



IT WAS ONLY A MATTER OF TIME UNTIL THE BIG EUROPEAN LUXURY HOUSES AWOKE TO THE REVENUE ON OFFER IF THEY MOVED INTO OUTFITTING THE SUPERYACHTS OF THEIR CLIENTELE. **NIGEL BOWEN** DISCOVERS THE FIRST FASHION HOUSE TO TAKE THE INITIATIVE IN AUSTRALIA IS FENDI.

Prestige fashion labels confining themselves to creating fashion is so 20th century. Nowadays, you can commute to work on a Louis Vuitton skateboard, or fly off on holidays to an Armani resort on a Versace-furnished private jet. So the only surprising thing about luxury labels getting into the yacht-outfitting business is just how long they've remained blind to the market opportunity.

It can surely only be a matter of time until, just as it happened with fragrances, all of them start furiously competing for a piece of the pie but for now Fendi has the first-mover advantage.

For those of you who haven't seen a copy of *Vogue* recently, Fendi, like many a world-conquering luxury house, started off as a humble boutique in a European capital servicing high-society types.

In 1925, Edoardo and Adele Fendi opened a small leathersgoods shop and fur workshop in Rome's Via del Plebiscito. Post World War II, a second generation of Fendis put the business on the world map by developing the brand's now iconic 'baguette' handbags.

In 1965 a young Parisian tailor called Karl Lagerfeld was hired as Fendi's creative director and the brand never looked back.

Since the turn of the millennium, Fendi has been part of the French multinational luxury goods conglomerate LVMH, which also owns the likes of Moët et Chandon, Veuve Clicquot, Kenzo, Givenchy, Louis Vuitton, Marc Jacobs, Bulgari and TAG Heuer.

The significant date in the Fendi timeline for nautical types is 1989, which is when the company teamed up with Club House Italia to launch Fendi Casa, a range of furniture and decorative objects.

Back in the late eighties, launching a homewares range wasn't that unusual – it wasn't until two decades later, when Fendi Casa decided to celebrate its 20th anniversary by becoming “a brand that launches collections designed to decorate not only the most beautiful private houses, but also luxury hotels, private jets and yachts” that things got really interesting.

The point of this history lesson is to provide some background to Casa Luxury, which opened a boutique in Waterloo, Sydney, early in 2012. Casa Luxury is not owned by Fendi but has been licensed to sell Fendi Casa (along with the Kenzo Maison homewares line) in Australia. And, if you should wander into the Casa Luxury store, once you've navigated past the exquisitely embroidered silk cushions and majestic leather lounges, you will discover that Casa Luxury, in close collaboration with Fendi HQ, can arrange an all-Fendi fit-out of your vessel.

“We work quite closely with Fendi Casa's head office in Forli, Italy, because they have all the most advanced technology,” explains Heath Baldwin, Casa Luxury's brand manager.

“The way it works is that the client would come into the store here in Sydney and go through what they wanted in terms of the different styles of sofas, chairs, armchairs, beds and bedding, as well as what colours and fabrics they want them in. We would then send that information to Italy, along with a floorplan of the boat, and get a furniture plan back, which provides a good impression of the scale on the furniture and what pieces are going where.

“Everything gets made in the creation studio in the Fendi Casa workshop in Forli, a process that will typically take 16 weeks, then it is shipped to wherever the yacht is being built for installation.”

If you're thinking that getting the Fendi Casa treatment wouldn't come cheap, you'd be right.

“It doesn't take much to get to the \$100,000 mark – that will get you a couple of chairs, a couple of sofas and a dining table with matching seats. I'd imagine you'd be up for \$250,000 to \$500,000 to do a reasonable-sized vessel,” says Baldwin.



GRAND LADY
The 59-metre superyacht, *Lady Lara*, built by Benetti, oozes grandeur from the saloon to the dining room and plush cabins with a Fendi Casa fitout in silver, gold and mother of pearl.

Casa Luxury can't provide any more exact figures yet because, despite having been open almost a year, it is still waiting to do a yacht job, something Baldwin attributes to the jet-setting lifestyles of his target market.

