





# RECAPTURING THE SPIRIT OF CUNARD

Marking a new chapter in its long-established history, Cunard unveils an acclaimed team of designers for its eagerly anticipated new vessel.

Words Ben Thomas Photography © Christopher Ison



## THE DESIGNERS



**Adam Tihany**  
Founder, Tihany Design

**Role**  
Creative Director, Cunard



**Simon Rawlings**  
Creative Director, David Collins Studio

**Key Spaces**  
Queen's Grill Suites, Grand Lobby, dining room



**Sybille de Margerie**  
Founder, Sybille de Margerie

**Key Spaces**  
Queen's Room, retail spaces, spa



**Terry McGillicuddy**  
Director, Richmond International

**Key Spaces**  
Theatre, entertainment spaces, outdoor deck

As part of its ambitious plans for the future, Carnival Corporation is expanding its Cunard fleet with the addition of a next generation cruise liner, due to set sail in 2022. With internationally-renowned designer Adam Tihany appointed as the ship's Creative Director last year, the group has since announced that Simon Rawlings of David Collins Studio, Terry McGillicuddy of Richmond International and Sybille de Margerie will be tasked with bringing the vessel to life.

While design details are still under wraps, Cunard has confirmed some of the key spaces that the teams will be assigned. Working on its very first cruise ship, David Collins Studio – whose projects include Kerridge's Bar & Grill at Corinthia London and The Tack Bar at Adare Manor in County Limerick – will be responsible for the Grand Lobby, the Queen's Grill Suites and the main dining room, while French interior architect Sybille de Margerie – who completed Mandarin Oriental Paris and Cheval Blanc in Courchevel – marks her debut at sea with the design of the retail spaces, spa and flagship event space the Queen's Room. Richmond International, which counts The Langham London and Four Seasons Hotel Budapest among its clients, is set to mastermind the theatre, entertainment spaces and an outside deck space.

"The calibre of talent we have brought together for this project will bring to life our vision of creating a truly world-class ship," says Simon Palethorpe, President of Cunard. "Collaborating with the legendary Adam Tihany, the team is working hard to ensure that every aspect of our new ship is exciting and forward-looking, yet unmistakably Cunard."

In an exclusive conversation with the design teams bringing their expertise to the new ship, Starboard finds out what guests can expect on board the soon-to-be-named vessel.

"For me, the 'Spirit of Cunard' means unrivalled glamour and sophisticated travel rooted within a framework of British heritage."

SIMON RAWLINGS

**How did you first become involved with Cunard?**

**Adam Tihany:** We are fortunate to have a wonderful longstanding relationship with Carnival Cruises, which began with the design of the public spaces on board Holland America's Pinnacle class ships and the complete interiors of Seabourn Encore and Seabourn Ovation. I was later appointed Creative Director for Costa Cruises, creating the design vision for the next generation of ships for Carnival's Italian brand. Creative Director proved to be a fulfilling and successful role, allowing me to direct the design story for a large vessel without the need for a large studio. I was glad to accept the opportunity to take on a similar role with Cunard and dive into the history of the brand, envisioning the look and feel of the future of the iconic British cruise line.

**As Creative Director of the new ship, why did you choose the design teams involved?**

**AT:** The three design teams chosen to realise the vision for the next generation of Cunard make up a dynamic and gifted group of creatives, each with extensive international experience in luxury hospitality interiors. Simon Rawlings with David Collins Studio and Terry McGillicuddy with Richmond represent British design and background, while Sybille de Margerie brings a sophisticated French flair to balance the group. All three teams share a deep understanding for design that does not focus solely on materials and lighting, but also on the strength of the narrative that drives the design.

**With this being David Collins Studio and Sybille de Margerie's first cruise project, were you actively seeking this type of commission?**

**Simon Rawlings:** As a studio we work across residential, retail and hospitality projects, and entering the maritime market was an obvious next step and an area we were keen to bring our expertise – in collaboration with the right partner. We strive to work with the best in their field and Cunard, with its historic reputation defining sophisticated ocean travel for close to 250 years, is a natural fit.

