

A design studio with a difference

Stefan Seidenfaden and Timo Hogestraat of Partner Ship Design tell Elly Yates-Roberts about the firm's diverse portfolio of projects and why partnership is the name of their game

The 21st century is becoming synonymous with celebrating difference, uniqueness and diversity. This is a principle German firm Partner Ship Design has built its business on to allow it to deliver the types of designs that will create unique ships and passenger experiences. This focus has led to its success on a wide range of ships.

"We are incredibly proud of our diverse portfolio, which includes everything from AIDA Cruises' AIDAcosma to Carnival Cruise Line's Mardi Gras, Costa Cruises' Costa Smeralda and Lindblad Expeditions' Hanse Explorer," says Stefan Seidenfaden, a junior partner at Partner Ship Design. "I don't know how many other design studios have worked on such a variety of vessels. It makes us very different to the rest of

the industry. We work very hard to understand the owners' requests and their vision for the future of their brand. We put this all together and to produce high-quality vessels."

Despite its vast portfolio, Partner Ship Design is heavily involved in every part of the ships it creates. "It's not just about the interior design," says Timo Hogestraat, a junior partner at Partner Ship Design. "We work on light fittings, staircases, fabrics and materials, colours, shapes, structures. Partner Ship Design can develop general arrangement plans from scratch, so we know exactly how everything works and is connected.

"Working on the general arrangement plan means we have influence over the steel structure and can make it fit the required functions. Obviously, we must adhere to regulations, but beyond that

