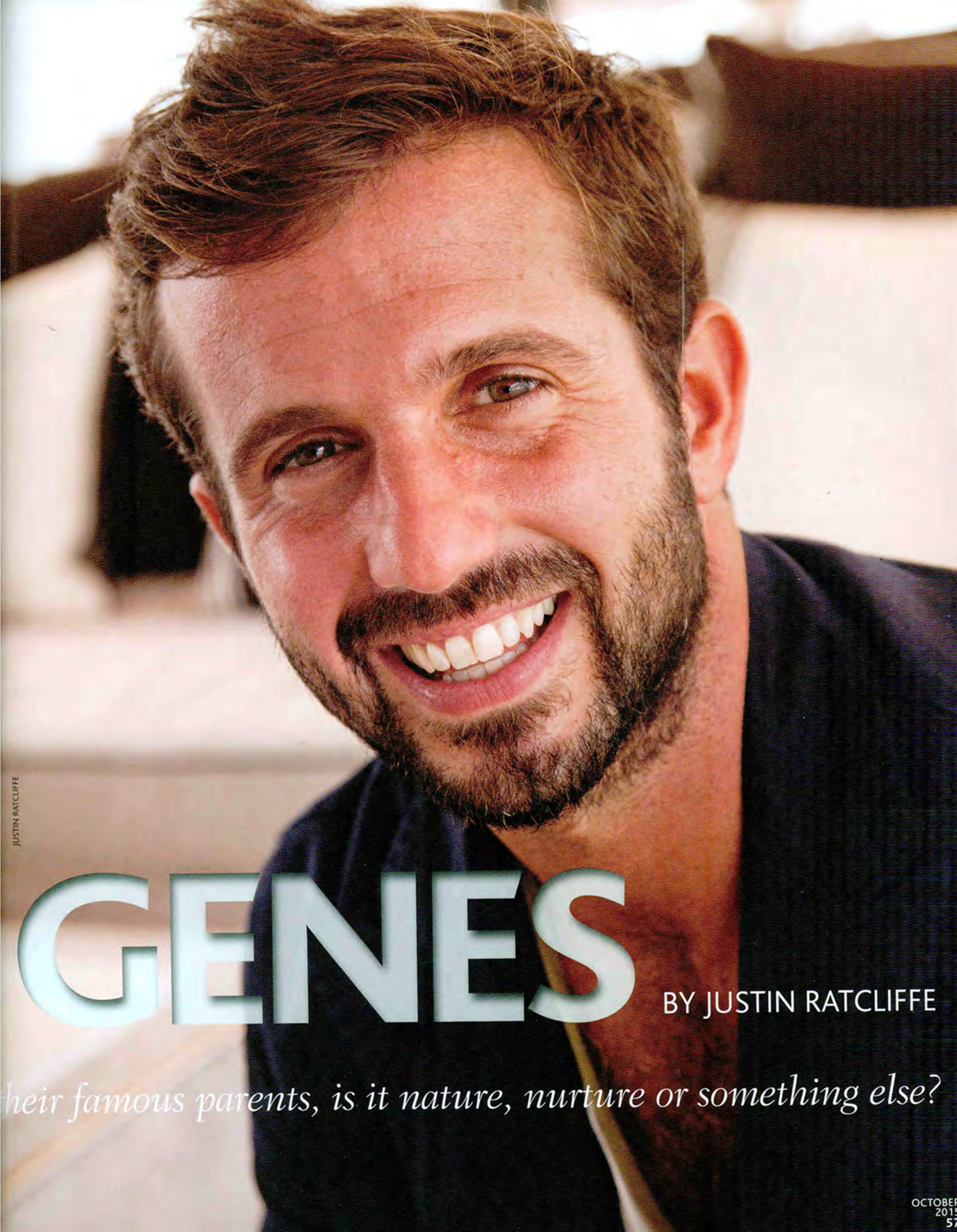


Giovanni Zuccon and his son
Bernardo (facing page) of Zuccon
International Project in Rome.



DESIGNER

When prominent yacht designers carry on the legacies of




JUSTIN RATCLIFFE

GENES

BY JUSTIN RATCLIFFE

their famous parents, is it nature, nurture or something else?



