

INTERIOR DESIGN YEARBOOK 2020



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In the air: aviation design

By Jim Dixon

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Winch Design is a full-service design and architectural studio specialising in the exterior and interior design of yachts, aircraft and residential and commercial properties. There is no house style and the scope of work is broad, to reflect each client's dreams. Similarly, the personalities and talents of the 100-strong team are individual yet coming from the same premise. At Winch Design, every design, be it for land, sea or air, is imbued with beauty, uniqueness and perfect proportions. The Winch ethos is predicated on certain values, initiated by Andrew Winch over thirty years ago, and now upheld by all. Having learnt the craft of 'how things go together' in his formative years training as a furniture maker and designer, Jim Dixon has applied this meticulous eye for detail and perfection to many areas of the design business. Jim's diverse and extensive experience enables him to lead both the yachts and aviation studios and to deliver seamless projects across the two teams.

At Winch we love a challenge! It is difficult to distinguish our aviation projects from our most sumptuous projects on land, an incredible feat since you are flying high above the clouds but you really wouldn't know it. The enjoyment of these spaces not only comes from designing ground-breaking interiors in line with the client's brief but also overcoming the technical challenges involved with pushing the boundaries.

Clients are favouring an interior that offers the same comfort and style as their homes, with a seamless transition between their spaces on land, air and sea. By creating a bespoke interior rather than using the standard 'private business jet' model, and by using



Above: Winch Design yoga concept mood board



Above: Winch Design's Boeing Business Jet

a colour palette and materials normally found in a residence rather than in the sky, we are able to fulfil this criteria.

“Great aviation design is creating the unimaginable and producing spaces with interiors, which are softer and more playful and versatile.”

Technology is constantly progressing, therefore clients are used to a higher standard of connectivity to their equipment, such as iPads linking to the music and light systems when in their homes, and they expect nothing

less when flying. When clients board their aircraft they should immediately be able to connect to the aircraft's network, enabling them to switch lights on/off, use the Internet, control the music system and temperature.

The most important thing is to understand the client's dreams and to create a product, which is completely bespoke, designed to their specific tastes and lifestyle, always exceeding their expectations. A great example is our 'yoga concept', which was borne from a conversation with a client who, despite travelling regularly, didn't want to give up their daily yoga and mindfulness rituals. Of great importance to them was the ability to continue with a healthy lifestyle, even when travelling and also to enjoy the moment. They're concerned with quality of experience. The yoga concept is completely unique, with an interior that

eschews typical aviation design tropes to create an open and light space focused on relaxation, meditation, wellbeing, health and balance. While the forward end of the aircraft retains all the usual VIP cabin amenities and features, at the back of the cabin we have concentrated on creating a private wellness retreat, including a yoga studio, aromatherapy shower and tapchan style day bed.

In addition to this, sustainability is a huge talking point at the moment and is a topic that cannot be avoided, nor should it be. Clients are now more interested in ensuring that their aircraft is as environmentally friendly as possible. To enable this, where possible we use lightweight materials, ensuring less fuel is consumed. We also review the materials we are selecting and how they are made. We look carefully at the

manufacturing process, sustainability and recyclability of each material.

When beginning a project brief with a client, we ask questions that will give us an idea of the environment the client relates to; this could range from asking which hotels they like to stay in, their favourite restaurant, the way the client lives and how they wish to be looked after on-board (we need to distinguish how private they wish to be). By understanding their preferences we are able to get a feel for their preferred interior design, offering a higher level of personal detail. Instead of the client having to adjust to the aircraft's

environment, the aircraft adapts to the client's lifestyle.

In a step towards informing our work with inspiration, at Winch Design, we have recently started an internal 'Design Forum'. Unlike typical 'Committee' or 'Board' meetings the forum is a place to discuss projects particularly at the pitch and concept stages. Designers from our three studios (yachts, aviation and architecture) attend and all ideas are welcomed but also critiqued! The Forum meets every two weeks and is a space for discussion, inspiration and to encourage innovation in design. We promote concept work as it is a great way to keep progressing

groundbreaking ideas, not restricted to a client's brief. Cross pollination between our studios helps ideas flow, the aviation studio can take inspiration from the architecture studio, with clients wishing to see the seamless transition from their home to their jet. The yachts studio can also help with creating luxurious spaces with a restricted volume by suggesting practical but beautiful materials, which create a more homely feel. Great aviation design is creating the unimaginable and producing spaces with interiors, which are softer and more playful and versatile. One way in which we do this is by creating curved and



Above: HALO concept



Above: Winch Design's yoga concept

irregularly shaped spaces within the cabin, through clever use of moulded panelling on the walls, and by dividing up the space with bespoke, intricate and detailed divisions. By using movable furniture (which can be securely stowed during take-off and landing), the spaces become malleable, dynamic and liveable, meaning that rather than spending the duration of the flight sitting opposite one-another in a formal business style, it is possible to feel totally relaxed in the cabin.

There are numerous restrictions to think about including the shape of the tubular fuselage, which more or less dictates the floor plan layout, dimensional restrictions, cabin pressure and decompression requirements. As designers we have to think creatively to come up with innovative ideas in order to find solutions to these barriers, using aircraft not simply as a means of transportation but rather a space to enjoy and to be inspired by. We're finding more and more now that clients do not want to be confined to one particular space, which feels boring and the same throughout. The interiors need to be comfortable, retaining

an open feel that does not feel cramped or confined. One of our BBJ-1 (Boeing Business Jet) projects was designed for a young businessman and his family. A stately desk area allows the owner to continue his work in one of the bespoke, butter-soft leather seats but when wanting to entertain guests and switch off from business the jet also featured a bar with stools and a hidden champagne cooler, making it hard to distinguish the aircraft from a boutique hotel.

It is not only the interior design which has a certain expectation but the service on board. As we have seen with the yoga concept, health is a high-priority, food is therefore key, where possible fresh food can also be taken on board via specialist caterers adding to the residential feel. Winch Design is mindful of offering the client something which adds value, this can be achieved by refining spending in areas which are not client facing. We can then focus on producing the highest quality interiors in the client facing areas.

We dream big at Winch Design, our HALO project concept, a residential airship with a living area the size of four football

itches, represents the way we will live and travel in the not too distant future. It is an extraordinary and exciting project that will appeal to our clients. Technology will also reach new heights. In the future, jets could be 'intelligent' containing AV which is aware of the client's mood, changing the environment to relax them as it is very common to work with clients who do not enjoy flying. One of our projects already has higher pressurisation, which is more natural for the body and relieves stress.

At Winch Design we are a huge advocate of sustainability but we need to further our knowledge to continue to reduce our carbon footprint. Where possible we already look to use natural materials and when sourcing materials we try to use local companies with an ethical approach, therefore investing back into the local economy. By choosing local suppliers, freight distances are reduced which reduces the carbon footprint involved with the production.

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