Archispeak 363 - AU - Outdoor Design Trends on Cruise Ships

[00:00:00]

**Evan Troxel:** Welcome to the Archispeak podcast. And today we are joined by Helena and you tell me how, how do you pronounce your name in the true Swedish Helena?

Nice.

**Helena Sawelin:** Helena Sawelin is my, I pronounce it in Swedish, yes.

**Cormac Phalen:** we wouldn't have gotten that.

**Evan Troxel:** I would not have pronounced it correctly. So thank you for, for taking that on. And maybe

you can start off by telling us about your studio and the type of work that you do.

**Helena Sawelin:** Oh yeah.

so, um,

Tillberg Design, it's an, uh,

Old company. It's, uh, 60 year celebration we have.

and, um, we are working with a big, big cruise ship and that is maybe we could call what we have done from the beginning.

It has been with Robert Tillberg that started it a long time ago. During the years [00:01:00] and we have followed the market, of course, and the change that has happened. it has been a little bit more. Yacht like cruise ship, uh, the last couple of, let's say almost 10 years have coming in, in a different way.

You could call it hotel yachts, uh, residential yachts, uh, and also people wants to have a private, uh, apartment on board. So we can see that change has also come the last couple of years. So the, the industry has changed a little bit, but cruise ship is what we have. done exterior design, interior design, uh, master planning.

Uh, so we, we are very advanced when it comes to, uh, the cruise ship design, uh, and, and can actually tailor, tailor made it for the client. We also have the last couple of years, we have bought two companies, Talia Marine, that is Naval Architect, and [00:02:00] together with them, we are, Having this, uh, competence in, in our company today with, uh, engineering.

Uh, so that is very beneficial.

**Evan Troxel:** So can you give us an idea of your background ?

**Helena Sawelin:** So my background, I'm, uh, started as an FF&E designer 30 years back. putting together the materials, working in the team, of course, um, meeting the clients, was participating in the yard meetings. So, so all that has been, of course, uh, growing, uh, well, with, with all that means as an FF&E designer, but it's main, mainly putting together, uh, making it colorful, let's say, uh, the design, with, um, Everything from carpets to furniture and all that.

And during the year, we were growing. I had become a mentor, taking, let's say, educating our new employees, uh, FF& E people that was coming in. We were growing [00:03:00] quite dramatic from 2000. Let's say 13, 14, 15, up to 19, we were growing quite a lot. So then I become a little bit more mentoring also. And then from 2018, I was more looking into the business.

director. Um, so today I'm a little bit more business director having my clients working close to them and also have a team that I am working very close to and make sure that we, we are following the guidelines from the clients. Uh, and also looking into the sustainability. Sustainability has become a very big part of the design today.

so I'm, I'm looking into the sustainability, uh, in the cruise industry as well.

**Cormac Phalen:** one of the things that I kind of noticed as

I was doing a little bit of research on your company is you have a lot of designers that come from a variety of different backgrounds, architecture, interior design,

**Helena Sawelin:** Yeah.

**Cormac Phalen:** and how [00:04:00] does, we've, we've had in the past a lot of discussion with other people who followed non linear Kind of like design paths to

different aspects of design, whether it's, going into product

design or architecture, interior designers and things like that. how does the background of say, an FF& E designer or, interior designer architect. lead to, cruise ship and, um, yacht design. I mean,

I could see a parallel, but it just seems like an

interesting kind of like pathway to get to

that, area. And I'm just kind of curious, not saying that, maybe I should send my resume, but you know,

**Helena Sawelin:** all the people is educated, uh, Architects or interior designers. And of course, as I say, the, the, the education is for the land based industry in the first case. Uh, but. You have to learn, uh, basically, [00:05:00] uh, and you have the experience to, well, you, you need to have experience to be the marine interior designer.

There is not really an education for that, what I understand, so you

have to actually learning by doing. So when we were growing dramatically, as I said, uh, Well, from, let's say, around 2015 and onwards, we did what we call an ABC internal education. So, everybody had this on board education to learn what is marine industry, what is, um, yeah, everything that is necessary.

