



FLAGSHIPS THREE

New European luxury liners — one Norwegian, two Italian — present divergent but sound solutions to the problem of designing interiors for floating resort hotels



M.S. Sagafjord



T.V. Raffaello



T.V. Michelangelo

The design of a luxury passenger liner poses serious and controversial problems for its interior planners. Their biggest problem, naturally, is the traditional shape and function of a ship itself. When its specific purpose is the safe and comfortable transport of leisurely, pleasure-seeking passengers, the problem is complex: The ship is also a hotel, yet without the neatly aligned squares and rectangles of shore-bound construction. Passengers are captives of their temporary environment—and design flaws cannot be mitigated by palmy landscaping or candlelit cocktail gardens.

Of the three new luxury liners shown here, one, the Norwegian America line's *M.S. Sagafjord* is scheduled primarily for vacation cruises south from New York. The Italian Line's new sister ships, the *T. V. Michelangelo* and *T. V. Raffaello*, sail seven-day crossings between New York and Naples. All, however, can be considered sea-going resorts. The widely different design of their interiors raises an old maritime controversy: Should a ship look like a ship — i.e., nautical and yacht-like — or like a floating hotel?

The first solution attempts to capture the age-old romance of seagoing. Though deck chairs and bouillon-at-eleven is far from the visceral, masculine drama of Conradesque freighters anchoring in foreign ports, the passenger ship still promises outward-bound adventure. The most sedentary landlubber is moved to unaccountable nostalgia by a blend of salt air, midnight confetti, captain's dinners, and

occasional sighting of porpoise.

Yet liner designers have rarely opted for nautical atmosphere. As distinguished design critic Edgar Kaufmann, Jr. complained about post-war British and American liners in "Shipboard Design" (INTERIORS, December, 1946): "Why was it necessary to assume that American travelers prefer surroundings suggesting they are ashore instead of on shipboard?"

Designers of these new European ships have chosen widely variant solutions to the ship versus hotel problem. Each had, however, similar passenger requirements: comfort, luxury, diversion, and far-from-home atmosphere.

Interiors of the smallest—the 24,000-ton *Sagafjord*—were executed by an international group of designers and artists headed by Denmark's noted architect/designer Kay Korbng. Korbng's team created a gay, sea-going resort hotel, yet immaculate use of woods evokes the sleekly crafted feeling aboard Scandinavian yachts.

The gay sunny atmosphere is achieved with bright colors, summery patterns, and decorative artwork; the "luxury" element is artlessly obtained with rich natural materials. Korbng's cabinetmaker's detailing, from state-room built-ins to railings, is evident everywhere.

The Italian sister ships, the 43,000-ton *Michelangelo* and *Raffaello*, are the fifth largest ships in the world. They were built as the ultimate expression of the Italian Line's longstanding tradition of floating "ocean palaces." Their overall plans are vir-

tually identical. Each features enormous, opulently furnished public rooms and accommodations, which frankly deny the existence without of the vast "uncharted seas."

The surprising effect of the commodious large-scale furniture in the Italian ships is that of *moderne* 'thirties design. Boxy, outsized chairs cluster under contemporary chandeliers in bars and ballrooms (pages 110-111) more like imitative Elbow Room than Palace Hotel. Their most highly touted features are copious and eclectic collections of decorative artwork, ranging from Flemish style tapestries to an entire corridor in beaten and etched metal. Though executed by numerous contemporary Italian artists and sculptors, the artwork, too, evokes Thirties' design.

The effect of the Italian liners, somehow, is oddly pleasing. The grandiose and opulent clumsiness of their interiors is too Italianate and exuberant to be callowly termed "tasteless." Making mockery of contemporary design standards, they nonetheless put to shame the sleek metal-and-plastic integrated interiors of other new ships.

The luxurious but impeccably Scandinavian *Sagafjord* should still, however, set the trend in future passenger liners. The leisurely era of "grand hotels," afloat or ashore, is irrevocably gone. Mention of the *Mauretania* still brings tears to many an eye, but the comfortable yacht-resort will put salt air and porpoises back in the passenger's logbook.—B.W.N.

