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# CRUISE CONTROL



A veteran cruise-ship designer pulls out all the stops in creating Silversea Cruises' latest luxury vessel.

BY MATTHEW HALL

**OVER THE PAST 30-PLUS YEARS,** Italy's Giacomo Erasmo Mortola has spearheaded the design of about 50 cruise ships for such lines as Princess Cruises, Cunard, P&O and Silversea Cruises. (Roughly half that work involved newbuild ships, while the remainder are refurbishments.) Mortola drew on that vast experience in his latest design for the latter firm, the all-suite *Silver Muse*, which is a newly constructed luxury liner that set sail earlier this year.

As is virtually always the case when designing a cruise ship, Mortola says he faced more technical and structural constraints than a typical land-based project entails. "One example of the structural constraints found on board cruise vessels is the required ratio between the surfaces of the internal venues and the height of the ceilings, which usually translates into lower ceiling height than is found in land-based buildings," explains Mortola, founder of Genoa-based GEM-Design for Cruise Ships. "Creating a successful design for such spaces means interweaving



COURTESY OF SILVERSEA CRUISES

ATRIUM









ATLANTIDE RESTAURANT

a variety of geometrical and optical tricks to increase the feeling of verticality within the space.” (More on that magic later.)

The limited ceiling height also influences the choice of flooring materials, Mortola says. “You really have to work to find a balance between hard surfaces (stones, ceramics, etc.) and softer materials such as carpets, which offer sound absorption. The use of curtains and valances also enters the equation here, especially when it comes to dampening noise propagation between one deck and another.”

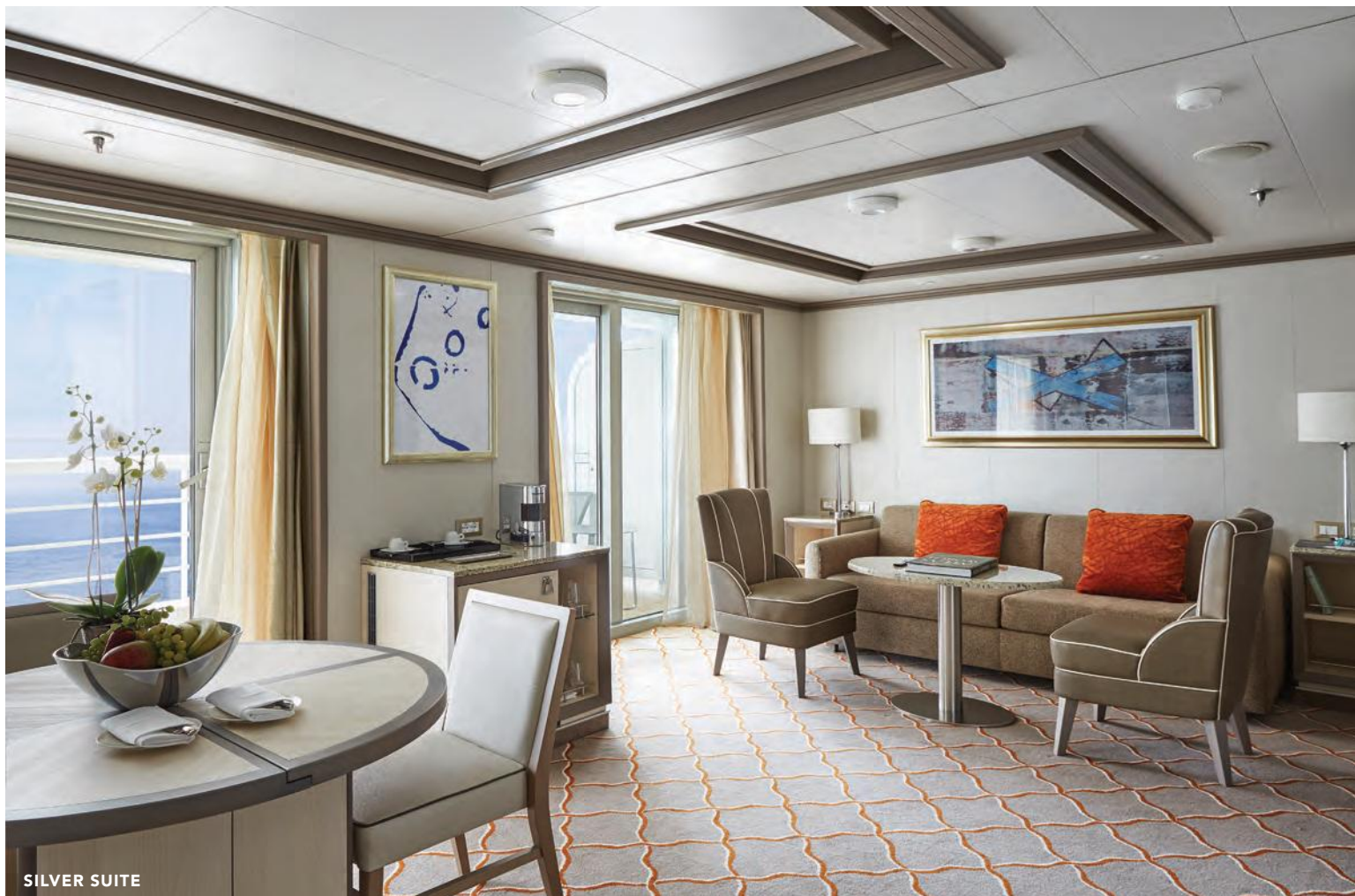
Another big difference between land-based structures and those on a ship is the greater number of required safety systems that need to be easily accessible behind ceilings and walls. “That means large portions of continuous, solid soffits are not possible. Instead you have to include a means of access (hatches, remov-

