




THE INTERIOR DESIGNERS' PERSPECTIVES ON MEGASTAR



Hearing directly from the designers of new passenger ships is always revealing - especially when they are experienced and dynamic figures like Vertti Kivi, the owner of dSign and Heikki Mattila of Aprocos, two of Finland's leading shipboard designers of the present era. Shippax asked them each questions about the design inspiration and execution of their areas of the MEGASTAR.

TEXT: BRUCE PETER

How do you see your current ferry interior design projects and your general design approach in relation to the established traditions of Finnish ship interior design and contemporary Nordic design in general?

Vertti Kivi:

We are known for designs with a strong ambience and our clients tend to hire us when they are looking for totally new and disruptive ideas in the field. In this sense I don't think people connect our designs with traditional Nordic design, although we are based in Finland.

Heikki Mattila:

At the moment, we are working on an interior design for a ro-pax ship, and on two concept designs for ferries as well, which both emphasize a Scandinavian aesthetic. As far as I can see, Scandinavian design represents a distinct layout as well as stylish and well-resolved interior details.

Can you summarise your brief from Tallink. Did you get a 'carte blanche', or were there particular stipulations?

Vertti Kivi:

Design briefs are always different. In the case of the MEGASTAR Shuttle, we were asked to design the interiors based on their customer feedback from the existing vessels (STAR and SUPERSTAR, the interiors of which were designed by others). Customers had wanted fewer cabins, for instance, which released more space for restaurants. The 'feel' and the atmosphere were totally up to us. It seemed that, in hiring us, our client knew who they were dealing with and so they didn't even expect to get anything 'traditional'.

We were asked to design interiors of the entrance lobby, all seven restaurants and bars, the children's playroom, the Comfort and Business lounges.

Heikki Mattila:

Tallink gave us the necessary information for each space, such as the number of seats and the functional requirements. As for the design and look, they gave us a 'carte blanche'.

What are the major differences of approach between designing public spaces for a cruise ferry (e.g. VIKING GRACE) and a shuttle ferry (e.g. MEGASTAR)?

Vertti Kivi:

We have designed interiors for several cruise ships but this was the first time



Samuli Hintikka



Vertti Kivi



Part of the Aprocos team - from left to right: Heikki Mattila, Samuli Pöllänen and Leena Kinnunen.

we designed interiors for a journey that only takes two hours. Designing a functional layout that enables smooth customer flow is a vital part of a shuttle design.

Could you influence the overall layout or was that already fixed by Meyer Turku and/or Tallink?

Vertti Kivi:

We worked hard on layouts in order to get rid of the typical long straight corridors common in ships. After careful studies, we were bold enough to introduce the idea of crossing paths in the lobby area, for example. In operation, it seems to function well and the upside is that it gives a more interesting and energetic ambience to the space. In addition to this, we opened long

views to the connecting spaces, hoping that they would lure the passengers to explore the many offerings elsewhere on board.

How did your ideas interface with those of the shipowner and the builder? Were there any areas where there was notable agreement, or ones where one or other party required to compromise?

Vertti Kivi:

Our clients seem to appreciate that, in addition to answering the interior design brief, we always try to find ways to improve their business. Design thinking, the way designers resolve problems, is nowadays in demand among business people.

In this case, our client approved our

disruptive ideas for the lobby design, for example. But there were also many compromises to be made in a huge and demanding project such as this. As we all know, the strict safety regulations set their own challenges for designers.

Heikki Mattila:

There were not any big disagreements. We knew the reference and we designed the spaces according to that. We reached a mutual understanding quite easily on how everything should be implemented.

How was it to co-operate with another design practice with a different approach (as was the case both on VIKING GRACE and on MEGASTAR)?

Vertti Kivi:

We are pretty used to it by now: this is how it goes in this business. There are many actors and the areas are split between design agencies. Everyone takes care of one's own areas pretty independently.

Heikki Mattila:

We have worked on projects which include several designers before, so the collaboration worked well.

Was any inspiration taken from other shuttle-type ferries, such as P&O's SPIRIT OF BRITAIN/FRANCE, or the Color Line SUPERSPEED 1 and 2?

Vertti Kivi:

Not at all! We wanted to move on and forget the traditional ferry design approach. We couldn't find any reason for sticking to it, not as designers nor as passengers.

Was there any conversation or were there any meetings between dSign and Aprocos to obtain harmony in the two areas of the interiors?

Vertti Kivi:

Yes, there were.

What were your starting points, references and inspirations for the overall approach to the MEGASTAR interiors?

