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U.S.S. EXCELSIOR
NCC-2000

CLASS: EXCELSIOR

ACTIVE: 2290S-2370S

TEST RUNS AS: NX-2000

LENGTH: 467 METERS

U.S.S. EXCELSIOR

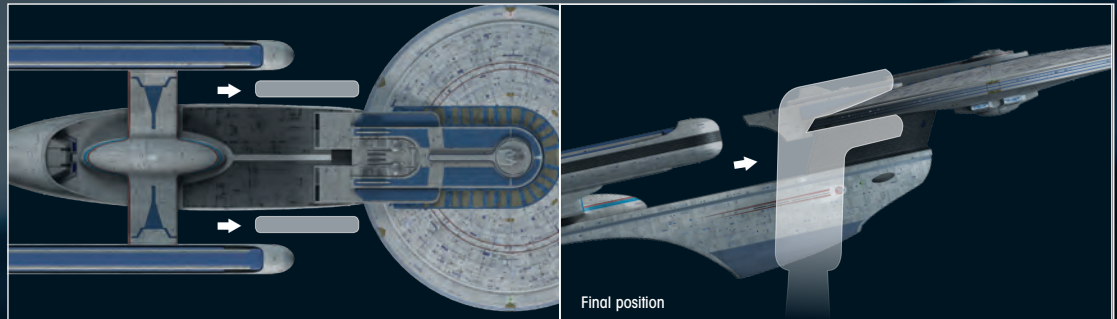
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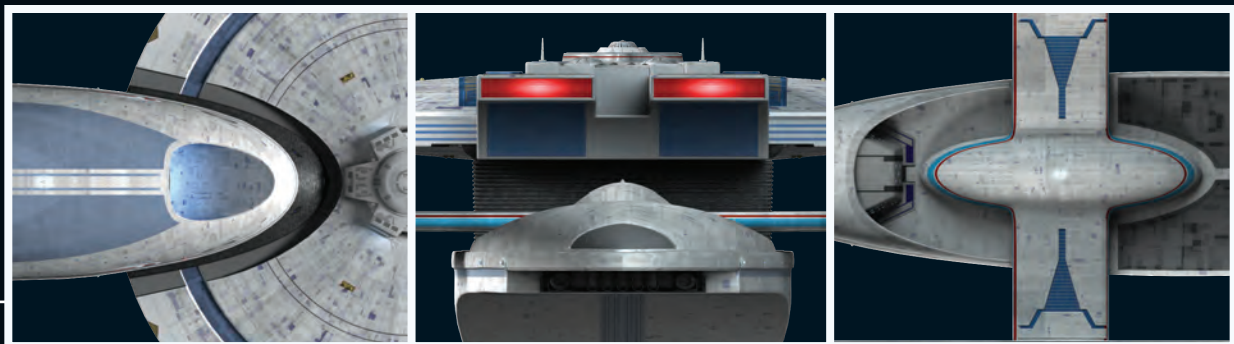
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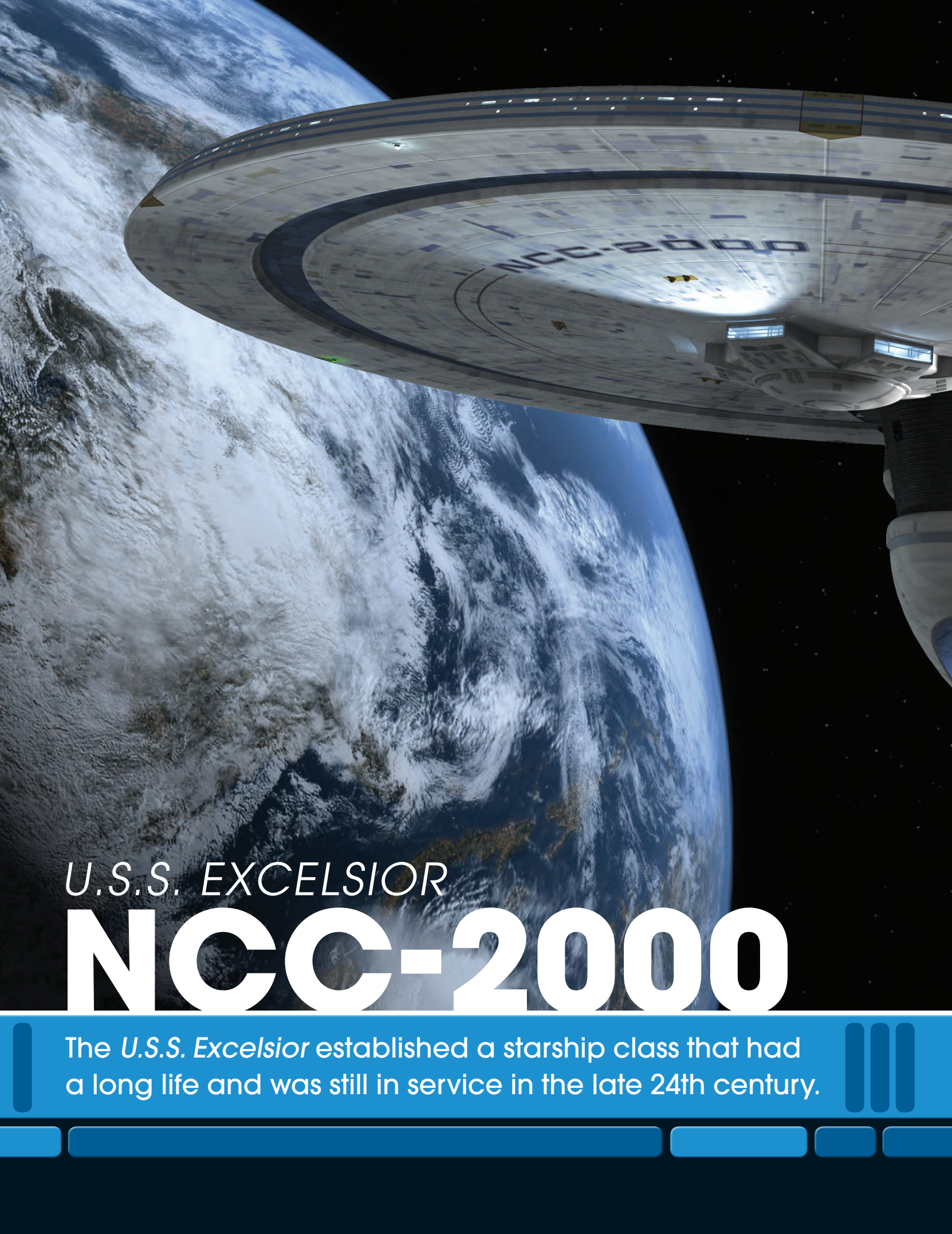
U.S.S. EXCELSIOR NCC-2000

SPECIFICATION



REGISTRY:	NCC-2000
CLASS:	EXCELSIOR
CONSTRUCTED:	SAN FRANCISCO FLEET YARDS
LAUNCHED:	2290
LENGTH:	467 METRES
DECKS:	32
CREW:	500
TOP SPEED:	WARP 9
WEAPONRY:	TYPE-8 PHASER ARRAYS 3 PHOTON TORPEDO LAUNCHERS
CAPTAIN:	HIKARU SULU





U.S.S. EXCELSIOR

NCC-2000

The *U.S.S. Excelsior* established a starship class that had a long life and was still in service in the late 24th century.



