

project_ MV
Sorrento Ferry

location_ Melbourne,
Australia

designer_
Nexus Designs

text_ Jan
Henderson

photography_
James Geer

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4 - all aboard

(inside)'s co-editor Jan Henderson enjoyed a leisurely cruise across Port Phillip Bay to experience first-hand the luxury and style of Nexus Designs' brand new interior refit of the MV Sorrento.





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above top— Navy coloured chairs from Hay add a touch of luxury to the Portsea Lounge. above bottom— Behind the Portsea Lounge is the café area that has used rope detailing around counters to great effect. opposite— Portside, bright red 111 Navy chairs by Emeco and Coca-Cola sit perfectly on the 'sailor's size' striped red and beige custom Axminster carpet. previous— The plywood bar and Artek high stools in the Portsea Lounge add a lightness to the navy blue colour palette.

In summer the seaside town of Sorrento on Victoria's Mornington Peninsula is buzzing with tourists and holidaymakers. Along the coast each of the villages overflows with people and the cafés do a fine trade. Driving is a challenge and when the sun is out a mere 10-kilometre journey can take time, but travelling all around the Peninsula to Queenscliff on the Bellarine Peninsula will take hours. Of course, there is an alternative – take the car ferry. Drive on, park the car and then relax in comfort for three-quarters of an hour and enjoy the outstanding views from Sorrento to Queenscliff and back again.

Welcome to the MV Sorrento and the last word in nautical chic. It's not often that a design company has the opportunity to put its stamp on the interior of a boat. I venture to say that not many architects and designers have had that privilege; however, on its first nautical design project, Nexus Designs has found its sea legs while completing an outstanding interior renovation of the MV Sorrento for Searoad Ferries. It's a brave company that steps outside of its comfort zone, but that was CEO of Searoad Ferries, Matt McDonald's plan when he approached Nexus Designs to create something different

for the interior of the 14-year-old ferry. McDonald wanted a new, fresh look for the interior of the MV Sorrento from a company that could present a different perspective. This has been achieved and concurrently the design bar has been raised for anyone contemplating the revamp of boat interiors in the future.

Nexus designers Sonia Simpfendorfer (creative director) and Lucy Marczyk (associate, senior designer) devised a design that was simple, effective and sophisticated. The interior was gutted, leaving only the necessary public utility area and staircase

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Sonia Simpfendorfer

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in the middle, and plans for cabinetry were conceptualised. The ferry was then sailed to Launceston, Tasmania so that the fitout work could commence. It is a credit to the skilful workmen from Seaward Ferries that the cabinetry works of the interior were completed with such expertise in a mere five weeks.

There are three distinct areas to the interior – the port, starboard and Portsea Lounge. The Portsea Lounge is located at the bow of the ferry and is a more intimate area, catering for VIP travellers and special events. Here the colour theme is all navy with custom-made navy and white pinstripe Axminster carpet (Brintons), navy coloured chairs (About a Chair by Hay, Cult) and bespoke tables. The bar is made from plywood and adds a lightness and contrast to the rich dark colour of the floor and chairs. High stools at the bar (Artek 64, Anibou) are a continuum of the light beige colour of the

plywood cabinetry. From the vantage of this area, views of the ocean are outstanding and the Portsea Lounge, true to the image of the elite seaside community that bears its name, is all luxury.

Behind the lounge is the café that services both communal areas on either side of the middle utility area. The café has been completely reworked with accents of vertical stainless steel trim incorporated into the joinery, which is again made from ply. A wonderful designer accent has been included with three pendant lights (Mayday by Konstantin Grcic for Flos, Euroluce) placed above the general product area, adding a certain panache to the design. In keeping with the updated interior, the café provides excellent coffee and tasty fare. Giftware is also displayed and includes local wines and gourmet products for passengers to purchase as a memento of their voyage.

A plywood banquette sofa that spans the length of the public areas has been inserted on both sides of the staircase and delineates the port and starboard sides of the ferry. The round cushions affixed to the backs of the banquettes resemble portholes and punctuate the seat backs – some in red, others in beige vinyl.

The smaller port side has been designed for groups and the café crowd. Communal tables with Artek chairs in birchwood veneer (Anibou) and smaller tables at the banquette feature bright red chairs (111 Navy chair, Emeco and Coca-Cola, Cult) that offer comfort with style. Near the café are low coffee tables with thick rope wrapped around each end. The rope detailing complements the nautical style and reoccurs in various iterations throughout the interior.

The larger starboard side has been designed to satisfy the needs of the working commuter. Wi-Fi is available and a television

[above](#)—Round cushions that resemble portholes have been affixed to the backs of the banquettes that feature on both port and starboard sides of the interior.



above—For the working commuter the starboard area offers 'hot desk' style communal tables with Emeco stools by Philippe Starck. opposite—Next to the café is the coffee collection zone with custom rope tables that can also be used as stools.

has been inserted above the banquette. There are 'hot desk' style large communal tables and seating is abundant with more beige and red chairs (Artek, Stylecraft, 111 Navy chairs by Emeco and Coca-Cola, Cult) and stools (Emeco by Philippe Starck, Cult). At the café end of the space are custom-made round, occasional tables that can also be used as stools again with the thick wrapped rope detail around the bases, while at the other end is the children's play area complete with slide and climbing equipment. In between are rows of traditional ferry banquette seating in beige vinyl and small side tables (60 by Artek, Anibou).

A vinyl floor (Armstrong Accolade Safe-Ironbark) has been laid throughout the main public areas and in particular areas there are inserts of striped, custom-made Axminster

carpet (Brintons). There are also a 'sailor's size' stripe in red and beige for port side, a larger stripe for the starboard area in green and beige and a sophisticated navy and white pinstripe in the Portsea Lounge. The existing perforated ceiling remains and the aged linear fluorescents have been replaced with LEDs.

"Overall, the design is fresh and clean with just the right amount of style," says Simpfordorfer. "The choice of furniture is considered – each piece a classic chosen for its quality, durability and, in many cases, sustainable material." The overall selection reinforces the nautical landscape of the interior, while adding depth and texture.

This design will last the distance and it will need to, with some 4000 people per day travelling during the peak summer season. Nexus

Designs and Searoad Ferries are an impressive team and the result is brilliant. Lucy Marczyk comments, "To be able to design the interior of a sea vessel is unique. A ferry is a public place and situated in the beautiful ocean, passengers relax and own their experience. That was the challenge – make this interior robust enough to serve its function, but delicate enough to really help people connect to that beautiful environment in a clear and freeing way."

The design is still a work in progress with the upper viewing deck to be completed and the occasional addition of small furniture pieces. There's a lot to look forward to, but why not see for yourself when next you decide to travel to or from Queenscliff and Sorrento. The MV Sorrento is a destination all on its own and worth the trip. 