

PORTFOLIO OF DREAMS



Design Q Lounge

In December 2016, Comlux challenged four top industry designers to create design concepts for the next generation VIP aircraft. The idea was to give inspiration and a starting point for owners of green aircraft, a portfolio of what was possible. *Altitudes* got a first look at what they produced and spoke to the designers about their visions.

By Jill Stockbridge

At the end of last year, Comlux, through its VIP completion centre in Indianapolis, USA, announced a design initiative, challenging four top designers to create designs for potential VIP customers of new generation aircraft. Each designer was asked to develop distinctive rendering concepts for the ACJneo and Boeing BBJ MAX 8, each with unique materials, styles and concepts.

Since the completion centre opened in 2008, the team has worked with a number of the top designers in private aviation and chose four familiar

names. Arnaud Martin, EVP Operations Comlux Group and Chairman Comlux America, explained:

“Each designer has his or her own style and signature, which is shown through a choice of cabin concepts, created especially for the Neo and Max products. They come from different worlds and each of them has specific sources of inspiration and past experiences that will make each design totally unique,” he added.

The portfolio is not intended as prefab solution to widebody aircraft completion, but a starting point helping customers of different cultures, tastes and needs get a feel for what is available. Martin said: “The design concepts do not propose a catalogue of



modular cabin layouts, but are more of an inspiration, an atmosphere, an art of living. Based on the proposals, our customers will be able to select the designer they wish to work with.”

“The ACJneo and the BBJ Max are the next generation bizliners. They have plenty of space in the cabin, which allows a huge range of different cabin arrangements. Because these aircraft are new, the design inside the cabin should be extremely new as well, integrating both innovation and luxury.”

There has been much discussion of the challenge of new generation aircraft interior design, due to the use of carbon fibre airframes instead of the traditional aluminium. However, both the Neo and Max have traditional structure. Martin believes that there are still unique challenges. “They are different aircraft as far as noise is concerned, and our concept designers and engineers will have to adapt in order to optimise the noise and comfort even further in these new aircraft.”

DESIGN Q

Design Q prides itself in being invisible when it comes to the style ethic. The style of any project we



Howard Guy, CEO and joint owner, Design Q says: “Our knowledge of aircraft seating is second to none”

do is driven by the brand of the customer, be it an OEM or a private individual. We believe that the aircraft interior should reflect the values and style of the customer and not the design house. However, on occasion, customers want to include us in their story of how the interior came about, so there are many innovative elements that we have invented and produced that can’t be found anywhere else. Our knowledge of aircraft seating, for example, is second to none and we relish the challenge of turning a heavy looking boxy seats or divans into a light weight comfortable sexy piece of furniture.

Working without a specific client is easier if we are putting a proposal together and we determine what it looks like. Clients usually make you work harder and will react to a proposal instantly for good or bad. But this process often brings out solutions that might not otherwise have been found, so I would always prefer to work with the client. In a wide body aircraft the scale of the furniture and the infinite layout options mean that you design exactly what the customer wants.

It is a challenge to work on larger aircraft, as there is the temptation to fill every square foot with some new option or detail, partly because on regular business jets space is limited and valuable. It is better to back off and play with large areas of free space. Less is more in this size of aircraft.

THE DESIGN

The style for this proposal is clean cut with a diagonal section, which emphasises the width of the aircraft and allows a larger galley at the forward end and an 85inch TV aft, which can be hidden in the bulkhead.

Technology can be ugly, but it can also be beautiful. Sometimes we show it if the customer takes pride in his favourite brand of hifi or vision, and being able to see the state-of-the-art speakers and tweeters floats many boats. A 75-85 inch 4K TV - double the size of any business jet - would be the first thing I would order for my aircraft, with full surround sound. In this proposal we have the window section that allows flight path tracking and an inter-active ability that with Comlux we hope to offer.

We have given the ceiling a high quality combination of finishes. The piano black emphasises the height of the cabin, doubling its visual height by way of reflection. The highly polished crystal lighting takes its invention from other projects done by Design Q for an Airbus 319 and a Global 6000.

The galley is designed to be a social centre point. Just as people gather in a kitchen at a party or crowd around a bar, this zone is designed to be a focal point of entertainment.



