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WINCH DESIGN HOMES IN THE SKY

by Jim Dixon, Head of Aviation at Winch Design



With the focus on extremely high-end bespoke, dynamic design for a worldwide client base, Winch Design is now recognised as one of the leading International design and architectural studios, having added Aviation, Architecture and Interiors teams to the core yacht business.

Now more than ever, clients favour having a private jet with an environment that comes as close as possible to the comfort and style available in homes or hotels. Aircraft shouldn't be seen as simply a means of transportation, but rather a sophisticated home to enjoy and to be inspired by. As a result, we are seeing spaces that offer vast amounts of customisation compared to older, more formulaic business focused designs that have been the norm for years. Furniture that appears free-standing, more creative surface textures and the

use of mood lighting are all relatively new design trends that help develop a residential feel. The interior design of an ACJ319 Winch Design delivered in 2013 features smooth leather floors, soft, buttery leather furnishings, ambient lighting and a library of books – the shelving cleverly doubles up as concealed doors. The resulting experience feels more like relaxing in a comfortable library than flying in a private plane.

Much of our interior inspiration comes from the luxury hotels that our clients so often frequent. Project Mayfair, as the name suggests, is based on the finest hotels in London, with the intention of creating a 'penthouse in the sky'. It is a dynamic, arresting concept. Think the elegance of Mount Street combined with the technical excellence of Savile Row. One of the main considerations when designing a private jet interior

with a focus on comfort is the space arrangement. Working with such a relatively confined space, every inch counts to ensure that optimum levels of enjoyment and relaxation can be achieved during every flight.

The correct choice of textures and materials is also crucial to the design process. Wood veneers and fabrics have to be carefully selected and include materials such as heavy linens, classic mohair and glove-soft leather, all of which capture a 'living room' ambience. The introduction of quality micro-perforated fabrics and panels that have considerable soundproofing properties can also lower the decibels in the cabin and therefore heighten the residential feel.

In our latest BBJ, we used a combination of exotic shell materials from the East, hand-stitched motifs to seats, valance panels and carpets, and mother-of-pearl accessories throughout. The master suite has a 64in TV (currently the largest in a certified aircraft interior), and the vibrant bathroom features a custom-made blue glass washbasin and mirror-faced TV built into the marble vanity area. A carefully selected collection of artwork is the finishing touch to create a residential feel which goes miles beyond any typical private jet.

The environment of an aircraft is unique however, due to the limited space on offer and fixed cylinder shape with a lack of natural light. As a consequence, the initial design requirements for an aircraft are very demanding because at the end of the design process the passenger has to feel good within the cabin environment and forget about the very nature of its limitations.

These new interiors need to be comfortable for family use as well as business meetings. Consequently, the layout of the aircraft allows both to happen at the same time without compromising the overall look and comfort of the cabins. The client may enjoy all the creature comforts one would expect to have at home while retaining an open feel that does not feel cramped or confined.

We are seeing that the top end of the business jet sector is increasingly aspiring to the same level of individuality

and customisation typical to larger private bizliners. They may be smaller 'vehicles' but there's no reason why the environment should be any less appealing.

Compared to a superyacht, however, the interior of a private jet is at least five times more costly per square metre, therefore making the most of the space on offer is something that has to be considered when making every decision. Stowable dining tables for example, often seating up to 6 guests, can be folded away when not in use to allow for more flexibility for entertaining.

In a BBJ we delivered earlier this year, there is a stately desk area where the owner can continue his formal business in one of the bespoke, finely-upholstered butter-soft leather seats, with the most wonderful hand-stitched details.

Private jet interior design has started to follow the evolution we see in other industries, most notably cars and yachts, as private jet owners are ultimately looking for a seamless transition between the house, the office and the aircraft. They want a consistency of design quality and elegance throughout their fleet, so as to maintain a luxurious experience for the duration of their journey. By creating a bespoke interior rather than using the standard 'private jet' model, and by using a colour palette and materials normally found in a residence rather than in the sky, we are able to fulfil this 'home from home' dream.