We had a very good program, we can call it, with our most experienced people that were helping our new employees, architects, to actually understand the difference between a land based to a marine interior design. Because there's so many, so many different things.

Requirements, uh, fire requirements, uh, uh, health and care and many other things that we have to [00:06:00] just understand. Uh, and yeah, that is super important to, to have this.

**Cormac Phalen:** do you feel like there was a hard learning curve between kind of like land based design to marine based design?

**Helena Sawelin:** Yes, somehow, well, when it comes to the regulation, uh, we have Norska Veritas and, uh, well, yeah, it is a lot of, it is a big difference actually, but, uh, we have always had, uh, Experienced people in the company and they have stayed here for more than 30 years, many of them. So we always have this group of people that has a possibility to learn.

And of course, when you have learned and it's, yeah, like bicycling almost,

**Evan Troxel:** Nice.

**Cormac Phalen:** Yeah.

**Helena Sawelin:** but anyway, it's, um, it has a certain regulations. And of course they are, Also, some new regulation is [00:07:00] happening sometimes, so you have to learn them as well. But we know what source to go and look for, and the YARD is always also, um, up to date, of course.

So it's, it's an, let's say, changing experience and education between the YARD and us. So, yeah, it's

**Evan Troxel:** Cormac, have you ever been on a cruise ship before?

**Helena Sawelin:** um, um,

**Cormac Phalen:** to the scale of some of the things that, uh,

that their company does. I was looking at a lot of their project types and I'm like, wow, I'm missing out.

**Evan Troxel:** Yeah, I mean, it's, it's different. And I think that's what's so attractive

about it, right? It's very different. But, but at the same time, it's about space. It's about, it's

about creating experiences,

but also like in the self contained thing that's, it's like a city on water to

some extent,

right? Where it has to be fully self sufficient, fully functional, and can only really rely upon itself. and I think [00:08:00] that's what's so interesting about, it. About it as a category that's different from the normal architectural projects. But also, I'm curious, Helena, what, what has changed? because I mean, obviously there's maybe more of a luxury aspect to it now. It's gotten a lot higher design and also you mentioned sustainability, but What else have you noticed has, has really changed because I would say like the cruise ships that I've been on, the first one was when I was 12 years old, and then during my honeymoon, my wife and I went on an Alaskan cruise. And I

mean, I would very much say that the U. S. cruise lines that we were on, which are not the luxury high end things, are like a casino on the water, for the most part, right? Like, it's

very it feels very Vegas, where it's like, it's really trying to be eye candy, it's,

it's focused on a few, Programmatic pieces, like, you know, there, there's obviously a lot of selling going on, on these kinds of cruise

ships where [00:09:00] they're trying to get you to buy their jewelry and their art, and

there's the casino and then there's the, the, the spa experiences

and things like that.

So

I'm curious what you've seen shift over the years as you've gotten more and more into, into the, the world that you're in.

**Helena Sawelin:** Yeah, I mean, first of all, today you can divide it in the large cruise ship, mid size, and then the small. And it's about one third of each, if you look into how many cruise ships there are out there today. So, of course, the largest cruise ship, I mean, first of all, the cruise ship has grown in size,

uh, extremely.

**Evan Troxel:** my son is an aficionado and

**Helena Sawelin:** yeah.

**Evan Troxel:** because he, all the way back to the Titanic, I mean, he was, he

studies the Titanic and

he talked about, you know, a couple of years about, about the ICON OF THE SEAS, which is this mega, mega, mega,

insanely huge cruise ship.

**Helena Sawelin:** Yeah,

it is. So, [00:10:00] I mean, today we can see this super, super large cruise ship for more than 5, 000 passengers and well. It's even more. It's 8, 000 to some of them. But anyway, it's, um, It's like a city, as you say, and there you, that is for one type of passengers that want to be spending, have full activity.

Uh, so still that trend is ongoing, but it is one type of passengers that enjoy that most. And then we can see the midsize has become, It has always been that. I think it was more the mid size cruise ship, well, and smaller in the beginning, of course, when the cruise industry started 60 years back. But, um, I would say mid size is coming back a little bit.

