

Looking Inside the BOX

**How Hatteras Interiors
Have Influenced the Industry
Since Day One**

By Jan Fogt



Alexis Jacobs is an Aries, which means she knows what she wants and is not afraid to go after it. So when the Columbus, Ohio, native recently began building her fourth Hatteras, this one a 68 Convertible that in her mind embodies the best Hatteras has to offer, she again chose to pursue her own personal style with guidance from consulting decorator Dawn Moffitt.

Like some 40 percent of Hatteras buyers today, Jacobs prefers adding her own custom interior touches to the boats she buys. She wants her boat to be unique, to reflect her style and the art she passionately collects. Thus, a neutral palette that emphasizes the art without competing against it is important. “If you go with neutral colors in the carpet and furnishings, you can go all out in the accessories,” explains Jacobs. Also, neutrals make the boat more sellable, says the businesswoman, whose fortunes are based on buying and selling automobiles.

That said, Jacobs is passionate about color. She loves using interesting textiles — often hand painted — in jewel and sea colors that play against the exotic woods and granite surfaces. Jacobs also recognizes that “standard” is sometimes preferable. In each of her past Hatteras yachts, Jacobs opted for the standard U-shape sectional in taupes, creams or tan-color leathers. In the 70-foot *Reel Obsession*, Moffitt finished the standard accent chairs in complementary suede, using leathers from the sofa for the piping trim.

SIMPLE ELEGANCE A high-gloss cherry finish provides





a luxurious backdrop, while architectural highlights such as arched doorways, sketch face doors and overhead soffits illustrate the sophistication of today's buyer.





One reason Jacobs favors the standard sofa and chairs over custom choices is a combination of cost and function. “You can’t improve on them,” she says. “Hatteras does a great job building storage into their furnishings and making sure the pieces are comfortable to sit or lounge on.”

Such comments come as music to the ears of Stacey Swecker, Hatteras’ in-house designer. “Just as you would if you were designing interiors for a home, you want the furnishings to be luxurious and comfortable,” she says. “But the bottom line is boats are not like houses. Everything we put on a boat has to be well thought out in terms of what it will lend to the space and how it fits.”

In the best of worlds, Swecker looks for ways for the interior elements to do double duty. One good example is the fluted wood cornices now used in all models. These are as functional as they are beautiful. They function as air conditioning vents, but they also work from a design standpoint, adding architectural interest that gives the illusion of height and space.

Function. Design. Beauty. All speak to Hatteras’ philosophy about interior spaces. It’s been that way since the beginning, since the *Knit Wits* made its landmark debut in 1960.

Debut of a Classic

You no doubt know the *Knit Wits* story, in that she was the first large boat ever built out of fiberglass. Most people fail to recognize she was also among the first with an enclosed salon. Keep in mind that this was the era of Rybovich and Merritt day boats with their open aft bulkheads designed to provide easy access from the cockpit to the shade of the salon,

where fishermen would retreat while waiting for the next bite.

Maybe because she was Carolina-bred rather than a south Florida creation, the *Knit Wits* was designed by Willis Slane to be multi-purpose. Slane believed a fishing boat should appeal to families as much as the hard-core fisherman of the family. Thus the first Hatteras had a refined interior including a fully enclosed salon with a door to ward off the chill and spray.

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And instead of a built-in dinette with hard bench seating, she had a full sofa, two comfy side chairs and a hi-lo table to function as a dining table or end table. A cruiser during the off-season and serious sport fisherman in season, it was dubbed the “convertible.”

The *Knit Wits* also had what has come to be known as a galley-down layout. Some 10 years later, Hatteras would become the first manufacturer to offer customers a choice of interior layouts, which it did in its 50- and 53-foot sportfishermen. With the galley

down, customers got a more spacious salon. The galley-up configuration provided an extra stateroom.

In the beginning, galley-down was the most popular configuration because men were still the principal buyers. They preferred having a bigger salon for entertaining. But it was a hard sell to families. Many women were prone to seasickness, so the concept of going down to the galley to make a sandwich was, well, about as popular as walking the plank. Even those not prone to *mal de mer* disliked the arrangement because they felt out of the action when working in the galley. Eventually, women and need for a third stateroom won out and galley-up became the standard in the early 1980s.

The Hargrave/Slane Influence

The case can be made for Hatteras being one of the first marine manufacturers to identify women’s needs in boating. Tom Slane says his father understood that by appealing to families he could sell more boats. It is not known how much input Doris Slane had with her husband’s plans for the first *Knit Wits*, but she had a lot to do with deciding what the furnishings should look like. With a decorating degree from Duke, she became Hatteras’ first decorator.

Tom Slane, who remains in the business as a custom boat renovator, says Doris did the first custom design of a Hatteras interior for Roy Tuggle, a Columbus, Ohio, buyer who ended up owning 13 Hatteras yachts — all heavily customized.

