



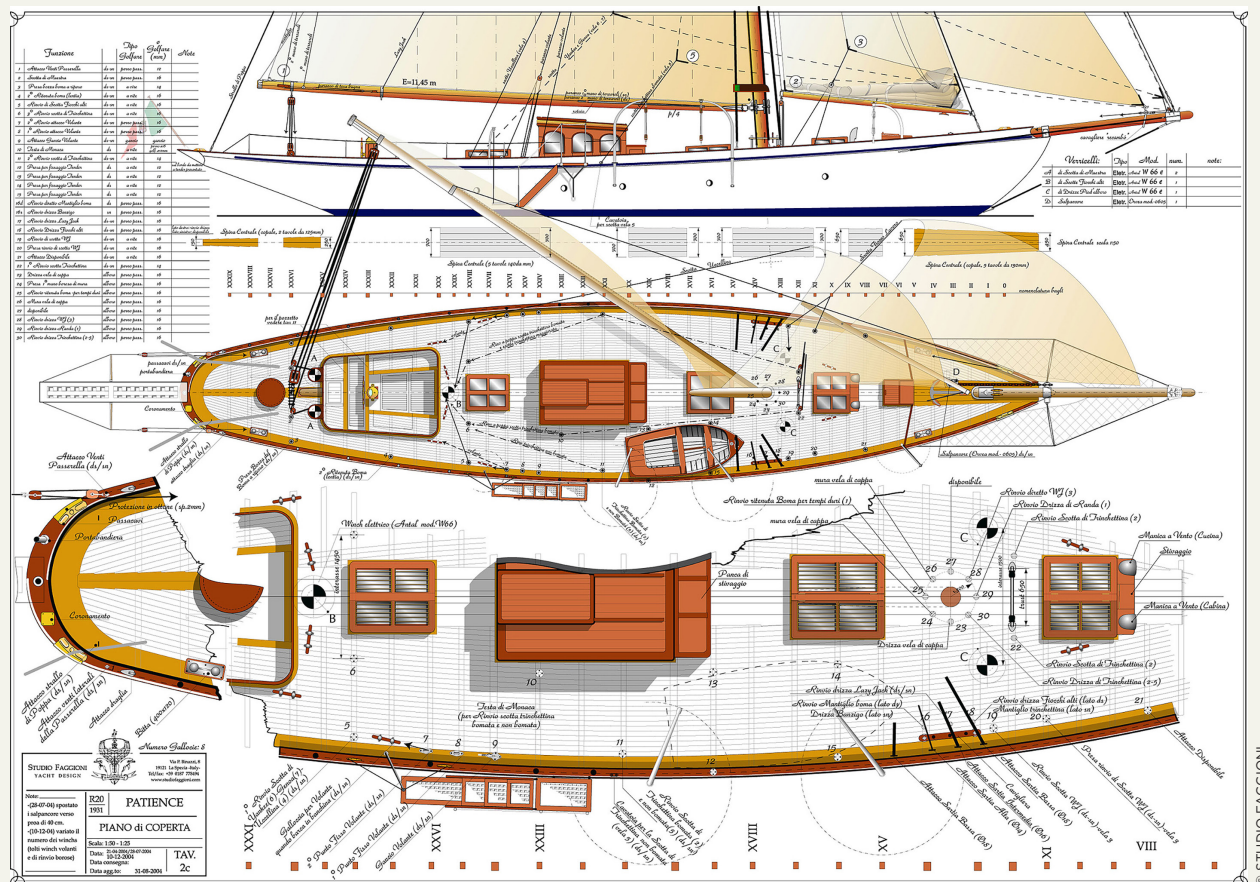
**STEFANO FAGGIONI**

# Tradition is not a detail

With the family vocation stretching  
back over centuries, boatbuilding  
and repair is clearly in the DNA

WORDS **BRUNO CIANCI**





Over 300 years ago, in the gulf that a century later would be found so striking by Lord Byron, Mary and Percy B Shelley, Charles Dickens and painter JMW Turner, Stefano Faggioni's ancestors had already devoted themselves to what would become their family's principal source of livelihood – the construction and repair of working vessels. Born in La Spezia in 1969, son of Ugo (d 2000) and grandson of Guido (d 1977), Stefano Faggioni embodies the passion of a man wholeheartedly devoted to his profession. Even the surname (the double 'g' voiced like the 'dg' in kedge) derives from Faggiona, a small town in the Ligurian hinterland, named after the 'faggio' ('beech' in Italian), a tree whose timber was used in Roman times to manufacture the oars of galleys.