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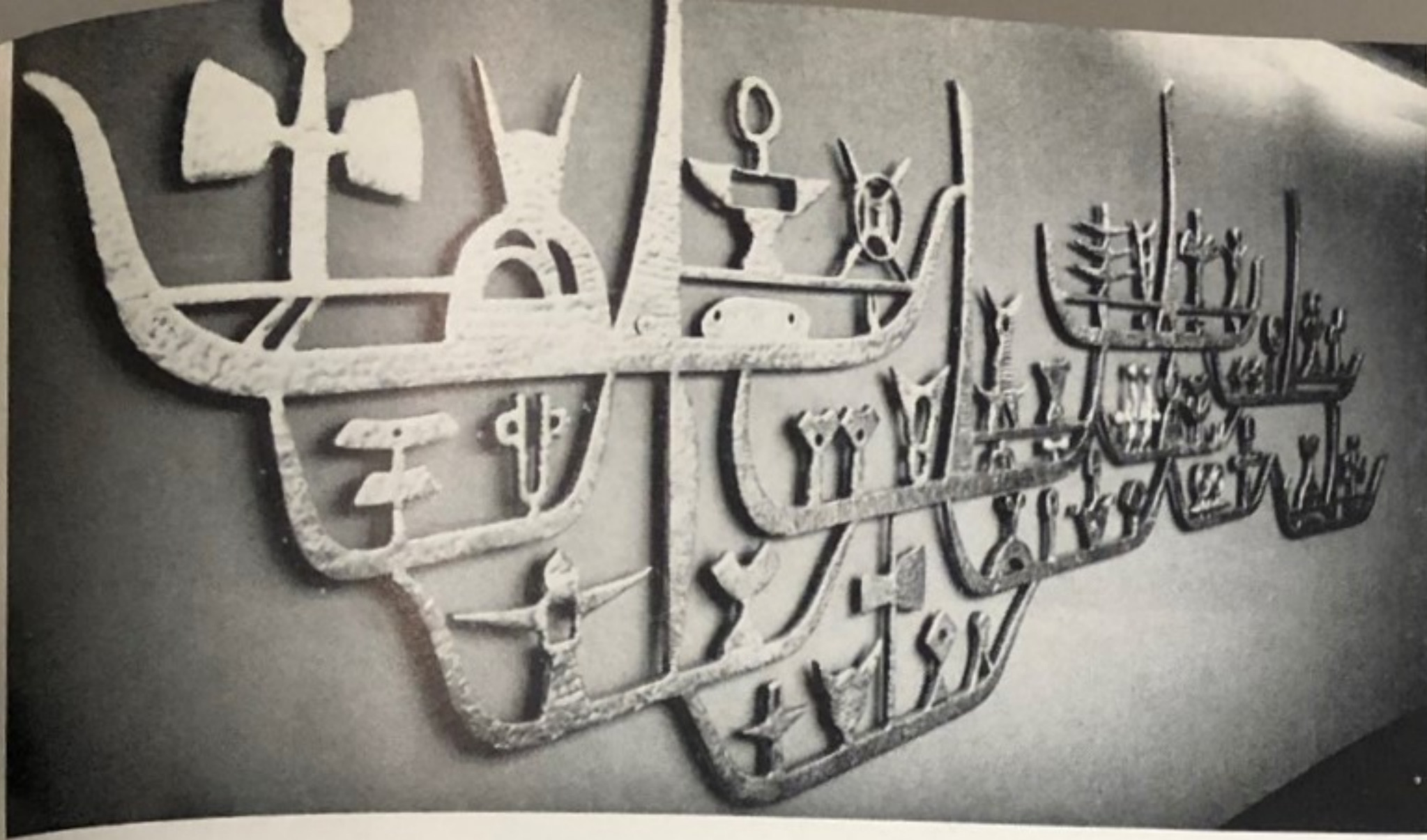