People enjoy, um, that size when you have connection to the ocean [00:11:00] a little bit more and you feel you are actually on board somewhere. Um, But what we definitely can see is the luxury segment has been growing. When I started 30 years back, it was like an, uh, you made almost like a coulisse it was extremely, colorful and it was you could feel it was a big difference to go on a cruise ship compared to go to a hotel.

I could

see the trend has become the design is a little bit more like a hotel like trend on board today. to the midsize and the luxury segment. And we can also see how the indoor outdoor areas is connected to each other. You have this big window, sliding open doors. You have almost like a living room on the outdoor areas.

Um, so it's connected, indoor outdoors, more connected as a living room. So that trend has become quite a lot of people want to, To have this luxury, let's say, barefoot luxury, [00:12:00] as we call it, where you can just have a layback style, sophisticated layback style.

**Cormac Phalen:** So, how do you Because it's kind of interesting people go on a cruise because they want to have that connection to the water, the ocean and things like that. But, as the trend starts to shift a little bit more towards, feeling like you're on a hotel, now you're on a floating hotel. How do you still maintain kind of that magic or that essence of being on the water, but then also providing those high luxuries of, say the five star hotel and things like that?

**Helena Sawelin:** well, you can see when it comes to the luxury, it's also about the number of crew, you could say, almost how, the attention from the crew and you can give, let's say the drink is coming

directly when they're ordering it. Uh, and people also wants to travel a little bit more seamless.

Everything is prepared. You almost have this red carpet when you walking wherever and everything is very smoothly transitioned to, to all [00:13:00] parts. So I would say that is also One important thing when it comes to the luxury segments, especially. so I think the cruise, the different size of cruises is a little bit different kind of directions.

When it's a bigger cruise ship, they're going out to their own islands. Usually they have an own island,

the cruise ship. So they go out there and spend a few days or one day or whatever and they can go back again to a port. But when you have this midsize, uh, You also have another kind of fuel, especially to the sustainability today, you maybe have a hybrid fuel, so you can stay to these hidden gems a little bit more.

People want to find these hidden gems a little bit more than they was in the past. They want to tell their friends back home that, wow, have you seen this? This is something new, you have never been there. And today with this sustainable, That is coming a little bit more and more with another, uh, let's say green methanol or [00:14:00] whatever.

They have a green fuel system. They are able to stay to another destination a little bit longer, maybe two days instead. And that is something new that is coming.

**Cormac Phalen:** right.

**Evan Troxel:** don't know. It's kind of bragging rights, I guess, where people want to talk about these really exquisite and exclusive places that they've been that they can only access. but also social media has really played a big role in this, and that's where a lot of people are getting exposed to the idea of these things.

So, I mean, it's interesting to me how all of this kind of goes hand in hand. Uh, You can see how these threads connect throughout modern media and advertising landscape. I'm sure the, the companies who are offering all of this are really big players in that market as far as social media and, and things as well.

I mean, can you just talk for, touch on that part of it? Because I'm sure [00:15:00] that's driving a lot of the cruise industry because of

that.

**Helena Sawelin:** Yes, the social media definitely, uh, It's important, um, uh, people is looking at the social media and look at beautiful places and want to go there. so that is a, let's say, the destination is a little bit of wow factor, actually, for those who can go there. And that is the mid size and the smaller, uh, cruise brands.

There are other cruise sizes that is able to find these hidden gems. but I also, at the same time, I have to say it is a demographic shift with the generations. You have the older generation that is a little bit more family oriented. They, they want to travel with, with a family. Uh, and yeah, you have the baby boomers and, and, and all that and millenials, but you also see the people with a luxury that want to find.

They want to tick off what they have seen on the social media and want to tick [00:16:00] off, their boxes and, uh, and go to this special parts. Uh, and they can also see the other hand is the people that has been, let's say on a cruise ship as a child, they want to do the same thing with their children because, uh, They, they know how fun they had on board on a cruise ship.

So they want to make sure that their own children will have the same experience that they had. So you, you can see it's this type of different type of passengers and they're choosing little bit different types of cruise ships, uh, because of that. Uh, but the social media anyhow, for coming back to that again, it is, it is important.

