

BOAT

International

THE A-LIST

*The top 50 yacht
designers in
the world*

SEXY BEAST

*The first all-carbon
49 metre superyacht*

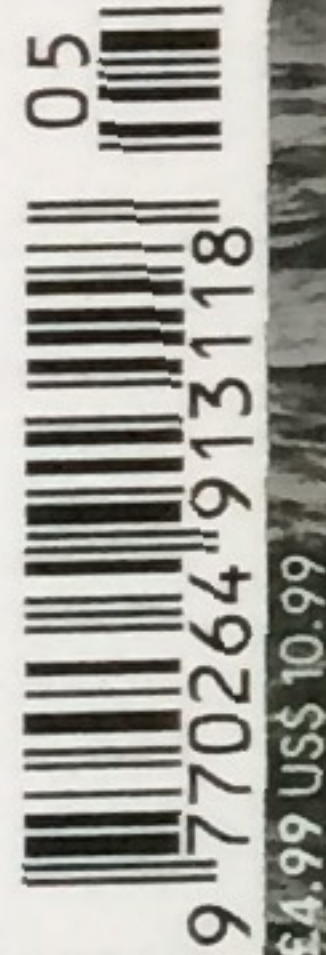


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Gold rush

*The first carbon composite 49 metre, the biggest windows
in American yacht design... and the beam of a 70 metre.
Khalilah has a lot to shout about*

Words - Cecile Gauert Photography - Q&K

There is no doubting the hottest topic of conversation in Miami Beach in February when the great and the good of the superyacht community gather for the Yacht and Brokerage Show. The boat in question is not part of the showcase event but her abstract sculptural quality, her golden pearlescent finish and black radar arch make *Khalilah* indisputably the star attraction – even tied up at a private home on the Indian Creek Waterway, a stone's throw from the show. Craft of all sorts mill about as passengers crane their necks for a better look at the gleaming, golden goddess.

One man is keeping his cool amid all the hullabaloo. Timur Mohamed, owner of the iconic American boatbuilder Palmer Johnson (PJ), which has produced the 49 metre SuperSport *Khalilah*, seems to be half-expecting the acclaim and attention when I join him on board. "This," says Mohamed, sweeping a hand towards the huge aft deck by way of explanation, "is what this is all about."

Her goldness is not what sets *Khalilah* apart. Nor is the fact that she's the largest private yacht built entirely in carbon composite. Rather, it's that amazing aft deck, formed by its 11 metre beam. "This yacht has the beam of a 70 metre," he says proudly.

And Mohamed can rightly feel proud, knowing as he does the amount of effort and the degree of innovation that has gone into creating this new SuperSport series. It has been under development since 2010, when Mohamed came across a concept

"We were aiming to capture the hearts and imagination of the discerning and knowledgeable"



to serve as the starting point for a yacht to shake things up, in what he considers the conservative world of yachting. It came courtesy of a designer called Berkeley March, a finalist in *Boat International's* 2008 Young Designer of the Year awards, who had recently started working for Palmer Johnson.