able panels, etc.) to all these system by incorporating a subtle series of architectural elements that aren’t readily apparent to the eye.”

Mortola’s design brief for *Silver Muse* involved creating a feeling of luxurious small-ship intimacy on a vessel whose passenger capacity is 596. That translated into such steps as subdividing the ship’s 298 suites into nine different configurations and using features like room size and picture windows versus floor-to-ceiling ones to differentiate them.

Wallcoverings also helped distinguish the suite types. “The ship’s standard suites have vinyl wallpaper, while its larger, superior suites have wallpaper by high-profile Italian textile makers,” says Mortola. The headboards in the higher-end suites are also a step up, featuring eco-friendly manta-ray patterned faux leather.





SILVER SUITE



GUEST ROOM BATH

The suites' architectural shell consists of neutral pastel colors, counterbalanced with select darker accent tones for the loose furniture, fabrics and textiles. The bathrooms enhance the luxe feel with their liberal use of marble.

As for the ship's two main interior areas—the Atrium, which has about 8,600 sq. ft. of space, and the 3,500-sq.-ft. Panorama lounge—both provide lots of plush seating configurations to encourage mingling. And, as mentioned earlier, Mortola says carefully crafting the ceilings in these high-profile spaces also played a central role in creating the desired vibe.

"For the Atrium ceiling, we used a series of mouldings and light coves aimed at breaking up the surface and maximizing the perception of height," he says. "In addition, the vertical arrangement of wall panels and wall-washing lights help give the space a more expansive feel."





For the Panorama ceiling, Mortola says, the aesthetics needed to mesh with a variety of functional and acoustic requirements, since at night the space becomes what the designer describes as “the pulsing heart of the ship,” thanks to the live music and dance parties it typically hosts.

“The Panorama ceiling contains a combination of solid spaces and open grating in order to improve the acoustics and limit noise reverberation,” Mortola says. “The focal point of the lounge is the vertical decorative chandelier positioned in the internal stair trunk, which become an attraction to guests

passing on the lower deck.”

*Silver Muse* is also home to a wider variety of on-board restaurants than its predecessors, including three concepts new to the fleet: the art deco-inspired Atlantide, the Asian-accented Indochine and the poolside Spaccanapoli pizzeria.

“This is an innovation for the Silversea fleet, as it entailed moving from a single, main restaurant concept to a multiple offer which gives guests the chance to choose from a variety of cuisines and ambiances,” he says. “This reflects the real meaning of luxury, and that is what *Silver Muse* is all about.” ●