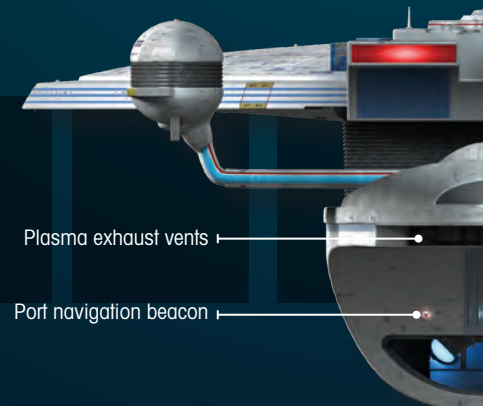
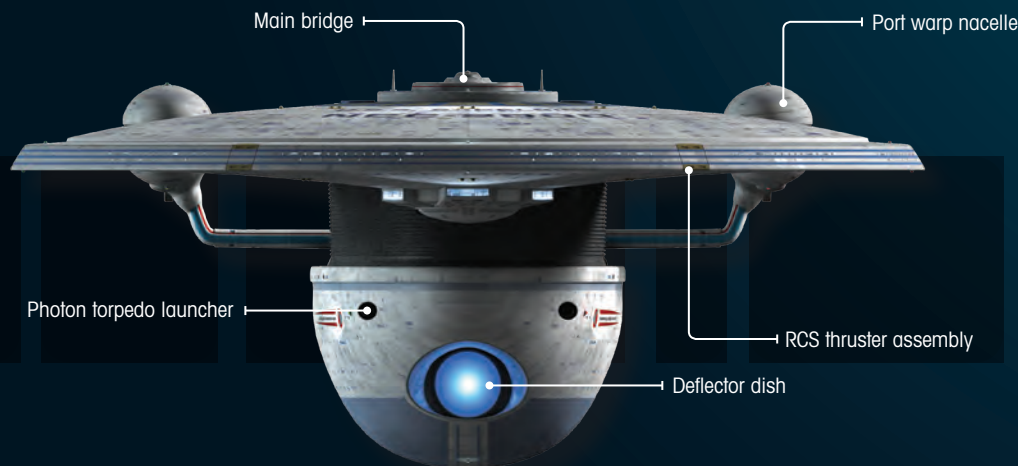
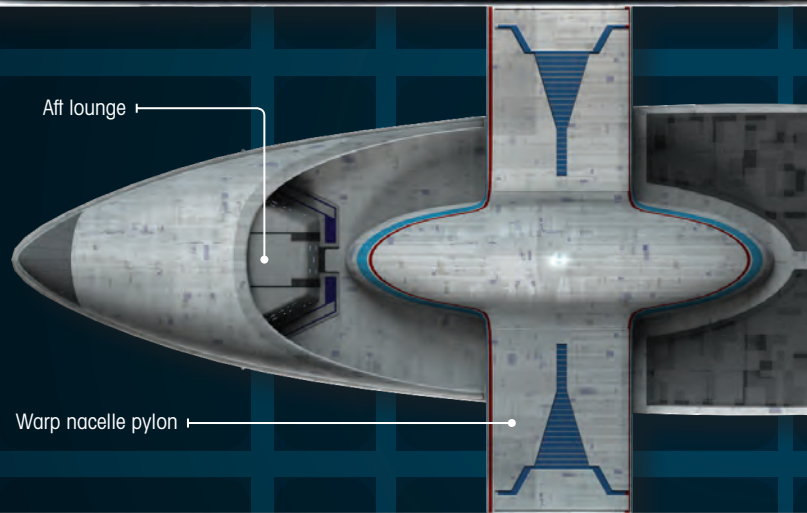
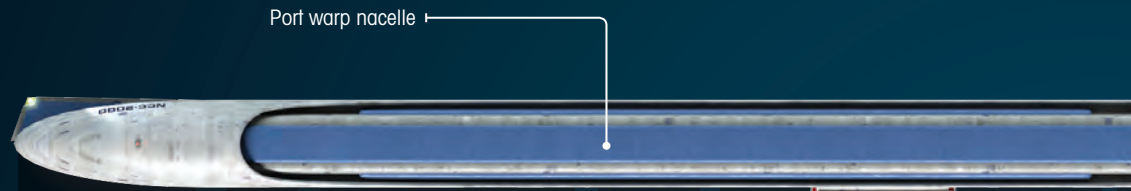
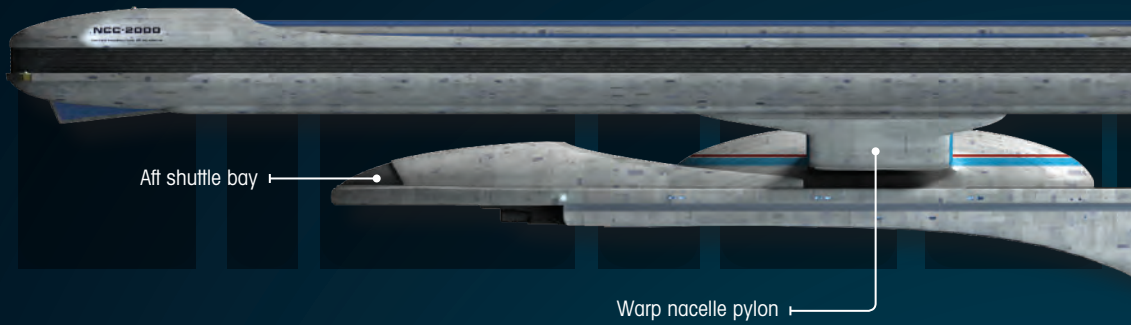
◀ Hikaru Sulu was the captain of the *U.S.S. Excelsior* NCC-2000 when it was the first Federation vessel to detect the destruction of the Klingon moon of Praxis. Sulu later took the *Excelsior* to the aid of his former commander, Captain Kirk, at the Klingon/Federation peace conference at Camp Khitomer.

DATA FEED

The first of its starship class, the *Excelsior* began life as a prototype vessel with the registry NX-2000. Far larger than the *Constitution*-class vessels (such as the *U.S.S. Enterprise* NCC-1701) it was designed to replace, the class was also intended to be much faster, thanks to a new form of propulsion, the transwarp drive.

However, after extensive tests on the NX-2000, the new technology failed to live up to expectations, and the *Excelsior* entered full active service by 2290 with standard warp drive and the registry NCC-2000.

Many more *Excelsior*-class ships were commissioned in the years that followed, including a variant design with a larger engineering hull and additional impulse engines. Though later than scheduled, the vessels did replace *Constitution*-class ships as Starfleet's primary deep-space explorers, and many were still in service at the end of the Dominion War in 2375.



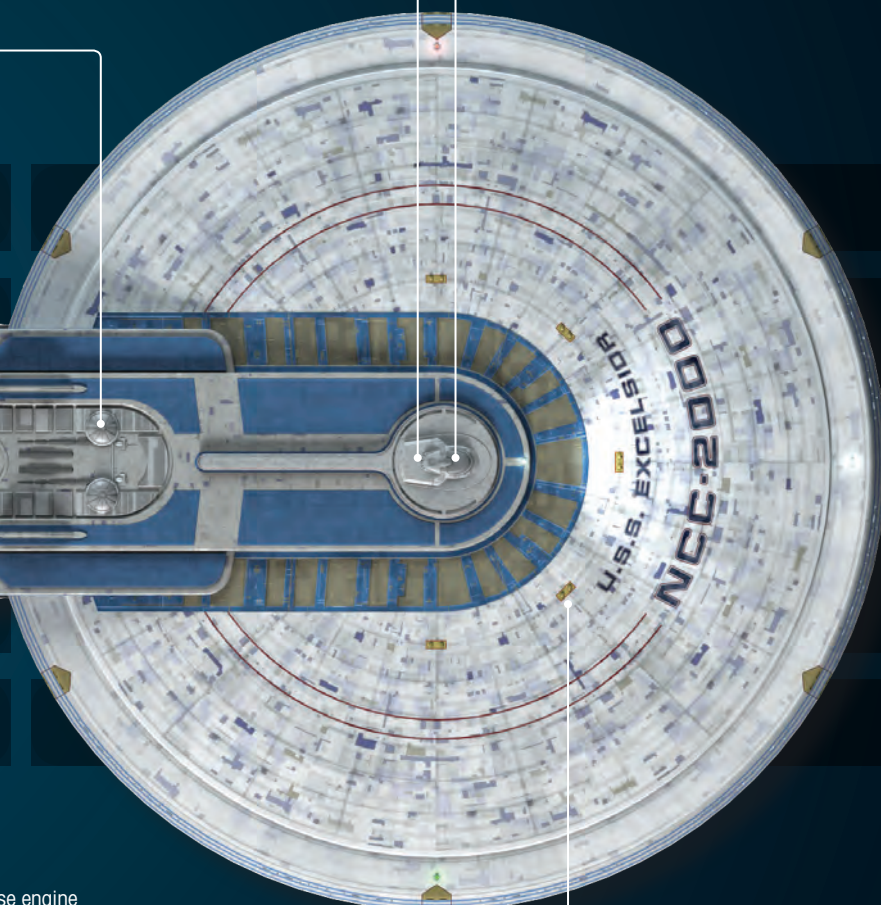


Lower sensor platform

Observation lounge

Main bridge

Impulse deflector crystal



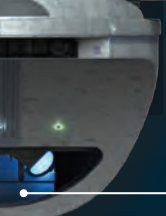
Phaser emitter

Starboard impulse engine



Starboard warp nacelle

Main shuttle bay



EARLY OFFICERS

A captain named Styles was in command of the *Excelsior* when it was still a prototype. His chief of engineering was briefly Montgomery Scott from the decommissioned *Enterprise*. Scotty used the position to sabotage his new ship, in order to help his former captain, Admiral James T. Kirk steal the *Enterprise* and save the katra of their fallen comrade, Spock.

FIRST MISSION

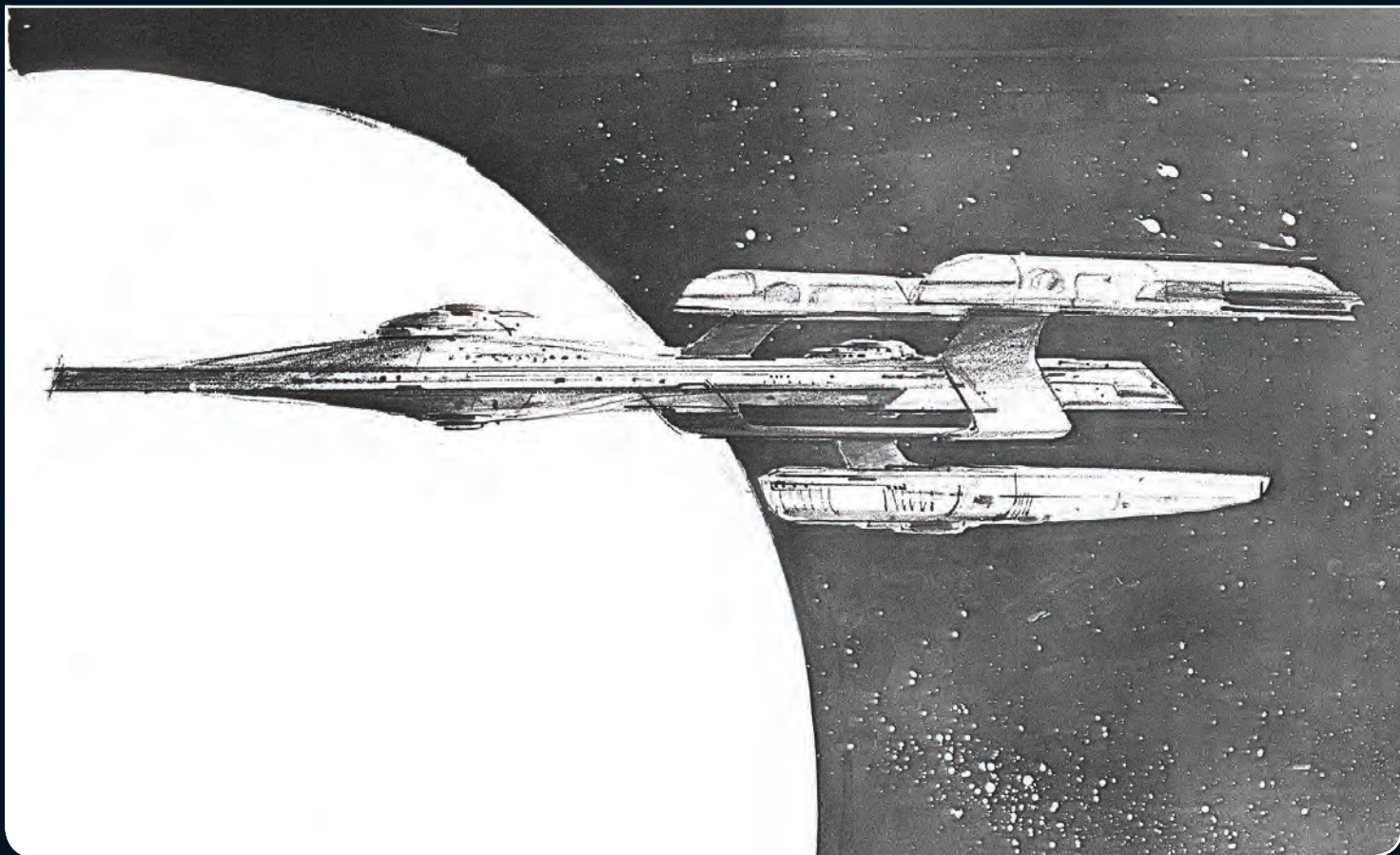
The *Excelsior's* first long-term assignment under Captain Sulu was a three-year mission from 2290, investigating gaseous planetary anomalies in the Beta Quadrant.

