

# Superyacht

INTERIOR DESIGN

EXTERIOR SPACE

CREATIVITY AND ARCHITECTURE



# DESIGN

**CASE STUDY**

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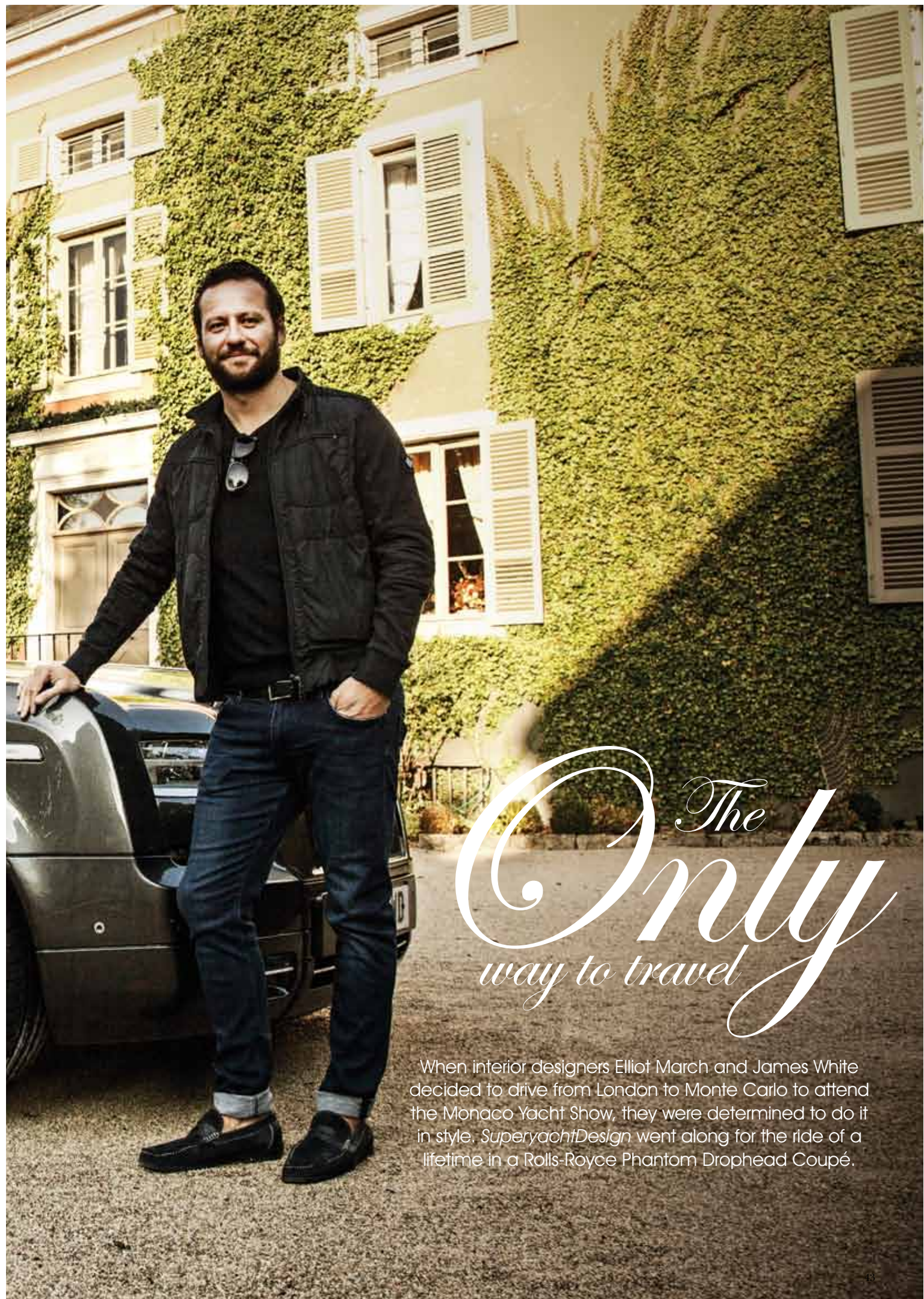
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Interior outfitter Struik & Hamerslag celebrates its 50th anniversary.  
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# TOP GEAR

MARCH  
& WHITE





# *The Only way to travel*

When interior designers Elliot March and James White decided to drive from London to Monte Carlo to attend the Monaco Yacht Show, they were determined to do it in style. *SuperyachtDesign* went along for the ride of a lifetime in a Rolls-Royce Phantom Drophead Coupé.

