



David Ostrander

– on the transforming power of art at sea

WORDS: Andrew Rogers
PHOTOGRAPHY: courtesy of Hakvoort

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The Art of Snowbird



Many superyacht owners share an affinity for art, and some enjoy sharing this passion with guests onboard their floating homes. The owner of the recently launched *Snowbird* has gone a step further, transforming an already aesthetically impressive 39-metre Hakvoort motoryacht into a veritable gallery of contemporary art. The interior designer responsible is the owner's son, David Ostrander. In this exclusive article for *Best of the Best*, he explains his thinking behind *Snowbird*'s art.

Having been brought up on the water from a young age, where I spent many summers participating in sailing regattas, I have always been fascinated by the oceans and the experience of being at sea. The design of yachts has also long been a source of fascination: they are grand objects, and I adore the references to the days when sailing was a gentlemanly pursuit back in the 1920s and 1930s.

It is wonderful to be able to take your home with you wherever you go and blend in with the constantly changing scenery outside. My primary passions are art and design. One of my previous projects was creating a highly detailed art deco interior for my parents' home in Florida. When presented with the opportunity to design the interior – as well as the exterior furnishings – of *Snowbird* to the owner's specification, I couldn't wait to get started. It was a whirlwind experience as the entire interior had to come together in just four months. My hope is to parlay my work on *Snowbird* into other design opportunities in the yachting industry.

With my background, there was no way I was going to design the interior of a superyacht without making art its centrepiece. To me, art is the purest form of human expression, and it became the driving force behind *Snowbird*'s interior. On many boats the art can be very much an afterthought, yet art has the ability to transform a space with so many different moods, creating an ambiance of sophistication and appreciation of the creative spirit.

I have been privileged to have a wonderful "canvas" for my work. The very effective layout designed by Cor de Rover and the wonderful interior environment created by Hakvoort gave me a gorgeous palette for a backdrop, with the owner's art collection the foundation for decisions on what would be onboard.

The genesis of the artwork began with the iconic 1965 piece "Shipboard Girl" by Roy Lichtenstein. This shows an ecstatic face with the ocean in the background, a perfect representation of the emotion that people feel at sea. From this we began building ideas and directions based on the concept of a woman being on board who is actually artwork. Much of the art in the full beam sky lounge is in keeping with the pop period, including the lovely "Ada with Sunglasses" by Alex Katz. Also in the lounge is a canvas by Peter Zimmermann.

The main entrance to the boat contains the first introduction to the art of *Snowbird* in the form of an untitled orange etching by Robert Mangold and two works by the painter and printmaker Frank Stella, while the day head features an original acrylic work by Sam Francis. On the prominent forward wall of the main deck lounge is a painting by the Spanish abstract impressionist Esteban Vicente called "Reddish" – even though it looks orange! There are also four original drawings on the aft bulwark by Hans Hofmann, featuring scenes of St Tropez in 1935.

The pieces were chosen to create a wide range of didactic and interesting sources of discussion, and each has its own very specific place in the overall

Snowbird's central stairway (above centre), with its teak-panelled wall and leather and mother of pearl insets, sets the scene for the boat's interior. 'Ada with Sunglasses' by Alex Katz takes pride of place in the full beam sky lounge (opposite page, top), evoking the feeling of being outside in the sun, and with an edge of glamour that works well with some of the places that *Snowbird* will visit. The owner's office (opposite page, middle) features untitled works by Willem de Kooning and Richard Diebenkorn, plus two rare prints by Ellsworth Kelly ('Blue Curve' and 'Blue and Red'). Centred above the desk is a gouache by Alexander Calder, an original work on paper entitled 'Fish and Faces'. In the main deck saloon (opposite page, bottom), a painting by the Spanish abstract impressionist Esteban Vicente called 'Reddish' (despite its orange hues) provides an interesting talking point



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scheme. One of many examples is the thematic juxtaposition of the two works aft in the main saloon, "A Bucket with a Halo" by James Rosenquist and "Bliss Bucket" by Ed Ruscha.

Another is the owner's office, where we combined ancient articles with modern and contemporary art. There are untitled works by Willem de Kooning and Richard Diebenkorn, plus two rare prints by Ellsworth Kelly ("Blue Curve" and "Blue and Red"). Centred above the desk is a gouache by Alexander Calder, an original work on paper entitled "Fish and Faces". Simple forms on simple forms from vastly different eras show an unexpected continuity of shape and form between the objects.

Continuity is a key factor on board *Snowbird* in other ways, too, as illustrated by the guest staterooms. These tend to receive less attention on many superyachts, but I believe that when you are dealing with something that is generally considered a luxury item it is important that no part of a superyacht feels less important than another. In fact, many of my favourite pieces of art have been placed in the VIP staterooms and guest suites.

Setting the scene, the lower deck lobby features a gallery of eight limited-edition images by the famous photographer Slim Aarons. Various scenes from the 1950s and 1960s of the beautiful and famous in leisure settings are set in white frames that really enhance the brightness and invoke a feeling of fun.

The painting over the bed in the owner's stateroom is a horizontal original acrylic on canvas from 1967 by Kenneth Noland from the striped series period. Other art in this room includes a large acrylic on canvas work by emerging artist Catherine Cary and a mixed-medium map representation of the Riviera coast by Robert Motherwell called "Mediterranean".

The two forward guest suites feature artworks by Frank Stella, Damien Hirst, Kenneth Noland and Andy Warhol; while works by Ed Ruscha and Richard Diebenkorn adorn the two aft VIP staterooms.

Although various designers have influenced my aesthetic, I tried to take items that I really like and find unique ways to combine them into a cohesive whole that did not seem manufactured. The overall aesthetic of this boat is fairly eclectic, with definite influences from the mid-century modern period and a bold use of colour. One of my favourite design eras is French art deco, and we used a lot of those materials on the boat while not being too literal. This gives a luxurious feeling without being overly ornate, and helps make *Snowbird* a very comfortable boat.

We invested considerable energy in research to work out the best way technically to deal with the various lithographs, watercolours, gouaches, silk-screens, etchings, canvases, statues and photographs. It was important to see which type of art would work best in the diverse environments and temperatures to which they will be subject on board *Snowbird*. However, pieces were still moved around if they looked better elsewhere. Trial and error is usually the best way to go about hanging art, and variety makes a space feel lived in – well travelled rather than contrived. My hope is that this will be the abiding impression of all our guests.' bb

Conscious that guest cabins tend to receive less attention on many superyachts, David Ostrander chose to place many of his favourite pieces of art in the guest suites onboard *Snowbird*. One of the VIP cabins (far left) boasts three identical prints in different colourways from the 'Book of Love' series by Richard Diebenkorn, while one of the twin suites (bottom right) features an untitled piece by Kenneth Noland and 'Turtle' by Andy Warhol (from the endangered species series). The painting over the bed in the owner's stateroom (centre) is a horizontal original acrylic on canvas from 1967 by Kenneth Noland from the striped series period

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