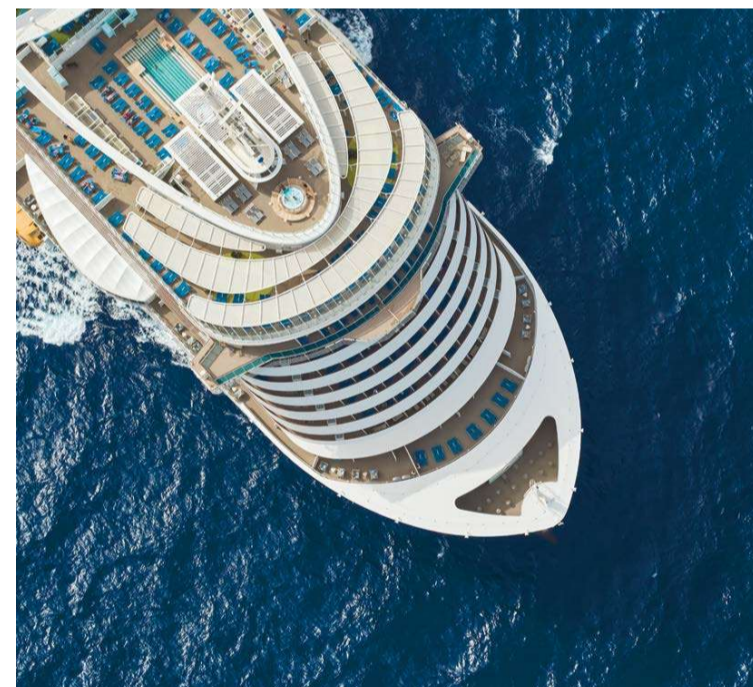
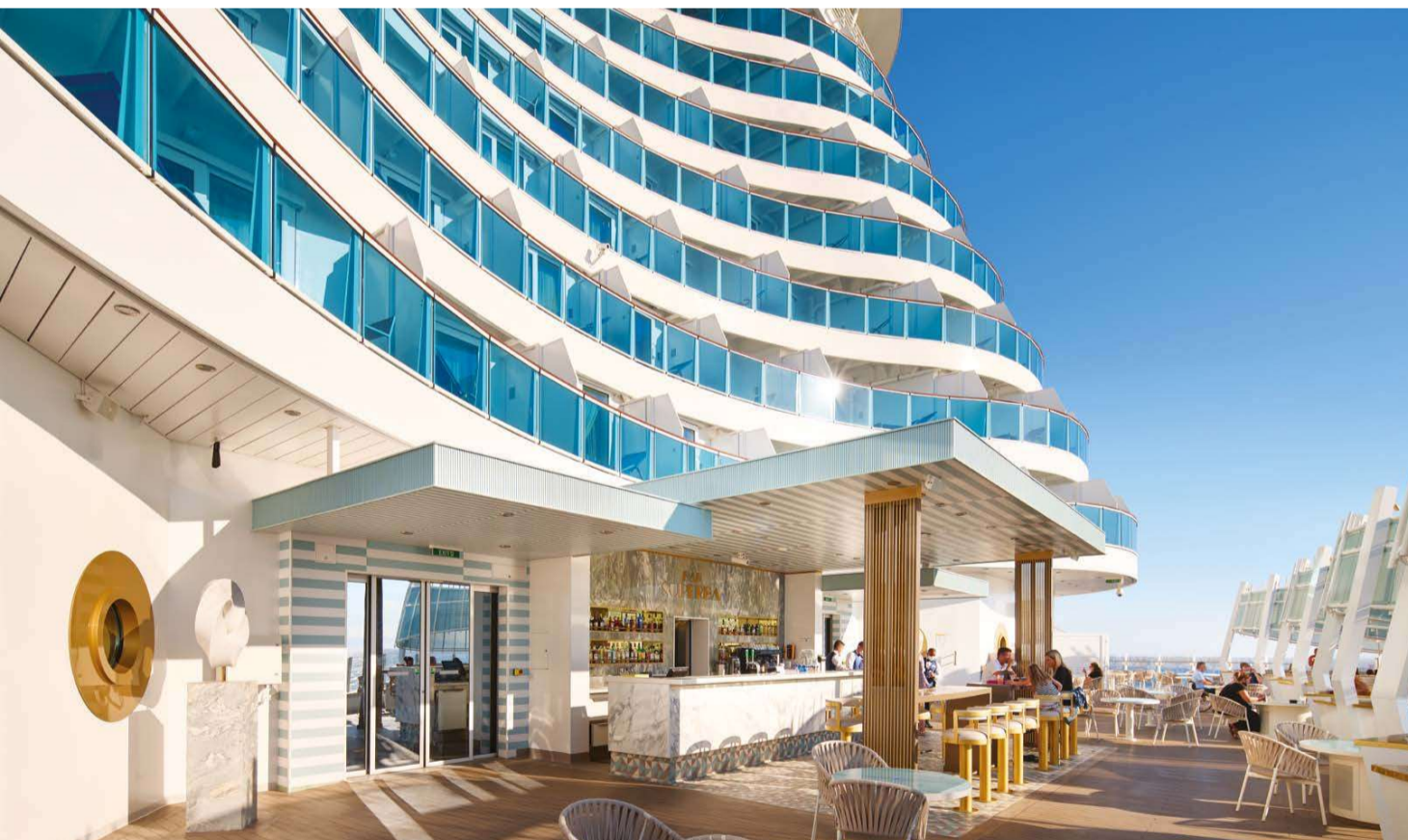
we have a lot of scope to be creative. We work on the logistics, the position of the functional elements and the accommodation areas to create an optimised layout."

"It's all about creating exciting designs that evoke the right atmosphere and emotions," says Seidenfaden.

A perfect example of this is the firm's work on Sea Cloud Spirit – a three-masted sailing ship operated by Germany-based Sea Cloud Cruises. "This was a completely different project for us. For example, there are three masts that run through the superstructure from the lower decks, which directly impact the onboard spaces," says Seidenfaden. "Due to the ship's geometry the layout of the cabins varies, but they all have to be the same size and offer the same level of luxury."