Definitely.

**Evan Troxel:** mentioned these new sustainable greener cruise ships and fuel and even, even locations I think are basically only allowing certain, like what you're talking

about those kinds of cruise ships to even get to them. Along with the rise of ecotourism, right, there's a big desire for people [00:17:00] to travel

and see these things, but do it in a way that's eco friendly, to get there, and leave a small carbon footprint to

do. So I'm sure all of these things are kind of tied together as well, but I would love to hear more about that trend in the industry. and actually how it's working its way into the, space, spatial design and

the things that you're

working on. with FF&E and layouts and all of those kinds of things.

**Helena Sawelin:** sustainability definitely is reshaping the cruise industry with all the air pollution taxes that is coming, port free, navigation limits, and it's a lot of things that's happening, and we, we follow. Of course, EU Commission's regulation. What has been the biggest impact when it comes to, is the fuel, the technical water systems.

And also the shore power and many other things. More technical related things has been. And the speed, for not [00:18:00] mention that speed and how the hull shape is. So all that has been maybe the things that the cruise industry had tried to change the last years to make sure they can meet the goal until 2020.

2050, but first you have the 2030, the 55 package, as they call it. By 55 percent, they have to reduce the

carbon. So, technical wise, it has been a lot of things ongoing. When it comes from our part that is working also with the interior design, we work in both exterior but also interior part design. We also try to, follow the R9 strategies that that is To refuse, basically, or rethink and reduce.

Refuse to work with suppliers that doesn't work with eco friendly materials as much as possible. work with those who has the right certification. You could call it that instead, it sounds [00:19:00] more positive. Which is quite a lot today. You can find a lot of good materials that is coming more and more. So yes, definitely a lot of things is happening when it comes to sustainability and AO Commission is pushing the cruise industry to become greener.

**Cormac Phalen:** if I can ask a little bit more on that, so obviously sustainability is something that is important to your company as, architectural projects, it's kind of forefront for us and what we, tend to do is, when we can convince the client to come along on the ride with us is it will shape and guide all of our decisions. For as you were saying, the product types and things like that. I mean, do you find yourself, I think you said yes. And so this is probably a little redundant, but refusing to work with, certain manufacturers who you may have like this long history with them, but you said, well, you're not really conforming to the new standards, we've got to move on.

But I mean, [00:20:00] we tend to change products all the time. We're always looking and researching newer and newer products that help us reduce our carbon footprint. And, and I'm just kind of assuming or asking, do you basically do the same thing where you're looking for additional products to help inform your design when you're, really focused on sustainability?

**Helena Sawelin:** First of all, we have a good dialogue with the client. We can see how the interest of sustainability has come more and more. And of course, in the first case, it's more the technical related fuel, speed, hull shape, shores power, technical water system. All that is the most important and had the highest impact.

So when it comes to interior design, it's different there, I would say. So we have few clients that is. They want to be green as much as possible, all the way through. But we also have clients, they say they want to maybe [00:21:00] The interior part maybe is not to prioritize because they have done everything else in the right order.

So, we have to follow the client, of course, and we have to make sure that the design will be good and according to the client's need. But we are trying to support them and suggest, what about, should we go for, let's say, a carpet that is, um, as green as possible and we can give them, let's say we have few brands and qualities that we can say this is a better alternative and that one.

So what about should we go for that instead? Because

we know that it's about 70, 000 to 100, 000 square meter carpet on board and it replace every fifth. So it's a lot of impact. So if you, let's say, go for a good carpet quality same with mattresses, that is maybe 10, 000 mattresses on board, if you go to crew [00:22:00] and passengers.

So, If we can find one that has a take back system or it's a green built, green quality or whatever, I think the client would say yes, why not? It sounds good. but we try to balance that depending on who the client is, of course. To say refuse is a too big word, I would

**Cormac Phalen:** Right, right. I

**Helena Sawelin:** So, we would say we suggest and, yeah, take it from there.

**Cormac Phalen:** Let me ask one more question on this. so, you've done your initial design, your initial installation. You've made that product selection. And one of the things that we also talk about with our

clients are, we understand that, 5, 10, 15 years down the

road, there's going to be a renovation, as part of that.

