

In Conversation with:

Laura Pomponi

Words: *In House Editor*
Images: *Luxury Projects Design Studio and Atelier*





Luxury Projects Design Studio and Atelier, headquartered in Ancona (Italy), was founded in 2008 by Laura Pomponi.

Laura grew up in Italy, gained a PHD in engineering and had a booming career in the electronic telecommunications as a talented young manager of the biggest Italian High-Tech company: Telecom. In those years, Laura travelled the world representing Italy at the top strategic tables in the telecommunications industry. She has a passion for math and complicated equations and a flair for design and fashion that runs in her blood, as her grandmother was a well-known couturier in the Marche in the 1950s.

“There are many important factors that have helped me in my career in the luxury world,” she reveals, “one of the main is travelling. I was very lucky as I had the chance to travel the world, to stay in the most luxurious hotels and to get in touch with different cultures. I lived in Southern America, California, Sweden and Japan”. Another important source of inspiration was Laura’s grandmother. “She had an Atelier, a place that tailor-makes a suit for each individual client combining creativity and craftsmanship with an obsessive attention to details. She was the reason why I spent many summer afternoons of my childhood in the convent learning the complicated art of embroidery. I called my studio an Atelier because we work in the same way. We have realised more than 50 yachts and every single one is different and tailored to the needs of the customer. Every Atelier’s project is done stitch by stitch, embroidery on embroidery”.

Tell us about how you got your start in your industry, and how it led to the work you do today?

In 2002 I was back in Italy, to my city Ancona, accepting the challenge to collaborate with one of the most important Italian yacht builders in the project management. In 2008 I



decided to put the entrepreneurial ambitions I had into action founding the Luxury Projects Design Studio and Atelier. At the beginning it was just me, and then in 2009 my senior architect Aldo Viani joined.” In 2010 Luxury Projects employed the lighting designer Enzo Treviglio and in so doing was the first firm in the industry to employ a lighting designer in house. These days the Luxury Projects team numbers 15 high skilled professionals from different nationalities and backgrounds. The HQ’s are in Ancona where the Atelier has recently added 600 square meters of showroom and work station at the main offices. The other offices are in Viareggio. The Atelier also acts through established partners in Far and Middle East.

How did you come to work on the interior for NERO?

Thanks to the Founder of a well-known brokerage company who was supporting the Owners in the purchase of MY Nero. I went to the meeting with the Owners with my ideas and a special book of samples I realised to provide him with the touch and feel of the materials we were suggesting for the interiors. The idea was to respect the timeless classic beauty of Nero while creating new path on board for the wellbeing and the pampering of the guests. Simply put, we were requested to transform a Gentleman Yacht into a Lady of the Sea. The challenge was in doing so while respecting her new classic aura. We were lucky as the Owners fell in love with our proposals. Nero is just an amazing yacht. She has a great spirit, great owners and can only have great results as one of the most stunning new-classic yacht ever created.

In 2016 Nero had an extensive Refit done onboard without destroying or taking apart anything, a pure example of how you can change the style of a yacht with the right ideas.

The interiors were given a new look by working on what was already good onboard and acting with sense. In this case, for

example, we decided to lime-washing all the wood panels, changing hardware features from gold to chrome and adding touches and details of different styling.

2020/2021, Nero went again under a 12-month Refit with a huge budget. In this case the intervention was mainly focused on the vessel hardware, technology and systems.

The interiors were redone apparently on a like to like basis, faithfully reconstructed but with new and substantial improvements, among which the additions of 3 completely converted areas dedicated to the wellness. We also took occasion for a fresh up of all soft furnishing, fabrics, colours and loose furniture!

Our goal was to keep as much as we could, while changing the perception of the interiors. We did as well an extensive study of the lighting system, adopting the most up-to-date solutions and innovative lighting devices. As you know, nowadays with the skilful use of the LED technology, the light can magically change the whole perception of the ambiances.

On Nero, the main conversion was aimed to provide “Healthy Living” and Full Treatment” services, aspects dedicated to further expand Nero’s already stellar charter success”.

How do you know when interior design is “good”?

When the clients are happy; feel themselves at home and see their dreams come true. You may design what you think the best project in the world, but if the client is not happy or does not feel it, you have done a good exercise of style, but you have not answered your call.

A design is also good when even the most creative and daring ideas are realised without problems. When everything you have designed works as you intended, when you are able

to combine the inspiration with the correct engineering.

How would you sum up your design philosophy?

Our philosophy is based on the deep understanding of the Client's mindset to translate their thoughts, need and feel in order to create new emotions for them.

Forms follow function. Sustainable awareness is also important for us. For one of our latest projects, MY Alfa, e.g. we used local craftsmen and artisans, so nothing travelled further than 40 km. In today's more sustainability focused world, limiting unnecessary travel, while still creating beautiful objects, makes a lot of sense.

How do you combine beauty and function?

It is a matter of balancing the compromises and listen to the client requests.

In the case of Nero, for example, as the ownership company was aiming in further expanding the charter activities, we first went through an extensive market survey to understand what "Today's Charter Guest" have on their wish list in terms of features, facilities and accommodations onboard yachts of a size around 90 m.

We, then, made a number of project proposals aimed to add what was missing and to convert what was no longer appropriate or suitable for today's demands.