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Teseo, the Italian studio's 50-meter explorer concept. **ABOVE:** Bernardo Zuccon with his parents aboard CRN's *Chopi Chopi*.



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hen Max Verstappen lined up his Toro Rosso on the starting grid at the Australian Grand Prix in Melbourne this past March, he became the youngest driver in the history of Formula 1—and the 12th son of a former driver to compete in a world championship. Eager to live up to the legacy of his father, Jos Verstappen, Holland's most successful F1 driver in the '90s, the younger Verstappen's debut ended in disappointment when a technical gremlin forced him to retire the car before the end of the race.

A similar burden of expectation rests on the sons of celebrated yacht designers who follow in the footsteps of their famous parents. Perhaps the most telling example is Dickie Bannenberg. His father, Jon Bannenberg, established the modern role of the yacht designer virtually single-handedly by wresting aesthetic control away from naval architects. In the process, Dickie absorbed almost by osmosis an awareness of the design process, but he is quick to downplay any direct comparison with his father.

"Remember that I plow a different furrow to that unique one laid out by Jon," Dickie says. "He was an out-and-out designer, capable of designing absolutely anything, quite apart from yachts. I don't pretend to be the same thing at all. I head up the Bannenberg & Rowell studio and, after almost 20 years of working alongside my father, I have a pretty clear idea about the direction we should take and how we should do it. Add that to the 40 years of simply being his son and growing up



Dickie Bannenberg (left) at work with creative director Simon Rowell in their London-based studio. TOP: Dickie's father, the inimitable Jon Bannenberg.



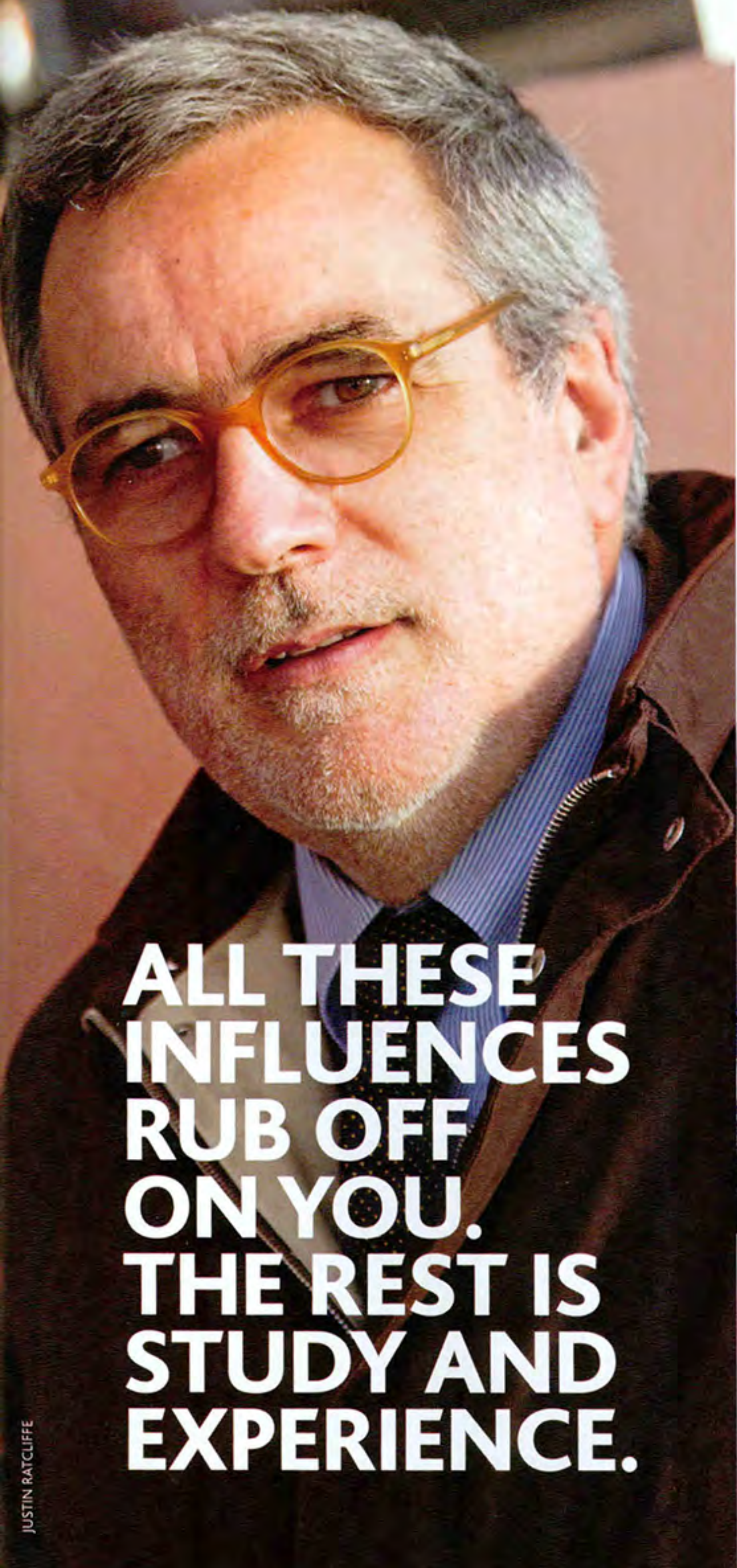
Heesen Yachts' *Galactica Star* (above) and *Aurelia* (left) both feature interiors by Bannenberg & Rowell.