BRIDGE CREW

Sulu's bridge crew on the *Excelsior* included Lieutenant Janice Rand, (left) with whom he served on the *Enterprise*, and Ensign Tuvok, a Vulcan who would later serve on the *U.S.S. Voyager* NCC-74656.



▲ Communications officer Lieutenant Junior Grade Janice Rand on board the *Excelsior* in 2293.



YOUNG MINDS

FRESH IDEAS

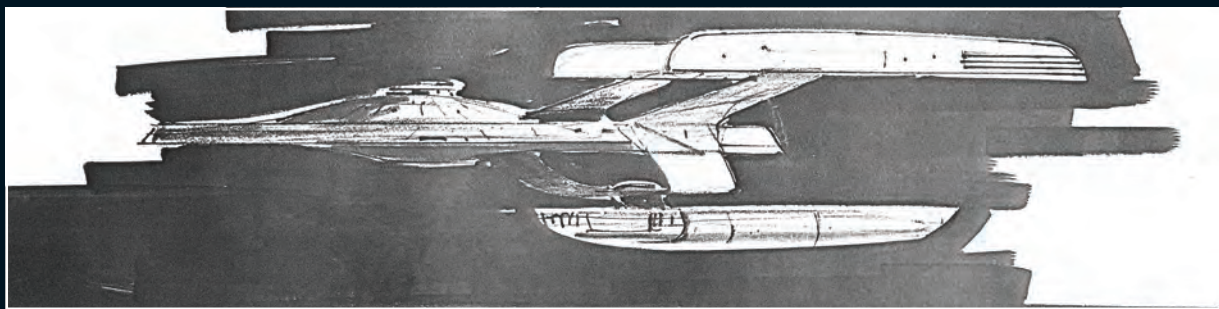
Admiral Kirk's words on first seeing the *U.S.S. Excelsior* in *STAR TREK III* could just as easily apply to the ship's creators behind the scenes...

▲ Labeled 'Excelsior Design #1' and dated February 25, 1983, this duplicate of a sketch by Nilo Rodis-Jamero has echoes of the *Reliant* from *STAR TREK II: THE WRATH OF KHAN*.

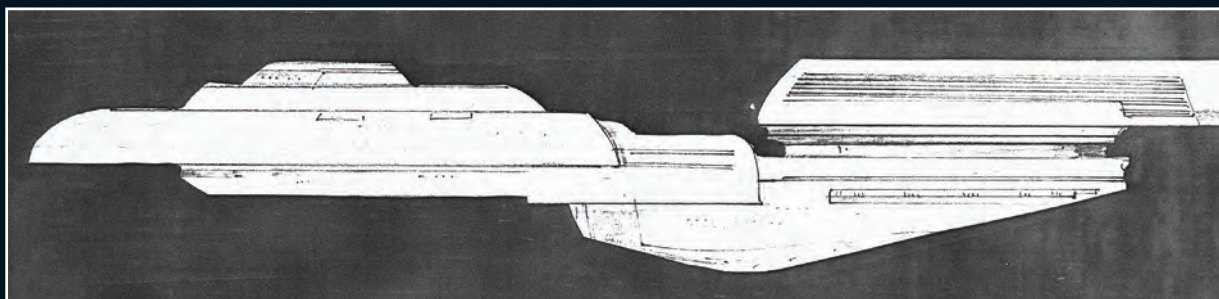
By the time Harve Bennett wrote *STAR TREK III: THE SEARCH FOR SPOCK* in 1983, the *U.S.S. Enterprise* NCC-1701 had become a classic design. What seemed far-out in 1966 was now reassuringly familiar, and though it had stood the test of time thanks to a 'refit' for *STAR TREK: THE MOTION PICTURE*, it was time for something new. In story terms, the *Enterprise* had been in service for decades, and was badly damaged during the events of *STAR TREK II: THE WRATH OF KHAN*. So it made sense that Starfleet would seek to replace the ship with something more advanced.

Enter the *U.S.S. Excelsior* NX-2000 – described in Bennett's script as being similar to the *Enterprise*, but "a super starship... bigger, sleeker... the new Queen of Space." On its first appearance, it elicits a mix of awe and foreboding from the *Enterprise* crew, and it needed to have the same effect on a cinema audience.

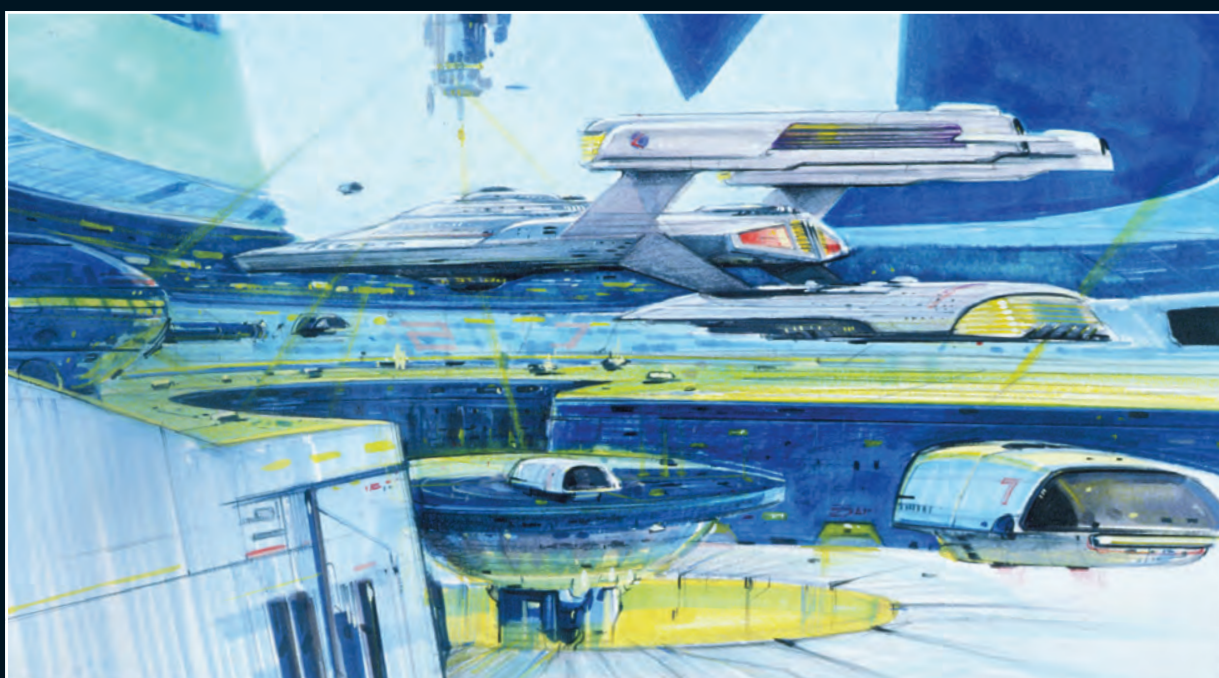
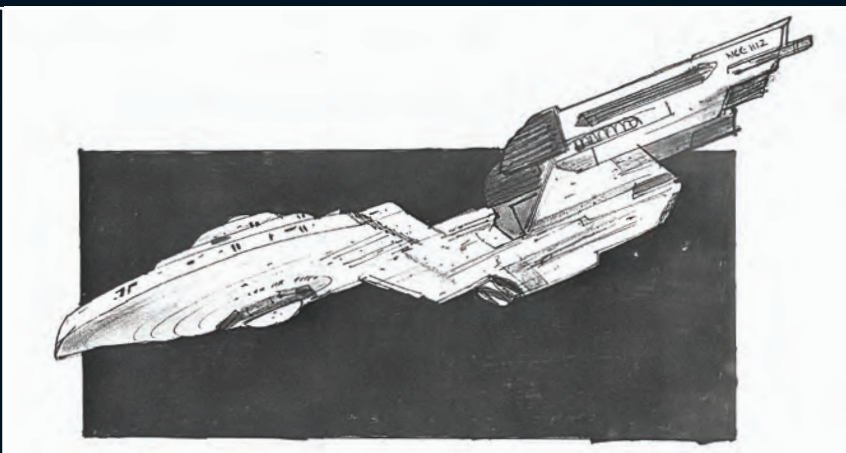
Realizing the ship on screen was the responsibility of visual effects maestros Industrial Light & Magic (ILM), who worked closely alongside Bennett – in his role as producer – and director Leonard Nimoy from the earliest stages of pre-production.