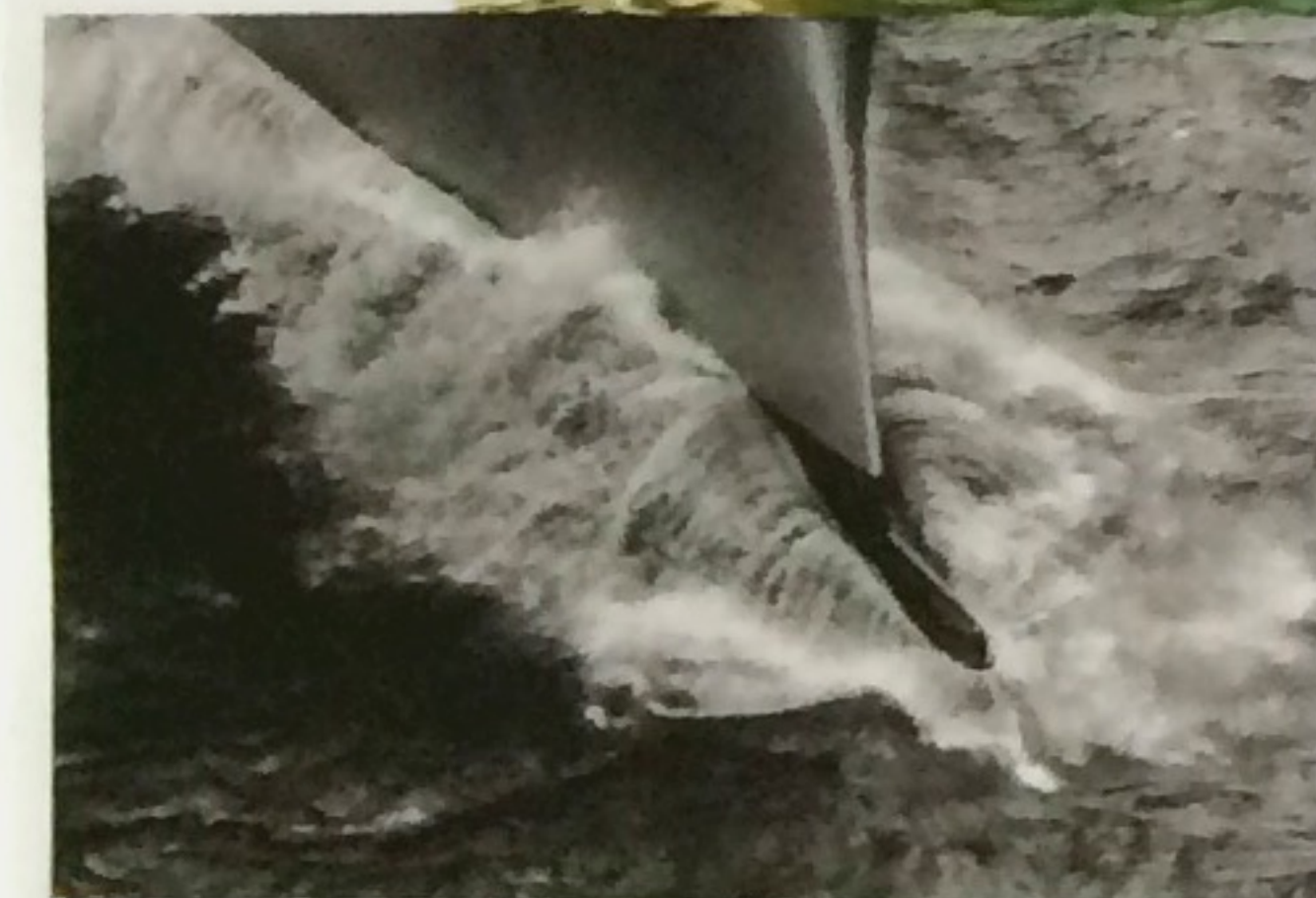
What Mohamed wanted was a yacht without compromise and, with March's design, he had it. "We wanted to tick all the boxes of what owners want," Mohamed says. "The design intent had a clear and bold goal from the start: to create superyachts that did not compromise speed, efficiency, comfort and space. Once we had exterior elements we liked, along with the new hull form, the next [goal] was that design, technology and performance had to be woven seamlessly into the essence of the yacht. We were aiming to capture the hearts and imagination of the discerning and knowledgeable."

The first designs were produced in late 2011. A contract for the first yacht came a few months later. "It was a high-risk project," says Mohamed, who admits he likes just this sort of challenge. A second hull, which was sold earlier this year, is under construction.

"Innovative is when you change something fundamental," Mohamed says. And this first SuperSport vessel did just that: a displacement yacht with no fin- or gyro-stabilisers, capable of reaching 30 knots and of providing the space of a multihull. "Thirty knots on a displacement hull



The design intent for the SuperSport series was clear: no compromise on speed, efficiency, comfort or space, with technology and performance woven seamlessly in



A successful feature of this design is that each deck has good height – yet the SuperSport is still sleek and sporty. Left: beneath the water's surface is a wave-piercing element, which parts waves that side deflectors are designed to abate

simply does not happen," he asserts. In February, shortly before heading to Florida, the yacht's GPS registered 29.9 knots. Further fine-tuning inevitably followed.

Palmer Johnson, founded in Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin, in 1918, long before its expansion into Monaco a few years ago, is no stranger to innovation. In the 1960s, the yard began building fast sailing yachts in aluminium. It expanded into the superyacht market, where it carved its niche with alluring and sporty yachts developed in co-operation with Italian design firm Nuvolari Lenard.

