

# EVA

WINTER 19/20

EXECUTIVE &  
VIP AVIATION  
INTERNATIONAL



## FAI AVIATION GROUP

CHAIRMAN SIEGFRIED AXTMANN & BRAND AMBASSADOR MIKA HÄKKINEN

30 YEARS AND STILL FLYING

The Story From the Chair: Next-generation Evolution Seat and LuxStream Connectivity  
Driving Excellence – ACH130 Aston Martin Edition  
The Story From the Air: GojiBox Geotainment – Peter Nissen, President & Executive  
Producer, Gotham Studios

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The primary business airport for New York, Teterboro supports four FBO operators – Atlantic Aviation, Jet Aviation, Meridian and Signature Flight Support – and sees considerable large-cabin, long-range traffic

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In 1989, German entrepreneur Siegfried Axtmann bought a small ambulance helicopter operator – 30 years on, the FAI Aviation Group is a major player in business aviation and air ambulance operations. Now it is entering its 31st year, with former Formula 1 world champion Mika Häkkinen on board as brand ambassador



# Star Creation

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*With only 30 days to refurbish a CJ2 cabin, Frank Ponterio turned to Scott Group Studio for a key design element. Meanwhile, the carpet maker has released its latest collection, Boreas, a continuation of its organic geometry theme*

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How much to do in the time available is the dilemma of most cabin refurbishments. If the seats, sideledges, cabin walls and carpet are coming out for rework or replacement, there's also an opportunity for inspection, maintenance and avionics update; it makes good sense to replace the IFE and cabin communications before the furnishings go back in. A proper order of work therefore emerges and close co-operation between designers, avionics technicians, maintainers, upholsterers, carpet makers and more is needed if a project is going to come together in time and on budget.

When an owner came to Frank Ponterio's Chicago design studio HQ with a CJ2 for complete refurbishment, Ponterio and his team faced all those usual challenges. But in this case, time was especially tight. "There was no compromising on timing," he recalls, "since my client is an avid golfer and wanted to take his new plane to the Masters. We knew it would be a challenge,



and mapped out a daily schedule to make sure we stayed organised and on time. The craftsmen worked multiple shifts to complete the work at the very highest level. It was a complete redo – everything from interior finishes to avionics.”

With only 30 days available, the work involved removal of all the headliner and wall materials, and the seats and carpeting. The cabinetry was also refurbished, and the

lighting, and all the accessories changed too. “And we reworked all the communications. Our end took care of the design and finishes, with Elliot Aviation as our partner, working through the avionics and total refit to bring our designs to reality. This was a majorly coordinated effort that couldn’t have worked without both teams being in sync.”

The result is quite stunning and still would be, even had it taken 60 days to complete; the compressed timescale appears to have made no difference at all to the quality of finish. In some cases, the team made exceptional use of existing material, the sideledges, for example, which at first glance appear to be new... “We did not change their functionality but we did completely refinish them, stripping the ‘checked’ (bubbled) finish and

reapplying a new finish for a crisp, fresh feel,” Ponterio confirms.

The aircraft’s original seats were particularly worn, with sagging, creased leather. They’d clearly seen heavy use and when seats are tired, other surfaces, especially tabletops, tend to be tired too. Ponterio says: “In the same manner as the sideledges, we stripped the original finish and leather, then completely refinished the hard surfaces, adding a very durable leather to the top. It’s taken a lot of wear and has held up incredibly well.”

#### Carpet Creation

The carpet in a well-used cabin will pretty much always show signs of use however well maintained. Mechanical wear from moving seats, marks from foot traffic and the occasional stain helped determine the original carpet’s fate in the CJ2, although a new carpet was always going to be required to complete the new owner’s desired look. There’s no shortage of carpet manufacturers, but Ponterio looked to Scott Group Studio, a supplier he knew and trusted, for this particularly demanding project.

“We worked with Scott Group Studio for many reasons. They’re relatively local and we had a great track record working with them in the past, plus they specialise in

#### FRANK PONTERIO

The craftsmen worked multiple shifts to complete the work at the very highest level.



aviation. While there certainly are other vendors we could work with, for this level of customisation in design we require someone with a proven track record, and who we know we can work closely with to achieve our exact vision for the plane.”