The three masts of Sea Cloud Spirit created design challenges for the firm, which worked hard to ensure guests feel the same level of luxury in cabins of various sizes



Partner Ship Design included several Italian influences in the design of Piazza Trastevere onboard Costa Smeralda, including an interpretation of Rome's Pantheon

Partner Ship Design uses some of the most innovative technology to deliver experiences that exceed guest expectations. For Seidenfaden, the secret ingredient is the firm's 3D department.

"Every rendering you see starts here," he explains. "We don't just create photorealistic images, we visualise the atmosphere of each space."

Partnership is another key ingredient for creating functional and successful cruise ships. "Delivering the best guest experience is the top priority for us, and we're not able to realise our dreams without the help of shipowners and their teams, engineers, contractors and, last but not least, shipyards," says Seidenfaden. "It is all in our name: Partner Ship Design."

Cooperation between every party is essential for delivering unique vessels that we have become known for."

Two of the crown jewels of Partner Ship Design's portfolio are Costa Toscana and Costa Smeralda. Both cruise ships are fully powered by LNG. Despite being designed by a German firm, the ship honours Costa's Italian



The two-deck SkyDome on P&O Cruises' Iona was designed to give passengers uninterrupted views, while evoking the feeling of an English park in summer

heritage. “We were incredibly proud to create this ship, especially since we were trusted to design something with such innate Italian-ness,” says Seidenfaden. “As visitors to the country, we see everything through different eyes than residents. When you grow up somewhere, you get used to your surroundings, and perhaps don’t appreciate them as much as others. This appreciation is what we brought to this project.”

Among the spaces that the team designed was Piazza Trastevere – an onboard hub of activity with bars and restaurants facing onto it – which features an interpretation of Rome’s Pantheon.

“We didn’t have a lot of space, so we had to work with several layers to create a

modern interpretation,” says Hogestraat. “We did a lot of research with historical items, buildings and other design features from across Italy, and we created something wonderful.”

Costa Smeralda is one of many ships that Partner Ship Design has created for Carnival Corporation, which owns several cruise lines, including Costa

basic platform, Partner Ship Design works hard to ensure that the interiors reflect the different brand identities and customer expectations.

“Carnival’s Mardi Gras is all about fun,” says Hogestraat. “Roller coasters and other high-octane activities are much more popular here, so we have to implement them into the design.”