in that design world he inhabited—or bestrode—and I guess I have a design sensibility that has infused into me over the years.”

The late Pierluigi Spadolini is sometimes credited as the Italian Jon Bannenberg. An architect by training, he was the first to hold a professorship in industrial design at an Italian university and went on to influence a whole generation of designers and architects, including his son, Tommaso Spadolini. In particular, Pierluigi's Akhir range (after the Arabic word for the bright Achernar star in the Eridanus constellation), created for Cantieri di Pisa in the '70s, became one of the most iconic series of its kind. As Italian as Ferrari and Sophia Loren rolled into one svelte and well-proportioned profile, the Akhir models are the basis of many of today's flybridge motoryachts.

“To my mind the Akhir 22 Sport is still, even today, the best example of a clean and pure yacht design,” says Tommaso, who accompanied his father on childhood visits to boatyards. He also inherited his father's decisive sense of exterior styling based on extended horizontal lines that has proved popular and timeless, evidenced by 138-foot (42.2-meter) *Nina J*, which is as fresh-looking today as when Baglietto launched her in 2005. He even managed to introduce the long strips of dark window glazing—a trademark feature of the Akhir—into the exterior styling of *Aslec 4* built by Rossinavi, despite the fact she is a 147-foot (45-meter)

Tommaso Spadolini and his father, Pierluigi Spadolini (right). Spadolini Jr. created the exterior styling of *Aslec 4* for Rossinavi (lower right).



**ALL THESE
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displacement motoryacht as opposed to a fast planing hull.

"The culture you breathe at home is as important as any formal training," says Tommaso, who grew up sailing a series of family boats designed by his father and believes that nature as much as nurture figured in his choice of profession. "Both my parents were architects, I'm the nephew of artists and architects, my brother and sisters are architects, and I grew up in Florence, a city full of architectural wonders. All these influences rub off on you. The rest is study and experience, year in and year out."



LATER MY SURNAME OPENED SOME DOORS, BUT FIRST I HAD TO LEARN TO STAND UP ON MY OWN.

Bernardo Zuccon is also the architect son of architects Giovanni Zuccon and Paola Galeazzi (the sister of designer Carlo Galeazzi, who coincidentally was charged with revamping the Akhir range before Cantieri di Pisa closed its doors). Giovanni and Paola are founders of Zuccon International Project in Rome, where Bernardo works as head of design alongside his parents and his sister, Martina, in the studio that has produced dozens of series and full-custom designs for the Ferretti Group and CRN in particular, including 262-foot (80-meter) *Chopi Chopi* and the recent 164-foot (50-meter) Teseo explorer concept. Bernardo grew up reading yachting magazines instead of children's comics and, like Tommaso Spadolini, credits his family background for his design sense.