And so part of our dialogue with them, especially when it comes to sustainability is

making those choices for recyclable materials, you know,

early

on. Is that conversations that you all are having

as well? [00:23:00] Right,

**Helena Sawelin:** for me a little bit my, I'm really working hard to find this, let's say, stakeholders that is buying waste and sell it further to someone else. So you can find this, let's say, circular. And I'm a little bit I think I have found a partner right now is in another industry that might be able to look into some parts, not everything, of course, because it is like a big city, what we have specified.

But what we also try to suggest for our clients, and they know it already, is the high, long lasting qualities. Go for a little bit higher quality to let them know. to lose furnitures. Um, so you can repair it and, uh, reupholster it much easier. We know back legs will break probably after one year. So let's order just new back legs instead of a new [00:24:00] entire chair.

So then you don't go for the raw material for a new chair. And you have thousands of. So that the modular thinking is what we are trying to advise the client. And, yeah,

**Evan Troxel:** I'm still trying to get my son from leaning back in his chair at the dinner table.

**Helena Sawelin:** Exactly. You see?

**Evan Troxel:** That's exactly right.

**Cormac Phalen:** just going to echo that a little bit, Evan, is the fact that, a lot of times our clients, and I, Helena, I can almost imagine that yours is probably tenfold worse than ours, is trying to design around human nature. You know, here you have, essentially a five by five. 8, 000 person floating city that then is, just cycling through the people throughout the year. And, just like when we're, designing dormitories for a university, we're trying to design the, maintenance free kind of thing, which we know is, is not something that [00:25:00] exists, but something that at least is friendly enough that, you know, we have that kind of like life cycle to be able to support that modular, flexibility is, is interesting because of the, the concept that we know we're going to have to fix something.

you know, what kind of investment do we want to make kind of thing? Cause so often the, not, you know, the situation that we've

gotten ourself

into, kind of globally is, Oh, it's broken. Let's throw it away and replace it. And

**Helena Sawelin:** Exactly. It hurts. It

**Cormac Phalen:** It it

**Helena Sawelin:** but yeah, so I'm really hope that, uh, that will be this possibility because I know in the hotel industry, they are, there is a little bit of Let's say a trend. There is some hotel brands that are making this, uh, uh, going for, uh, recycling. Uh, they have buy, they buy old chairs and refurbish them and they make a thing about it.

Uh, but the Cruise, maybe it's not really there yet. Maybe one area [00:26:00] here and there, but not totally. But as long as we can go for long lasting design, high quality, easier to refurbish and modular design, I think we are in a big step. If that will be possible, and it will be possible, definitely, it will come.

**Evan Troxel:** I love that. I, have a question about, you mentioned kind of the living room extending with through glass doors to an outdoor balcony. That's not my experience on a cruise ship. I get the inner cheap cabin with no windows, right? Um, and and there's tiers in cruise ships, right? There's priced pricing tiers and there's also experience tiers based on that.

And the way that I've always viewed it, I mean just, yeah. It's like, I'm, just sleeping in my room, I'm gonna do everything else outside of the room, but, I think what you're explaining is a very different philosophy, like, people who go on these mid size cruise ships, there's a lot more, seclusion from your neighbors.

They want the experience, like a private experience. And I'm, I'm [00:27:00] curious if you could explain in more detail, just like what these suites are like, and this blending of indoor and outdoor and how that's being accomplished, because I think what's also interesting, depending on the location, you could spend a lot of time outdoors, and you might want to do that with just you and your partner or with you and your family, versus the entire population of a cruise ship, you know, being out at the pool, for

example.

So maybe you can talk a little bit more about, like, the intimate space design of a suite that actually, like, what are the, what's going on there from a design perspective?

**Helena Sawelin:** When it comes, that is more the luxury segment. The luxury segment where you have bigger, uh, suites. Uh, two, three, four. Two room suites, uh, you have room service, of course you can have it otherwise as well, but they might go more for the room service and eat in the room and have, uh, enjoy the day basically on, on your balcony and all that.