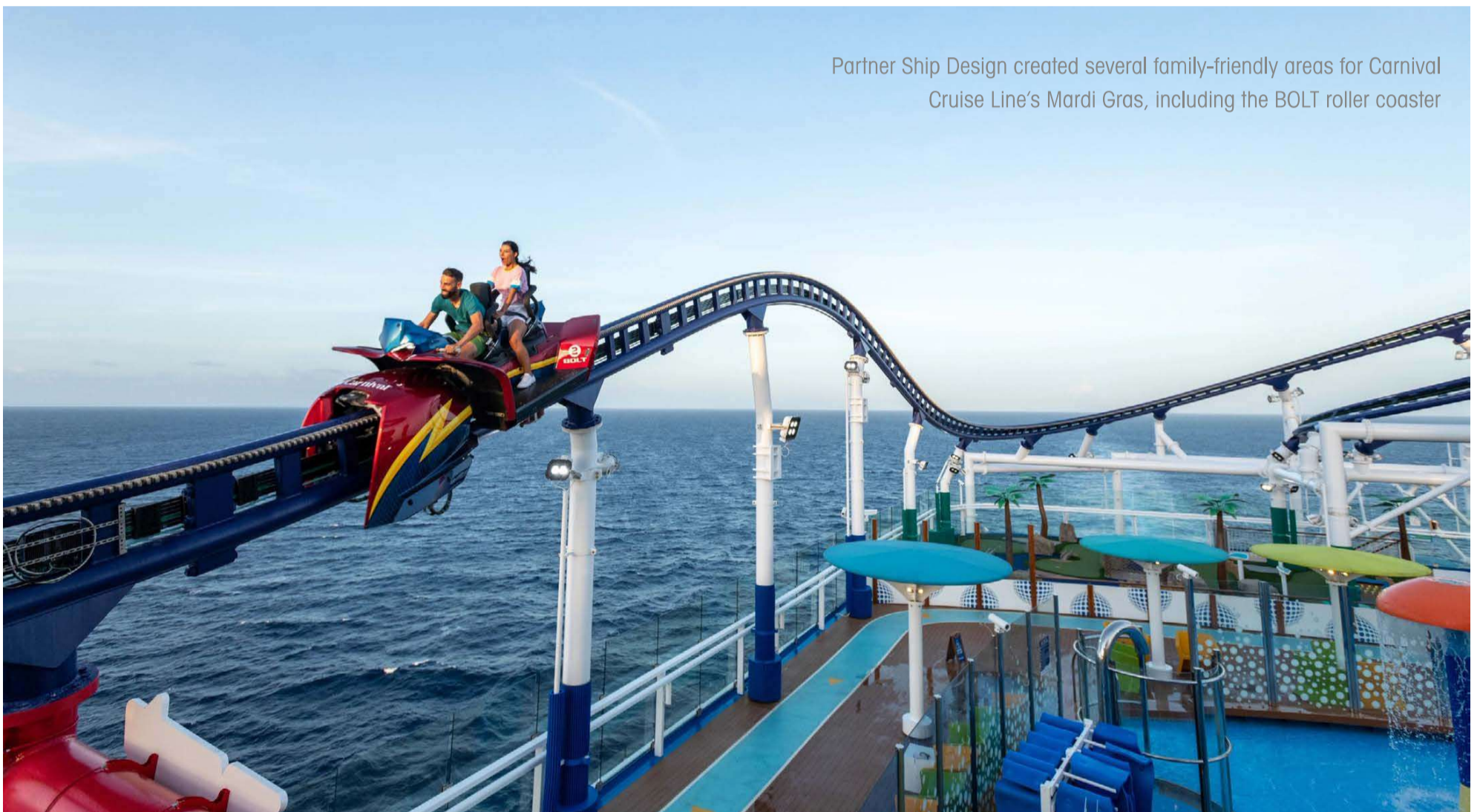
“We have designed most of our newbuilds from scratch”

Cruises, Carnival Cruise Line, AIDA Cruises and P&O Cruises. Despite the fact that the most recent ships for all these brands are built using the same

Contrastingly, Iona from UK-based P&O Cruises features the SkyDome – a top-deck glass structure that acts as the hub for onboard entertainment and



The German design studio created 17 different restaurants and 23 bars on AIDAcosma



Partner Ship Design created several family-friendly areas for Carnival Cruise Line's Mardi Gras, including the BOLT roller coaster

provides passengers with uninterrupted views. Designed to feel like an English park in summer, the space features a pool, two whirlpools, sun loungers and dining areas. And AIDAcosma is altogether different again.

“Here we created 17 different restaurants and 23 bars,” says Seidenfaden. “But the real star of the show is the Theatrium. Unlike many other cruise ships, AIDAcosma doesn’t feature a dedicated theatre. Instead, we implemented the popular Theatrium

concept which we developed with AIDA Cruises for its Sphinx-class ships on AIDAcosma and her sister AIDAnova.”

Another company favourite is Hanse Explorer, which Partner Ship Design transformed from a training vessel to an exploration yacht.

“Before we started working on the ship, it was used for training seamen,” says Seidenfaden. “The owner asked us to turn the upper deck – which had been a technical area – into a public space. We made some technical

modifications and also added a whirlpool, two cabanas and a seating area. This area contributes to the new look and feel of the ship.”

Seidenfaden recalls the joy of incorporating nature into the redesign of Hanse Explorer. “We achieved a 360-degree view of the surroundings from the open deck, and this was echoed throughout the ship by incorporating larger windows. The connection between inside and outside is very important, especially on an expedition cruise ship.