



shipping yarns

One of the many things that fascinate us about the major projects we cover is the fact that a diverse nature of businesses successfully employ similar design formulae to achieve similar results.

We find legal firms adopting the same working principles as advertising agencies, for example, or retail businesses taking influence from pharmaceutical companies. We have even seen liquefied natural gas shipping companies benefiting from the same...no, wait, we might have made this last bit up.

The truth is, before today we've never heard of liquefied natural gas shipping, and yet, here we are at the prestigious One America Square in the City of London, visiting one of the global leaders in this (at least to us) undiscovered industry.

So let us tell you a little about this incredible company: based in Bermuda, Golar LNG is one of the world's largest independent owners and operators of LNG carriers with over 30 years of experience. This amazing company developed the world's first Floating Storage and Regasification Unit (FSRU) projects based on the conversion of existing LNG carriers. Golar leads the industry with committed projects and is progressing plans to grow its business further upstream via Floating liquefaction (FLNG).

Golar is engaged in the acquisition, ownership, operation and chartering of LNG carriers and FSRUs through its subsidiaries. The business was originally founded in 1946 as Gotaas-Larsen Shipping Corporation, which then entered the LNG shipping business in 1970 when it ordered the LNG▶▶▶▶▶





»»» Carrier Hilli – which is still part of its fleet today.

Gotaas-Larsen was acquired by Osprey Maritime Limited in 1997 and in May 2001, World Shipholding Ltd – a company indirectly controlled by John Fredriksen – Golar’s Chairman and President, completed an acquisition of Osprey – acquiring the LNG shipping interest of Osprey. Golar listed on the Oslo Stock Exchange in July 2001 and on NASDAQ in December 2002. Since 2001, the company has grown from a fleet of six LNG Carriers purely focused on LNG transportation, to a fleet of 15 vessels dedicated to both LNG transportation and midstream floating solutions.

Golar LNG has had a management office in London for many years at various locations, and the new Golar Management headquarters imperiously overlook the capital, on the (lucky for some) 13th Floor of the prestigious One America Square. The multi-tenanted building features fantastic restored art deco design, but that is a long way away from what we discover when the

elevator (anything this dazzling and preserved cannot just be called a lift!) opens out into the Golar home.

Clean lines, bright, open space and contemporary styling takes over here. The minimal, angular reception desk is flanked by a nod to Golar’s shipping fleet, with models adorning a transparent case which splits the introductory area from the start of the heart of the office.

Incidentally, from here we can see the name Golar just once, and that is on a decorative ship’s bell that hangs from the wall. Subtle.

We met with DTZ Director Gary Lagdon and JAC Director Trevor Mattacks – two of the people at the helm of the crew for this impressive project. We begin by asking about how the working relationships between all three parties were fostered. ‘DTZ has had a long working relationship with Golar,’ Gary reveals. ‘When they were looking at their options towards the end of their lease, I had a chat with them and they brought me along. They were previously at

30 Marsh Wall, Canary Wharf. It wasn’t bad space, but it wasn’t great either.

‘We talked through procurement options and went down a fairly tried and tested route. JAC were appointed as architects and put together the design. We had already, from the due diligence stage, in looking at different buildings, put a team in place and JAC took them under their wing. It’s their brilliant design that you now see before you.’

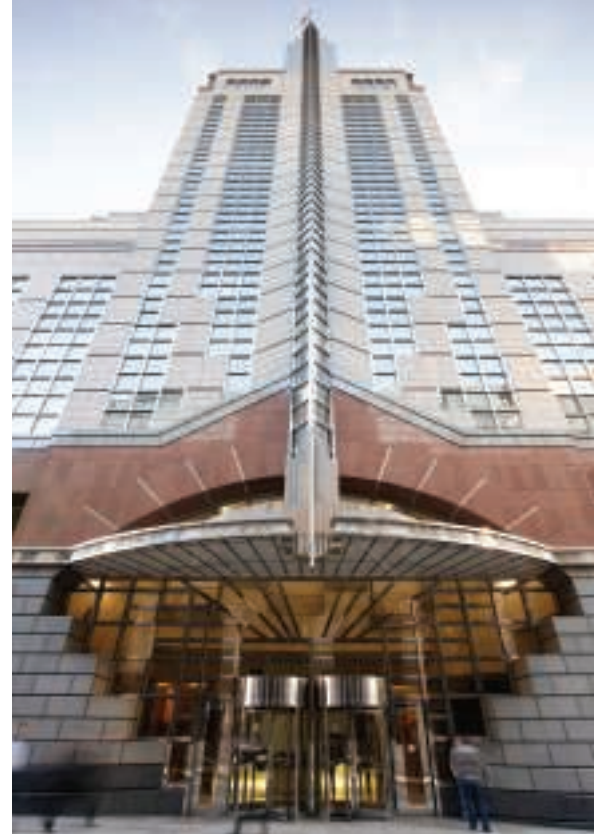
‘It really was a partnership,’ Trevor tells us. ‘DTZ did the project management side of things while we did the design and wrote the spec. They oversaw all of that, we both did the site monitoring together, we qualified it, tendered it and it was very much a case then of DTZ looking at the specification we’d written, looking at the costings and then together choosing who should actually do it – and then getting on and running it! It was a very straight forward procurement route.’

