



# FERRY INTERIORS BECOME MORE SOPHISTICATED AND SUSTAINABLE

*Designers of ferry interiors are paying increasing attention to improved overall impression of the interiors, while everything related to sustainability is also heavily on the agenda. More refined interiors can help the ferry operator to nudge the image of its product higher in the eyes of the public.*

**By Kari Reinikainen**

There is a clear trend towards more emphasis on the overall impression of interiors onboard ferries, said **Anu Shaw**, Senior Interior Designer at Kudos Dsign, the Turku-based interior design company that is currently working on Wasaline's newbuilding the Aurora Botnia, which is under construction at Rauma Marine Constructions. All three companies are based in Finland, which Shaw said is rather rare: With this project, there are no cultural differences arising from the involvement of partners from various countries involved and every-



one literally speaks the same language. "Although Aurora Botnia will make a crossing of only about three hours in each direction, many people will actually take the crossing as a mini cruise," Shaw told CruiseBusiness.com Magazine. This means that the interiors onboard the ship must be appealing in their

own right, as Wasaline's business is not only about providing transport. The company also caters to the onboard conference market, and in this segment, too, the demand for the quality of interiors is quite high.

Kudos has never worked on a ferry newbuilding before, but the company is not a newcomer in the marine sector, as its clients include Crystal Cruises, the U.S.-based luxury cruise unit in the Genting Hong Kong group. It has also worked on several refurbishments of ferries. "As in the case of a cruise ship, the experience of passengers is the focus on Aurora Botnia. Comfort is very important. The ship even offers some cabins for passengers, because some want to have a space of their own where they can leave their luggage and have some rest," Shaw continued.

## **Sea views important**

"If you think of any bar or restaurant onboard a ship, tables by the windows will be occupied first. Everyone wants to see the sea," she pointed out. In line with many other contemporary ferry newbuildings, the Aurora Botnia also features large windows that provide a view of the sea and the rug- ▶



*Another view of Aurora Botnia restaurant and cabin (below)*



ged, rocky islands that the ship will pass on each crossing in and out of Vaasa. The company has decided that these should also be featured in large photographs that decorate public areas on the vessel.

The views outside have provided a platform on which colors and the design of the interior of the Aurora Botnia are based. The styling is essentially Scandinavian to reflect the fact that most passengers will come from this region. "The key question to ask yourself is what exactly is it that your customers are looking for? The outcome should be a vessel that welcomes existing passengers of the line, but also broadens its appeal to bring in passengers that are new to the line," Shaw pointed out.

Sustainability is another major part of the design of the Aurora Botnia, both when it comes to the engineering side and also to the interiors. "Carpets in the passenger cabins are made of material obtained from recycled old fishnets," Shaw said. People are increas-

ingly aware of the footprint that ships will make on the environment, and both ferry and cruise shipping companies are responding to this by seeking to use more environmentally friendly materials.

### **Sustainable materials emerge**

However, the marine sector differs markedly from land-based ones: Only materials approved by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) are allowed to be used onboard ships. This is mainly because of fire safety: Easily flammable materials have been a contributing factor to many a disaster at sea in the past, some of which led to heavy loss of life. In the past, it was quite common to think of the interiors in very contemporary terms. What was

deemed to look modern at the time was deemed to be the right choice, and it was accepted that major refits would be required at frequent intervals to replace carpets, curtains and furnishing that had started to look dated.

Today the thinking has changed, and interiors are expected to look good for years to come, both from an aesthetic and from a technical point of view. At the same time, the materials should meet requirements of



*Aurora Botnia is currently under outfitting stage in Rauma, Finland*



Artist's rendering Viking Glory public areas

sustainability. It should be possible to recycle them, and it would be even better if recycled materials had been used as at least part of their raw materials. "Happily, more and more materials have come to the market in recent years that meet all this criteria," Shaw said.