"Historically, the kind of customer we're after would have gone international when organising the interior design of their yacht. And, truth be told, they could still do that – they could deal directly with Fendi Casa in Italy, for example, if they wished.

"What we're offering is convenience, the ability to choose what you want in Sydney while dealing with a native English speaker rather than having to fly halfway around the world to look at fabric samples. We're in the process of trying to educate the market that they can organise world-class interior design for their superyacht from right here in Australia."

Baldwin suspects the first boating customer might materialise thanks to the pester power of an owner's wife.

"Most of the clients who come into the store to look at Fendi Casa furniture for their homes are female," he observes. "For women, especially, Fendi has a huge desirability about it. It's closely linked with a fashion line, it makes great handbags, it's a luxury label... it ticks all the boxes.

"So I wouldn't be surprised if a yacht owner came to see us as a result of his female partner encouraging him to review the service we offer."

While Casa Luxury may be yet to get its feet wet, Fendi Casa has dived headfirst into decorating yachts (and yacht clubs) over the last three years. The two projects they are most well known for are the *Lady Lara* and the 98 Motor Yacht built by Princess Yachts International.

The *Lady Lara*, a 59-metre superyacht built by Benetti, demonstrates why Fendi Casa has been praised for its elegance and craftsmanship for almost a century. *Lady Lara* delights the eyes with warm shades of gold, silver and mother of pearl. The walls are covered in leather with a crocodile and galuchat effect, which matches the sofas, while precious boiserie panels run along the rooms and corridors.

On the lower deck, the wide rooms are filled with refined matching colours and exquisite details: beds with big upholstered headboards, twisted silk rugs and leather-upholstered cabinets reflect the colour palette of gold, silver and mother of pearl.

From the Selleria stitching, to the Swarovski vases and the hand-blown Murano glass chandeliers, the vessel oozes aristocratic grandeur.

Princess Yachts, also owned by LVMH, sought Fendi Casa to take care of the seating, furniture, fabrics, floor coverings and accessories for its Princess 98 Motor Yacht, unveiled at the 2011 PSP Southampton Boat Show.

Fendi Casa's inimitable style is stamped all over the vessel, from the saloon with its onyx lamps and chrome and glass feature lights illuminating a Bernini Royce dining table, to the highly appointed cabins boasting hand-stitched leather furniture, chic chairs, throws, cushions, and sofas.

If you're prepared to travel, you can even luxuriate in a Fendi Casa-friendly yacht club once you step off your Fendi Casa-filled yacht.

The Yacht Club Costa Smeralda in the British Virgin Islands has had its event lawn decorated with pieces from the Fendi Casa Outdoor line, notably Laetitia armchairs in the bergère style with modern arms and low wide seats, and Apta sofas, an outdoor version of the renowned Fendi Casa sofa but with a Damier plaited structure. (The Fendi Casa Outdoor line is also found in Miami's Trump Tower, Dubai's Skygardens tower and Milan's Principe Di Savoia hotel.)

Baldwin is eager to point out that Fendi Casa is equally at home on the water as it is on dry land.

"I think a lot of customers will match their boat's décor with their home's décor, which you just need to flick through the pages of *Ocean* to realise is a popular approach. They might change the colour palette slightly but the furniture lends itself really well to both.

"One difference is that with boats, pretty much everything is bespoke, meaning you can specify everything from whether you want hand or machine stitching or whether you want the Fendi horse logo embroidered on all fours or prancing. Basically, we're here to help the client get whatever they want." ○

www.casaluxury.com.au



FIT FOR A ROYAL

Above right: *Lady Lara*'s, warm metallic shades and mother of pearl in the main saloon. Right: The Princess 98 Motor Yacht offers a complete Fendi Casa experience from the saloon with its onyx lamps and chrome and glass feature lights illuminating a Bernini Royce dining table to the highly appointed cabins boasting hand-stitched leather furniture, chic chairs, throws, cushions, and sofas.

