

BURYING THE TOMBSTONES

Hallelujah, Hallelujah! The long-awaited awakening of Chair Design



“We all know where it’s
“been”. Now let’s talk
about where it’s going!”



Anyone that’s ever practiced in the field of aircraft interior design will tell you that (with a few notable exceptions), the universe of certified aircraft chairs has until recently been the equivalent of fingernails on a chalkboard for as long as they can remember. It is to aviation cabin design what corked wine is to a dinner party. If you imagine the design development process as a great piece of music, one that you’re composing with each sketch or 3D model concept and then you come to the inevitable point where it’s time to shop for those just right single chairs...this is where your beautiful rhapsody becomes the proverbial record scratch, that insidious sound that brings the party to a screeching halt.

Until the last few years, every designer on the planet has (in one fashion or another) been faced with the ugly task of installing “tombstones” in their client’s \$60 - \$200 M interior. Oh sure you can “try” to be creative with the upholstery design or play around with the foam build-ups - but at the end of the day, the raw certified seat pan and back looked more like an erector set chair for medical experiments than anything you’d ever actually want to sit in. It’s hard to make an otherwise beautiful and inviting interior cabin what you want (and what your customer is expecting), with chair frame certification envelopes that don’t even come close to supporting good design - not to mention comfort!

Now the big seating manufacturers out there have historically argued that to make a chair withstand the 16G certification mandates they must adhere to, while also maintaining enough room for all the required options that customers want - leaves little room to provide design flexibility. And on at least some level, there is legitimacy in that but the sobering fact is, this is 2017. We now live in a world where there simply is no room for undernourished design - for any reason! And that goes triple in airborne interiors where costs can be \$ 50,000 per square foot. Today’s owners don’t want tombstones to sit in. They want what they have in their living rooms and they don’t want to hear about certification parameters for the money they’re spending.

Today in all almost all areas of design it’s simply not enough to hide behind the old adage “form follows function”. In the world of industrial design these two opposing disciplines absolutely coexist - one supporting the other throughout the entire evolution of product design. From smartphones to computers to cars, to toasters; even corkscrews....it better first have a kick-ass aesthetic or whatever function it holds won’t matter. There was a time when “sophisticated” buyers represented a fairly small part of the marketplace. Today (in varying degrees) the entire marketplace is sophisticated on one level or another because we’re all exposed to the same things; and the bar is continually being raised.

Ok so we all know where it’s “been”. Now let’s talk about where it’s going. Aircraft seats are a changin’ and it’s happening fast across the industry. Despite the almost onerous certification and engineering constraints that govern them, aircraft chairs and divans are rapidly making their way out of the past and into the long-awaited world of DESIGNER friendly seating options.

But there is at least one company out there making bold strides in this area. Inairvationà; an Austrian based group set out to change the longstanding paradigm and one look at what their offering will usher in a welcome sigh of relief to almost any designer.

Inairvationà (IAV) a joint venture between Austrian aircraft interior manufacturer F/LIST and Lufthansa Technik - has completely changed the way aircraft seat-frames are thought about and certified. All IAV configurations are based on a seat frame developed in bionic harmony with the human body. Combined with a variety of flexible add-ons, the Inairvationà chair platform provides previously undreamed of cabin comfort and flexibility of design. If you like, you can actually size your chair to a particular individual or set of passenger size profiles. Ergonomic functions such as leg and arm rests, can be easily tailored to the look and feel you desire- and the upholstery options are virtually endless via much wider certification parameters.

IAV offers a free seat configuration that allows designers the ability to customize a basic seat frame according to variables such as seat width, height, armrest style and number of ribs. Different seating scenarios can be worked through quickly and efficiently too, such as lounges, dining areas, boardroom tables and office space.

All CHAIR variations derive from the same base frame and require only a single aviation certification. Creativity is boosted. Time and money are saved.

Designers can develop a completely original CHAIR by building upon the basic seat skeleton. There are three pre-configurations to use for inspiration – Lounge CHAIR, Club CHAIR and Office CHAIR – with the ability to combine elements from all three. Of course, armrests, leg rests and other details can be tailored to a customer's individual requirements.

CHAIR is the base for a virtually unlimited range of cabin seating options. Whether you want your seat to fold out flat or to rock back and forth, it's all possible and it's all aviation compliant.

As a designer, I've never been quite so impressed with the breadth of features and all-encompassing flexibility that IAV has built into their extremely designer friendly platform. It might be a slightly overzealous assertion to say Inairvation's program will single-handedly eradicate the tombstone. But one thing's for sure; they are pioneering a fundamental industry-wide change that will influence the way chairs and seats are designed, built and certified forever.



To learn more visit: inairvation.aero/index.php/chair/home