



RECONFIGURATION, MODULAR THINKING, SENSE OF DETAILS – JET INTERIOR VISION BY ALI BENHAM BAKHTIAR

News / Business aviation



A lover of art and culture, with a passion for architecture, he is also a visionary who loves a challenge. Ali Behnam-Bakhtiar is an interior architect and event designer. He also designs private jets, combining talent, originality and creativity. We had the opportunity to discuss his vision of the business aviation industry and the future in more detail. Here is the essential of our exchange:

Q. How you ended up creating interiors for business jets?

A.B.B. I have an architecture & design department and we have also event department. When I

started to work with my clients on their houses or on their events and other projects. There was wedding event for my client when a lot of private jets were coming. I had to decorate a plane for this event. When I came inside, I thought – why does it look like so commercial? I knew what my client wanted. So, I told, let me organize it. I played around with some decoration, to make it more homey using color pallet my client likes. The captain came to me and said he could not recognize the plane. In 20 minutes, you just transformed the entire thing. When my client took the flight on this plane, he was amazed. Knowing my client has a busy schedule and must take long flights I just wanted to make the travel smoother. So it started like that. Later my client proposed to do the entire interior, as he was taking the delivery of new aircraft. He connected me with responsible persons in Switzerland. This was the moment when I got so many “no it is not possible” on ideas I had of the interior. I always try to understand what I am working on and discover. I took a special course on aircraft interior design. I discovered that if you respect safety and security requirement, you can do a lot of very different things. You can create whatever you want. Thus, I did this first aircraft for my clients, who was very satisfied. I am not doing tons of them, just very selected few. Sometimes it is just refurbishment project, some are more interesting for us as it is for new plane, so from Zero.

I think this market has huge potential. It seems to me that until now many projects were realized using pretty much the same color palette and scheme, standard furniture. I always try to understand what the story is behind, what are expectations. When we have all wishes, we segmentate then, we segregate it. One important thing for today – things can be modular. For example a bed can be transformed into a sofa.

Q. Are you ready to come up with a concept of modular furniture for private planes? A lot of aircraft are used by big operators, without a possibility to be too much personalized. Chartering aircraft you cannot be sure all clients will like the same things. A concept like that would allow to have a basic neutral aircraft and opportunity to play with elements to update the interior.

A.B.B. This is what we are working on. For the same client of mine I mentioned. He like one color palette and style; his mother and his kids have totally different preferences. So we're working on transformable chairs for the aircraft, so you could easily keep the structure, but change colors, fit in and fit out and change the configuration. If one day, they want to sell the plane or charter it – it will be easy to go for something neutral. Some clients are telling me, - if I charter the plane, I don't want someone sleeping in my bed. I totally understand. We came up with “second kit” idea. So, when it is chartered – one kit is used. When it goes back private – another one is clipped in. From production point of view, it is almost the same, you just produce the structure in double and then personalization with different materials.

I think it will be more and more popular. People think wisely now. For many of my clients money is not an issue. It is question of different attitude – you don't need to change the entire interior of an aircraft, with this kit and modular approach big changes can be made in an easier way without huge investment.

Q. We must educate the end consumer. To show then a different way of flying, of using private planes. Do you use sustainable materials in your creations?

A.B.B. We use sustainable material for the most of things we are doing. A lot of manufacturers are proposing to create even your own design for recyclable fabrics. You can find so many things now. That depends on you, on designer. Clients I am working with never came to me saying for example – I want a real fer, real leather of animals. Thanks to technologies we have now you can have amazing recyclable materials and imitation that are giving you even better experience than

“normally” used materials. It is a part of the education. This is where designers should come up. We want to go this direction. The only limitation – aircraft design must comply with safety and security requirements, including for materials. There are cases we’re sending materials for testing before getting approvals. This is also education. Education is more than important! I learn daily. Nature has everything. If we go back to nature and try to understand and try to use things.

Q. Are you ready to work on your clients future eVTOLs? It looks like they are coming.

A.B.B. They are. I think there is a huge development happening in aviation in general. It is going to grow to another level. I assisted one test in Dubai, it is amazing. It is just an air Taxi, you just go inside, you don’t have a pilot, anything. Technology will take things to another level.

Q. Would you be ready to start a serie, educational one, from a designer point of view, explaining what and how can be done different in private jets?

A.B.B. Even I have a very little knowledge, because it is such a huge industry and there are a lot of names. I believe that thinking outside a box is important. When I was thinking to aeronautical engineers, and they were saying – not. I was asking why not; can you explain me? The answer just because was not enough for me. My answer is almost always why not? When I started projects for my clients a lot of people were surprised – oh it works! It is not a question of working; you just must open up a little bit. I think private aviation is still one of industries being very conservative, in the box. This is what missing – thinking out of the box. With me in general, I am always outside the box! I think there is a huge educational gap on that! It will be caught very fast.

Q. For me it is very important to reach out, to scream and make people wonder, what can be done thinking outside the box. If you ready, it will be my pleasure.

A.B.B. With pleasure, no problem!



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