

ALTEA has created a reputation for delivering high-end bespoke aircraft and helicopter interiors from concept to completion. From BBJs to AW109s, the company brings together design concepts blending safety and practicality with a touch of class. **Robin Dunlop**, partner and head of ALTEA's design team, spoke with *Air International*


Eight Questions

Question 1: Describe the initial consultation with a private jet owner seeking a bespoke interior? What's discussed during the first few meetings, and how, if needed, are compromises reached regarding safety and practicality?

It all starts with an idea of what the customer wants to achieve from a range and payload point of view. What are the most travelled city pairs? How many passengers are the norm on board? If we then look at a suitable aircraft type, we can go from there to plan the interior. What sort of amenities, comfort, and sleeping arrangements does the customer wish for? Quite often, the first discussions are around a floorplan of the proposed aircraft – where is it best to place bedroom, lounges, cinema etc. Once we know the sort of passenger density and range, we can then advise on what the expected service might be on a ten-hour flight, for example, what galley space and equipment might be suitable, what amount of stowage is likely, and where to place it. No matter what is wished for or how much space and money a client might think they have, there will always be compromises to their initial ideas. At ALTEA, we minimise those compromises and maximise a customer's ambitions to make them a reality.

Question 2: How much does CGI now play within the process, and is this all beneficial in allowing for more complex demands from a client?

We use CGI renderings and animations on every project. However, they must be used within the proper process and in the correct sequence. On many occasions, ALTEA is called and asked to produce 'some renderings' because the customer wants to know what their interior could look like. This is often the first request, frequently from 'middlemen', suppliers, or MROs. Our response is always positive, but I always say, 'Renderings of what?'

You need a design process, a dialogue, and an initial conversation to get a glimpse of what a customer might be looking for. If you go straight in and bash out a CGI render (which takes time and money), you need to know what part of the aircraft cabin is the focus. What is the desired configuration of furniture? What is the desired style? What materials does a customer like? Do they have favourite colours? 



Robin Dunlop, partner and head of ALTEA's design consultancy service
ALTEA



Or, better still, do they have colours they don't like and don't want to see? You better be sure to get this all correct because, with increasing technology, the realism of the CGI render is so good it's hard to detect from reality. If you place a detail within the render that you miss or don't execute in reality, then you have some explaining to do!

The CGI render is an excellent final validation of the listening, interpretation, planning, material sample reviews, sketching, colourway concepts and hard work that then produce the intended vision. However, experience tells us that it shouldn't be the starting point or opening conversation.

Question 3: Regarding regulation safety standards within the corporate market, what fundamentals must all interiors abide by to be certified? Have these become more complicated in recent years?

All ALTEA's ideas and configurations must consider CS25 (EASA) or FAR 25 (FAA) compliance. They are not difficult to understand, but like law, they have some variations in interpretation. One procedure might be that we look at what and how a particular regulation has been interpreted before – this presents a precedent that we can then, with some argument, follow. However, the regulations are reviewed and updated, and there are amendments and recommendations, so ALTEA is mindful of staying on top of all of this too.

The ALTEA design studio comes from a technical background, and we are generally renowned as 'technical designers' in the industry. We don't dream



up endless possibilities for a business jet interior that we know simply won't meet the necessary compliance. It wastes time and builds false ambition in the customers' minds – you will only disappoint if you start promising a jacuzzi! We believe in 'testing' the interpretation of some of the regulations to achieve a positive outcome. Someone must set those precedents. We like to be innovative and produce something unique for our customers.

Question 4: With a push across the entire aviation world to 'be green' and improve sustainability, how is ALTEA managing these new requirements and are they coming from individual clients or industry?

This is where ALTEA can produce some 'magic'. Real developments are happening in using sustainable materials,

and these are not just decorative materials; these are secondary structures using biomass materials. We are always talking with suppliers and manufacturers. These are the companies that are doing their research and development to make quantifiable changes. So, the whole supply chain has a real foothold on this R&D work, allowing them to bring solutions to the market in bite-size solutions quickly. We then must apply them and build the picture to complete sustainability within an aircraft interior.

It is up to all of us to truly reduce our footprint. As designers, we think we can facilitate these changes by embracing the R&D work and finding proper applications for the technology.

Question 5: During the build/installation phase, how does

ALTEA manage the processes at a facility in the UK or overseas?

It does not matter where in the world a project might be coming together; ALTEA has the means to service our customers and complete the build/installation. Throughout COVID-19, we managed the completion of a new aircraft delivery without us continually crossing seas and continents to do so. Of course, it's not ideal, and generally, we like to be at the coalface with the supply chain and in the hangar at the completion centre or paint shop. But it can be done with our breadth of network and ability to manage from afar.

Question 6: Compared with VIP corporate jets, aside from the apparent dimensions, what challenges do helicopter interiors present and what processes are unique to this aircraft?

We love a helicopter at ALTEA! It's

basically a very cool mode of transport, more automotive-like than VIP aircraft, which are associated more with a villa, yacht, or luxury apartment. However, a helicopter represents a challenge; how can we create a unique experience for the passenger? How can we build in details and make it intuitive and exciting? Of course, there are some significant obstacles – noise being the main challenge – but with the suitable materials, quality of construction and some noise-damping technology, the final experience can definitely be enhanced.

Question 7: ALTEA managed outfitting the State of Netherlands Boeing BBJ PH-GOV. Can you explain some of the challenges faced before successfully completing the aircraft?

Dream customer! We can honestly say that ALTEA was involved right at the beginning advising on aircraft types,

specifications, types of ownership, financial structures, market intelligence on other government flights and aircraft, cabin configuration, design styles, details on upholstery, cabin management, cabin connectivity, aircraft security – everything; you name it, they asked our advice. But, then... they let us get on with it; they knew when to engage and when to let us do our job. It was an inspiring project to be involved in, with a great team around us.