The historical headquarters of the Faggioni family is located in Cadimare (La Spezia), a typical Ligurian village, highly authentic even today. The studio lies within the family home, one of the oldest in the area. It is a construction characteristic of many villages in Liguria, in being built by the Faggionis in the 1700s using recycled naval materials. The beams, in fact, are ship masts; rudders have been found in the planks under the pavements, and the floors are slightly inclined to allow washing water to flow towards the entrance; the front door itself, as well as a dining table and chairs, are the remnants of a scrapped ship once of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Nautical culture is everywhere.

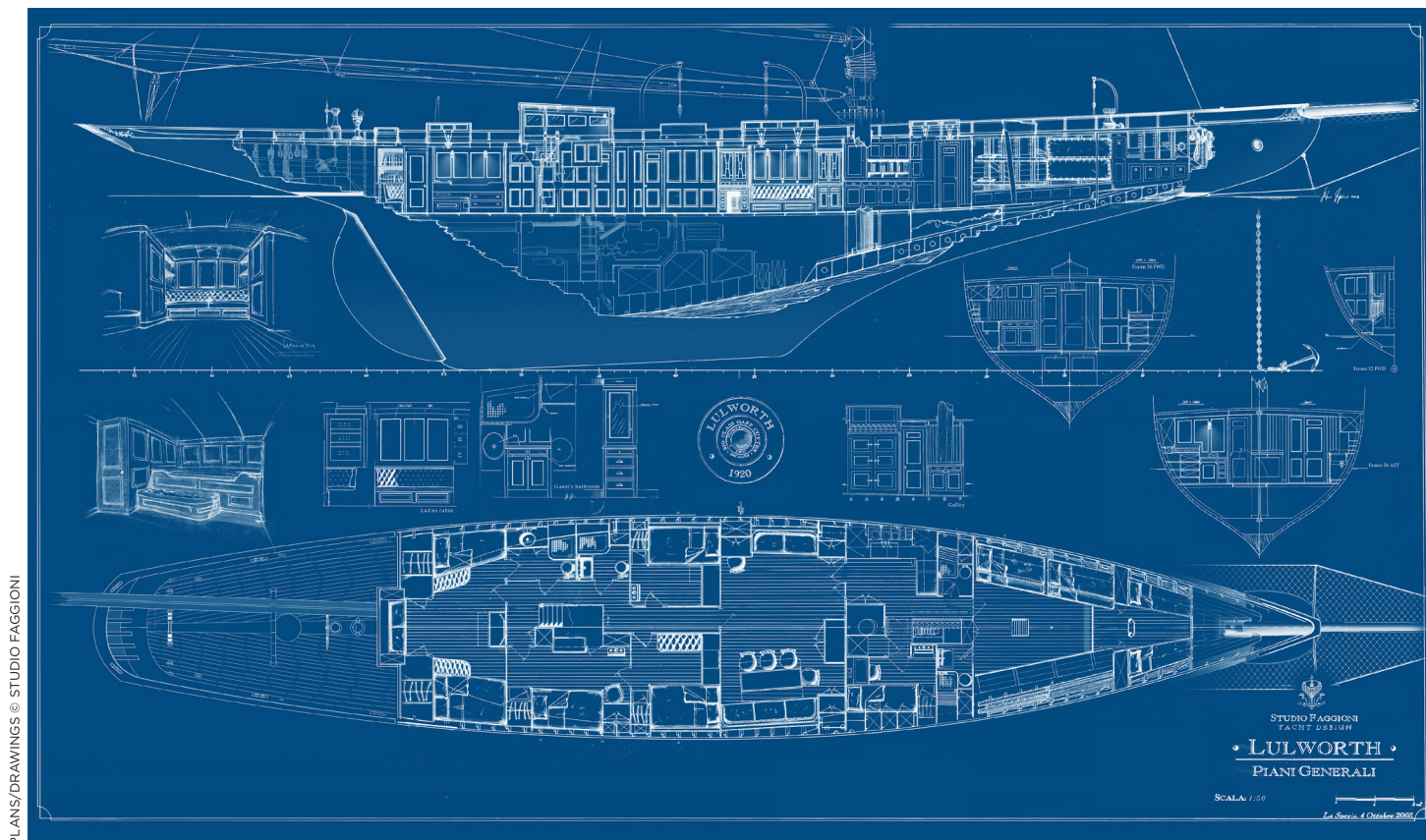
In the 1960s, thanks to Ugo Faggioni's intuition, the company gradually began to widen its spectrum of activities, dealing not only with the repair and restoration of wooden boats but also with the design of