◀ Taken from the same sheet as the image on the facing page, this *Excelsior* concept has more swept-back warp pylons but retains the flat-topped aircraft-carrier shape of the secondary hull.



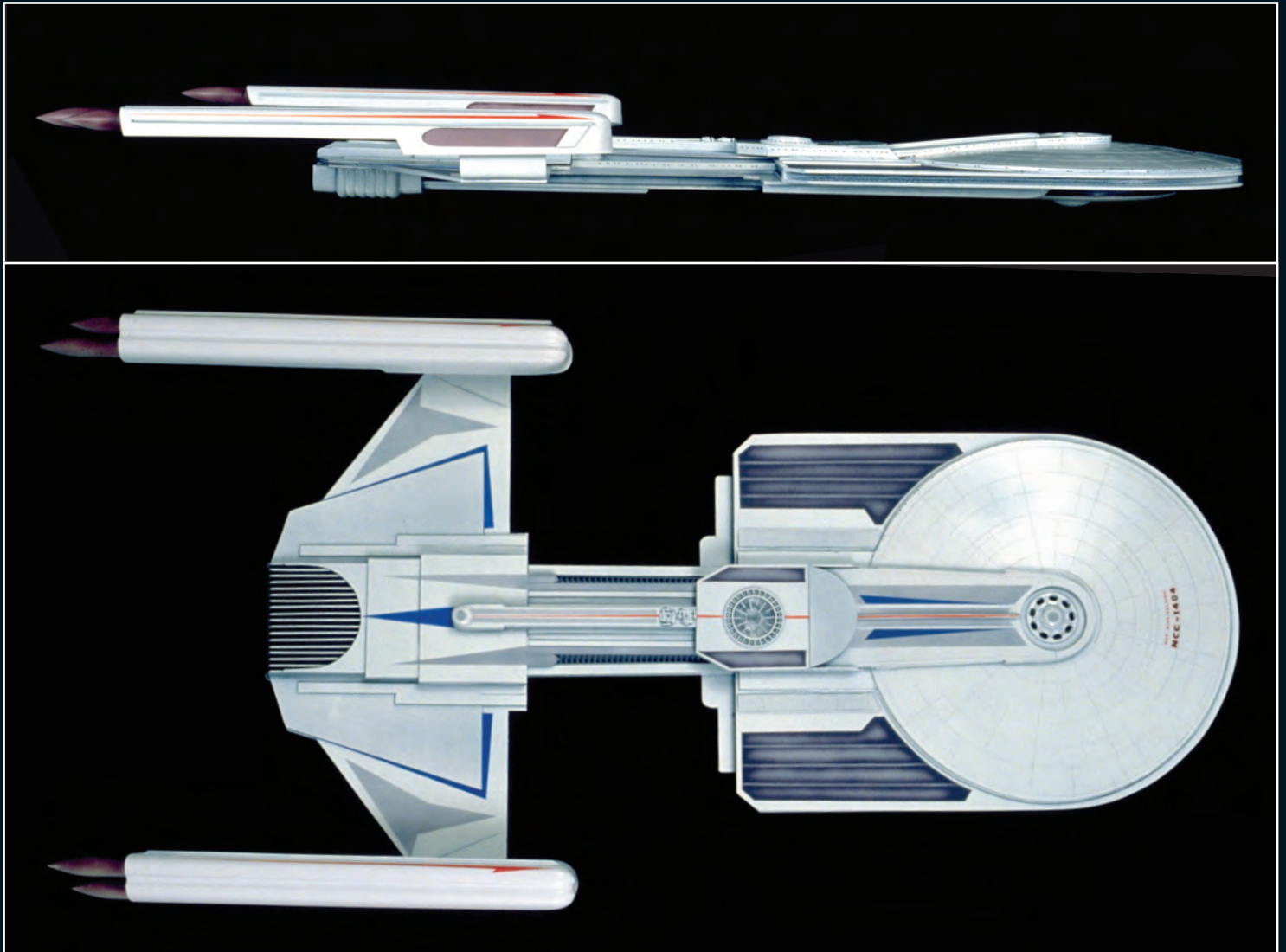
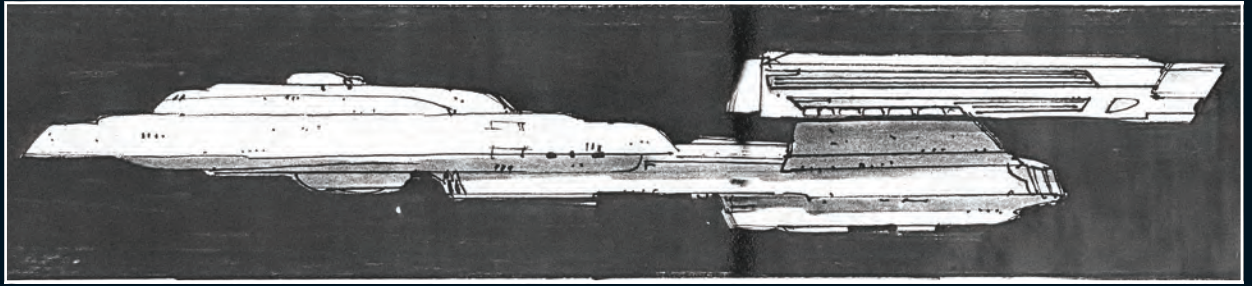
◀ A more compact version of the ship above, this Rodis-Jamero sketch fed into the design of the *U.S.S. Valiant* – which became the *Grissom* in *STAR TREK III* (pictured below left).



▲ Some elements of this powerful, angular design foreshadow the look of the Dreadnought-class *U.S.S. Vengeance* in *STAR TREK INTO DARKNESS* (2013).

◀ This concept image shows an *Excelsior* with four pylons coming off the saucer section: two supporting warp engines and two linking to a flat, wide, secondary hull. The Spacedock interior backdrop indicates that this is not (as sometimes claimed) a concept for the *Valiant/Grissom*.

► As Rodis-Jamero's designs moved in an increasingly flattened, linear direction, they retained some of the muscular menace that went on to define one of his other designs for the film – the Klingon bird-of-prey.