It was the company's SportYacht series, launched in the mid-2000s, that first caught the attention of Mohamed. The first PJ120, *Cover Drive*, was built for him. "It's all part of the PJ story," he says. "From *Fortuna* (a 30.5 metre built in the late 1970s for King Juan Carlos of Spain) to the SportYachts to the SuperSport series, PJ has always bred performance yachts with dynamic styling ahead of the market."

It helps that the builder has like-minded clients. Palmer Johnson built the first SuperSport for a repeat customer who, in 2007, took delivery of another head turner: the golden, Nuvolari Lenard-designed 46 metre named *O'Khalila* (now *Skyfall II*). Unlike her predecessor, which was built in aluminium, *Khalilah* is entirely carbon composite: carbon fibre sandwich and vinylester.

Khalilah oozes the best of automotive styling with a *souçon* of later-generation Palmer Johnson genes. On the water the 49 metre, despite her wide body aft, is sleek and sporty, with a long foredeck ending in what appears to be a reverse bow. Above deck, nothing is revealed: no tenders or cranes, no anchors, winches or mast clutter that foredeck; there is no towering superstructure, as Palmer Johnson eschewed such features many years ago. A wave-piercing element designed to part the water is visible only below the surface. Waves may rise occasionally to the level of side deflectors that also serve as interesting styling elements.

Seen from land, the yacht offers a very different perspective and reveals her imposing scale. But even as she towers above, when you stand quayside (she is 16 metres tall from the waterline to the top of the mast), little prepares you for the space that she offers. The aft main deck sits on top of the widest part of the hull, courtesy of two sponsons that are

designed to give stability. On closer inspection these thin appendages have doors built right above them to allow the crew to unload tenders and toys. Seen from the inside, they expand the storage space significantly. Twin side garages, one with a fuelling station, hold a seven metre tender and three jet skis, and frame a large beach club protected from the elements by a wide glass door. With at least three functions, the sponsons are an integral part of the design and, when the yacht is at anchor, they contribute to the feeling of space on board.

The aft deck's size – 110 square metres – is closer to the space you'd expect on a multihull. Compounding the effect of that 11 metre beam, and the almost 12 metres from the transom to the saloon door, is the extensive use of glass, which opens up views everywhere you look. Seated or sprawled on the large outside banquette, or lying on enormous sunpads, you still enjoy uninterrupted views. Shapely railings support glass panels that break the wind effectively but don't spoil the view. More glass is inset in the carbon supports framing the main deck's outdoor dining area, with the largest panes found forward at the main saloon level. "They are the biggest glass panels aside from Steve Jobs's boat [*Venus*]," says Mohamed.

Each panel framing the superstructure at the saloon's level measures 6.6 by 2.2 metres. Palmer Johnson worked with New Zealand glass specialist Glasshape, which made and installed the specially formulated DuraShield Marine Glass. Each window panel comprises two layers of laminated glass, with an interlayer of resin that helps refract heat. One-inch thick (26mm), each panel weighs more than one tonne. "They are the largest windows installed on a superyacht in the United States," says Andrew Forrest, who heads the Glasshape North America office in Fort Lauderdale, Florida.

Thanks to the slender naval architecture and carbon composite construction (which represents a weight saving of about 20 tonnes according to PJ's own estimation), the SuperSport 48 requires relatively modest power to reach her noteworthy top speed of 32 knots. The engines are twin 16V MTU diesel M94s from the 2000 series, with a maximum 5,200hp output. As a result, total consumption at top speed is about 1,000 litres per hour. Consumption, says the captain who took



*"They are the largest windows installed
on a superyacht in the United States"*

Pleasant design features, such as the spiralling light pattern on the high ceiling and attractive flooring, take a back seat to the views that pour through the huge windows

the yacht from Wisconsin to Florida via Montreal, goes down significantly with speed. With an extra tank extending capacity up to 41,600 litres, and a consumption of 159 litres per hour, the yacht has transatlantic range at about 15 knots.