Doris went on to found Skipper’s Choice, making drapes, custom-fitted sheets and other soft goods for the industry. Through the



1960s, she collaborated with Jack Hargrave on the interiors, choosing fabrics, flooring (the first was cork) and colors. But the look inside and out was driven largely by Hargrave, who at Willis Slane's direction was trying not to duplicate the custom boats of the day, but to produce a good all-around fishing and cruising combination.

"During the 20-odd years Jack designed the Hatteras sport and cruising lineup, he oversaw every aspect of the design process, from exteriors to the spatial planning of interiors," says Dudley Dawson, Hatteras' chief naval architect from 1988 to 1994 and now technical editor for *Yachting*. "Jack never paid much attention to what the competition was doing," Dawson says. "Yes, he was aware of changes the custom yards were making with

their interiors, but he wasn't influenced by them. Jack designed for what he called the 'bell curve' of the boating population. He was more concerned about keeping costs down, making the boats accessible. In the late 1960s and 1970s, a Hatteras was the first blue-water boat most people ever owned. Today, customers are more sophisticated. They want yacht-class detail, which is exactly what Hatteras is giving them."

Commitment to Interiors

The sexy exterior lines and speed figures associated with Hatteras' new generation of product may get the headlines, but interior achievements have always distinguished Hatteras from its competition. Hatteras was the first major manufacturer to commit to a full-

time, in-house decorating staff, which began with CEO Dave Parker's administration in 1965. Heading up that department was Mary Reed, who by all accounts was a force to be reckoned with.

At one dealer meeting, for instance, Reed had models who were dressed in the standard décor fabrics showing the boats. And it was Reed who went to Parker with an idea to create an inviting design studio for owners. Once completed, the Yacht Fashions Studio — a name that elicited a "yuk" from some employees — operated like a high-end, custom interior design store complete with accessories, carpeting and furnishings. Only this studio happened to be footsteps away from Hatteras' main manufacturing facility. It remains one of the few in-house interior design studios in the industry.

Breaking New Ground

If you haven't stepped aboard a new Hatteras motoryacht or sportfishing convertible in the last two years, you have missed a major shift in process and materials that have produced significant improvements in interior fit and finish. Visit a major boat show this fall and see for yourself how Hatteras continues to lead the pace in interior appointments.

A leading contributor to this advancement is the prevalent use of flush-fill panels that feature a polyester finish. Available in either a satin or high-gloss finish, the new polyester flush-fill panels have numerous advantages over the old water-based technique.

Most notably, all grain in the new panels is filled for a mirror-like luster, giving a clearer, more uniform gloss that presents the natural color and beauty of the wood without applying any stain. As the panels are pre-finished before assembly, they allow Hatteras craftsmen to build cabinetry that is finished to perfection before it ever gets installed on the boat. The panels allow for matching grain across drawer fronts or cabinet doors, as well as more uniform color throughout a compartment.

Most importantly, perhaps, the surface is harder, more durable, more resistant to scratches, and is less susceptible to chemical attack from cleaning solutions. As such, it is easier to care for. A simple wash and wipe is all that is required; no waxes or specialty cleaners are needed. As a result of this change, in fact, warranty work related to interior deficiencies has dropped significantly since moving all products to the new flush-filled panels in early 2004.



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SUPERYACHT The 125-foot *Alexandra* marked a shift in Hatteras interiors. The yacht featured lighting techniques and materials not seen before in the product line.

Enter the Superyacht

Moffitt left Hatteras during the industry downturn in 1980 but was asked to come back as head designer in 1985 when Reed retired. During her absence, the economy had turned around and Hatteras had begun building custom megayachts. On her first day back she began putting her personal stamp on an 82 Convertible and six motoryachts over 100 feet that were underway or already sold.

“It was a little like a baptism by fire,” recalls Moffitt. “There was a lot of product expansion going on, but even the convertible owners had become more discriminating. In the 1970s, people didn’t buy boats to impress. In the 1980s that changed. Standard décor was out. People wanted boats that were decked out with custom carpets, architectural detail, furnishings and lighting.”

Longtime Hatteras broker Hutch Hutchings credits Moffitt with bringing Hatteras into the 1990s. “She took us from dark, traditional interiors to light and airy spaces. Her outlook was sophisticated, almost masculine,” he says. “In the end, she influenced the direction of the company, inside and out, making the boats sleeker, more custom.”

Moffitt says it was Hatteras’ crown jewel, the 125-foot *Alexandra*, the largest superyacht Hatteras ever built, that pushed her and the factory in new directions. “Once I had my marching orders, I started doing the research, looking for ideas unlike anything Hatteras had ever done. The way I saw it, this boat would be a traveling billboard for the kind of craftsmanship Hatteras was capable of. So it was important she be the best she could be.”

In addition to specifying furnishings and surfaces, the interior design department was asked for the first time to develop a concept for the interior layout. “Until then, we’d never been involved in space planning,” Moffitt says. “We’d always decorated the spaces they gave us. This was a challenge.”