[00:28:00] That type of cruise is, of course, a little bit more expensive. You, you are also having, uh, the destination that is also important. So, the design should cover all the comfort that you need in, in that, the big, the big suite. Uh, if you compare it with the, let's say, the, the big, big, uh, The bigger, the larger cruise ships, where they have quite smaller room, they want to people spend their money basically on the public areas, because there is actually where the cruise brands make the profit.

And those ship is maybe not costly to go on. In the first case, it's more So they have a different, let's say, focus on, or what you can call it, approach to who is the cruise type and what you can do basically on board. But, I would say [00:29:00] also on the come to the luxury segment, what we talked about this indoor, outdoor areas, that is also to the, public rooms.

The public rooms could be like a living room where you can also sit and have a nice view. You can socialize with other people. You still have good space enough that you can feel your, your own comfort. Let's say corner. Uh, but you also have this kind of living room outdoor, there you can have this climate controls basically.

so, that type of cruise brands or cruise ships, they are a little bit more like hotel look. where you have the barefoot luxury, what we call it, a little bit more. Yeah,

**Evan Troxel:** So, so in these outdoor spaces, can you talk about the kinds of, the ways that you're making those comfortable for people? Because it seems like you're going to be, going to all kinds of remote destinations and you've got different environmental things to deal with. So what, what kinds of things are you specifying to make it comfortable for [00:30:00] people? Because I, I assume that it's a lot like the hospitality industry, but, it has its own set of kind of environmental factors that are going to make it different.

**Helena Sawelin:** Yeah, I mean, many of this cruise ship is going both to colder and warmer destinations. They are spending time outdoor. they definitely have the heaters to make it comfortable. And today, when you have this Automation technology. Technology is a wow big trend

also. And to not, let's say, make it more efficient, it's also automated, what's turns on, what is turning off and when you have people on the right place.

So let's say heaters is definitely one thing that we should put in, uh, in these outdoor spaces so people can feel comfortable and sit outdoor. And having a good time, let's say, um, also for [00:31:00] the outdoor dining, the same there.

**Cormac Phalen:** one of the things that it sounds like, you know, as you're kind of talking about these more luxury spaces are you're kind of designing a familiarity. something that like, okay, I'm used to this in, this type of, amenities and things that, for the hotels that I visit, I'd like to still have that kind of similar feeling on

a cruise ship, but also still have that kind of connection to, as you said earlier, connection to the water, connection to the,

the places that you're visiting.

but also still feel, very familiar and very comfortable with kind of your new surroundings. Is

**Helena Sawelin:** hmm. Yeah, definitely. And when it comes to this luxury, I would say many of these luxury segment is many times a cruise brand. Hotel, resort, we are doing for Four Seasons right now. We did Ritz Carlton's, Evrima, the first yacht series they [00:32:00] did. So, of course, the hotel brands should have and let's say you should feel they're connected because you have the Passengers or the people that is going to these hotels, they want to go to this kind of hotel resort yacht as well.

So that you should feel connected and some similarities and the home away feeling. No,

**Cormac Phalen:** when you go onto the cruise ship. So you don't have like when Evan had the, the windowless, internal cabin.

**Evan Troxel:** That's just

**Helena Sawelin:** no, no, should not go. No, true. It's important. I mean, we definitely I mean, that is, of course, a challenge to make every everyone should have the best spot, but definitely to have an understanding of how to make the best design. I mean, the ship is, of course, you have always this kind of different kind of corners that is more [00:33:00] challenging, but you have to work around it basically.

But yeah, it's important.

**Evan Troxel:** I'm curious from an aesthetic point of view as designers of these spaces when it, when it, you've got indoor spaces, you've got outdoor spaces, you've got private spaces, shared spaces. Scandinavia is known for a certain design aesthetic.

And I'm just curious, because my experience was very, Las Vegas like on the water with the cruise ships that I've been on. and then I've seen, you know, the Viking cruise lines, and I've seen some of these, these images that you have on your website. It's a very kind of different aesthetic. And so when it comes to kind of trends in the Aesthetics, but also functionality and, and we think about social media and the kinds of images people are sharing.