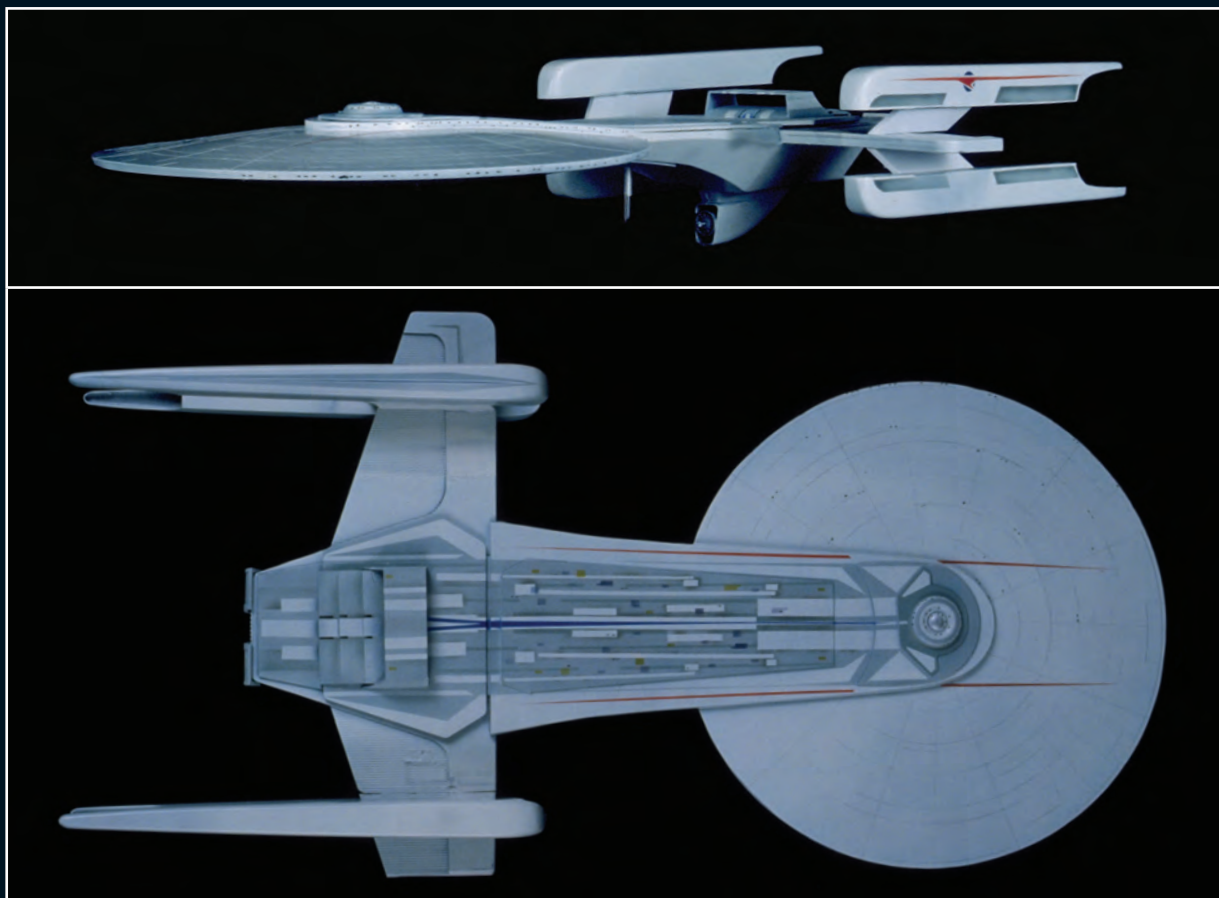
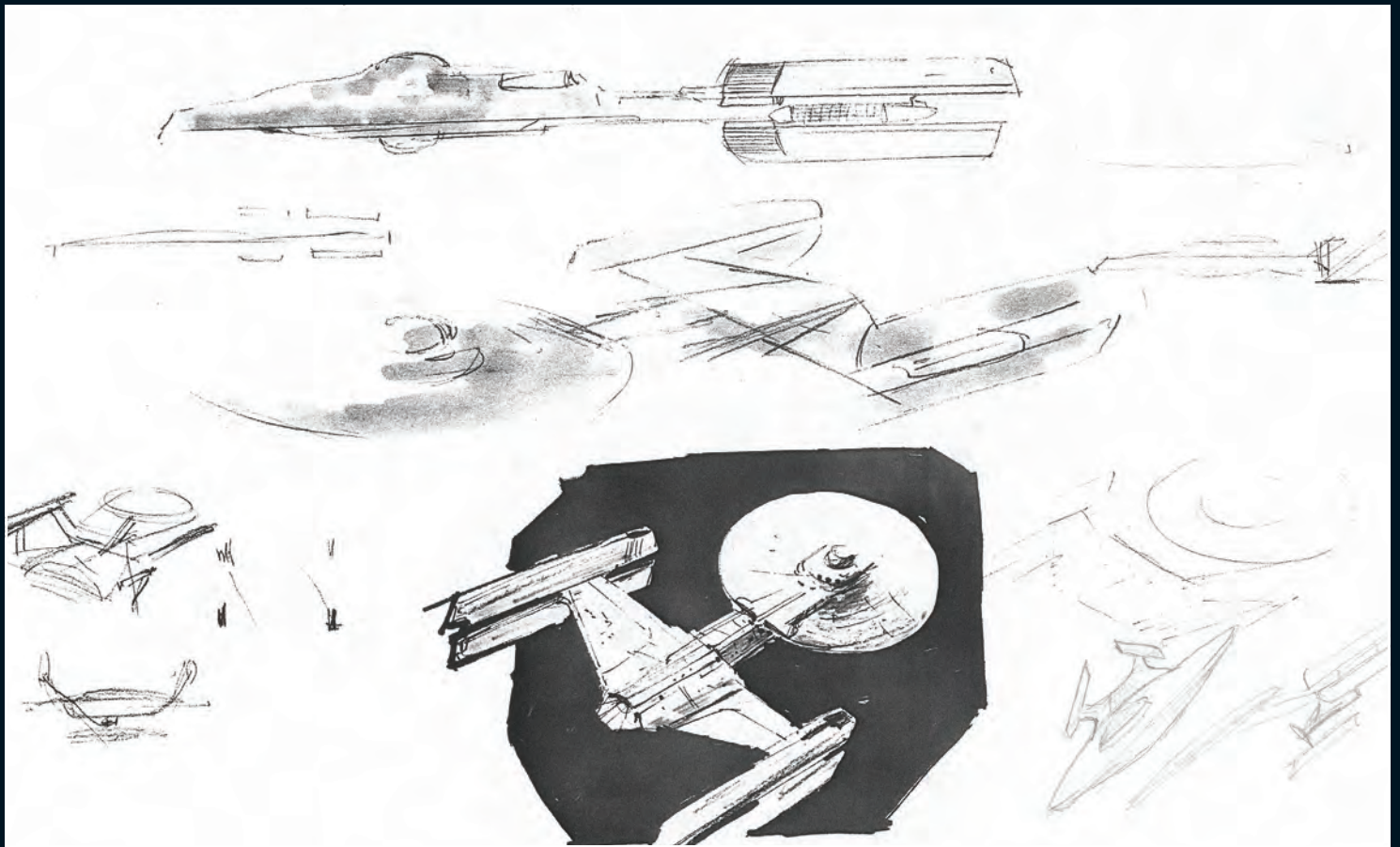


▲ This study model by Bill George takes its cue from the Rodis-Jamero design above it, without following it slavishly. It is jokingly labeled *U.S.S. Alka-Celzior*, in reference to the similarly named indigestion remedy.

The first concept drawings of the *Excelsior* were made by ILM's Nilo Rodis-Jamero in February 1983. Today, much of his original artwork is believed lost, but photocopies survive and are reproduced in these pages. After experimenting with designs that combined an *Enterprise*-style saucer with more compact warp nacelles and a smaller, canoe-shaped secondary hull, Rodis-Jamero moved on to more linear designs with chunkier, somewhat frisbee-like saucer sections. He then passed

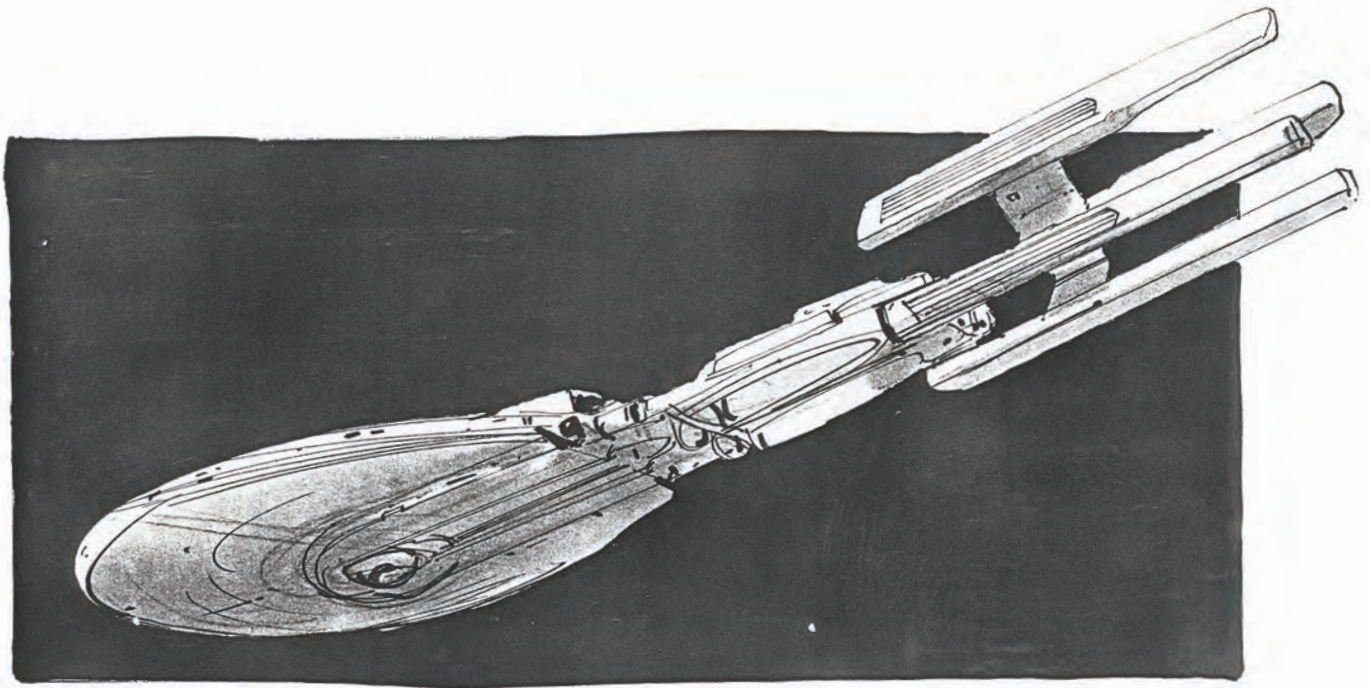
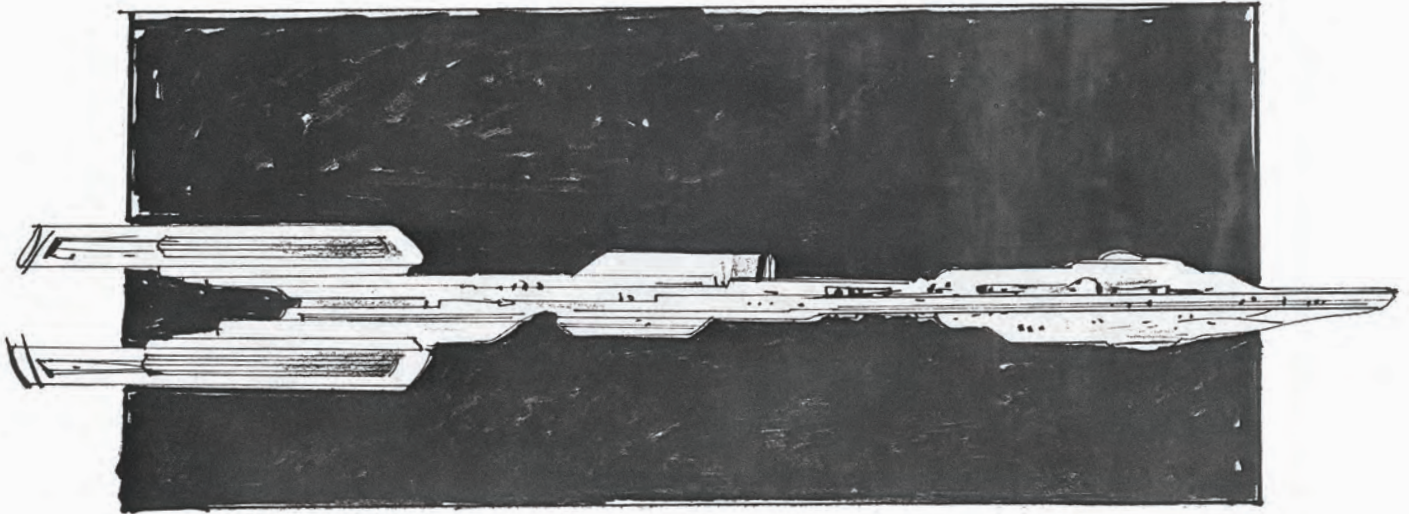
these designs on to ILM modelmaker Bill George, who interpreted the sketches to make small study models that could be easily handled and assessed from all angles at meetings.