To build the yacht entirely in carbon composite, Palmer Johnson selected a Norwegian shipyard well-versed in the material. Brødrene Aa, which specialises in fast ferries, built the first DNV-approved vessel in GRP sandwich panels in the 1970s and a few well-known yachts marketed under the Norship name, including the 36.5 metre *Moonraker*, once the world's fastest yacht, in the early 1990s.

The assembled hull and superstructure, with engines and drives in place, made their way from Norway to Wisconsin in late 2013, and the PJ craftsmen installed the mechanics, electronics, a complex network of lights and built the custom interior to the owner's requirements.

This owner wanted a simple but playful interior. A spiral of LED lights inset in the ceiling above the entrance foyer, a glass octopus, and low-lying colourful seats on top of wide-beam parquet flooring set the tone. But it is not long before the eyes wander towards the floor-to-ceiling windows that frame the saloon.

PJ's standard layout calls for a larger main saloon, a galley down and a palatial master suite sprawling full-beam forward on the main deck. *Khalilah* has a different layout, according to her owner's wishes. The galley, a contemporary and alluring space with windows, stainless steel appliances and lacquered orange cabinets, looks as though it came from a Boffi showroom but was designed and built in-house. It was installed on the main deck at the owner's request. Two similar-sized owner's suites occupy the space forward, benefiting from great views through vertical portholes.

The guest cabins, including a comfortable VIP, are on the lower deck. Each has a different colour scheme, highly personalised décor and beautiful marble and colourful mosaics in the showers. The crew cabins (four twins and one single for the captain) are forward of a pleasant crew mess. A clever use of skylights allows light to stream belowdecks and the space is both practical and comfortable.

The pilothouse, up a few steps from the main deck, mirrors the progressive styling of the yacht herself. The modern bridge at the centre of it all was designed, assembled and built at Palmer Johnson, with control panels from Praxis Automation Technology. The wide windscreen offers a surprisingly good view despite the pronounced slant. A second, smaller helm station, or "skybridge", is on the sundeck above. Modern Edge, an industrial design company based in Portland, Oregon, worked with Palmer Johnson on the design of this stainless steel and GRP console, which fits perfectly with the yacht's exterior styling and integrates neatly with the Praxis control panels. Wing stations are on fold-out balconies, usually framed by removable stanchions and rails. Like many of this yacht's design features, they are revealed only on closer inspection.

The yacht does have a forward navigation mast, but it disappears into the bowels of the vessel when not in use. The only indication of something there is the round shape of the teak detail forward of the sunpads. A system brings the mast up from below. Opening the trap and descending a rather steep ladder reveals a massive and perfectly finished mooring room where several crew can stand fully erect to supervise docking operations. Two anchors drop vertically from the bottom of that room, a system the yard chose to avoid unsightly anchor pockets that distract from the styling.

Practicality dictated most of the choices that the yard made on the technical side, from the sound damping material (Dynamat, a product commonly used in automotive and architectural applications) to the fixed Kohler generators and the conventional diesel power plant included. Most, but not all, of course. When you seek to provoke an emotional reaction and create a strong attachment from an owner to his or her yacht, the details count.

The owner of *Khalilah* clearly has a thing for gold, which is found at the heart of the engine room as a custom finish on the two MTU engine blocks. Gold suggests glamour and confidence but also courage and passion. It took all of that to imagine and build the first SuperSport. Now let's hope the golden *Khalilah* will also mean prosperity for this forward-thinking US yacht builder. ■



Above: despite a markedly slanted windscreen, the pilothouse offers good views. The upper saloon (inset top) and aft deck (left) are impressive private spaces, many metres above the waterline. Right: the main saloon is a colourful and welcoming social space. Top: even the engine blocks are finished with gold





Timur Mohamed came across a concept to serve as a starting point for a yacht to shake up what he considers the conservative world of yachting