We thus added a Gym, a Massage and created a convertible space for multifunctional use.

We also worked on the appeal and decoration, selecting crisp and fresh colours for all the new fabrics, new finishing and carefully selected décor elements.

And how can that be seen aboard NERO?

The overall result answered perfectly to the precise client's brief. As challenging as the project was, thanks also to the collaboration of the captain and the crew, we were able to nail it and creating exactly what the owners wanted. They use Nero a lot as a family yacht, but she is also a perfect and very successful charter boat.

One of the bigger challenges for sure was the conversion of the Sky Lounge into a fully equipped Gym with free weights, KINESIS (The New Swedish Wall) treadmill, home trainer, juiced bar, yoga floor and local entertainment system. In a space with extreme deck camber and a max head room of 2.05m! But we did, it was a snug fit.

Then there was the new beauty and treatment room with convertible treatment chair for massage, manicure, pedicure and facials, and integration of "LED daylight panels" in the existing ceiling. The connection to the existing vessel construction and systems was fairly challenging.

What inspires you?

My clients. My travels. My passions for intricate equations to be solved. Colours. Art. My addiction to details.

With my passion for creativity and perfection, my skills are focused on designing bespoke and timeless projects for life. I always look for innovative and sustainable materials and processes. I am very lucky because my bond with the Marche, my region and territory, allows me to work with amazing local artisans, depositors of exceptional craftsmanship.

In the Atelier we are continuously striving for innovative and new technological solutions, these are the keywords of Luxury Projects. Our projects always combine a





creative and timeless approach with an elegant signature and luxurious style. Offering a highly personalised and dedicated service, we put great importance and commitment to build strong client relationships, always tailoring our work to meet each individual client's needs. We fully manage each project from concept through to completion no matter the size, with meticulous attention to detail, working very closely with a team of incredibly skilled professionals and craftsmen.

What do you see for the future of design?

Yachting is kind of returning to its roots: if in its early days it was meant for pleasure and leisure time at sea, it slowly grew into a status symbol. But today we have many clients that approach the yachting as it was intended with all the passion for living onboard and the love for the oceans. They are particularly fond of all the actions you can undertake with water sport toys, diving equipment but also fishing and exploring. Our designs answer to this requirement and we create design solutions to be as close to the water as possible. More and more we design beach clubs, SPA and gym areas, spaces that easily open to the environment with foldable platforms and balconies. The reception room as we know it, on the main deck, is often converted to a more functional and useable space that connects the water activities to the rest of the yacht.

It's our task as designers to create ever better designs in functionality, ergonomics and beauty and we must do so with our minds focused on the future of our planet.

What are you working on at the moment?

Luxury Projects works regularly on Interior & Exterior Design for Yachts, Private Jets, Private villas, Residential and Hospitality projects and Public buildings. Most recently we have broadened our services to Naval Architecture thanks to a recent addendum to our senior team and collaboration.

As far as our most recent yachting projects, we just completed the delivery of 3 yachts, between 55 and 45 m; we are also

working on 74 m yacht , a 40 m yacht and a brand-new series of large Catamarans.

As far as residential and hospitality projects we are working in Uzbekistan, Qatar, Biarritz, Dubai and London.

We are also designing a new line of furniture and furnishings for an Italian brand. We are very proud of this latest activity as it comes from our research on renewable and sustainable materials.

We are most familiar with the interior design you created for NERO, but which of your other projects might we recognise?

Quite frankly, all our projects have a special place in our hearts. If reluctantly I have to mention just but few, I would say that some of them received a wider public recognition, such as the 60m my Moonstone, or the 70m MY My Alfa. But also the 38m Destiny or Kjos were prized. So it is difficult to select just but few. From an architectural point of view the residential project in Jordan and Uzbekistan were particularly challenging and rewarding. To not forget the private jets. I insist, it is difficult to pick one.

What is your favourite project to date and why?

All of them have something different and special, we love to create different style interiors according to the Clients taste...It is an amazing journey with them in discovering new cultures.

Which aspect of NERO's interior do you like the most?

The atmosphere you feel as soon as you enter, she is special! When you walk onboard you are immersed in all the glory of the best yachting golden age, with a timeless elegance and the most classic beauty, but you perceived immediately that you have the highest modern comfort. The sensation of wellbeing is matchless. She epitomizes the definition of new classic.

Which project are you most proud of so far and why?

Again, it is difficult to pick one. But if I have, then we are particularly proud of the lighting on My Alfa and Moonstone, which we completed in 2020 and 2021. They are both modern and contemporary in style, where ceiling and lighting design play a major role to create a full harmony in each ambience. Everything is fully integrated into the design from the concept stage, for a whole holistic approach, and we worked on the lighting concept from the inside out.

What was the best advice anyone ever gave you, and did you follow it?

Follow your soul, your talent and your integrity.

We love what we do, our company is our family and all in our studio feel connected and part of it. I like this approach, it is who I really am. Our employees come to work happy and enthusiastically. We take care of each other. We respect each other and we feel to be part of something. We love what we do, and we do it with integrity.

In few year we have reached incredible results. We completed land projects in Europe, UK, Switzerland, Russia, Middle East, India, Philippines, China and multiple locations overseas. We have been working on various stage on more than 150 yachts and we have more than 15 International Awards to our credit as a firm.

It was a good advice.