"The most important thing was that the ships looked like part of a family," Rodis-Jamero said. "I didn't want to go leaping far into the future, I just wanted a newer model (than the *Enterprise*). It still had to be designed and manufactured by the same people using the same tools."



▲ On this sheet, Rodis-Jamero developed the design on the facing page into something with four warp nacelles rather than the traditional two. Though it is clearly more heavily equipped than *Enterprise*, it does not necessarily look more advanced.

◀ Bill George's study model develops on Rodis-Jamero's sketches (top) to create an *Excelsior* that looks more futuristic than the *Enterprise*, but which does not necessarily seem more powerful! The 21-inch model was sold at auction in 2011 with only two of its original four nacelles still in place.



▲ Two more of Rodis-Jamero's concepts for an *Excelsior* with four warp nacelles. Though they look similar, they are labeled 'Design #2' (above) and 'Design #3' (top) and do have minor differences, such as the longer warp nacelles on Design #2.

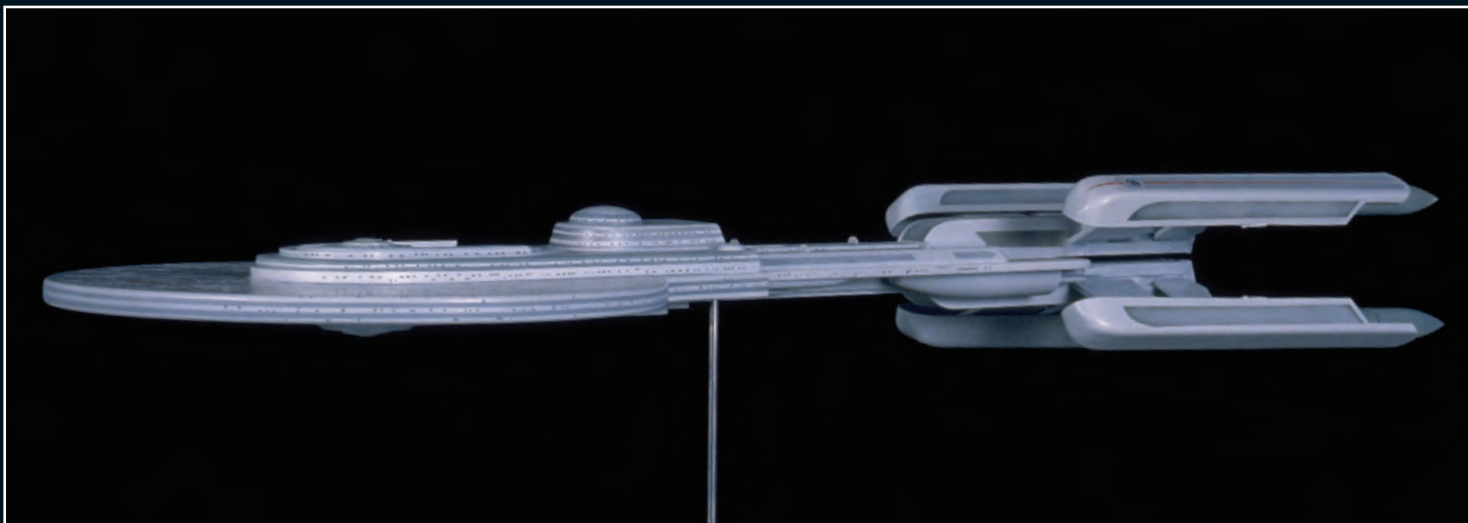
As George set about building the study models, the *Excelsior* became even flatter and sleeker than in Rodis-Jamero's initial drawings. With some of his early ideas now feeding into the design of the film's other new starship – the far less imposing *U.S.S. Grissom* – a 'stretch limo' look for the larger ship became the dominant direction.

"The design impetus with the *Grissom* was that it shouldn't steal any thunder from the *Enterprise*," said Rodis-Jamero. "The *Excelsior* was there to do that. I don't need you to remember the *Grissom* – because we're going to blow it apart anyway –

but the *Excelsior* had to be so massive and brilliant that it would age *Enterprise* when you saw it."

EXPLORING AND EXPERIMENTING

As well as making the *Excelsior* bigger than the *Enterprise*, in some of his drawings, Rodis-Jamero gave it two extra warp nacelles to suggest it was twice as powerful as the older ship. George also refined these elements, making them rounder at the front while tapering them at the back. And where Rodis-Jamero's drawings largely focused on a sense of added strength and battleship-style



bulk, George's models added a degree of grace that was more in keeping with Starfleet's mission of peaceful exploration and diplomacy.

One of the most interesting study models made by George at this time bears the registry NCC-0220. Measuring 23 inches from end to end, it has four warp nacelles on adjustable pylons that can be positioned in an open 'X' formation or in a tighter grouping of two pairs on either side of the ship. It is a movement familiar from *Star Wars'* X-wing fighters, first seen in 1977, and not dissimilar from the variable wing positions of the Klingon bird-of-prey, which also debuted in *STAR TREK III* with a design by George and Rodis-Jamero. However, while Rodis-Jamero has cited the X-wing fighter as an influence on his work, it is unclear whether he and George ever intended the *Excelsior* to have a variable profile on screen. None of Rodis-Jamero's surviving sketches indicate any moving parts, and it is entirely possible that George built his model with adjustable sections purely as an easy way to show two different design options without having to construct a whole extra ship. Today, the model is in the safe hands of *STAR TREK* scenic artist and technical consultant Mike Okuda, its nacelles seemingly long since glued into a permanently 'open' position.

EXCEEDING EXPECTATIONS

Whatever the reasoning behind the adjustable four-nacelle study, it was indicative of George's ability to create and adapt multipurpose models quickly and efficiently – often in just a few hours. And when he was left with time to spare before

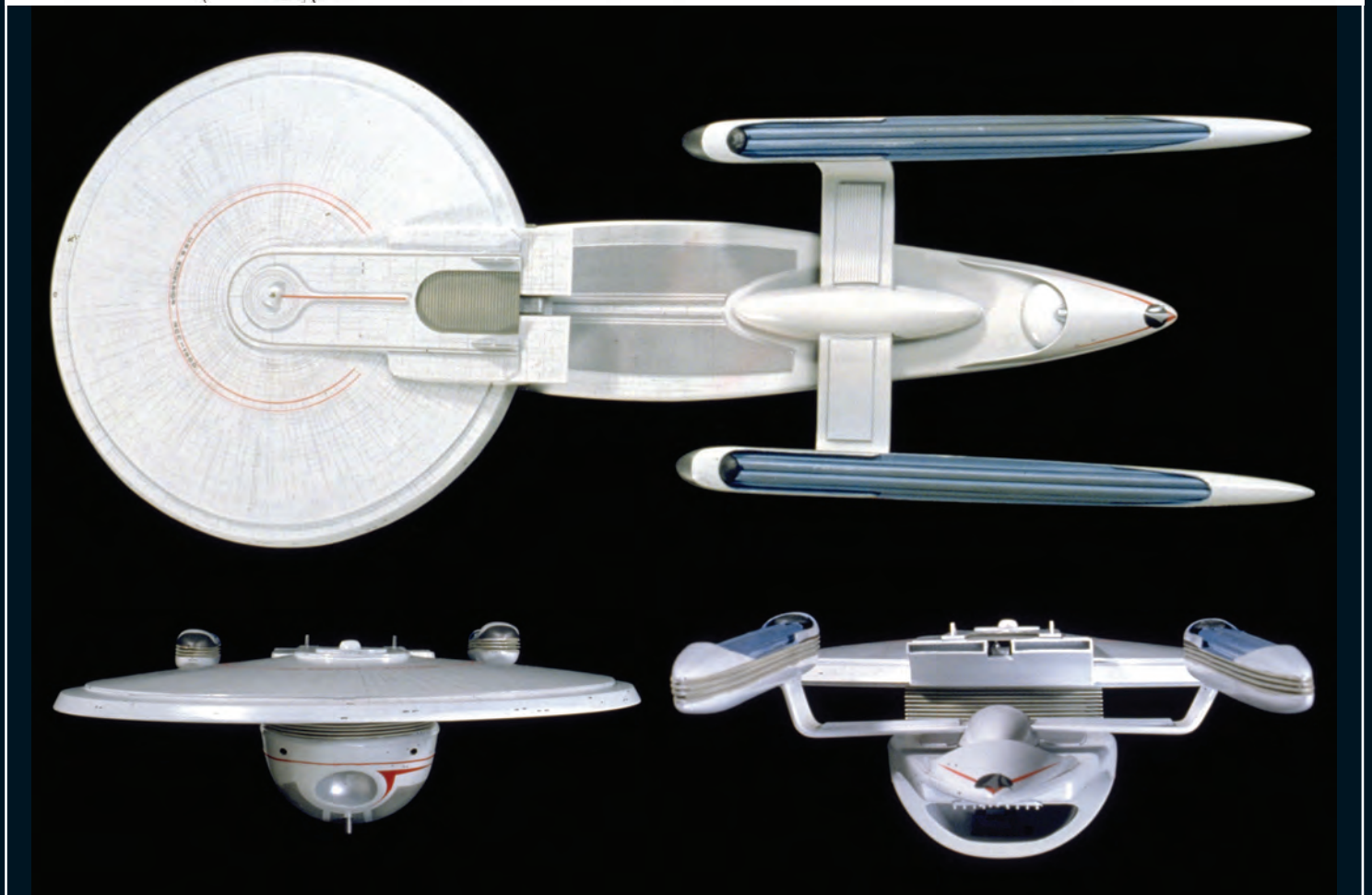
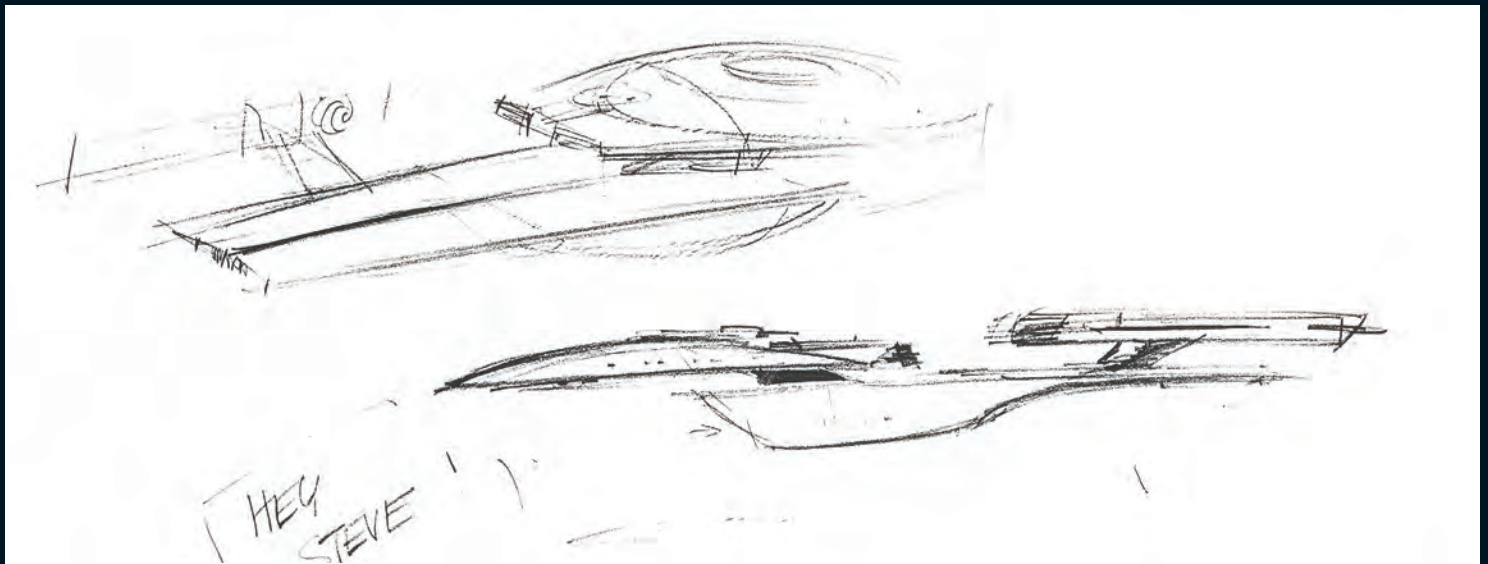