Looking into the future, she predicted that green values would continue to gain importance in the eyes of passengers and that both cruise lines and ferry companies will have to meet these expectations. Multifunctionality of spaces is also increasingly emphasized. "A room that serves as a cafe could become a dining venue in the evening by just slight changes, such as simple change of textiles. The outcome should be a different ambiance, but it should be possible to achieve this with minimal physical changes in the space," she noted.

From the point of view of an architectural company, the end result is always the product of the team that has worked on a project. A project manager can act as the facade of a project – Shaw heads the work on the Aurora Botnia at Kudos – but everyone on the team has made a contribution to the finished product. "This is one thing that I always want to point out," she concluded.

### **Influence of land-based trends**

Developments ashore influence marine interiors, and this is very much the case with the Viking Glory, the 63,000 gross ton new-building that Viking Line, the listed Finnish cruise ferry company, has on order at the Xiamen shipyard in China, said **Niclas Makowsky**, architect at Koncept Design. The Stockholm-based company, which has wide



Niclas Makowsky

experience in hospitality, retail, office and private residence interior design, was chosen because Viking Line wanted a designer with no previous experience in the marine area so that fresh ideas could be incorporated into the work. The company's brief to Koncept stated that the design should reflect core values of the Viking Line brand, which is well known in the markets where it operates, and thus have a Nordic maritime feel.

This means that the interior should have references to, for example, the lighthouses and rocky islands that the ship will pass on its 10-hour crossings between Turku in southwestern Finland, via Mariehamn in the Åland archipelago, to the Swedish capital of Stockholm. However, although materials like polished brass and glass would be used, the interior should not feel cold but warm and inviting, elegant yet not something would put people off by being too formal.

In this context, Makowsky said that Koncept has recent experience from the hotel sector in Stockholm that will serve it well with the Viking Glory project. The company produced the interior design for the Scandic Haymarket Hotel, which was recently converted from the PUB department store on Hotorget (Haymarket in Swedish) in central Stockholm. Although the Scandic brand is well known, it had been regarded as a mainly three-star operator of brisk and contemporary hotels and not something the locals would be interested in visiting.

### **Examples of what can be done**

The company wanted to change this perception and create a more upscale environment at the Scandic Haymarket that could tap the lively bar and restaurant scene around its location. As **Greta Garbo** used to work at PUB, which had opened its doors in the 1920s in her early life, this fact was used to give the interior an injection of glamour. "Local people now gather at [Scandic] Haymarket and order bottles

of champagne and party," Makowsky said, adding that the desired step upmarket had been achieved with some bold statements in the design, such as "Greta Garbo meets **Lady Gaga.**"

Koncept also worked at transforming a piano bar at the nearby Scandic Hotel Anglajs into a living room, with the result that the previously little-used facility at the hotel, which is located at one of the best addresses in the city, is now a lively venue where people take their laptops and work. This has led to a significant increase in revenue, Makowsky noted.

Viking Line started operations in 1959 and pioneered the use of car ferries rather than passenger ships with limited or no space for cars. The line developed quickly in the two subsequent decades, as the numbers of passengers and volumes of freight required more capacity. As one of the major ferry companies in the Baltic, its newbuildings in the 1980s played a significant role in first the introduction and later the evolution of the cruise ferry. "However, some people might think that cruising on the Baltic Sea isn't an experience for them, but by changing the interior design you can change the way people look at it in a positive direction. The travel experience of tomorrow is much about slow cruise, well-being and good food, so the interior design becomes even more important," Makowsky pointed out.

### **Importance of windows**

In terms of basic layout, the Viking Glory will build on the experience of the slightly smaller, Finnish-built Viking Grace that Viking Line introduced in 2013. This ship marked a revolution in thinking, as all public areas were located on the two uppermost decks, above the cabin accommodations. On the Viking Glory, large windows will offer unobstructed views, which should be much appreciated as every other crossing of the ship takes place in daytime and the beauti-