Question 8: How do you spend your free time away from aviation, Robin?

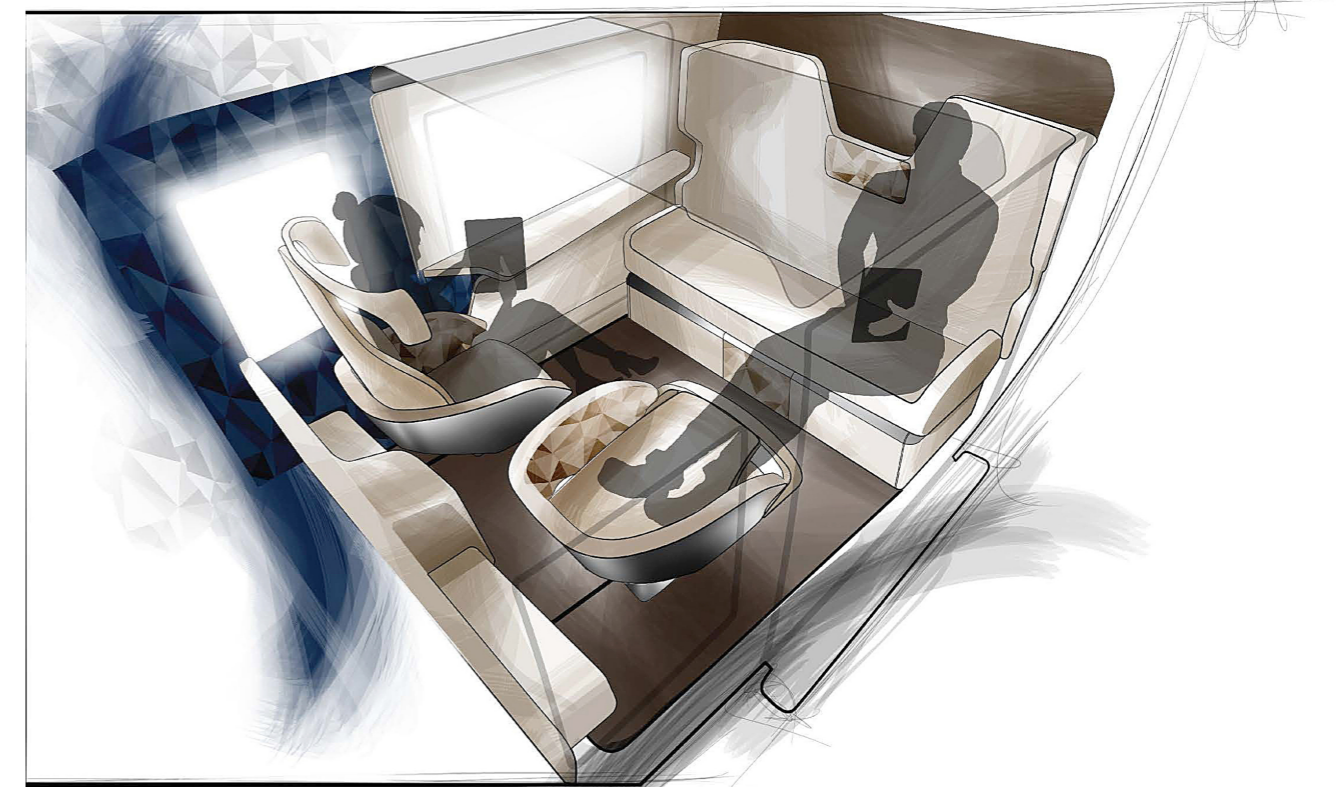
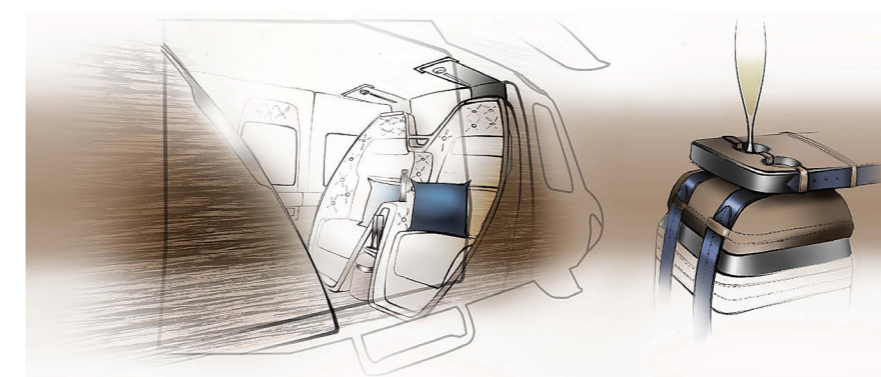
I love what I do, so annoyingly, I tend to do it every moment I get. When I am not involved with aircraft, I love racing my mountain bike and skiing with my 11-year-old son. Occasionally I am known to sit still, maybe with a glass of wine, chatting with my wife, Julia, with our dog Beau lying at our feet... occasionally. **AI**

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Before any work commences, ALTEA develops interior concepts using CGI, such as this bedroom area for a Global 7500 ALTEA

It's always the little details that make an interior exceptional, and ALTEA liaises with the client throughout the initial design briefs with detailed illustrations, as shown ALTEA

Helicopter interiors, such as for this the Airbus H160, have to balance EASA certification requirements and comfort in what is a relatively small area ALTEA

The ALTEA design team have unveiled several concept interiors for the flagship of the Bombardier fleet, the Global 7500 ALTEA



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