

# Newbuild nirvana

The latest launches and pipeline projects were on the agenda when Cherie Rowlands caught up with Royal Caribbean Cruises Ltd vice president of newbuild and architectural design, Kelly Gonzalez

**F**resh from inspecting progress on *Quantum of the Seas*, Kelly Gonzalez is buoyed by what she saw on her May visit to the Meyer Werft shipyard.

“Some areas have turned out better than we thought,” she says. “Around two months ago you could feel how spectacular *Two70°* was, but as the scaffolding comes down it starts to amaze. Then *SeaPlex* and how spacious that feels with the sea pods above, the solarium and how that cascades from the upper level down to the deck below with the deck-level changes and how one pool spills to the next — seeing it pulled together in front of you, having looked at it on paper for a long time, is a gratifying feeling.”

Hot on the heels of *Quantum*'s autumn 2014 launch is the second *Quantum*-class newbuild *Anthem of the Seas*, which is scheduled for a spring 2015 delivery. *North Star*, *SeaPlex*, *Two70°* and *RipCord* by iFly, the innovative features found on her

predecessor, will also be part of *Anthem*, although Gonzalez is keen to keep specific design details under wraps for now. “*Anthem* will receive more design touches than real changes,” she says. “There is a certain finesse in the second ship of a class — it's a sister ship, so we haven't made any big changes in regard to architects and designers either. We want to preserve the outcome of each of the spaces — it's all about the continuity and consistency.”

However, appreciating differentiation is also important, particularly when designing across multiple brands, Gonzalez believes. Describing the design style of TUI's newly launched *Mein Schiff 3* as contemporary and smart, yet with understated sophistication, she says: “We worked to understand the level to which TUI know their customer and where they wish to take the future of the brand. There's a strong German-centricity — including strong representation of German art throughout

the ship — not only in terms of TUI as a client but some of the architects, designers and consultants that we've worked with. One Hamburg firm, first introduced to us through *Mein Schiff 1* and *2*, is *cm-Design*. It was their first big work on cruise ships and we loved their sensibilities — they learned a lot from us and we learned a lot from them. They are doing some wonderful work.”

With the number of newbuilds lining up including at least two new *Oasis*-class vessels, Gonzalez is quick to point out that *Royal Caribbean* is not an assembly line. “We are not a mass production factory,” she says. “We believe in best practices, but we still like to stir things up and I'm always excited about what comes next — thoughts we have for pipeline revitalisations, *Oasis 4*, *Quantum 3* and beyond. That's what motivates me to wake up in the morning. It's never dull or ordinary and it's great fun to stretch those brain cells a little further when thinking about what's on the horizon.” **C&F**

One example of understated sophistication onboard *Mein Schiff 3* is the *Himmel & Meer Lounge* on Deck 12



Photo: TUI Cruises