The cabin colours and finish were obviously carefully chosen and created, but the carpet really does stand out in the refurbished cabin, to the point where it could easily have been the central piece around which everything else was designed. But with the customer’s requirements always in mind, the optimum combination of leather, wood and carpet colour is achieved through careful balance and Ponterio says no single element takes the lead.

“This is really where our talents as designers come in. We presented our initial colour

scheme to the client and he loved it off the bat. We either hand selected all of the items or they were designed by my team at Frank Ponterio. There’s typically no single element that ‘leads’ over another in an interior, although the carpet was certainly the super star in this case.”

#### Star Creation

From initial contact between cabin designer and Scott Group, there is a well-defined process of carpet design and definition, often followed by the manufacture of samples that can be shown to customers and even placed inside cabins for appraisal. With colours and pattern agreed, the process moves to production, where the pattern is stamped and checked in detail on the scrim, or backing, before tufting commences. The process of actually threading the carpet,

tufting results in a finish that needs to be completed through shearing and, possibly, carving, to achieve consistent pile height and any special effects, before a latex binding is applied.

Ponterio notes: “We worked through several custom strike offs – samples for approval – of the carpet before we finally approved it.” And all while Scott Group’s skilled craftspeople waited to begin their precise work. In fact, the work didn’t finish in the factory, because: “They also assisted in the custom piece being exactly ‘fitted’ into the cabin plan and helped with express delivery to the Aviation refit group.”

The result of 30 days’ hard work and precision, the refurbished CJ2 is in a configuration that Ponterio says ‘works very

well for the client'. It offers six club seats in a very comfortable layout, while he also confirms the level of personalisation: "The galley was arranged around the client's individual needs and wants, which even included his favourite glassware, playing cards and snacks."

Timescale aside, Ponterio obviously enjoyed the CJ2 project and is pleased with the transformation of a traditional cabin. "I've been fortunate to have several clients and friends with aircraft, and I've always been underwhelmed with the design of the interiors. Most are grey or tan, and

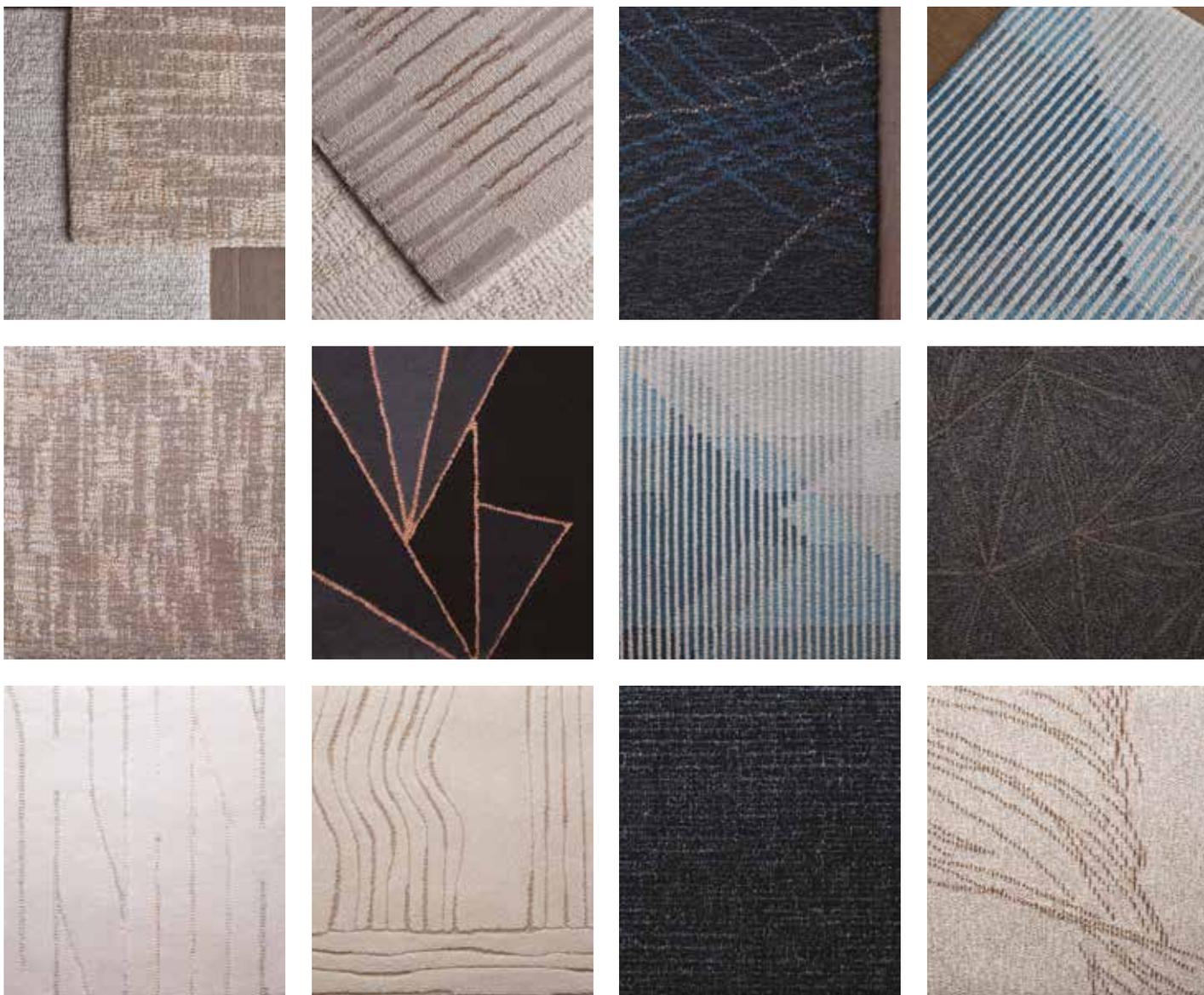
while very well appointed with a high level of craftsmanship, very few had anything other than rather boring design elements and palette." That's something he and his team definitely fixed on the CJ2. And it's something they'll be fixing for other clients too. "We are working on another two planes now. One is a refit, the design inspired by a 1972 Alfa Romeo GTV – a favourite car from my childhood. It's going to be great!"