**Above: Side view and deck plans for *Patience*, designed by C&N, one of the studio's most important restorations**

*Opposite:*  
Stefano Faggioni  
in his studio in  
Cadimare, near  
La Spezia

military craft, patrol boats, superyachts and even fast ferries. Stefano's involvement in the family business dates back to 1995. His memory of those days is indeed clear: "I started working on general plans, interior design and furniture on board motorboat projects; this was a logical choice because at the time I was a student of architecture. In 1999, through the Beconcini shipyard with which we enjoyed a particularly close relationship, we began working mainly on classic yachts such as JFK's *Marlin*, the schooner *Orion*, and *Candida*, *Iduma* and *Black Swan*." The last two projects marked the handover from father to son, since Ugo died in 2000 while working on those two specific boats. "I can still recall the sense of panic brought on by the loss of my father," says Stefano, "and that weird feeling of having to walk on a wire without a net underneath, and to proceed without his words of comfort, criticism and instruction that I still miss today. Nevertheless, my cousin Simone and my uncle Francesco supported me hugely in completing the restorations, and they remain on my side."

Close work on *Black Swan*, a gaff ketch launched in 1899, enabled Stefano to better discover the world of Charles E Nicholson, whose career as a designer and builder are a source of inspiration to many. Faggioni has had the good fortune to participate in at least eight boat projects designed by the renowned genius of Gosport: in addition to *Black Swan*, are *Joyette*, *Orion*, *Sylvia*, *Yali*, *Candida*, *Astra* and *Patience*. Beyond the ever graceful and seductive lines, Stefano considers the builds of the Camper &



PLANS/DRAWINGS © STUDIO FAGGIONI

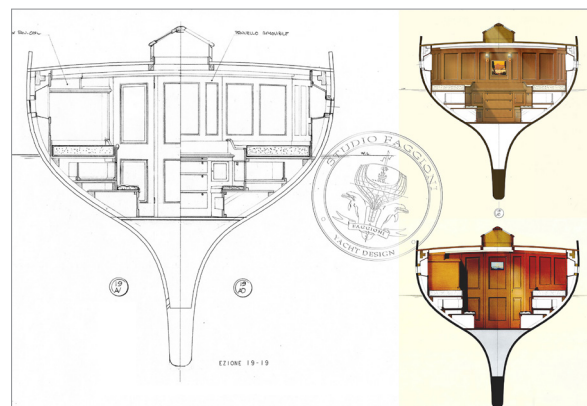
Nicholsons shipyard to be of the highest level: “In them, we notice more than ever that the clients were of privileged background. I remember that *Patience* came to La Spezia as an empty shell, but that we managed to recover almost everything from the hull, as the planking was entirely of teak. Amazing!”

In the early 2000s, Stefano Faggioni was also able to work on the interior rebuild of one of the most important British yachts in circulation: the Big Class *Lulworth* (1920), whose recovery has been referred to by many as ‘the restoration of the century’. “Our job,” Stefano recalls, “consisted of restoring the soul of the boat. The design work was very faithful to the limited existing parts, basically the salon and certain bulkheads, and was carried out by redesigning new spaces in a spirit that I like to consider reminiscent of the original; one, in fact, that led me to design and create objects and elements that perhaps had not existed on board before, but that today appear truly authentic.”

Exploring the work of Stefano Faggioni is a pleasure for lovers of the world of classic boats. Some of the sketches that catch the eye are those of accessories such as lamps, handles, spreaders, eyebolts and general deck hardware, confirming that the work of the Studio Faggioni reflects a complete design approach. Nothing in a restoration led by Stefano is left to chance: “I like a project that is complete, coherent and monolithic, and one that speaks a common language from the masthead right down to the smallest interior detail. I love to distribute the interior spaces,

**Above: A blueprint of the Big Class *Lulworth* (1920), the ‘restoration of the century’, undertaken in Viareggio between 2001 and 2006**

