

AWAITING AZURA

Executive Purser Keith De La Mare tells us about his plans for Azura, and what he's looking forward to most about this brand new superliner

I have been privileged to spend time on board Ventura and I am looking forward to building on the great work done there with our new superliner, Azura. I have seen the plans for her and, wow, what an exciting ship she promises to be, with many super new concepts being introduced, such as the alfresco cinema, SeaScreen, and The Glass House which, as a wine lover, gets my vote.

The build is such a challenging and exciting time, with each day of the project revealing something new. I am in constant dialogue with Azura's development managers and I'm being briefed at every stage of her progress, with an update meeting being held every month, but my first opportunity to step on board the ship will be in November. Getting to meet all of the crew will be a pretty special time for me.

I think the fact that we are combining a ship the size of Ventura with a more traditional feel is what makes Azura unique among the fleet. The big challenge is in recreating all the traditional values our passengers know and love on such a grand scale, to create intimacy and a personal one-to-one service when faced with 3,000 or more passengers. That is the style I am looking for, and will be the main aim for my team. I want to establish Azura as the ship to travel on, and hopefully enjoy the great loyalty that our other ships enjoy.

Below: find out what is planned for the art on board Azura



Below: discover the classic and contemporary in Azura's bars



ARTISTIC VISION

Art has always been an integral part of the P&O Cruises fleet. Here, the man in charge of commissioning the art for Azura, **Tom Tempest-Radford**, tells us about the visual feast we can expect...

“Organising the art for Azura is proving to be a fascinating project. The ship will house some 7,000 works of art in total, produced by a broad range of artists, who are all busy beavering away at the moment to produce their pieces in time.

As always, the art that has been commissioned uses all manner of media – we’ve got photographs, oil paintings, glass, ceramics... you name it. On the ground floor of the atrium, we will have bronze shells flanking the staircase, which will look quite grand, and the atrium will be overlooked by Iestyn Davies’ magnificent glass chandelier.

We’ve got three fantastic artists who are providing the pieces for Azura’s stairwells. Matt Wright is creating an extraordinary series of photo-spherical images of Britain to be displayed in the aft stairwell. He uses a very clever technique to produce photos that start and end at the same point – like an opened out sphere. The central staircase will feature works by an artist called Gordon Cain, who produces digitally

manipulated art. He’s working on a series of visionary, futuristic images relating to sea life, beaches, that sort of thing. For the forward stairwell, Paul Ward has been travelling around the world taking lots of photographs of greenery – so there will be shots of tea plantations and rubber plantations, basically all sorts of linear foliage. It’s a very naturalistic approach, and the result will be striking.

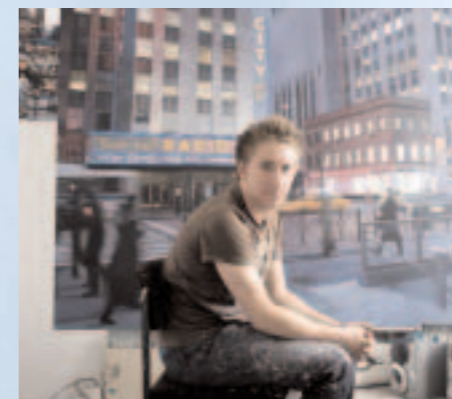
There is going to be an element of the unexpected running throughout the art on board, and a real sense of fun too. We’ll have some quirky paintings by Paul Critchley situated in unusual places, and four Morph-like white figures of people reading, created by sculptor Andrew Sinclair, dotted around the exterior of the ship. Yes, there will definitely be some elements of surprise to the art on board Azura, so watch this space...”

Meet the artists...