I'm just curious, from a maybe architectural and interior design trends, what you're seeing happen in, in the space that you're working in.

**Helena Sawelin:** we, we try to also understand the client's need. That, [00:34:00] that is very important. But What is very important for our, let's say, design we're doing, it needs to have a functionality. It needs to work. It needs to be practical also in one way.

But aesthetics is super important and it might be that our design is a little bit this kind of Scandinavian touch to it. It's quite clean, it's quite easy to read. We want to use as natural materials as possible. Um, and the connection should be smart. Uh, we also look into the technical devices that makes smart technology coming in also, uh, in the functions, that makes it easy for the passengers.

It should just be, you should just enjoy the life on board. So, all that is. An important part in the design to have the aesthetics together with the functionality and of course a little bit of [00:35:00] twist somewhere that makes it a little bit like a fun thing that is coming in. Rememberable design somehow.

**Cormac Phalen:** so, as Evan was kind of rattling off some of the, kind of potentially design constraints, let's call

it. how does your design aesthetics, sensibilities, pair up and marry to, cause you started to mention, the client, we know that, a lot of times you'd be beholden to kind of a branding, of those, but, how do you work with your client to understand their branding, but then also, stay true to your own kind of design ethos.

Yeah.

**Helena Sawelin:** of relationship you build up with a client and it's important to keep that. Interview and learn the client, who are they? Who, what do what they want, what are their challenges they have had on board, uh, in the past? What can we do with change to help them to make it a little bit better?

So we, we try to also look to the history and [00:36:00] learn from, well, depending on what kind of cruise or passengers they have on board. Uh. So, but it's definitely to listen in and, and understand clients need, uh, and to get to know them as much as possible, but also at the same time, we're doing the different steps with mood boards, we're doing, uh, conceptual boards, uh, and all through the steps, you have to present the storytelling behind why we choose to go this direction, why we suggest, well, whatever design we're doing, how important is, you know, with that and that function and, and, uh, sometimes the clients like it a lot and say, wow, yeah, we've thought everything we, we, we need it.

Uh, so it depends off the client, of course. And we have also clients that has a very good knowledge about it by themselves and they know exactly what they need. Uh, so it is, uh, a give and take definitely, but, um, it, it's very, [00:37:00] Wonderful to work with clients where you have this kind of close relationship and you, you build it up somehow.

**Cormac Phalen:** Yeah, I agree. Those are probably some of the more rewarding ones where you have that kind of like symbiotic relationship where, you understand them, they understand you and, and are willing to work with each other to kind of really, excel the design

**Helena Sawelin:** Mm

**Cormac Phalen:** versus kind of, More, I hope you don't have any of these, but, more confrontational type, atmospheres like, Nope, this is

exactly what I want.

You're

like, all right. All right. You know, kind

**Helena Sawelin:** Oh, no.

**Cormac Phalen:** situations.

**Helena Sawelin:** Exactly, no, uh, it doesn't work like that, I would say, and, uh, No, exactly. It is super important to listen to each other and build it up. And also, since we're doing it in different steps, the client is, they can see a little bit what's happening during the design process until the delivery. But when we have, when they have agreed on, let's say the design, the visual and all the [00:38:00] story around it, then the hard work is to work with the yard

because they are sitting with the budget and the cost and they might probably say, this is too costly, this is not possible.

And then we have to double check with the client. Is it something we can, we can lower this, but we keep that, yeah, whatever. And sometimes, yeah, it's, uh, it is, uh, you have to play around it.

**Cormac Phalen:** so I have this question because obviously we deal with this a lot in, in our industry, on the land base side of the design, where, a lot of times we will have, late, Late process changes. you're,

because you're dealing with so much on the engineering side, where

it is so strict to, it's got to fit the design of the, this floating hotel. How, do you, do you experience changes like that?

**Helena Sawelin:** Oh,

**Cormac Phalen:** you know,

do you?

