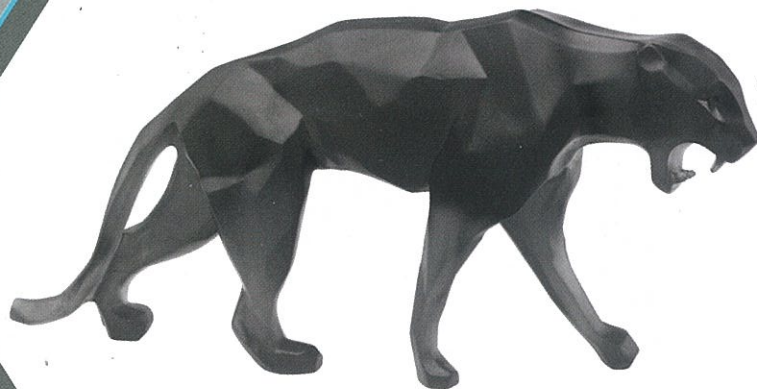


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## The story behind the picture



The mustard-yellow chopper gives away the decade but otherwise this shot, captured in 1976 by the society photographer Slim Aarons from a helicopter in Monaco, could easily be part of a new photo shoot for this magazine.

The Feadship motor yacht *Nobla*, then *Lac II*, is fresh from her 1975 launch and piled high with toys and treats, including a sleek Donzi speedboat. Reclining and shoeless, her American owner Roy J. Carver looks understandably proud of the 40 metre – a seriously big yacht for the time (she would have been among the 100 largest in the world) – as he chats to Jean-Héracle, seventh Duke of Polignac.

It is a long way from the beginnings of Carver's success story, running a pump factory in Illinois during the Great Depression. By the early 1970s his tyre-retreading business Bandag had earned him a fortune estimated at \$300 million. When this photograph was taken he owned homes in Cannes and Miami and had flown solo from Newfoundland to Paris in a single-engine Beechcraft Bonanza.

But as for so many, no experience or prize compared to the feeling of being on his own boat. And being on your own boat in Monaco is like taking your favourite outfit for a stride down the catwalk. The principality's waters may have filled up with other superyachts since this photo was taken, but that just means more admiring glances from the few people in the world who know exactly how you feel.



# The queen of Monaco

**Sabrina Monte-Carlo embodies the principality – and the label that brings good taste to superyacht design, says *Sacha Bonsor***

Sabrina Monte-Carlo, the superyacht owner's go-to store for stylish interiors, is so synonymous with its owner that it only occurs to me weeks after our meeting that her surname may not match that of her retail empire. As the partner of the Norwegian yacht designer Espen Øino, is she perhaps Mrs Sabrina Øino? Her last name, I find out later, is in fact Montelegone.

"Monte-Carlo" suits Sabrina, however. Not only is she glamorous – on the day we meet in her showroom overlooking the Riviera, she is wearing three-inch heels and a bright blue, beaded Dolce & Gabbana dress – but she is also a born-and-bred Monégasque. Her father was a tailor, her mother a seamstress; "a fabric family through and through", she says.

Monte Carlo is also the capital of the superyachting world, of course, and for the past 10 years she has built her business around supplying those yachts with outdoor and indoor furniture, fabrics and products.

It's been a busy decade for Sabrina. Her portfolio now includes more than 80 yachts, including some of the biggest names on the sea – *Kismet*, *Ester III* and *Silver Fast* – and superyachts make up 65 per cent of her business (the rest comes from villas, chalets, houses and private jets).

How has she done it? It is tempting to marry her success with the timing of her partnership with Espen, also 10 years ago, many of whose yachts she has worked on. Does she think that this has played a part? "Well, I am the one from Monaco!" she says, good naturedly. "I have always worked with, or been friends with, people in the yacht industry."

It is also a case of right place, right time. The yacht show celebrates its 25th anniversary this year, to which more than 100 yachts will show up, but Sabrina recalls that when she first started attending it, 12 years ago, there were half this number. The demand for Sabrina's services far outstrips supply.



“This was especially true when I started working with yachts,” says Sabrina. “Because I had started to sell chic outdoor furniture – and no one else was doing this – and working with boat designers, who needed a lot of it, was the next obvious step.”

In truth, Sabrina, who is now in her mid-40s, was successful a long time before meeting her husband or working with yachts. After studying fashion and business in Monaco, she set up her first store aged 30. “It consisted of a collection of high fashion brands such as Burberry, Alberta Ferretti and Valentino, mixed with home accessories. Nothing like that had been done in Monaco before.”

But it wasn't until Sabrina bought a new apartment, in her early 30s, that she changed the store's direction. “The problem was that everything inside my new home was beautiful, but it was hard to find elegant furniture for my terrace. With a beautiful interior, nobody wants to sit on plastic chairs outside!”

Thanks to her own need, and the ever-increasing ubiquitousness of the fashion industry, Sabrina stopped stocking fashion brands, increased her interiors offering, and started to stock large outdoor furniture, too. “We went from a team of two, to a team of 10 in six months, and now we are a team of 25, with four stores – two in Monaco, one in Cap Ferrat and one in Menton.”

With so many yachts under her belt, is there a secret to getting “yacht style” right? “You know, the only key is making sure the client is happy. It is very important to remember that we are a retailer, not a design business.” Although people are buying into her style? “Yes, true. I think people trust my eye because they know I only work with quality.”

Sabrina's favourite superyacht project so far was the 70 metre *Skat*, designed by Espen,



Woven poufs and chairs on Silver Fast's deck (above) ensure the superyacht's outside is as stylish as its interior



Inside Sabrina and Espen's beach house (left). Hermès fabrics instore (right)

**“We went from a team of two to 10 in six months, and now we are a team of 25, with four stores”**

owing to “its purity, simplicity and light. If you are on a yacht, you want to have lots of light, so that you can really feel that you are on the sea.” She and Espen do not own a boat: “We have the yachts of friends,” she jokes. “But seriously, I would love to have a dayboat, and Espen has promised to design it, but I am still waiting!”

Working in the same industry as one's partner can present all sorts of problems, but Sabrina says that theirs is a symbiotic set-up. “Espen tends to work at night, so I will go and keep him company, as will our cat; he often asks for my opinions, just as I ask for his.”

Sabrina's ambition is to open a fifth store, in Monaco, in the not too distant future. Hopefully she will have a dayboat to go with it, decked out in the best fabrics, of course, adding to her impressive portfolio of boats. ■

Among the collectable pieces are a Lalique vase (inset) and panther sculpture from Daum



The appeal of teal: elegant glassware (above) and Portofino chair from Paola Lenti (right)