**Boreas Collection**

Meanwhile, Scott Group Studio has been busy completing its new Boreas Collection, which Missy Vandenberg Strear, Design

Director at Scott Group Studio, says, "...continues the theme of organic geometry from our Escala Collection, but focuses more on aisles, to create artful moments that evoke movement, customised to the plan of an aircraft." The focus on aisles is particularly apt given Ponterio's superb use of a Scott Group carpet in the CJ2.

With so much bespoke design on offer from Scott Group, one might question why the company bothers to create collections at all, but they make excellent starting points for customers and designers, enabling them to see a catalogue of possibilities, rather than



starting from the basis of ‘You can have anything you want...’. A collection design is also easily adapted to become unique, as Strear notes: Our collections are thoughtfully designed for ease of specification, however our strength at Scott Group Studio is our ability to customise, working closely with the customer to create a design that celebrates their individuality.

“Adaptability of design is essential when we create new collections. Colour, size and pattern are the most apparent ways to customise, but there are many more components that can be altered, including texture, pile height and yarn type, which our in-house design team takes into

consideration to achieve the desired customer aesthetic.”

Thinking back, the Escala Collection seems too recent to be yesterday’s news, while the recent release of Boreas implies that Scott Group keeps its designers very busy. The reality is that collections don’t date so quickly: “Scott Group Studio designs maintain a timeless appeal through customisation,” Strear emphasises. “Modifying the scale or colour of a design, for example, can instantly transform it from classic to contemporary. But we are continually ideating for future collections, typically looking one to two years ahead.

“Every collection begins with a theme which guides the creative direction. Common avenues for inspiration include nature, art, fashion and collaborative brainstorming, but sometimes inspiration can be derived from a feeling or memory that tells a story. The Boreas collection, for example, is inspired by the ephemeral, organic patterns created by wind, evoking a feeling of movement and propulsion.” With carpet such a vital component in the cabin, Scott Group Studio’s latest collection seems to encapsulate all that is important about flying and deliver it into the cabin. It should come as no surprise since, to borrow unashamedly from Frank Ponterio, “...they specialise in aviation”.