**Helena Sawelin:** We,

**Cormac Phalen:** was hoping no.

**Helena Sawelin:** I mean, that [00:39:00] is, we usually say never miss a deadline. That is, we are working definitely towards the goal to always keep on track on, on, on the deadlines that it has been set by the yard. But it happens that the client is. This suddenly wants to change the concept or new direction and something.

Uh, it is of course demanding and, uh, so definitely tough times. It can be very tough times. Uh, we just have to understand what is the purpose. Uh, and of course then we try to adapt according to, to that.

**Cormac Phalen:** I was hoping some industry out there actually, might, you know,

hold to that.

**Evan Troxel:** Well, I kind of have a final topic for us to wrap up around, and that is amenity spaces and the kinds of amenities that are going into cruise ships. Again, my experience is very limited in this, and I mentioned a [00:40:00] few of them that I have experienced before, but I'm curious what the trends are.

I mean, obviously it sounds like there's a bigger trend towards outdoor amenity spaces and things like that.

Um, maybe you can just talk through the kinds of things that you're seeing happen on cruise ship design and in, in the later cruise ships that are coming out now.

**Helena Sawelin:** Definitely the outdoor areas, as we spoke about earlier, the living room feeling that has been for a while, the hotel feeling, but I would say wellness, spa wellness, that trend with health and care has been also very, very big for a while. And we can see how that is growing. But people doesn't just want to have massage.

They want to have, you know, body screening. They want to have a real, Someone that is really can talk. tell you what is your health and what you need to do. And it has to be a truth worth, uh, wording what they are, what experienced people on [00:41:00] board. So the health and wellness is big and people want to stay active at the same time.

They want to be play pickleball or something. So, and then we can see, yeah, I would say eco friendly. People also want to have, yeah, the destination is also a trend, of course, and someone to want to have digital detoxing. They want to stay, you know, going in your mind, yoga, but that is also connected to their health and wellness.

but yeah, it is different types of, um, I think we touched on it earlier about the age of the group who we are looking into. because some is more entertainment driven, what we call the Millenniums, for example, and they want to be more socialized and meet people all at the same time.

and then we have the more Family oriented, uh, passengers, where that is very important, uh, of course, [00:42:00] but otherwise I would say technology, eco friendly health and care. If you just look at like, like trends,

**Evan Troxel:** the trend line of growth of this industry, can you maybe talk about that? Because it sounds, you've mentioned it earlier, like this is, you, your firm experienced a lot of growth from, I think you said 2015 to 2019, right? It sounds like there was a big boom in the industry. what's the current trend line in the industry right now?

**Helena Sawelin:** obviously COVID, uh, make Everything stopped for a while. Uh, and of course no one knew what will happen, what will happen now. But today is the market up running a hundred percent. We, the, the cruise from the, what we understand from the cruise, uh, brands, they are telling us they are at the same numbers of [00:43:00] passengers as before COVID.

So definitely, and we can see it's more than. All the shipyards is fully booked until 2035, I think, 2036. So they're building new ships again, and many are going bigger, uh, cruise brands, and we can see, it's basically all of them, it's also mid size that is growing. Uh, but definitely the cruise industry is growing a lot, and we can also see how, This type of people that was used to be there as a kid, they want to go with their family today.

So, it's still growing, that will come new passengers. It has a very positive development, what do you call, the cruise industry. They can see it's still growing about

10 percent every year.

**Evan Troxel:** Okay, nice. I wanted to kind of wrap up with that because I think, you know, for our audience, if [00:44:00] you're interested in learning more about this, there's room. in the space, right? Like this is a tangent, I think, career wise to quote unquote, you know,

building architecture, but still

very related, very applicable to the

education

of an architect to get involved in this. And it sounds like it's super interesting to me. I think I think it sounds really cool. So

thank you

so much for taking the

time to talk with us today and, and teach us about this industry and, The potential for architecture and design and interior design and FF& E and all of the things that are in the life of an architect, but applying it to the marine industry.

This has been very educational and interesting. So thank you.

**Helena Sawelin:** Thank you. Very nice to meet you guys. Thank you.

​[00:45:00]