Bennett and Nimoy were due to visit ILM's model shop and choose a final design for the *Excelsior*, he was invited by VFX art director David Carson to submit his own ideas for the ship.

"Dave said, 'You've got a couple of days, go ahead,'" George later recalled. "So I thought: OK, what would the *Enterprise* look like if the Japanese designed it? At the time I was really into Japanese design, so that was the basis for what I came up with."

George's concept was far more flowing and familiar-looking than the other, more angular

▲ Three views of Bill George's study model NCC-0220, based on some of Rodis-Jamero's four-nacelle designs. In the top image from the 1980s, it is displayed with its nacelles folded inwards. In the smaller images, taken recently, the same model is set with its nacelles apart, and is clearly showing its 35-year vintage.

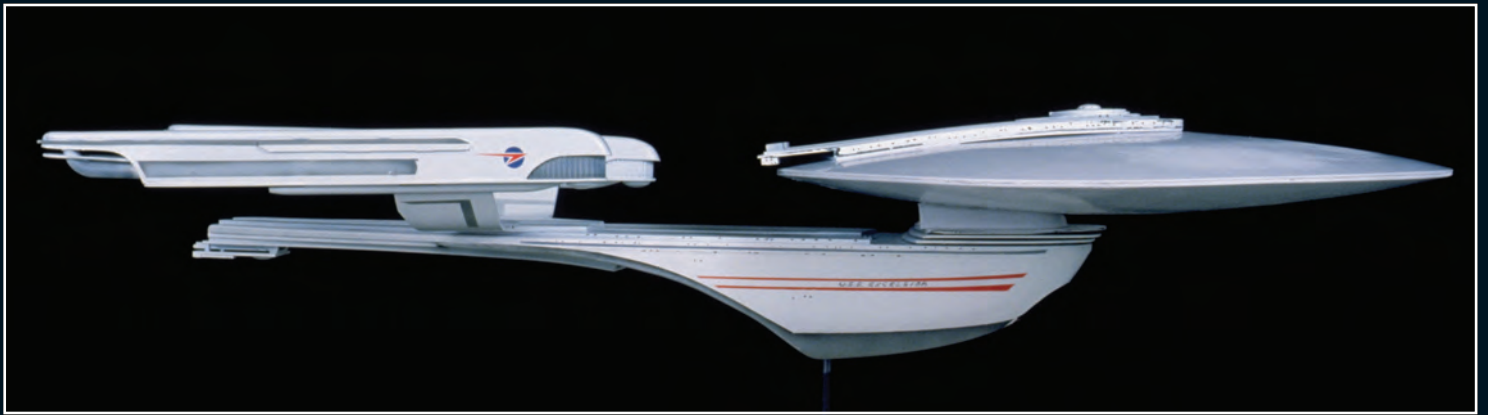


▲ Top: Rough sketches by Bill George showing his initial design idea. Above: Three views of a highly finished study model including most of the elements seen in the filming model.

designs. Its secondary hull greatly exaggerated the scoop beneath the *Enterprise*'s shuttle bay and retained its curving 'belly'. However, it also incorporated the flat top from several of Rodis-Jamero's designs, echoing the lines of a 20th-century aircraft carrier. Its saucer and two warp nacelles were elevated, in the same formation

as the *Enterprise*, and it walked the line between tradition and innovation.

"In the script, it was described as the next generation," George recalled. "It was supposed to look super-fast, and really different from the *Enterprise*. (The other designs) were very futuristic and did not look like the *Enterprise* at all. There



were a couple that I really liked, but I wanted to come up with my own take on it, and it just so happened that mine looked more like the *Enterprise* than any of the others.”

This familiarity clearly resonated with Nimoy, who selected George’s design from the array of other study models he had built. “I think that is what Leonard responded to,” he reasoned. “We laid out all these things on a table, and he pointed and said ‘That one.’ I wasn’t trying to figure out which one he was going to choose. It was quite a surprise when I found out mine was the one he wanted!”

EXPERTISE X EXPEDIENCY

With the final design agreed, ILM started work on a 7.5-foot studio model. Though the ship was intended to be much bigger than the *Enterprise* (in the script, Bennett described the difference in terms of World War II aircraft – the 74-foot B-17 Flying Fortress versus the 99-foot B-29 Superfortress), the model was built six inches shorter than the refit *Enterprise* first seen in *THE MOTION PICTURE*. This decision was made for reasons of budget, speed and maneuverability, plus the fact that the two ships would never be filmed side by side, but rather shot separately and composited to make a single image in post-production.

“We had to build a model that looked as good as – if not better than – *Enterprise*,” remembered ILM’s Steve Gawley, who oversaw construction. “We had to be innovative, because of a lack of funding, and we had to be quick. That required us to come up with a different way of building, and so we used vacuum-forming to come up with hollow components pretty quickly. The ship had to be hollow so we could have interior lighting.”

That interior lighting was also designed to be far less complex than the internal workings of the *Enterprise* model (which was not made by ILM), meaning that all aspects of filming the completed model were more straightforward than working with the larger, older ship. It was hardly a surprise, therefore, that when *STAR TREK III* wrapped, the impressive model was carefully stored away and earmarked for future use.

