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# AIR

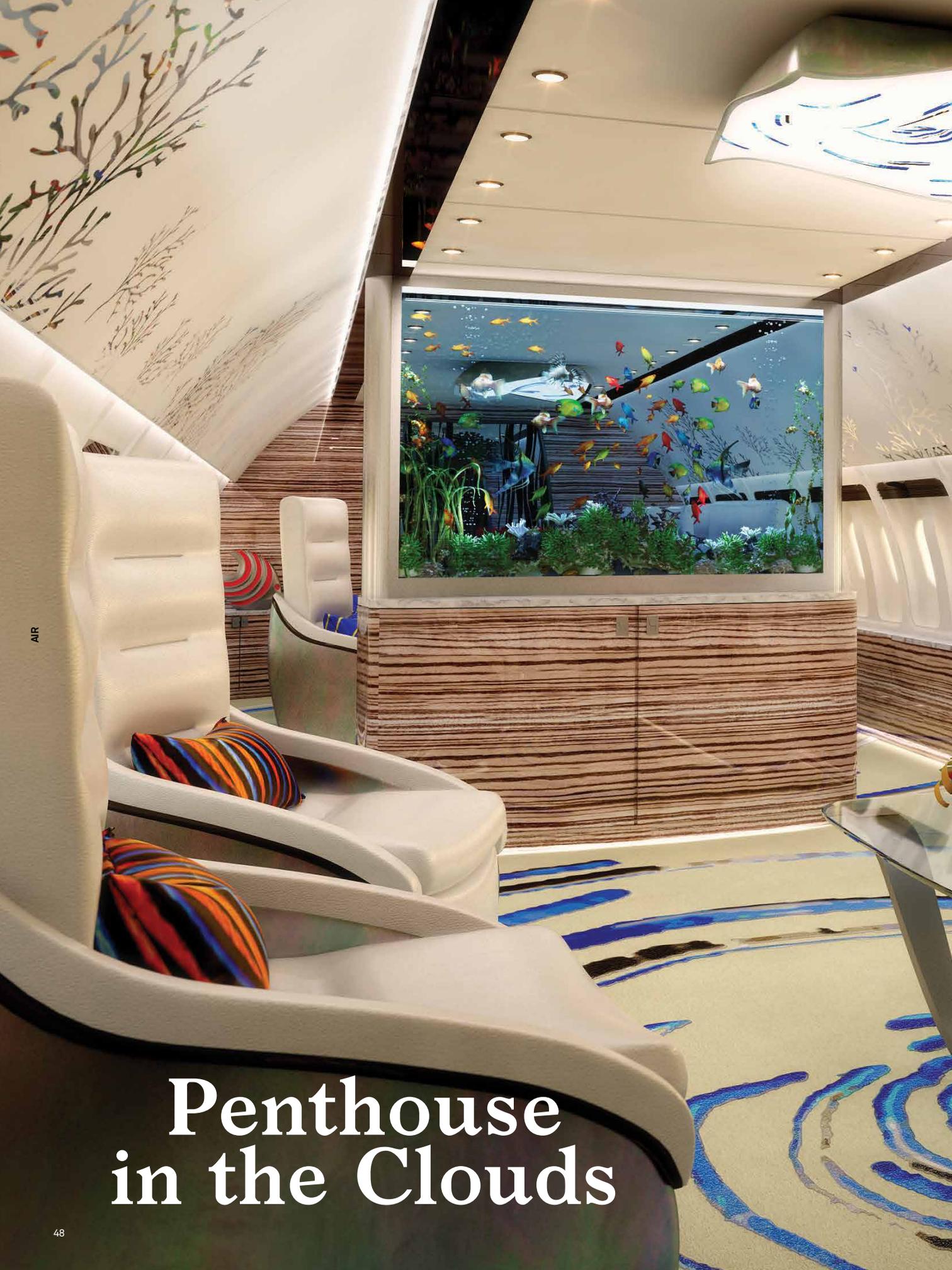
A MAGAZINE WITH ALTITUDE

Al Bateen  
Executive Airport  
مطار البطيخ للطيران الخاص



George Clooney

Luxury • Culture • People • Style • Heritage



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# Penthouse in the Clouds



Your private plane represents the ultimate travel escape, and with a **bespoke jet interior**, that imaginative odyssey can commence simply by stepping onboard. Call in the experts for your design project, and the sky's the limit

**S**pend an afternoon browsing private jet interior designs, and your eyes will be treated to a veritable visual feast.

The simplest of searches unearths inspiring delights: fish darting around an aquarium located between the dining and lounge areas of an aquatic-themed A320; a soaring New York skyline in sculpted leather relief, forming the backdrop to a suave 1930s art deco bar area; the serenity of a Washitsu, with a chabudai for dining and kisses of cherry blossom motif.

