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INTERNATIONAL JET INTERIORS

by Jennifer Henricus

CABIN & COUTURE

A DARING DESIGNER GOES FOR THE RUNWAY

Clients always want their aircraft to be modern and up-to-date, while maintaining an understated, luxurious aesthetic

In a 50,000-square-foot hangar at Long Island's MacArthur Airport, an aircraft interiors project has its designer "fired on all cylinders". Tasked to modify and refurbish a Global 5000 for the sports entertainment giant, World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE, formerly WWF), New York-based International Jet Interiors is putting a progressive spin on cabin design. While the livery boasts WWE's corporate colours, the interiors use "hand-woven carpets, custom-made metal finishes including a spun black pearl finish, custom-dyed leathers and bespoke seating from Italy", says Eric Roth, the designer at International Jet Interiors' helm.

But the highlight is in the high-tech facilities: studio-grade equipment that enables on-the-fly editing of feeds from live sports entertainment shows, which are transmitted via on-board satellite. Meanwhile, specially programmed iPad minis control the cabin functions. "It will be the ultimate couture craft when completed in January 2014," says Roth.

No stranger to special client requests, Roth says he loves the challenge – the more unusual the request, the more he and his team seem to excel in delivering the solution. His clients come from around the world with a varied wish-list, ranging from entertainment systems with satellite TV and high-speed WiFi to 24-karat gold-plated fixtures throughout the craft. >>

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Details set Roth's work apart from other aircraft interiors — from the choice of lighting, carpet, upholstery and cabinetry, to gadget stowage and dining accessories

>> Its refurbishment of Donald Trump's Boeing 757, for instance, included a 24-karat gold-plated bathroom sink. Other projects have required reconfiguring the seating layout to make kennel space for hunting dogs, installing ultra-secure bassinets for newborn infants, and wrapping a toilet seat in crocodile skin for a client in India.

Roth says that as a designer and design director, his main task is to develop an intimate understanding of a client's lifestyle and his use of the jet — the percentage of time spent for business, pleasure, corporate entertainment and family time. "Helping clients strategise is a key part of the design process. I look at how long they have owned the craft and at its depreciating asset value, and work out if it's worth it to invest in the latest piece of technology or ultra comfort accessory. Most of them will opt for the investment because they want their aircraft to be up-to-date, even if this does not up its asset value."

At times, thorough strategising is needed even before International Jet Interiors accepts a project. A US-based film producer once wanted a 'sky studio' so that he and his four-member team could edit films onboard his Gulfstream. This required state-of-the-art editing equipment, surround sound, and a 42-inch, flat-screen, high-definition TV. "The client perceived the theatre >>







>> aspect as the great challenge — yet it was balancing the weight of the floor-plan change and equipment furnishing that was the real challenge. The structural and technical analysis consumed the better part of three weeks before we could make the commitment to produce this unique aircraft,” says Roth.

Despite many quirky refurbishing requests, Roth says a fair percentage of his clients avoid using their aircraft to make a statement: “They will come to me saying ‘Eric, I want it to be luxuriously comfortable, very functional but extremely understated.’” Nearly 75 per cent of the firm’s clients are US-based, but it is now receiving more requests from private-jet owners in Asia. The company has worked with clients in Shanghai, Tokyo and Mumbai, and is in discussions with new customers in Africa.

He hopes to one day produce a “green and sustainable” solution for a client. That may sound like an oxymoron, and it will take a designer used to pushing the limits of convention to create such a ground-breaking design. It looks like Roth is cut out for the job. 



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OPPOSITE

International Jet Interiors achieves a sleek, streamlined appeal by modifying an aircraft’s window line and periphery, and using composite materials exclusively

THIS PAGE

Hand-stitched leathers and finely woven fabrics create a luxurious, comfortable ambiance

Gadgets can be configured to control the lightings in the cabin interior