M.S. Sagafjord

Above, right: The Garden Lounge on board the Sagafjord is on an elevated deck encircling the first class ballroom, enabling passengers to look out at sea by day, and watch dancing by night. Designed by Danish architect/designer Kay Korbning, principal of a team of interior designers and artists responsible for the Sagafjord interiors, the garden lounge is furnished with cane chairs in flowered upholstery and ceramic-topped tables. The color scheme is a summery red and gold. Window walls are paneled with Canadian rock elm, while walls amidships are paneled in palisander. Yellow and white draperies are drawn at night. Right, below: The dance floor of the Garden Lounge at night, with draperies drawn at windows around encircling platform (above). Six lounge groupings on the lower level—chairs upholstered in russet wool around ceramic topped tables—surround the circular dance floor of white Italian marble. Columns of gold anodized aluminum, dividing the spaces, have live flowering plants in white marble boxes at their base. A domed light ceiling above the dance floor affords a multitude of colored light combinations.







Opposite: The dramatic staircase in the first class hall is made of iron painted blue; treads and hallway are carpeted in blue. Safety lights are built into steps. The wall in back of the staircase has an abstract geometric pattern composed of strips of thamerlan (a wood similar to palisander) and plates of blue lacquer in a rectangular pattern.

Left, above: The largest work of art on the ship is Sigurd Winge's sculpture "The Wind and the Signs" in vivid enamel colors on copper. This decorates a panel 25 feet long and six feet high on the Veranda Deck of the Sagafjord.

Left, center: The library lounge, designed by Kay Korbng, is furnished with commodious armchairs and tables, all designed by Korbng. Tables are fitted with specially-designed brass-and-crystal glass reading lamps. Wall, paneled in Canadian rock elm, is decorated with reproduction of an old map of the world. Carpet, draperies, and upholstery are all restful shades of green.

Left, below: The Ibsen suite, a deluxe stateroom by Korbng, is completely paneled in mahogany, and all furniture (also made of mahogany) is built in. Sleeping quarters include closet, toilet table, built-in storage space and bed (which can be removed if necessary). Suites are carpeted, with rya rugs at bedside. Indirect lighting throughout is supplemented by custom-designed lamps (not shown).

SOURCES FOR M. S. SAGAFJORD

All furniture: Designed by Kay Korbng, made by I. Thorballs, Copenhagen. Now manufactured in the United States by JG Furniture.

Woodwork and paneling throughout: Korbng design, executed by De Nijs' Meubelfabriek, Rotterdam.

Carpets and draperies: De Nijs' Meubelfabriek, Rotterdam.

Lighting: Korbng design, executed by A/S Lyfa, Copenhagen.

Shipbuilders: Societé des Forges et Chantiers de la Méditerranée, La Seyne.





Opposite, top: One of the biggest public rooms on any ship is the 100 by 80 foot first-class lounge of the Michelangelo. Opulent atmosphere is achieved with plush carpeting, velvet upholstery on outsized armchairs, enormous contemporary chandeliers, and Flemish-type tapestries decorating walls.

Opposite, bottom: First class bar on the Michelangelo is furnished with unusual but comfortable armchairs of steel and black leather; bar has bottles in grid of glass shelves illuminated from behind.

Left, above: a first class stateroom on the Michelangelo features the same oversized furniture used throughout the ship, with draperies on ceiling-recessed track separating living and sleeping areas. Case furnishings, including bedsteads, have highly polished lacquered surfaces.

Left, center and below: For the first class lounge, bar, and ballroom aboard the Raffaello, architects Attilio and Emilio Padula and Fabio Poggiolini combined three rooms in one large space. To unite them visually and architecturally, they used the ceiling as the strongest design element: in coffers of varying depths they placed Murano glass tube chandeliers, emitting softly diffused light. Sofas and semi-circular lounge chairs are upholstered in light-colored velvet. Walls of the bar (below) are decorated by twenty-two eight-foot high tapestries, by contemporary Italian artists.