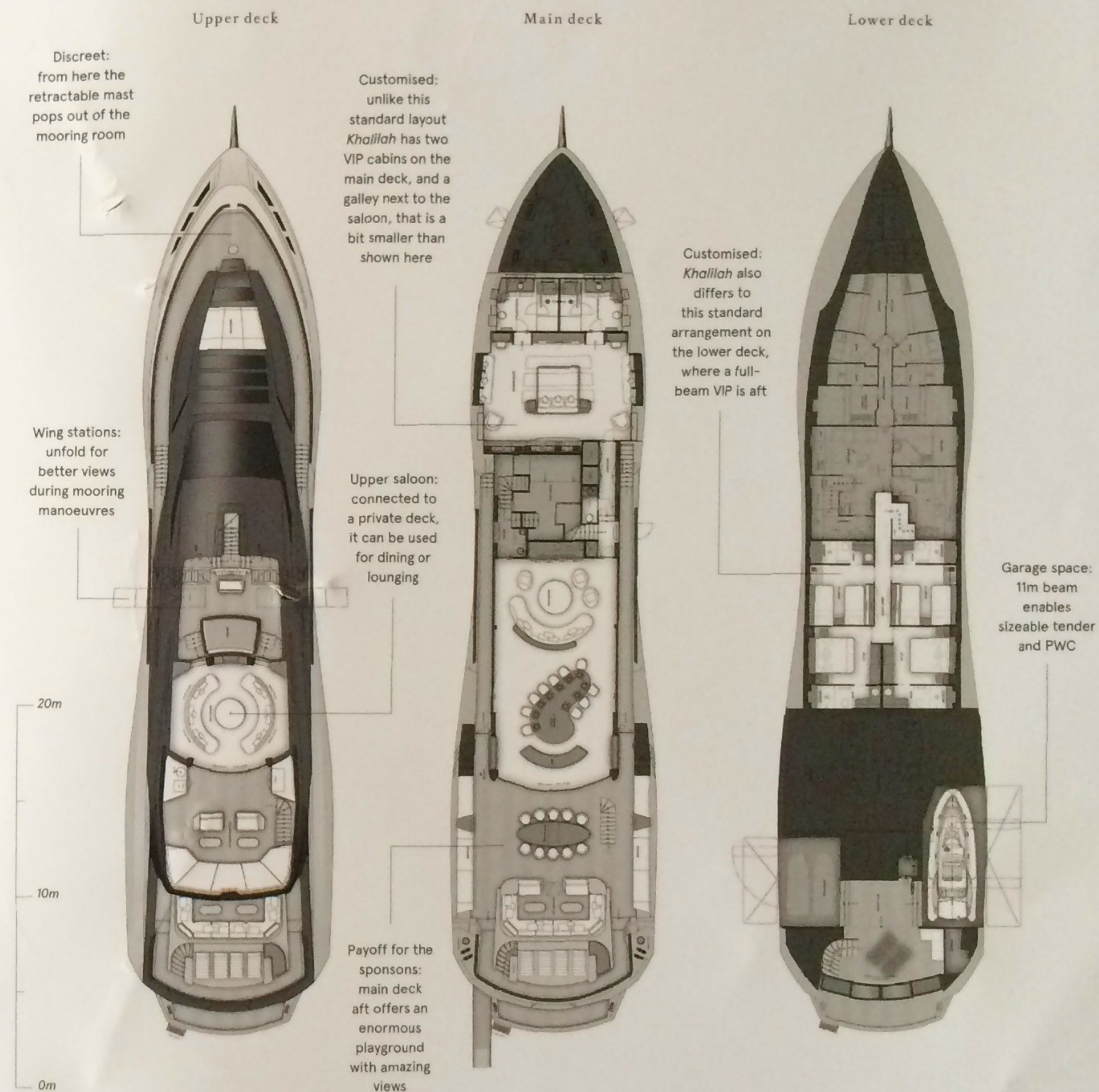


The main deck aft is a very large social space - similar in size to what is often available on multihulls. The upper deck shades the dining area on the main deck, but sun worshippers still have many options to choose from



S P E C S

SuperSport 48 - Palmer Johnson



LOA 49m
Beam 11m
Draught 2.1m
Gross Tonnage 490GT
Engines 2 x MTU 16V2000 M94,

1,939kW @ 2,450 rpm
Speed (max/cruise) 30 knots/28 knots
Range at 24 knots 1,500nm
Generators 2 x 80kW Kohler

Fuel capacity 30,000 litres
Freshwater capacity 6,000 litres
Owner and guests 12
Crew 9

Tenders 1 x 7m custom
Construction Carbon composite
Classification DNV: #1A1 HSLC Yacht R0 Yacht; MCA LY2

Naval architecture & exterior design Palmer Johnson
Interior design Palmer Johnson/Owner

Builder/year Palmer Johnson/2015
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