The trust was well deserved. The 125-footer was an immediate hit at the 1989 Fort Lauderdale Boat Show and became the toast of Europe. It was the first modern-day Hatteras ever to grace more than one magazine cover in the same month, even earning a cover pullout in *Showboats*. And it was a finalist for an international design award from the Super Yachts Society. Yet for Moffitt, many of the design elements heralded by the press had been an uphill battle.

Hatteras Interiors: Three Ways to Go

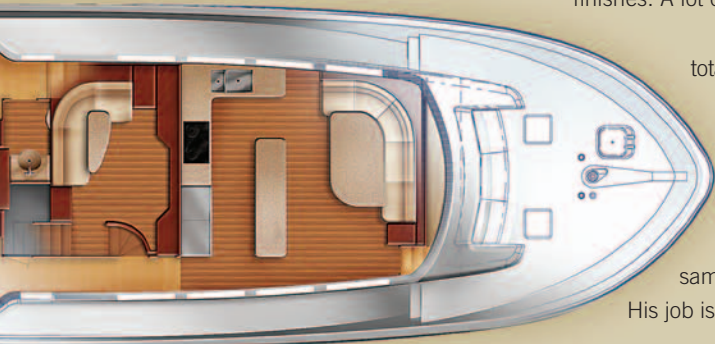
Outside of performance, most buyers say a yacht’s interior is their second biggest consideration when selecting a boat. With that in mind, Hatteras has come up with a variety of options to make sure customers are as satisfied with the interior environments as they are with the boat’s renowned ride.

“Our standard interior package appeals to a lot of people because there are so many options,” says Stacey Swecker, Hatteras’ chief interior designer. “The packages include pretty much everything, from furnishings to custom wood blinds to solid-surface countertops to elegant wood cabinets to sculpted carpeting. You can even order compass rose inlays in hard floorings as part of the standard décor.”

The second most affordable way to go is to stick with the standard package and add custom accessories or surfaces. “For instance, we can add custom fabric to the chairs and toss pillows on the sofa,” she says. “We can also customize standard interiors by adding different cabinet finishes. A lot of things can be done without significantly impacting the price.”

Another option would be to have Swecker and the engineering team create a total custom package, including fabrics, furnishings, headliners, architectural moldings, bow-front vanities and built-in cabinets such as china storage, entertainment centers or a hideaway office. Customers also are welcome to use their own decorator. Many actually prefer this option, said Swecker, because of long-standing relationships they have with decorators doing their homes or offices.

Regardless of which option a customer chooses, the building process is the same. Every buyer is assigned a construction manager to serve as the boat’s builder. His job is to make sure the owner gets the boat they want and that it is delivered on time.





LOTS OF BRASS Ash was the wood finish of choice during much of the 1980s. Debuting in 1989, *The Alexandra* (left) was the first modern-day Hatteras to secure more than one magazine cover in the same month.

“When we started planning the *Alexandra* in 1987, management could not conceive of something floating having stone countertops,” says Moffitt. “I got a call from the president of the company one night telling me he was sorry, but there was no way they could put stone on a yacht because of the weight. Only after I made a presentation to the engineers would they agree to try it. Suffice to say, I think they’re pleased I won because Hatteras was the first manufacturer to use granite surfaces. Today, of course, it’s commonplace not just on luxury yachts but on the fishing boats.”

Customers Drive the Process

“We’ve definitely made tremendous improvements in the fit and finish and quality of the interiors in the 10 years I’ve been here,” says Stacey Swecker, Hatteras’ chief interior designer. “Some changes have come in-house, but increasingly, interior layout plans and innovation are being driven by our customers.”

In finalizing the design of the new 80 Motor Yacht, for example, yacht owners, dealers, captains and potential customers were invited to the factory to view conceptual plans and layouts for the grand new

yacht, and to critique them. “We wanted to know what they would do differently,” says Swecker. “And tell us they did: ‘Get rid of the upholstered headboards, more pull-out storage, more beam, more bowed cabinetry, more choices for decorative headliners.’ They had

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plenty of comments on the interiors.”

“Good customer input tends to influence the entire product line,” adds Don Farlow, executive vice-president. “We enjoy interacting with our customers because they push us in directions we might not go with-

out their involvement,” he says.

Alexis Jacobs is a perfect example.

“Many years ago she didn’t want a full-size refrigerator on her boat,” Farlow says. “She wanted to use the drawer-style Sub Zero units instead. That opened up some challenges, like where we would we put additional freezer space. Bottom line, the drawers worked out so well we started putting them in all of our convertibles. As for additional freezer space, we’ve found room in the attics or utility rooms for an extra unit.”

Among the new challenges Hatteras is tackling is how to incorporate computer work stations and the extensive home entertainment systems everyone seems to want — especially on smaller 50s and 54s. Also coming are even more choices for interior woods and finishes. At Hatteras, the standard cherry, maple, African mahogany and Anigre options equate to custom anywhere else, and offer yet another example of Hatteras’ commitment to providing customers with myriad ways to personalize their boats.

Then and now, the inside story at Hatteras has always been limited only by the imagination.