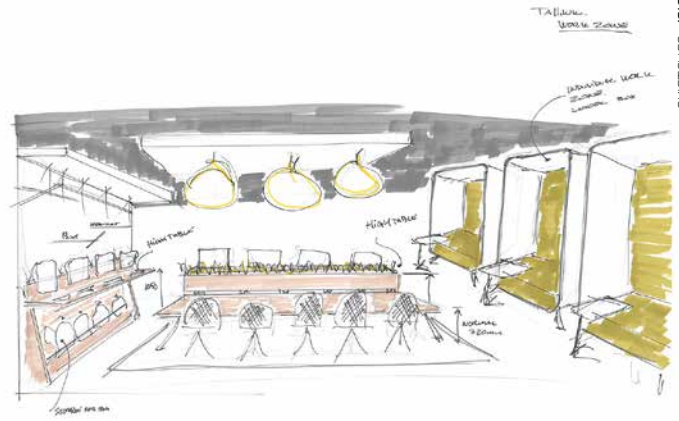
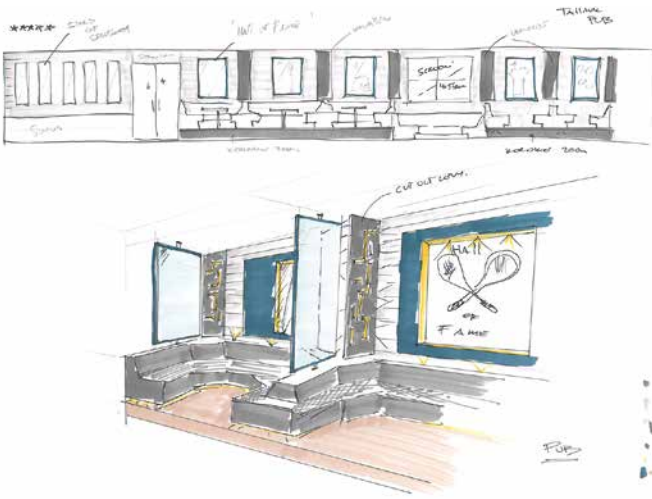
Vertti Kivi:

We wanted our design to cause the adult passengers to feel a strong urge to explore the ship like children do. So, we concentrated in creating long interesting views and exciting customer paths around the vessel. Along the paths, there are various 'experience islands' in the form of restaurants, pubs and cafes with varying moods and offerings. More ►

Artist's impressions of (top to bottom): Victory Bar, Delight Buffet and the Main Lounge amidships on Deck 8.



ARTIST'S IMPRESSIONS: dSIGN



► points of reference came from projects ashore than from other ferries.

thanks to the shipbuilding industry there.

VIKING GRACE, which we designed and was introduced in 2013.

How did the anticipated passenger flow influence the design?

Vertti Kivi:
When the journey only takes two hours and there is constant loading and unloading going on, having good flows becomes such a vital part of customer comfort that it has to be in the focus of the design.

There are a great many picturesque details throughout the passenger accommodation. What is your position with regard to the importance of patterns, ornaments, decoration and colour and how has this guided your approach?

Vertti Kivi:
We are known for the strong ambience of our designs. I guess that we use more décor and ornaments than most of the traditional Nordic design agencies. For MEGASTAR we chose rather serene colour schemes but with bold graphics. The carpets were specially designed by us and these are a vital part of the overall design feel. Carefully placed original design pieces, such as Moooi lighting fixtures, for example, give a certain quality feel to a space, even if the other design choices were more economical.

Inside a ferry, with wide decks and fairly low deck-heads, the ceiling finishes are of great importance – as is the lighting – and on MEGASTAR, the latter is particularly effective. How did you go about giving the interiors distinctive ‘day’ and ‘night’ atmospheres?

Vertti Kivi:
As always in our projects, lighting design was another key focus of our attention. We worked hard to get the desired fresh but cosy general lighting mood throughout the ship. It’s all done with the latest LED technology.

To what extent have Finnish and/or Estonian products, fixtures and fittings been used and are there any materials used that you find particularly interesting or innovative?

Vertti Kivi:
We tried to use as many Scandinavian design pieces as we could. Bespoke design pieces by us, such as lighting fixtures and built-in furniture, were manufactured around the Turku area in Finland where the ship was built. We are very happy with the quality of the work. There is a lot of know-how

What were your starting points, references and inspirations for the overall approach to the Traveller Superstore? Did you look to airport duty-free shop design, for example, or to interiors of department stores?

Heikki Mattila:
We have designed several shops on



different ships for Tallink Silja, and the design was based on the concept that was already used in the big duty-free shops on SILJA SERENADE and SILJA SYMPHONY. However, the most challenging part was the tall space and the staircase in the shop; such a feature was never found in duty-free shops like this before. We wanted to embrace the tall space with an attention-grabbing round ceiling feature and transparent surfaces, like glass balustrades. Additionally, the designing of the main cashiers was a difficult detail, because the customer flow had to be fast and fluent, although the amount of space was very limited.

The free seating area appears to be very popular with passengers. Do you think that it is important for passenger ships also to contain non-commercial spaces and, if so, why?

Heikki Mattila:

In my opinion it's very important to have free seating areas on ships that

are mainly used for transportation and not so much for entertainment and on which travelling time is limited – two hours in this case. Many people are working while they are travelling, and free seating areas enable that to happen.

How important is it for ship interiors to resist wear and tear relative to other comparable public environments (hotel foyers, airport lounges). Is there a discernible trend towards less durable fittings and more frequent refitting?

Heikki Mattila:

Ships' public areas always get very hard usage. Especially on ferries like this, the materials and furniture must be very durable. It's ecologically as well as economically intelligent to use robust materials only. So far as is possible, the interior design must also withstand the test of time, so that it can outlast the trends of today and it doesn't have to be changed very often. I think that

in a ferry or cruise ship milieu nothing should be easily broken or disposable. It's a matter of safety and ethics.

What do you expect to be the design life of the interiors?

Vertti Kivi:

In these kinds of heavy-use environment, life expectancy is about five years. But I hope that the new kind of ferry design thinking we have introduced to the industry lives on a bit longer.

Vertti Kivi and Heikki Mattila – thank you very much and Shippax wishes you success with your future projects. ■

Traveller Superstore



Sitting Lounge

SKETCH/ ARTIST'S IMPRESSIONS: APROCOS