Such concepts may seem a flight of fancy, but these ideas (and more) are being savoured in the skies above: the vision of clients looking to furnish their proud aircraft purchase, blended with the creative proficiency of teams making such projects feasible – and aviation compliant.

Toulouse-based AirJet Designs is one such dreamcatcher. Jean-Pierre Alfano, its Head Designer, explains that, “Anything that you conceptualise has to be realised. I always say that making a nice drawing is easy, but turning it into reality means considering who will install it, who will create the upholstery, and carefully picking the proposed materials and technology – so that when you enter certification stage, you are not faced with any redesign issues and get sent back to the drawing board.”

AirJet will discuss a client's preference in detail, covering broader themes such as classic or contemporary, to specific examples of a particular interior that inspires them – a home, the aura of a fine hotel they like to frequent, for instance. The jet owner may wish to bring in a trusted interior designer they have worked with outside the aviation sphere.

“Some aircraft owners will say, ‘I have a designer I hired for my yacht or villa, and I want them to work on my plane,’” Alfano explains. His company is inserted into the process to provide the crucial know-how: “Often with such collaborations, they do not have experience with aircraft-specific materials and technologies. We oversee the process from beginning to end, ensuring maximum innovation while being true to certification and vessel airworthiness.”

For a boutique designer, a factor that can shape the creative process is plane's intended use. “Jets being utilised for charter [when not flown by the principal owner] can narrow options, purely from a business perspective,” Alfano reveals. “For example, I found beautiful inspiration for a seat rest, that would integrate an intricate weave with leather accent. But as the project was for charter this was too delicate for maintenance purposes, should a passenger accidentally unravel the weave. Working on a plain leather scratch is easier, in terms of upkeep.”

The design arm of an aerospace conglomerate such as Embraer, however, can go ‘all in’ with its charter jet approach



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– evidenced by the resplendent ‘Hollywood’ and ‘Manhattan’ themes masterminded by Jay Beever, Vice President of Interior Design for Embraer Executive Jets.

He explains that the seed was planted when a friend in Laguna Beach, John Erdman, exposed him “to the design and history of the SS Normandie, a French ocean liner... I immediately fell in love with its Art Deco and Streamline Moderne interior design, making me think of the wealth of such architecture here in the US. We conceived two sister airships which not only celebrate the Art Deco history of Manhattan and Hollywood architecture, but also deliver the ultimate flight experience.”

The Embraer charter themes are ‘scalable concepts’ that can be applied to its entire line of business jets. “The unique and compelling layouts are atypical,” elaborates Beever. “For instance, the first three cabin zones are set aside for the party. These three open gathering spaces encourage socialising. Next is the salon, featuring a more typical cabin layout for relaxation and intimate

conversation. In the rear of the aircraft, the Crystal Room is meant for dining. The layout is entirely customisable.”

On embracing the avant garde, “The use of aircraft mohair and lamb skin leathers make for luxurious seating applications,” Beever explains. “The exotic veneers and marquetry utilise methods from the period while simulated crystal, developed for aircraft, created special lighting opportunities. Lastly, the 3D sculpted sidewall and headliner trim takes advantage of aircraft space rarely considered a canvas for art.”

For AirJet, being headquartered in the heart of Europe also allows them to unearth design gems. “With our network of trusted suppliers, we’ve elite carpet, leather and upholsters, but we’re also able to source time-honoured techniques,” Alfano enthuses.

“A French 1930s artisanal Straw marquetry that we are working on for some doors and tabletops, or lamps with intricate mosaic artwork from Italian artisans. We’ve exquisite crafts being produced right on the doorstep.”

Of the myriad design details it is certification, Alfano believes, that is

perhaps the most undervalued. AirJet takes pride in deflecting such concerns from the client, yet compliance awareness is included in discussions from the beginning. “We don’t make promises that cannot be kept in regards to ‘out of the box’ ideas that are impossible to install,” he says.

“A client may want the seats to be red because their Ferrari is the same shade, so engage a non-aviation upholstery shop to create the seat material. They look nice. But if they are not put through testing and obtain the correct paperwork, when the regulator inspects the plane they could decide to ground it – which of course is costly and time-consuming. We navigate such matters.”

There are evident challenges, but not every project means boldly reinventing the wheel. “These are projects that appeal to one particular client, but not necessarily to the majority of people,” Alfano soothes. “In essence, people desire a similar level of exceptional comfort that they enjoy in their home or yacht. A lot of personalisation focuses on the little details – having that discreet yet distinct mark of the aircraft being one’s own.”

**Opening Pages:**  
Acquario, a theme created by  
AirJet Designs for an A320  
**Left:**  
The Kyoto airship  
theme, by Embraer  
**Right:**  
AirJet Design's Oasis, aboard  
an A340-500; Manhattan  
theme, created for charter  
by Embraer Executive Jets'  
interior design team