The Drophead Coupé—posh-speak for soft top—reveals a sportier and more relaxed but no less eloquent and exclusive side of Rolls-Royce. With a price tag in excess of £300,000 and a muscular 6.75-litre, 435-bhp V12 engine capable of wafting close to three tons of steel and aluminium from zero-to-60 mph in less than six seconds, the handcrafted convertible represents the ultimate in open-air opulence. The perfect machine, in other words, with which to pull up in Place du Casino, especially with the roof down during the Monaco Yacht Show to reveal the optional teak-lined tonneau that recalls the decking of a yacht.

The inspiration for the latest model, with its high waistline tapering back to a contemporary take on a boat-tail, was the J-Class racing yachts of the 1930s. Like a sailing boat, the Drophead Coupé “offers driver and passengers a dual experience—intimate and cocooning or embracing the elements depending on whether the roof is raised or lowered,” says Rolls-Royce. It further evokes romantic, high-performance motoring in an era when the leisurely Grand Tour by car has largely been ousted by the high-speed convenience of jet travel.

“There’s a certain synergy that has to do with fine craftsmanship and quality engineering between what we’re doing in the yachting or residential worlds and what our clients experience when they drive a car like this,” says Elliot March. “We wanted to recreate that experience, that lifestyle choice, by driving from London to Monaco in a Rolls-Royce, much as our clients might do.”

Since founding their own London-based studio four years ago after a decade spent working for different architectural practices, the two young designers have won recognition both at home and abroad for their high-end residential, hotel and hospitality interior projects. More recently, they established a dedicated yacht design division headed up by Wayne Parker, formerly of Terence Disdale Design, who is supported by Helena Howcroft, who joined the team from Raymond Langton Design. The diversification proved immediately successful and they are currently working on two major superyacht projects: a 100m-plus design with a north European shipyard and a 60m concept for Abeking & Rasmussen.

“The craftsmanship and execution are far superior to anything we see in the residential sector,” says James White. “As relative newcomers to the superyacht industry, that’s what excites us most about yacht design—it pushes the boundaries of what’s possible, something new and clever that the owner is going to love and cherish.”

Our road journey began at the March & White premises on Buckingham Palace Road in the heart of London. The designers had attended an initiation course at the Rolls-Royce production facility at

Goodwood in West Sussex, but James was still acclimatising to the vehicle’s extraordinary length of more than five and a half metres and breadth of nearly two metres as he navigated the busy streets of central London (they were instructed to use the Spirit of Ecstasy, the famous bonnet ornament also available to order in solid gold or LED-lit crystal, as a marker to keep the car off the kerb).

The proposed two-day itinerary required us to be in Folkestone by 10am to catch the Eurotunnel train to Calais. Once on French soil, we would stop for lunch on the coast, then proceed south to Reims and Dijon—taking in scenic stops along the way such as Troyes and the Parc Naturel regional de la Forêt d’Orient—as far as Beaune, the wine capital of Burgundy, where we would stop for the night.

The plan went awry almost immediately when our unfamiliarity with the sophisticated satnav system meant we missed the exit for the M26 that would take us to Folkestone. Half an hour spent cruising serenely back and forth along the same stretch of the M25, the notoriously congested motorway that rings Greater London, saw us back on track and after a brief refuelling stop (Shell V-Power for the car; bacon butties for the drivers and passenger) the Rolls was finally loaded on to Le Shuttle for France.

An exquisite seafood lunch followed at the Aquar’aille restaurant in Calais with its glorious views over a North Sea bathed in late summer sunshine—so exquisite that we lingered over the cheese board and coffee and were nearly two hours behind schedule by the time Elliot, now at the wheel, exited the péage on the motorway and sited the Spirit of Ecstasy squarely in the fast lane. With a surge of torque from the V12 engine, the car whispered to a barely legal cruising speed and we were once again heading south.

“Our first Top Gear moment!,” says Elliot with a grin. “The comfort factor is astonishing: it’s like driving a comfortable pair of slippers. It goes where you want it to, as long as you point it in the right

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direction, and irons out any creases in the road. It’s a beautiful grand tourer that harks back to a time when you would drive to your country house with a couple of girls in the back.”

