



WINCH DESIGN

THE LANDSCAPE OF LUXURY DESIGN POST COVID-19

Only very few have evaded the impact of COVID-19. The repercussions have not only affected how we spend our time and who with, but also created a rare opportunity for reflection in a busy world, offering the space to re-evaluate values and goals. The pandemic has also altered how businesses around the world operate and how businesses and individuals alike choose to spend their money. Few industries have been fortunate enough to avoid the negative financial consequences of the pandemic, and fewer still, to have seen an upturn in business activity. One fortunate industry to fall into the latter category is the luxury design sector, specifically, top-end bespoke design for some of the world's wealthiest people.

Winch Design is a London-based studio with a 35-year heritage in the bespoke design of superyachts, private jets and architecture for a discreet and discerning UHNW client base. The studio has seen a surge in business activity across all three design

disciplines and has recruited over twenty-five new members of staff since the start of the pandemic. But together with the upturn in business activity, Winch Design has also noticed a shift in values and goals amongst its clients, in relation to not just their spending habits but also with how they are thinking about their lifestyles, now and into the future.

Privacy, security, and social distancing have become greater priorities and subsequently, superyachts and private aircraft are swiftly becoming essential additions to portfolios. In addition to the aforementioned, they also offer the opportunity to travel with a bubble for an extended period of time. Winch is seeing an increase in requests that cater to a post-COVID lifestyle such as enhanced working from home, yacht or plane capabilities and heightened inside/outside living areas. Health has ranked as a top priority for UHNWIs for some time but is now soaring to the top of the agenda. What clients expect from their home working environment is expanding as

health and well-being takes centre stage and designers are increasingly considering natural light cycles, plant life, Feng-shui and ergonomic design. Some clients are requesting specially designed medicine rooms and accommodations for an onboard doctor in addition to the usual gym and spa facilities found onboard the top superyachts in the world.

Perhaps seeking a more balanced lifestyle away from the stresses and pressures of daily life, 26% of global UHNWIs are planning to buy a new residence in 2021. Demand is especially high for rural and coastal properties, with access to open space being the most highly desired feature. The pandemic has super-charged demand for locations that offer a surfeit of wellness and an opportunity to take a deep breath of clean air away from the bustle of city life. Following the theme of escapism, Aino Grapin, CEO Winch Design, says that: "Explorer yachts are gaining popularity. Clients are wanting to be able to navigate around the globe for extended periods of time in a 7* environment. Their yacht must be able to thrive anywhere, no matter how harsh the climate." Explorer yachts have increased tender storage for maximum exploration, ice-class hulls, and increased crew capacity to set out on longer expeditions. These 'swiss-army knives on the water' can operate for months at a time at sea, eliminating the need to refuel, and therefore removing all unnecessary human contact. Another emerging trend is the one for more informal, multi-functional spaces on board yachts that readily cater to a growing family. Perhaps clients and their families are preparing to not only spend extended periods of time at sea but also to spend extended periods of time at sea for a number of years to come. Private jet companies also saw a surge in demand as individuals, their families and entourages



sought to travel safely in 'a bubble' to their yachts and holiday homes. Included in these numbers were individuals who hadn't previously sought a private-jet charter. Some brokerages saw new customer sign ups double the usual levels and to manage the increased passenger count, were spending up to one-million pounds a month on safety and cleaning procedures. The rapid change in the way that international businesses operate also forced reflection. Previously the Winch Design team would frequently travel by air to meet suppliers, partners and clients, however the team have adapted easily to communicating and presenting designs remotely, and the studio plans to continue to rely on video conferencing as the new normal. In terms of a wider recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, generally the luxury sector lends itself well to the necessary adjustments due to the level of exclusivity enjoyed by clients.

However, Aino Grapin describes how supply chain resilience will be critical for sustainable recovery across all industries but excitingly offers a unique opportunity to build back differently. "Now is the time to speak about action when it comes to sustainability within the luxury design sector" she says, "in order to continue growing and to protect our environment, we must ensure that luxury design industries continue to grow with a sustainable ethos at their core". Winch Design signed The Water Revolution Foundation's 'Code of Conduct', in early 2020 which aims to unite the whole supply chain together in a mission to innovate and advance sustainable technologies and solutions within the superyacht industries.

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