



SPRING 2006

[truth, beauty & charity on the california desert]



**N**OT LONG AGO, A Near-Eastern customer ordered a blazing hearth for his new **Airbus A380**, a big jet that was all the rage at the 2005 Paris Air Show. The private-plane customization firm **Lufthansa Technik** put all its best engineers on the “flying fireplace” project. Not feasible they finally

concluded — “would the owner settle for a second lounge instead?”

Among the swelling ranks of well-heeled nomads living mainly out of Vuitton suitcases, the comfort level within the cabins of their personal aircraft has become increasingly important — more a basic essential than flighty indulgence.

Making a seamless transition between home and second home, office and Hong Kong meeting,

Montana ranch and London shopping spree and back home again all in one unflustered piece — is fast becoming one of the Holy Grails of modern living.

Our research into the art of living seamlessly and the latest developments in jet cabin design propelled us on a whirlwind flight to top conversion facilities at **Cessna** in Kansas and **Lufthansa Technik** in Germany as well

# The Sky's

# NO

*The world's best interior designers are playing among the stars.*

STYLE BY LOUIS POSTEL

# Limit

as to the studios of international designers **Mario Buatta**, **Juan Montoya**, **Edese Doret** (whose designs are pictured on these pages) and **Brad Dunning**, a Palm Springs transplant who is busy finishing up Demi Moore and Ashton Kutcher's new place in the Hollywood Hills.

For Brad Dunning, the nomadic life aboard private jets and life in Palm Springs are wonderfully symbiotic.

"One thing that's so amazing

about Palm Springs that seldom gets mentioned is the close proximity of the airport to the neighborhoods and center of town," says Dunning.

"Palm Springs is truly a 'jet age' city in this aspect which meshes beautifully with the Mid-Century optimism of its dramatic modern architecture," Dunning continues. "Especially if you live in Palm Springs proper you can be home and in the pool within minutes of

landing; an amazing asset. That drive west up Tahquitz, leaving the airport and heading toward town, with Albert Frey's iconic glass house directly in front of you nestled up on the rocks, the street lined with palm trees and the giant mountain looming ahead — that's a true Palm Springs moment welcoming you back."

Mr. Dunning transfers his sense of style in living on terra firma with his sense of style ►



in the skies. "It sounds like a no-brainer, but one important factor is matching the tone and feel of a client's home to his or her plane; the signature-style factor. Most sophisticated clients have either chosen or agreed upon a color palette in their home — be it stark white; mellow earth tones of brown and beige or even the sexier bachelor colors, gray and black.

"Take this onto the plane," says Dunning. "Nothing beats the tactile pleasure of deep-pile mohairs, assuming they are kept very clean. Cashmere, soft throws and blankets should be scattered everywhere. There is nothing like cuddling up with a good book or movie on a private plane.

"Also, just like at home, lighting is the key. Small concentrated pools of light create a sexier, calmer and more

sophisticated mood. The Bose noise-canceling headphones are also genius for music listening or DVD watching."

From Palm Springs imagine hurtling over aerodynamically carved desert to Lufthansa Technik's hangar located in the Hamburg airport. Clad in surgical whites, 180 technicians swarm around private Airbuses and Boeings busily customizing them for their V.I.P. clients, drawn in large part from the United States and the Near East. A spokesman, **Aage Dunhaupt**, looks like the Euro answer to Brad Pitt, only six inches taller and with a lot less angst.

"No matter how big the plane, weight is always an issue," explains Dunhaupt.

To stay feather-light Lufthansa Technik has developed paper doors for the cabins: a honeycomb material coated

with beeswax and a couple of layers of fire protection, and then added a veneer of sycamore.

The material is "very stable and can also be used for shelves and closets."

Beeswax doors?