“And a Pimms picnic hamper in the boot,” adds James, getting into the spirit of luxury travel by road. “The cigar humidifier in the glove compartment is a nice touch, too.” ▶



JUSTIN RATCLIFFE



(L-R) ELLIOT MARCH AND JAMES WHITE



A few hours later, and with the light fading fast, we realise we're not going to make our overnight stop in Beaune in time for dinner. Out come the smartphones and we start Googling alternatives. By unanimous decision, we settle on the Château de Courban, a charming four-star hotel, restaurant and spa with individually decorated suites in the heart of Burgandy. Situated close to the Champagne and Chablis vineyards of the Châtillonnais, the mansion was rebuilt in 1820 in place of a castle that was burnt to the ground during the French Revolution and the property has been lovingly refurbished by its current

owners over a period of 12 years. We arrived after dark and immediately decamped to the restaurant before it closed for the evening. Over a perfect filet mignon saignant and a warming glass of Bordeaux Superior, Elliot and James explained the importance of 'slow travel', which like slow food is so much more rewarding and inspirational.

"We've found that travel helps us to be more creative in our work and we try to take a sabbatical together at least once a year," says Elliot. "It can be hard to feel inspired when you're living and working in London, and the south of France is a great place for recharging the creative batteries."

"The first trip we made was to Tokyo and we came back with lots of design details gleaned from visits to various hotels, bars and clubs," adds James. "Then last year we went to New York and the Boom Boom Room, a throwback to 1950s' decadence at the top of the Standard Hotel in the Meatpacking District, which provided a kick-start for a new private members' club we're designing in the City of London. Inspiration for us comes from getting out and seeing places."

We woke to bright sunshine, but there was an autumnal chill in the air and a welcoming fire had been prepared in the breakfast room ▶



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**They were instructed to use the Spirit of Ecstasy, the famous bonnet ornament also available to order in solid gold or LED-lit crystal, as a marker to keep the car off the kerb.**





JUSTIN RATCLIFFE

as we sat down to coffee and croissants. The hotel manager had instructed the gardener to wash and polish the Rolls while we breakfasted, so we emerged to find the car looking picture-perfect, with its brushed steel bonnet gleaming on the driveway ready for the final stage of our journey to Monaco. While loading our luggage, Elliot pointed out yet another unique design feature of this remarkable automobile: even the wheels feature self-righting centres, so the RR monogram is always displayed correctly.

As the warming sun rose in the sky and the ground mist dispersed, the signature soft top—the largest and most refined of any car on the market made of five layers of fabric—was lowered at the touch of a button and took just 25 seconds to disappear beneath the oiled teak tonneau. Once on the road, the 21-inch wheels ate up the asphalt and as Elliot and James took turns to motor through the region's rolling hills towards our lunchtime stopover in Provence, the conversation turned once again to design.

"We always start a project by getting to know the client so we can create a narrative or story to weave into the interior design," says James. "We work a lot with what you could call the 'next generation', UHNWs in their thirties who identify with the style we promote. It's not driven so much by how much these clients have to spend, but whether they have a vision and are willing to let you develop that into something different. We use that story to develop new materials and specialist finishes, or integrate pattern forms into bespoke wood veneers, metals and resins that have never been seen before. Even in our more traditional

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interiors, there has to be a modern twist, something you wouldn't expect."

After crossing the Rhône, the landscape and climate of Provence became distinctly more Mediterranean and we could almost smell the sea. Following a light lunch accompanied by a sublime Châteauneuf-du-Pape on the terrace of the Château des Fines Roche, a former stately home surrounded by vineyards near Avignon,

Elliot sank into the soft, natural-grain leather driver's seat for the last stage of our road journey. The buzz of Monaco during the Yacht Show beckoned as we cruised along the final stretch of coastal highway and entered the Principality in style with the hood down and a hip-hop tune on the premium audio system.

Gliding to a halt in front of The Casino de Monte-Carlo, a uniformed valet duly

parked the Rolls among a long line of other luxury car brands, none of which had quite the same air of refinement as the Phantom Drophead Coupé. As the usual onlookers took turns to be photographed alongside the graceful curves of the Rolls-Royce, we retired to the Café de Paris for a celebratory beer. We had arrived. ■



JUSTIN RATCLIFFE