**Sybille de Margerie:** I love travelling, I love sailing and I love swimming, but until now I have not had the opportunity to design a luxury cruise ship. This project therefore fulfils my wish to open up to new fields, and I will enjoy writing this new chapter for Cunard by creating the interiors for the ship's public spaces.

**As newcomers to the cruise ship design industry, what can you bring to this sector?**

**SR:** One of the key benefits of being new to designing ships is that it allows us the opportunity to challenge the traditional approach to shipbuilding and design, and to create something new and exciting. There is a natural affinity with Cunard, because their F&B, design and service offerings are so similar to that of a luxury hotel project. We are approaching each area in the same manner as we would any other project. There are of course some constraints in materials and technical specifications, but we consider the careful balance of design, detail and operations as we would in any other project to deliver a truly unique vision to the ship.

**SdM:** The fact that this is my first cruise ship project is probably a benefit, as I will bring a new eye with less creative restrictions. Cunard has a strong DNA and our design respects the heritage dimension of the brand. Being an ambassador of French elegance, art de vivre is certainly a touch that I plan to bring to the project.

"In my mind, a luxury place, whether a ship, hotel or residence, must spark emotions. It must elicit a certain experience that will touch the heart of its guests."

SYBILLE DE MARGERIE

Richmond International already has a number of cruise projects under its belt, so how does this ship differ your previous work?

**Terry McGillicuddy:** Cunard is significant because of the huge brand image and distinct historical design style, which is different to what we have experienced with previous cruise ship projects. Cunard really is iconic in the industry – it was the historical creator of luxury cruising for passengers, so working on the interiors of the newest ship is an extremely exciting and challenging prospect.

Cunard has a long-established history in shipping, but what does the 'Spirit of Cunard' mean to you?

**AT:** Cunard is one of the few travel brands in the world that is at once leading and inspiring, while also carrying with it a refined romanticism of the early years of luxury transatlantic travel. The Cunard spirit is leisure, luxury, charisma and adventure – and this sense of distinction creates a level of comfort that is welcoming and familiar, even though the brand itself has always been innovative and forward-thinking for its time.

**SR:** For me, it means unrivalled glamour and sophisticated travel rooted within a framework of British heritage.

**SdM:** Cunard's spirit is about a luxurious and unique experience, and in my mind a luxury place, whether a ship, hotel or residence, must spark emotions. It must elicit a certain experience that will touch the heart of its guests.

**TM:** Known as the most famous cruise ship brand in the world, Cunard is renowned for high quality, service, romance and authentic experiences. These attributes need to be reflected in the design of the interiors. The 'Spirit of Cunard' suggests a wealth of experience, excellent service and luxurious and glamorous environments, which evoke refined, British styling whilst providing personally crafted and curated experiences for passengers.

What is your overall vision for Cunard's new vessel?

**AT:** With an iconic brand like Cunard, it is impossible to ignore the history and the distinctively British heritage that has created the brand as we know it. My vision is to tap into the romance, the spirit of the early days of transatlantic travel with a lighter, more contemporary take inspired by Art Deco style of that period. The interiors will be fresh and forward-looking, but crucially it will still feel like a Cunard ship and loyal Cunard guests will feel at home.

If the objective is to create a forward-looking yet unmistakably Cunard ship, what brief was given to the design teams?

**AT:** We created a presentation exploring some of the most iconic and admired aspects of heritage, craft, storytelling and British style. With an eye to the future of the Cunard brand, we presented chapters within these themes on design, architecture, fashion, cuisine and theatre – all of which came together to create layers of inspiration for the design teams. We also put together a series of moodboards for the key public areas to offer an intended feeling for each space.

**TM:** The brief was for all of the design consultants to work harmoniously as a team to produce a design that reinvents and reinforces the key values of the Cunard brand and will be relevant both now and in the future, engaging existing