Next, we invite readers to transport themselves from Hamburg to Wichita, Kansas for a dose of comparative reality. There, Cessna is turning out Citation X's "with standard amenities" for just under \$20 million. (Much less than an Airbus costs, for those who need to ask.) Add special fabrics, carpets, exotic veneers, gold-plated seatbelts and a cutting-edge entertainment package and expect to pay another two million or more, according to **Gary Sauber**, Manager of Interior Research and Development.

A \$230,000 entertainment package, called an "air show," would include one of the ubiquitous and very fun "moving maps," CNN Headline News non-stop on strategically-placed monitors and headset jacks on every seat, selectable menus on the DVDs with liquid crystal displays, totally digitized. Right behind ramp appeal, which the Citation certainly has in spades, "entertainment on these planes is a big driver," adds Sauber.

Nothing about Edese Doret's many jet interiors appears to be regulation or standard issue. At 38, Doret is one of the dashing young men in the field: If Aage Dunhaupt of Lufthansa reminds us of Brad Pitt, our first impression of the Haitian-born industrial designer is a cross between Denzel Washington and Brian McKnight.

Based in New York, Doret is currently surrounded by boxes, as he is preparing to move his small firm and huge computer monitors to a larger loft downtown. In a room dedicated to samples of fabrics, woods, finishes and carpets, a 16" by 16" piece of African mahogany awaits a final verdict.

"Most designers wrap or integrate divans in the cabinetry, but we don't do that; we have them stand alone to look more like a residence. Our style is a little more modern, though we recently did a plane for Ty Warner that was more classic and traditional." (Warner was the inventor of Beanie Babies, owner of Four Seasons hotels and the tie that binds the Ty Warner Sea Center to the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History.)

"We also just did an Airbus A380 Double Decker with a

cool new feature: an Air Force One-type air stair in the belly of the plane; You board not from the side but up the belly.

"There's also a Jacuzzi that we installed in a unique way. We engineered it in a way that treats it like a shower. In the front half of the Jacuzzi we installed sliding pocket doors, so that, in cases of extreme turbulence, the water drains quickly..."

For those who adhere to a truly nomadic, globetrotting lifestyle, specifically a sheik from Saudi, Doret created a desert camp in the upper deck of an Airbus, complete with Persian rugs and low round tables.

"When you enter the lounge, you enter through curtains and when you go inside you feel like you are entering a tent. You have the sense of being in an Arabian desert, with fabric panels following the sweeping

*Continued on page 73*



# The Sky's No Limit

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curves of the pressure dome. The fabric is painted in a mosaic fashion, and fiber optics are wired in so you have the illusion of seeing stars.

Hall of Fame interior designer **Juan Montoya** recently devoted his talents to a Gulfstream V for a computer entrepreneur:

"He took me for a trip to Chicago and we saw his plane and I thought we could improve it quite a bit. The whole thing had been designed in different colors and leathers and fabrics.

"We reconfigured the space entirely. There was a series of very traditional and conventional seating arrangements; instead we created mini conference centers where you could work as well as recline. If you look at any commercial plane, you have seating all going one way but this was to have seating in little centers just like at home. Ultimately, the FAA opposed our seating arrangements; they wanted the conventional layout, but we finally came to an agreement."

## A WHOLE OTHER APPROACH

Perhaps the world's most famous decorator, **Mario Buatta**, a.k.a **The Prince of Chintz**, is the opposite of Montoya on the color spectrum. "I hate beige," says Buatta who lives in New York but who was born in Hollywood in 1933, the son of bandleader Phil Burton (Alice Faye, a longtime desert resident and one of the founding members of Thunderbird Country Club, was Buatta's babysitter, just for the record).

Buatta holds up the now defunct 1970's commercial carrier Regent Air as a model of inspiration. "It had a beauty parlor and caviar. You could sit and play cards. There was a massage table and make-up room."

What would Buatta's own private plane look like? "An English country house drawing room." But of course. ■■

*Watch for more style stories filed by 111's Style Editor Louis Postel in future issues. Next month, he tackles Earth Tones.*



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