
Sails North Sails
Sail area 1,448 sq m
Spar manufacturer
Hall Spars

Rigging
Future Fibres ECsix
Fuel capacity
4,000 litres
Freshwater capacity
2,600 litres
Owners/guests
8

Crew 5
Construction
Carbon-fibre hull and superstructure
Classification
RINA C*HULL @ MACH
Ych: short range + French Division 247

Naval architecture
Germán Frers
Exterior design
Micheletti + Partners
Interior design
Misa Poggi

Builder/year
Nautor Swan/2023
Pietarsaari, Finland
+39 055 240 382
info@nautorswan.com
nautorswan.com
For charter
Bernard-gallay.com