



## **PRESENTATION OF THE "LO SPIRITO DI STELLA" ASSOCIATION**

In August 2000 Andrea Stella, a twenty-four year old boy from Thiene (Vicenza, North-East Italy) on holiday in Miami, was involved in an inexplicable shooting that forced him on a wheelchair. Passionate for sailing, Andrea was so eager to get back on the sea that he built a disabled people friendly catamaran. The results he obtained prove that in the design of objects and places, paying attention to the needs of motor-handicapped people is a strength rather than a weakness.

In 2003 he founded "lo Spirito di Stella", a nonprofit association engaged in a sensitization campaign against architectural barriers for a better integration of disabled people in society. In 2004 the catamaran sailed across the ocean back to Miami with a crew composed of wheelchair people and great sailors like Giovanni Soldini and Mauro Pelaschier.

The main activities carried out by the association are:

- Sailing classes for disabled and motor-handicapped people: every year more than 700 people (including disabled people, doctors and physiotherapists) take part to this free initiative and spend a day in full freedom aboard the vessel;
- Courses in colleges of architecture and design: the aim is to promote the concept of the catamaran and the "design for all" philosophy amongst students;
- "Design and Build for Everyone" International Competition of Ideas: this competition, partnered by Autogrill S.p.A., invites students and designers to "train" their "thinking for everyone" approach;
- "The house for everyone": this project is based on the design of three fully accessible houses to be used by seriously injured people on a wheelchair who have completed their hospital-based program and are ready to go back home. These housings will be taken as a model for design students and experts.
- New project: "I diritti solcano l'Oceano"

## **THE ACTIVITIES OF "LO SPIRITO DI STELLA"**



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## **SAILING: THE "FREE SPIRIT" TOUR**

The "Spirito Libero" project is based on free sailing classes for disabled people on board the "Lo Spirito di Stella" catamaran. Every year more than 700 people, including disabled people, carers, doctors and physiotherapists, can spend a day in complete autonomy aboard the first disabled friendly catamaran in the world.

In 2010 the tour made 9 stops in 70 days in total:

- 1-17th May: Jesolo
- 24-30th May: Rimini
- 5-9th June: San Giorgio Port
- 14-20th June: Pescara
- 5-13th July: Taranto
- 22-28th July: Augusta
- 28th August – 3rd September: Alghero
- 20-26th September: La Spezia
- 2-10th October: Genoa

The day schedule consists of a sea outing which includes a classroom session on sailing basics and free lunch aboard. Participants will be allowed to take the helm and pilot the vessel under the Captain's supervision. Each trip is usually joined by four disabled people (three wheelchairs maximum) and their respective carers. Participants can be both people who have contacted the association individually and members of local associations.

## **UNIVERSITY COURSES**

Andrea Stella often wonders: "If it was possible to make a boat accessible, why shouldn't it be possible to make a town accessible?". This is exactly the point that the association has been trying to make in its effort to spread the importance of everyone-friendly design and divulgate the concept of the catamaran in multiple contexts such as universities of architecture, design institutes, professional bodies as well as public institutions and local authorities. Every year "Lo Spirito di Stella" organizes courses in Italian universities with the aim of educating future designers to the "Design for all" principles. These courses provide a description of the latest catamaran's design improvements and a demonstration of how considering the needs of motor-handicapped people will bring benefits not only for disabled people, but for everyone in general.



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## **COMPETITION OF IDEAS**

The association promotes "Design and Build for Everyone", an international competition of ideas in which students and designers are asked to redesign some spaces based on the catamaran's principles and the Design for All philosophy.

The competition, partnered by Autogrill S.p.A., is sponsored by ADI (Industrial Design Association) and DFA (Design for All Italia).

In the first two years, it was about the design of a classroom and a front office. In the last editions the focus of attention was the Autogrill points of sales: in 2007 the topics were the bar counter, check-out and toilets (the winning bar counter design has recently been built in the Mensa di Ravenna halt area), while in 2008 it was about the self-service restaurant area and rest areas. Participants were invited to plan such spaces in terms of accessibility and usability without sacrificing beauty factors.

Throughout the years, the competition was supported by celebrity spokesmen like former Milan Carlo Ancelotti and footballer Clarence Seedorf, who are both very sympathetic to the goals of the association.

## **THE HOUSE FOR EVERYONE**

For several years "Lo Spirito di Stella" has been promoting and managing design projects of architectural barrier-free towns and buildings with the intent of developing a kind of design based on the needs of disabled and motor-handicapped people for everyone's benefit.

Within the Vicenza area, the association is about to build three completely accessible residential units to be used by seriously injured people on a wheelchair who have completed their hospital-based program and are ready to go back home.

Inside these housings everything, starting from the simplest actions of daily life, will be oriented to the optimization of spaces on an ergonomic basis. Spaces will be maximized through prefabrication and serial production, thus achieving remarkable cost savings. The most advanced bio-architecture technologies will be combined to sustainability and renewable materials and energy sources. The housing units can be taken as a design example for all wheelchaired people who need to make their homes accessible after an accident or illness. They should also prove useful to students and designers who want to build accessible spaces for everyone's needs with low cost and little space requirements.



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Every unit will occupy a limited area of 70 square meters, however everything inside will be perfectly functional and allow a person on a wheelchair to move in full freedom to every room. This project demonstrates that mobility needs can also be met also in narrow spaces.

## **THE CURRENT PROJECT: "I DIRITTI SOLCANO L'OCEANO"**

At the moment, the association is engaged in a new ambitious project called "I diritti solcano l'Oceano" (Rights crossing the ocean), that is a transatlantic crossing on board the "lo Spirito di Stella", the world's first barrier-free catamaran, having the aim of spreading the UN Charter of rights for the disabled, which are also printed on the sails.

The catamaran set off last December from La Spezia, where it was greeted by the Italian Navy (a partner of the initiative), to head to the Canary islands and then to Martinique, in the Caribbean Sea.

Besides its goal of spreading the message of the UN Convention and sensitizing the public opinion toward the importance of architectural barrier removal, this adventure is also meant as an experiment to evaluate how the human body responds to stress and monitor the health of the crew members through telemedicine. Moreover, as the project also intends to promote research on environmental sustainability, the catamaran will be tested in terms of energy efficiency.



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