"It was impossible for me to be indifferent to the work of my parents, to whom I owe any predisposition for design," Bernardo says. In addition to his own architectural studies, his parents' influence has instilled the conviction that yachts are much more than objects designed to move on the water; they are complex living spaces that require a delicate balance between form and function.

As to whether being the son of a renowned designer is a boost or a burden, Bernardo is of two minds. "People always ask, 'Will he be as good as his dad?' So there is undoubtedly pressure to perform," he says. "The trick is to transform that pressure into a determination to succeed by

ABOVE: Bill Tripp III (right) with associate Stephane Levee at his Connecticut-based studio. **BELOW:** His designer father, Bill Tripp Jr. (steering), on a Block Island 40 he designed as a young man.



JUSTIN RATCLIFFE

identifying the goals and objectives you want to achieve. Overall, I would say that the pros outweigh the cons, not least because I'm lucky enough to have a maestro by my side, which is a huge advantage."

It is a pressure that Dickie Bannenberg knows all too well. His father set the bar as high as it could go by creating a string of iconic superyachts in a career that spanned four decades. Dickie, struggling to manage the business on his own after Jon died in 2002, lured Simon Rowell away from a career in the residential and hotel sector to form Bannenberg & Rowell. Rather than emulate his father's accomplishments, Dickie has built on the family reputation by leading the studio into what he calls a "post-Jon era."

"Having the Bannenberg surname has not been unhelpful," admits Dickie, who recently published a revealing—and beautifully designed—biography of his father. "But the sheer toughness of the act to follow meant that there was some pretty close scrutiny, not to mention skepticism, about what was going to emerge from the studio in the post-Jon era. You are really only as good as your last job, which is what matters more than the name. But, of course, I am very conscious of the legacy that needs to be upheld—even more so after spending five years preparing the book on Jon."

It took awhile for the rebranded studio to find its feet. The team started with refit projects such as 170-foot (52-meter) *Feadship Illusion* and 111-foot (34-meter) *Blue Bird*, the 1938 motoryacht once owned by Malcolm Campbell, the former British holder of the speed record on both land and water. *Illusion*, in particular, mapped the studio's future direction by doing away with the heavy onyx, maple and burl, replacing them with dark oak, brushed nickel and a dazzling white color scheme. Since then, Bannenberg & Rowell has developed an eclectic interior style on yachts as diverse as *Predator*, *Natori*, *Pacific*, *Kaiser*, *Aurelia* and *Galactica Star* that owes much to Jon's pioneering approach. Judging from a burgeoning order book,

today's owners share the studio's penchant for hexagonal and elliptical shapes, furniture units that split or divide to create multifunctional areas, boldly juxtaposed wood grains and a general distrust of overtly traditional materials.

"Even if the brief is for a deliberately knocked-back interior, I think you have to take a bit of a risk, which I suppose is a Bannenberg trait inherited from my dad," Dickie says.

While Europe continues to produce the most influential designers of large motoryachts, American Bill H. Tripp III has cornered a healthy slice of the market for super sailing yachts with designs such as *Mystere*, *Esence*, *Alithia*, *Saudade* and *Better Place*. Among his current projects is a 170-foot (52-meter) Ice Class schooner and a 279-foot (85-meter) ketch, both in the Netherlands, where he has a subsidiary office. Tripp spent his childhood on the water sailing and racing the fast and beautiful boats designed by his father, William H. Tripp, Jr.

"There was no pressure for me to become a yacht designer, but there was plenty of example," Bill says. "From the age of 6, my dad was taking me to yards like Hinckley, Abeking & Rasmussen and De Vries Lentsch, which created a kind of design wanderlust in me."

While growing up in the world of sail attuned him to the sea and seamanship, Bill believes that today's sailing yachts are so different from the Bermuda 40, Block Island 40, Columbia 50 and other designs by his father—not least in terms of sheer size—that if there has been an exchange of genetic information, it has undergone a significant mutation. When his father died in 1971, Bill was still in high school, so the gap was such that it took "a bootstrap effort" to make a name for himself.

"Later my surname opened some doors, but first I had to learn to stand up on my own," says the Connecticut-based designer. "Only then could I stand on my father's shoulders." **M**