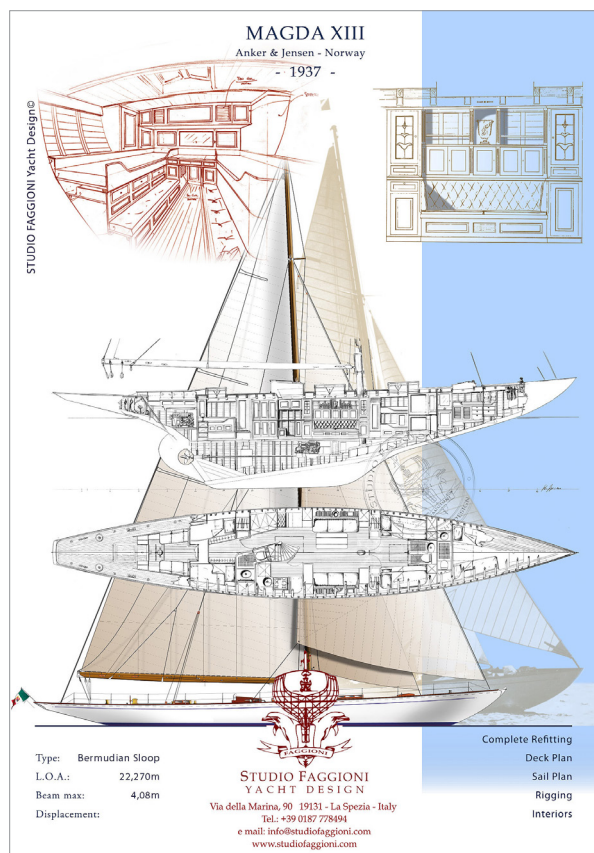
**Right: Sections of *Patience*, a bermudan cutter designed by Charles E Nicholson (1931)**



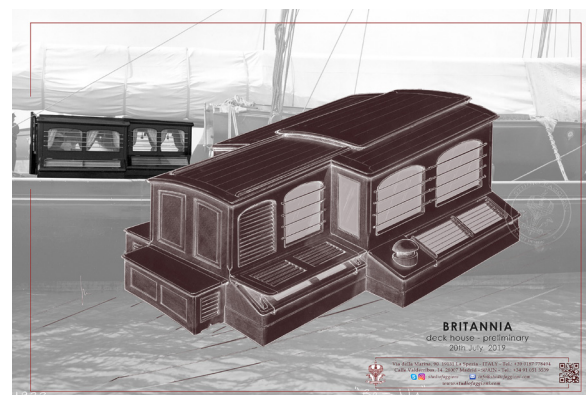
to have the privilege of experiencing the boat before anyone else, while exploring how to make life on board more comfortable without diminishing the original elegance and spirit. I very carefully select the smells that the wardrobes and drawers must emit when opened: the choice of wood and essence are essential, so as to also activate the olfactory sense, which most of the time is wholly neglected in a restoration project.” Apparently, it is not enough to replace a wooden panel with a similar one, and Faggioni explains why: “Because of the processing techniques involved, today’s woods are no longer what they used to be when some old classics were built. Woods, even if they bear the same name and belong to the same species, no longer have the same fibre and, above all, will never have the same colour as those we are called upon to replace. Even the client is no longer the same, and nor indeed are we, those individuals tasked with working on the boat... We are a product of our time; that’s why I think that reproducing the past does not always work, especially at the emotional and sensorial level”.

**‘Freehand drawing allows me to dive deeper into the project, to live it almost physically’**





**Left:** Sail, interior and deck plans of *Magda XIII*, a bermudan cutter launched in 1938 by Anker & Jensen



**Right top:** Deckhouse of the new replica of *Britannia*



**Right bottom:** A classic way to disguise a winch

**Below top:** Side view and deck arrangements of *La Spina*, built by Baglietto in 1929

**Below bottom:** Hand-drawing a skylight

Although the computer is an essential work tool, we note that Stefano very much works freehand, clutching pencil and colours in his right hand, as there is always a part of the project that must be drawn that way, sometimes including the general plans themselves: “Freehand drawing allows me to dive deeper into the project, to live it almost physically. The perfect definition a machine can give may not be achievable, but I believe that this way of studying and representing certain details, even to the customer’s eye, is more appropriate in the restoration of classic boats.” These drawings, sketched lines on white sheets of paper, are found everywhere in the Cadimare studio. Every horizontal surface is covered by them, a sign of numerous ongoing works: these involve the Bermudan ketch *Gitana IV*, built by Sangermani (1961); the *Portola* yacht (1929); the Bermudan yawl *Mait II*, built by Baglietto in 1957 and the first Italian boat to ever enter a Fastnet Race, in 1959 (with Francis Chichester on board); the new replica of the *Britannia*, and various projects for new wooden builds in Italy. These works lead Stefano to travel continually: Valencia, Viareggio, Naples, and Los Angeles are some of the ports he is currently visiting, not to mention his native La Spezia and Madrid, the city that adopted him back in 2014. In Spain, Stefano has recently worked on certain internal modifications of the schooner *Kelpie of Falmouth*, on the NY 39 *Rowdy* and on the famous *Wally One*. Meanwhile, in the Spanish capital city, Stefano Faggioni has another small studio and, above all, his family beside him. His 17-year-old son – like his grandfather, named Ugo – has yet to choose his path in life. And yet it somehow seems laid out for him. Like a line drawn on a white sheet of paper.

