

The MSC Fantasia's Liquid Disco and Tropici pool (inset).



Design on deck

While bigger ships offer greater room for innovative concepts, it is important not to let design go overboard. Royal Caribbean's **Emilio Perez** and **Marco De Jorio** from De Jorio Design International share their philosophies with Jodie McLeod.

The movement towards the cruise-ship-as-destination has been developing for some time now, but it is only with the recent advent of the mega-vessel that ships have truly sealed their identity as floating resorts.

Royal Caribbean International's 5,400-passenger *Oasis of the Seas*, for instance, which sets sail in November, is designed with seven distinct Manhattan-style neighbourhoods, Central Park, a carousel and double-height suites.

In addition, Celebrity Cruises' Solstice-class of ships, the second of which is the 2,850-capacity *Celebrity Equinox*, which entered service in August, features resort-style lawn clubs, glass blowing classes and staterooms linked to spa facilities.

While such contemporary post-Panamax-sized ships offer more choice to passengers in terms of entertainment, dining and accommodation than ever before, their gigantic size poses many challenges from a design perspective.

Italian ship designer Marco De Jorio noted in his address at the 2008 Seatrade Med conference in Venice that these floating global villages risk becoming 'an artificial hotchpotch lacking any cultural reference or artistic depth.'

The passenger, in this context, becomes like a battery hen, to which the design is geared to 'distract and shock to optimise exploitation, rather than [being treated as] a human being with his/her own cultural appetite and sensitivity.'

De Jorio, who is the project manager of Italian architecture and design company De Jorio Design International, believes the modern challenge is on how to allow for such onboard diversity while still communicating a design that carries value and meaning for each individual passenger.

Better by design

De Jorio encountered the issue of balancing size with sensitivity when designing Italian cruise line MSC Cruises' new Fantasia-class of ships – the 133,000gt *MSC Fantasia* and *MSC Splendida* – which entered service in 2008 and 2009, respectively.

'[For these ships] we had to combine fun, leisure, elegance and originality in the same floating town, while always making high-



quality design the top priority,' he says.

To ensure quality reigned over quantity, De Jorio anchored the design concept around the ideals of New Humanism, a paradigm that values quality of life (including environmental sustainability), and a philosophy that De Jorio says guides contemporary man.

'The [*Fantasia*] is a floating town where all the interactive and creative spaces are a destination for the spirit; a destination for people to perceive a new experience and an expression of New Humanism,' he says.

Each main area on board the *Fantasia* and *Splendida* has its own stylistic identity, yet exudes a common theme

of contemporary class familiar to all passengers, regardless of their nationality.

In a globalised cruise industry, De Jorio says, it is important that the design has this kind of 'cultural shareability', which can cross both national cultural divides and internal market differences.

'When a project is shareable, it means it's interesting for the collective. It can be shared by both the cruise market and the general escapist market. It's a new model for interior design,' he says.

Unified vision

Consistency of interior design is the unifying thread that links the various

areas and elements together and creates a sense of community, not only on board one ship, but across the entire class. Emilio Perez, manager of new building and design for Celebrity Cruises, believes cohesiveness of design was crucial when creating Celebrity's Solstice-class ships.

'Usually in shipbuilding, you feel the difference from when you go from one fire zone to the next. But in the case of the *Celebrity Solstice* we were very clear from the beginning that that threshold needed to disappear somehow,' says Perez.

We don't want to see where one designer started and the next began. We wanted to create a sense of being in one big hotel.'

De Jorio says a similar approach was taken with the *MSC Fantasia*. 'The same focus on artistic commitment and quality is found throughout the ship,' he adds.

'This generates a feeling of artistic homogeneity, and so the perception of the space is not fractured, which creates a different mood for the passengers.'

One of the challenges in achieving this kind of continuity is managing the creative input of multiple designers. For example, over 250 designers worked on the *Celebrity Solstice*, including those from big-name architecture firms RTKL, BG Studio and 5+Design.

As for brand new design innovations for Celebrity, Perez is not at liberty to reveal these just yet.

De Jorio, however, knows of one major design transition that he anticipates will affect the majority of cruise ships in the not-to-distant future: the integration of renewable energy sources on board, such as solar and wind production.

'The impact of this will influence the use of open decks and will affect the design and shape of the superstructure, along with the general external look of the floating town,' he says.

Some shipyards are already investigating the possibilities, according to De Jorio, and the industry could see designs take form within six to eight years.

'It does not exist yet, but these applications could be possible if people are interested in investing,' he says.

If the philosophy of New Humanism is still driving the market by this time, it could well be possible. [wc](#)

'We had to combine fun, leisure, elegance and originality in the same floating town, while making high-quality design the top priority.'

Marco De Jorio on the MSC Fantasia-class