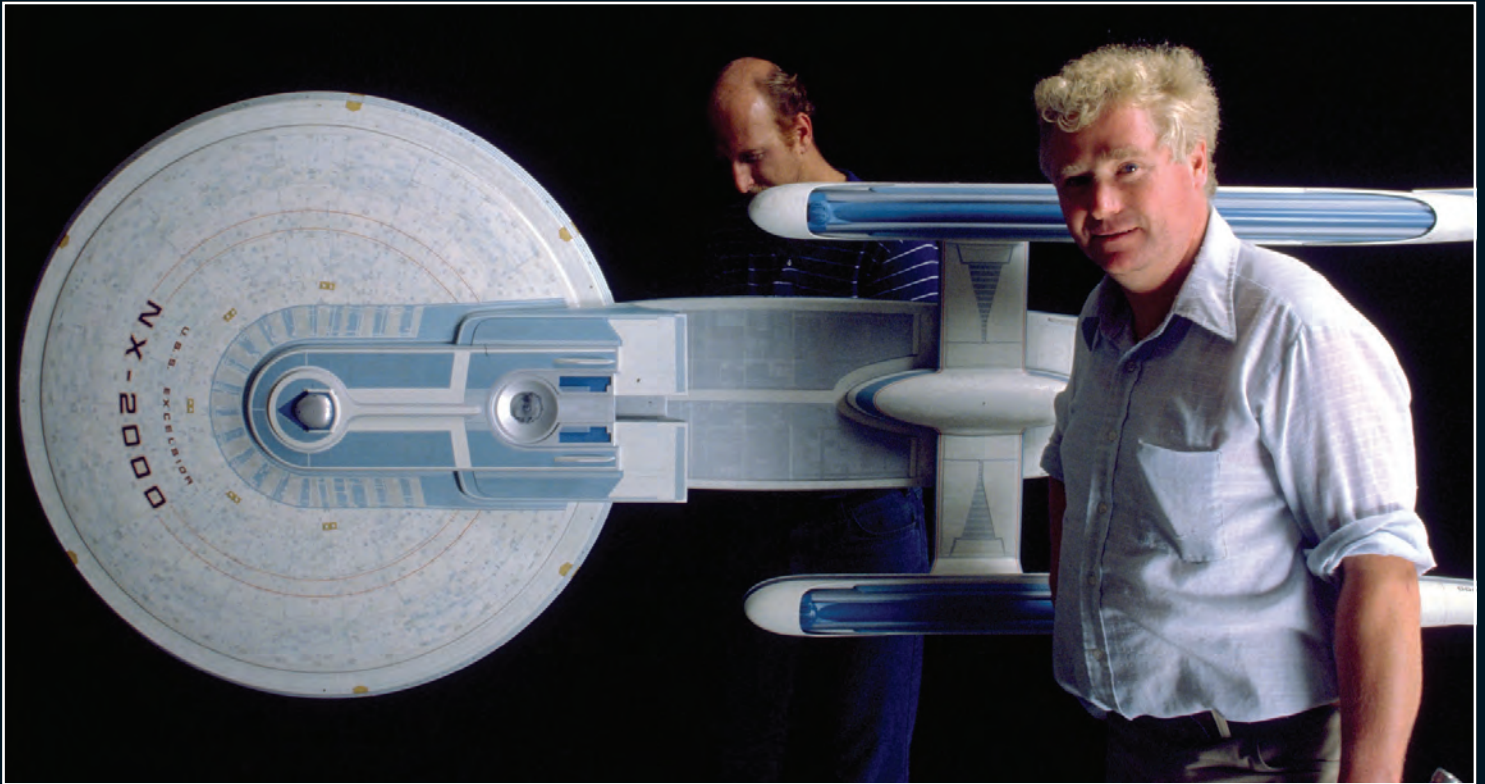
EXTRA EXCURSIONS

After a brief appearance in *STAR TREK IV: THE VOYAGE HOME* (1986), the *Excelsior* model was pressed into service once more when ILM was commissioned to provide the visual effects for “Encounter At Farpoint”, the 1987 launch episode of *STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION*. As the man

▲ This study model lacks the refinements of that on the facing page. It is missing the large impulse engines and dramatic rear shuttle bay, and the saucer is set further back on the unfinished ‘neck’ of the secondary hull.

▼ The 7.5-foot studio model with its original finishes, barring name and registry decals.





▲ The completed filming model for *STAR TREK III*. Note the oversized silver bridge module, which would be replaced for *STAR TREK VI*.

▼ Internally lit and composited against a Spacedock interior model, the *Excelsior* makes its debut in *STAR TREK III*.

most familiar with the model, Gawley set about sprucing up the four-year-old ship, and turning it into the *U.S.S. Hood* NCC-2541. A small library of shots was made, allowing for the appearance of various *Excelsior*-class vessels throughout the run of *THE NEXT GENERATION*, and this footage was later used to represent the *U.S.S. Fearless*, the *U.S.S. Cairo*, and the *U.S.S. Gorkon* among others. In fact, the only time this footage was not used to represent an *Excelsior*-class ship in *THE NEXT GENERATION* was for a single shot in

the episode 'The Child', for which the model was partially relabeled as the *U.S.S. Repulse*.

Then, in 1991, ILM fully refurbished the model to serve as the *U.S.S. Excelsior* one last time, now with the registry NCC-2000, in *STAR TREK VI: THE UNDISCOVERED COUNTRY* (stock footage from *STAR TREK IV* was used for *STAR TREK V: THE FINAL FRONTIER*). The large silver bridge module was replaced with a smaller one, more in keeping with the scale of the bridge interior seen in the film; the impulse engines were modified; and





◀ Captain Sulu's *U.S.S. Excelsior* NCC-2000 in its only big-screen outing, 1991's *STAR TREK VI: THE UNDISCOVERED COUNTRY*.

the dome-shaped lounge in front of the rear shuttle bay was replaced with a more angular structure. One year later, the *Excelsior* decals came off for the last time, when the ship was relabeled the *U.S.S. Melbourne* NCC-62043 for 'Emissary' – the debut episode of *STAR TREK: DEEP SPACE NINE*.

EXTENSIONS AND EXIT

The model underwent its most extensive overhaul in 1994, when it was upgraded to become the *U.S.S. Enterprise* NCC-1701-B for the movie *STAR TREK GENERATIONS*. Though this was an *Excelsior*-class vessel, it needed to be clear to audiences that it was not the same ship from earlier films. For plot purposes, it also needed a projecting area that could be badly damaged without effecting the rest of the ship. With those requirements in mind, illustrator John Eaves updated the look on paper, before ILM applied the changes to the aging model. The top of the saucer was entirely rebuilt, gaining two extra impulse engines in the process, and the underside of the secondary hull was more obviously remodeled with fiberglass resin 'wings' on either side.

After *GENERATIONS*, the amended model made only one further on-screen appearance, as the *U.S.S. Lakota* NCC-42768 in the *DEEP SPACE NINE* episode 'Paradise Lost' in 1996. After 12 years and 20 appearances, the original *Excelsior* was retired. Its replacements would be a smaller model, a CGI version, and occasional stock footage.



◀ The *Excelsior* model relabeled as the *U.S.S. Hood* for *STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION*.



◀ The model renamed once more to become the *U.S.S. Melbourne* in *DEEP SPACE NINE*.



◀ The modified ship with additional impulse engines, nacelle cap fins, and *U.S.S. Lakota* markings, on display before being sold at auction in 2006.



THE OTHER

EXCELSIORS

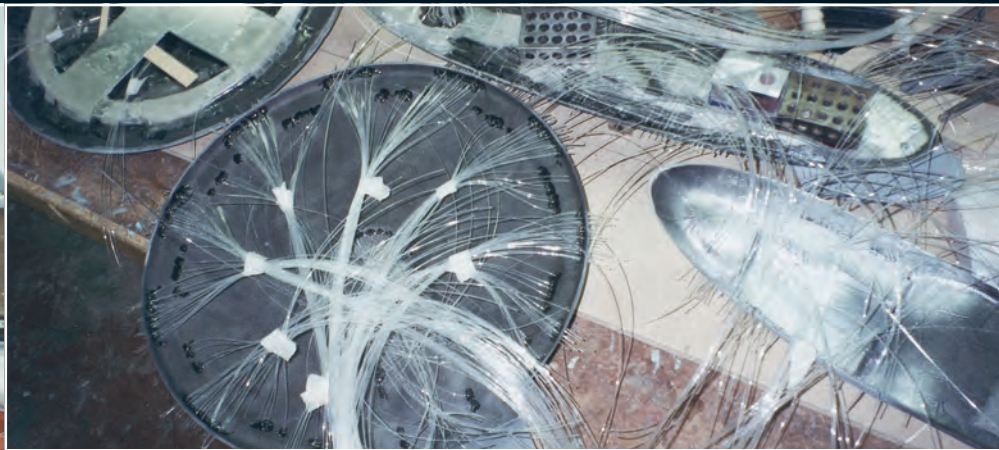
After the original *U.S.S. Excelsior* model was retired, a smaller version and later a computer-generated version took its place on TV

▲ Above and above right: modelmakers in Greg Jein's studio work on the scaled-down *U.S.S. Excelsior* model built for *STAR TREK: VOYAGER*.

In 1996, as part of *STAR TREK*'s 30th anniversary celebrations, the *STAR TREK: VOYAGER* episode 'Flashback' was set partly during the events of *STAR TREK VI: THE UNDISCOVERED COUNTRY* (or, at least, within the long-lived Vulcan Tuvok's memory of those events). The episode made use of stock footage of Captain Sulu's *U.S.S. Excelsior* from the film, but the production team also hoped to film new effects shots using the *Excelsior* model. When it became clear that this would not be possible, owing to the permanent nature of the changes made to the ship for *STAR TREK GENERATIONS* two years earlier, the team decided to commission a whole new studio model.

Built at a more manageable (and cheaper) 36-inch scale, compared to the original 7.5-foot build, the new model would prove to be the last on-screen *STAR TREK* commission built by Gregory Jein, Inc., a model shop that had worked on the franchise since the 1970s. In the finished episode, the smaller ship was all but indistinguishable from the stock shots of the original – with the notable exception that the new *Excelsior* had glowing warp nacelles (something never seen in the Kirk-era films).

The convenient size of the Jein model also meant that it was far more suitable for use than the updated original model when *Excelsior-*



▲ Inside the lightweight metal frame of the *Jein Excelsior* is a mass of fiber optic cabling.

▶ A closer look at the bridge module and surrounding details on the 36-inch model.



class ships were called for on *DEEP SPACE NINE*. Its appearances there include the episodes 'For The Uniform' as the *U.S.S. Malinche*, and 'A Time To Stand', for which it was partially relabeled and battle-scarred to serve as the *U.S.S. Fredrickson*.

After 'A Time To Stand' the model was redressed as the undamaged *U.S.S. Excelsior NCC-2000* and used as a display piece at exhibitions. It also formed the basis of a computer-generated *Excelsior*-class ship built by David Lombardi of VFX house Digital Muse in 1997. This CG model made the first of many *DEEP SPACE NINE* appearances in 'Favor The Bold', and can also be glimpsed as the dry-docked *U.S.S. Fredrickson* in *VOYAGER*'s 'Relativity'.

▲ Above left: The 36-inch *Excelsior* model as seen in *VOYAGER*'s 'Flashback'. Above right: The same model redecorated to become the *Fredrickson* in *DEEP SPACE 9*'s 'A Time To Stand'.

▶ Several *Excelsior*-class ships form part of the CG armada seen in *DEEP SPACE 9*'s 'Favor The Bold'.



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