Even without a client brief, from our experience, we understand a client's expectations in acquiring this type of aircraft. We are innovative in the way we work with the most advanced technologies without transforming the cabin into a space ship. We try to keep an elegant warm and welcoming atmosphere. What I like about this design is its eclecticism and its originality, enriched by the experience of a company that not only designs aircraft, but also yachts, luxury hotels, high end residences and corporate offices.

Balancing technology and connectivity with beauty and aesthetics is not a real issue. With the help of the completion centre's engineers we always find a way to integrate the most recent technologies into our interiors, even more so since IFE equipment tends to always be smaller now.

Perhaps the most difficult challenge is maximising flexibility in our designs, since it is hard to please everyone all of the time. However, our savoir-faire in terms of layout, comfort, elegance, etc. can be tailored to suit any client.

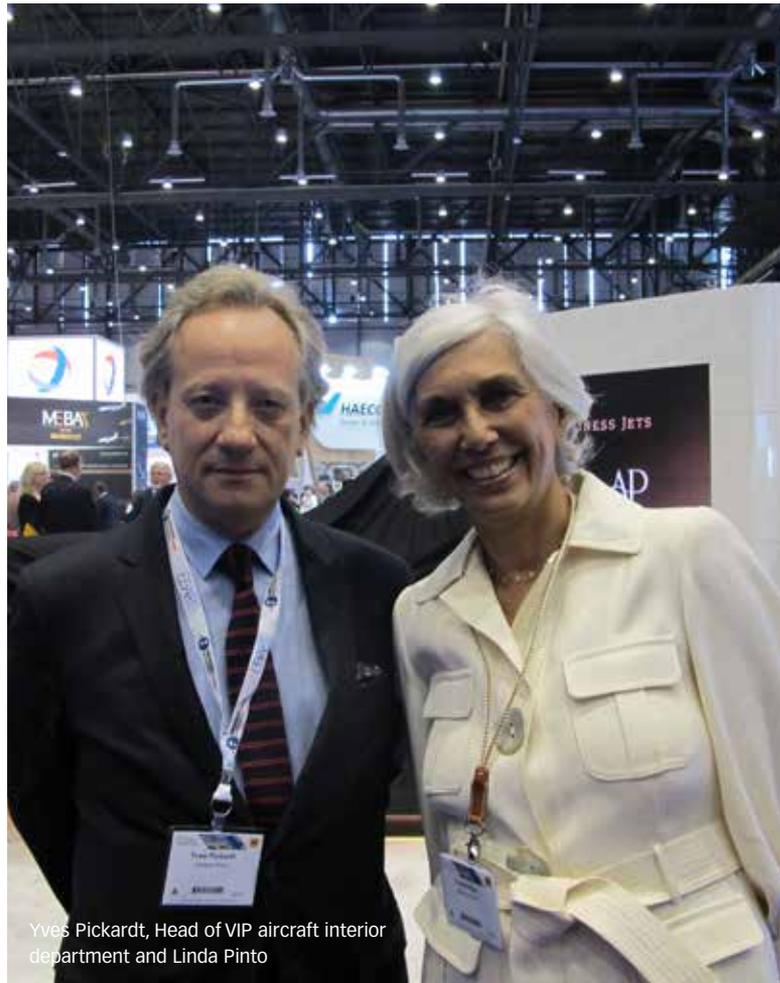
CABINET ALBERTO PINTO

Eclecticism is the key word for Pinto's style. It is nourished by worldwide influences - Europe, South America, the Orient, etc. "Our style" says Yves Pickardt, Head of VIP aircraft interior department, has some strong characteristics, such as highest quality, sense of comfort and a certain idea of chic. Alberto Pinto Interior Design, now led by Alberto Pinto's sister Linda Pinto, has always offered to its most demanding clients all styles of design, from eighteenth century French classical, to luxury beach houses to ultra-modern urban style. Alberto Pinto Interior Design makes our client's most extravagant demands and dreams a reality.

The first question asked when entering into an aircraft designed by Alberto Pinto is "Wow, who designed this plane?" Our design is immediately felt by our attention to detail, the way we use materials and a mastered originality. We make each aircraft a different story since every client is unique.