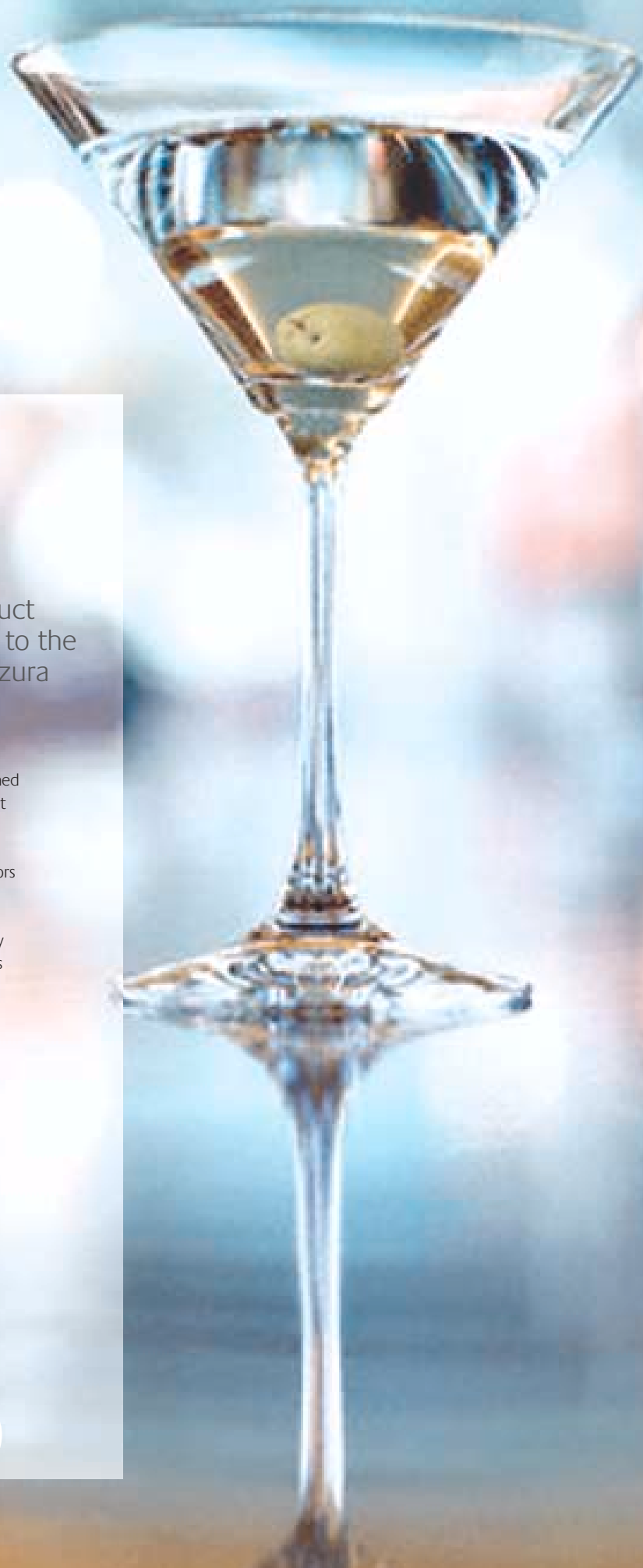


Iestyn Davies, a glass sculptor who is based in Shropshire, is in the process of creating a magnificent centrepiece for Azura – a glass chandelier for the ship’s atrium. Designed to resemble delicate strands of seaweed (of up to a metre in length), and utilising state-of-the-art colour-changing technology, the chandelier is sure to be spectacular. “My inspiration comes from two things,” explains Iestyn. “I love the material of glass, having spent the past 25 years training as a glass artist, but I am also inspired by the technology. So I’m combining my artistic side with how the glass actually performs with the light.”

London-based photographer **Carl Warner** is producing a series of quirky foodscapes for Azura’s Amber restaurant. Nicknamed ‘Salvador Deli’, Carl’s work is created using real food, with the foodscapes built by hand and then photographed. Inspired by films such as *The Wizard of Oz* and *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, Carl’s work is composed to look like a real scene at first – only on closer inspection does it become apparent that the landscape is actually made of food. “It is the realisation of what the real ingredients are that brings a smile, and for me that’s the best part,” says Carl.



Joe Simpson is producing eight paintings of New York for Azura’s Manhattan bar. In preparation for the series, Manchester-based artist Joe visited New York in February, taking more than a thousand photos while he was there as source material. “For this series I am depicting bold and romantic scenes from New York, with references to the unique iconography of the city – yellow taxi cabs, bright lights, distinctive architecture,” says Joe. “I’m interested in trying to make my work look and feel ‘cinematic’, so I’ve been watching classic movies set in New York, from Woody Allen to Martin Scorsese.”



the best bar none

Mark Tomley, Food & Beverage Product Development Manager, introduces us to the fantastic selection of bars on board Azura

Azura is set to be both exciting and innovative, classic and yet contemporary – and its range of bars is no exception. From the New York-inspired décor of Manhattan to the opulent India-themed Malabar, via Java, the perfect pre-dinner drinks venue at the heart of the ship, Azura will offer something for everyone.

The Marquis is Azura's pub, taking its inspiration from classic London pubs, with traditional Victorian touches, such as tiled floors and patterned glass, combined with a modern design to give it an eclectic and unexpectedly glamorous feel.

In contrast, the décor in The Blue Bar takes its cue from trendy London nightspots, its beautiful blue touches and lighting effects giving this exquisite venue a stylish and sophisticated feel. This is where you will find the finest range of champagne, spirits and cocktails for a truly decadent evening on board.

The Planet Bar, meanwhile, promises to be nothing short of spectacular. Featuring a floor-to-ceiling plasma wall, this venue will immerse you in a series of breathtaking scenes from around the world, while sipping a sumptuous cocktail that has been inspired by the destinations you see before you. Each night a different continent will take to the screen, but the glorious panoramic views of the ocean will be there night after night.

One of the most exciting venues on Azura is sure to be The Glass House, the wine bar and restaurant co-created by wine connoisseur Olly Smith. Upmarket and yet informal, The Glass House will be a haven for lovers of fine wine, as well as those looking to learn more about it. Olly is bringing a wealth of experience to the project, and has been busy selecting wines for The Glass House, as well as advising on wine and cocktails elsewhere on the ship, and creating Azura's house wine, which will be specially blended and exclusive to P&O Cruises.

From classic to cool, simple to spectacular, Azura's bars all promise to be superb, and I can't wait to see them develop.