‘It was,’ Gary takes over. ‘We were costing ourselves as well! Even though I run the DTZ architectural business as well, we tend to go down the route of collaborating with architects rather than doing it ourselves. Most of the time, I prefer to do things this way, depending on the size of the project or the wishes of the client. In a more difficult market, if you’re not in a collaborative position with the rest of the market, it can work against you. I think this puts us in a great position.’

‘JAC are a good size for us on this type of fit-out because they are big enough that they have enough resources to cover everything, they’ve got a good track record having been around for ages, everyone knows what they are capable of, and the quality of design you can see from what they have done before, but they are not so big that you’re competing with resources and the whole process becomes impersonal. You know you’re going to start and finish a project with the same people.’

‘We’re happy to work in the same way,’ Trevor admits. ‘We’re a design and build company with the emphasis on design. We don’t have one person working on design, another writing the spec, another running it on site...we generally have just two people working on a project and both will know exactly what is going on with every aspect of the job. The idea of that is the final design is not compromised by someone walking into someone else’s scheme.’

This collaborative approach clearly worked here at Golar – the evidence is not just all around us in the design, but also in»»»»»



▶▶▶▶ the fact that Gary and Trevor are both here chatting with us. We change tack (sorry, no more nautical references!), and ask about the nature of the client's business and what they required from this new working space. 'They are the market leaders in quite a competitive market,' Gary explains. 'I think the image they were trying to project was one of a market leading company. The design here certainly addresses and encapsulates that. The use of elements such as the ship's bell and the ship models were things that, when looking at the brief, they really wanted to include – their iconic imagery and pieces. They also wanted to use super-graphics, such as shots of one of their tankers in a heavy sea, taken from the Captain's bridge, but pixelated and used as this brilliant graphic.'

'The other thing is, yes, they are market leaders and they wanted to be in a better position than they were in Marsh Wall, they also didn't want this to be over-the-top,' Trevor adds. 'They wanted this to be smart, but not ostentatious. They didn't want it to look as though they'd spent vast amounts of money, although they wanted it to look professional and stylish. You don't have to spend a fortune to achieve that, of course.'

'Also, the search that DTZ did in finding the building and space somewhat surprised everybody. It was really good fortune that a deal could be struck here; the space gave us the tools to do a really nice design job. The views are fantastic and there are a lot of options open to you. From a design point of view, it's a great space. We were able to make it look dramatic.'

What's more, this is a building in the heart of the City, just a stone's throw from Lloyd's Register – almost ideal for Golar.

So what were the main challenges with this space? 'The double-height space means that you can only really have ceilings at either end of the floor,' Gary continues. 'The middle has to be kept open because of the double-height void, although working with that also drives a more dramatic solution.'

'A space like this does get your design juices flowing,' Trevor enthuses. 'You start looking at what can be achieved. This is not about the amount of money that's been spent – it's about how everything has been put together. The materials we've used here could be used in a different space and look quite dull, but if you use them in the right context, with the right flair, it can create a great scheme.'

'Little features such as the little dark spaces that exist in the centre of the floorplate, we've used to generate comms rooms, storage, quiet rooms and meeting rooms, which is the perfect use for them,' Gary explains. 'The mezzanine level breakout space also works brilliantly – I love that!'

The nature of the environment, with the central core, allows staff to benefit from those aforementioned views of the capital and natural light from the expansive windows, while adjacencies were also key to the success of the project.

The new Golar home features three large glazed meeting rooms and three quiet rooms as well as tea points and the fantastic,

bright mezzanine breakout facility. The 30 workstations here, from Task Systems, allow a flexible, spacious and clean working environment for the staff. 'Their offices were looking tired and the whole design here is fresh and timeless,' Trevor tells us. 'If you look at the furniture, it fits perfectly with that feel. They now have furniture with proper wire working – big troughs which they can scrunch the cables up, put it in a hole and close the tops. It's gone. The way they were working was with wires hanging everywhere. The opportunity here was to tidy all of that up with smart new furniture – while also addressing health and safety! Everything's been cleaned up for them here.'

Cleaning up is an apt phrase. We'll certainly resist the temptation to say the new Golar home is shipshape.

Again, sorry! ●

essential ingredients

Client:	• Golar LNG
Interior Design:	• JAC Interiors Group 020 7602 0700
Project Manager:	• DTZ 020 3296 3000
Systems Furniture:	• Task Systems 020 7749 1960
Storage:	• Task Systems 020 7749 1960