THE CHALLENGES

Working on a large aircraft is both a freedom and a greater challenge, as we are able to express more creativity throughout the numerous areas of the aircraft, allowing us to work with different types of seats, cabinets, harmonies and ambiances. We designed a stunning interior of a Boeing 747-8 and love these challenging projects, which are rare because of their size.



Yves Pickardt, Head of VIP aircraft interior department and Linda Pinto



JIM DIXON, HEAD OF AVIATION, WINCH DESIGN

Winch Design has a classic style, but always questioning the 'norms' of convention, personal to the client's lifestyle brief, and devoted to detail. We love to finesse the details that make the interior more tactile and appealing to touch. As an owner can be 'sat in a chair' for several hours on a flight, it's important to make that a real pleasure, so the stitching and upholstery detailing has become a signature here. This concept also features an electro-dimming bulkhead that offers 'openness' and 'privacy' to the main cabin spaces.

Working on larger aircraft gives us a freedom to have the available space to investigate different layout configurations and allow the design to express a personal 'signature' developed by Winch Design with the owner. When working without a client on this project there were so many ideas and possibilities! Design can be much more objective when we have a clear brief... but without it, we can show the clients ideas which they may not have even imagined! In the new generation aircraft owners will have a heightened expectation of the interior cabin design - to be 'forward-thinking' and 'new' in parallel to the new technology of the aircraft itself.

Flexibility can be built in when the spatial planning of the scheme has good rationale. Then the aesthetic design can easily be changed to meet a client's personal taste. Different clients will always have different requirements based on passenger numbers and functionality, but we always try to offer configuration options to each section of the



cabin, which can be combined to meet the requirements. We also work very hard on the individual areas to make sure that seating layouts have flexibility to create various groupings for conversation or changing functions throughout a long flight.

I don't see technology and aesthetics as fighting each other... Continually-advancing technology, and how an owner wishes to use it, can often be the starting point of a design concept. I find it easy to make beauty from any set of parameters by employing the rules of good proportion and intuitive detailing.

THE DESIGN

With some easy re-arrangement of the tables, the configuration of this space can be perfect for relaxed conversation, movie-watching in a large group, dining for 6-8 guests, or comfortable sleeping in two double beds. Making the interior 'work' with minimal effort and intrusion from the cabin crew is crucial to an owner's enjoyment of the design.

My favourite aspect of the design is not a particular feature that is somehow 'revolutionary'. I admire our design for being harmonious and integrated. I can guarantee then that it will be a perfectly relaxed environment for the owner and guests to enjoy. Above all, that's what all our clients want, but not all designs manage to achieve.



WARJA BORGES, OWNER, UNIQUE AIRCRAFT

My passion is to design interiors while helping the passengers to forget the inconvenience of long distance travels. My target is to create an atmosphere of recreation and also a relaxing place to recharge. One of my signature design elements is to use colours and materials to support this purpose as well as to study cultural and traditional styles and implement those into the design.

I have never designed a customised interior for an aircraft smaller than a Boeing or Airbus, so the size of the new generation narrow body aircraft Max and Neo are very familiar to me.

THE DESIGN

I have presented two designs that show an interior style with an innovative, fresh and elegant spirit. One is contemporary and timeless, the other uses regional and traditional Asian elements. Customised details and materials, designed and selected with care, emphasise the look and fuse the Asian style into the interior.



The contemporary design mainly plays with interesting surfaces and structures of the materials, while the Asian style has a signature motif to it presented in the ceiling lights, the bar front and in the carpet pattern.

It was an enjoyable experience to design without a client brief. Without any specific customer's request, we used our expert knowledge and imagination to design interiors addressed to customers looking for something unique but also appealing to a wide audience.

Each aircraft is tailor made according to the client's needs. In this case the two presented designs do have the identical configuration. Customisation can be achieved by layout variants, by changing the material and colour concepts. Additionally, changing a few elements and patterns in the interior changes its appearance completely to satisfy different tastes. The area can be changed from a dining room to conference area.

The technology of LED lighting allows for a significant change and look to illuminate the cabin. Avoiding the traditional use of light by the way of spotlights and ceiling domes, I used different decorative light features for the general room lighting and a few spots for designated functions only. ■