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Mobile Makeover

An iconic 1978 Sovereign Airstream Land Yacht gets a very modern overhaul

THE Airstream Land Yacht is as American as a good old game of baseball and arguably as iconic as the Star-Spangled Banner. These shiny, polished aluminum capsules were introduced to the market back in 1932 when the founder of Airstream, Wally Byam, decided to build an "innovative, well-designed, high quality mobile product that met the needs of a new breed of adventurer".

A lot has happened in the last 75 years however, and the new breed of adventurer has become more discerning, design-savvy and unwilling to go without their creature comforts. For some people a basic caravan will no longer cut the mustard and they are looking for a veritable home from home.

Enter Mobitas – the ultimate restoration of a 1978 Sovereign 21' Airstream Land Yacht. Called Mobita for short, this caravan is designed for the wealthy traveller and represents a brand new way to experience total luxury combined with mobile living.

Gone are the days of the blue butane boiler that provides gas for the little camping stove and sitting round with the family playing Scrabble while the rain beats down outside. Mobita encompasses the latest smart technology and comes loaded with creature comforts you would normally find only in custom-designed homes.

The brain-child of Kevin Fitzsimons, editor-in-chief of Canada-based design and interiors magazine *Your Space* and director of design firm Fitzsimons Design + Build, this futuristic Land Yacht will be the envy of many a traveller.

Having been a fan of the iconic Airstream Land Yacht since childhood, this seemed a logical project for Fitzsimons to undertake. "I think from being a kid and seeing the first Airstream at about eight years old I was always fascinated with them. Now I realise that they were contemporary design long before their time. They were actually at the forefront →



"IT REPRESENTS A BRAND NEW WAY TO EXPERIENCE TOTAL LUXURY COMBINED WITH MOBILE LIVING"



of modern architecture and design of the future. I wanted to own an important piece of contemporary history. I also wanted to take the interior design of the Airstream and see how far I could push it into modern and upscale design."

The original budget set by Fitzsimons proved to be a little conservative and the actual spend ended up being far above initial estimates. "Honestly I don't think I really knew what it was going to take. I assumed it would take about three months and about \$15-20K (£7,500-£10,000). The project ended up taking nine months and roughly \$178K (£90,000)."

He adds that, in addition, the project was sponsored with many of the interior features totaling around £16,000. "So in reality, if we just listed what was put into it, it would be worth around \$280K. We pulled out all the stops and put in 110 per cent quality," says Fitzsimons.

It's cool to see how it was possible to exceed the budget in such extraordinary fashion.

"I DON'T THINK THERE IS ANYTHING ELSE THAT MOBI COULD HAVE HANDLED EXCEPT JET PROPULSION"

when you take a closer look at the quality of the interior and the attention to detail.

The living room is jam packed with custom-made furniture and accessories, carpeting, sectional couch with storage and electrical compartments beneath, walnut walls and drop-down concealed desk, upholstered white leatherette walls and ceiling, 2.5" recessed lighting, a Philips 30" flat screen LCD television and a satellite system.

The master bedroom is fitted out with double bed, custom-milled walnut walls with concealed storage under the mattress, upholstered white leatherette walls and ceiling, customised walnut cabinetry and Philips home theatre system.

The kitchen includes a 40th Corian countertop with undermounted round Kohler stainless-steel sink, Kohler Purist collection taps and instant hot water dispenser, Gaggenau combination steam/convection oven, built-in Gaggenau induction cook top and espresso maker, built-in beverage centre and refrigerator as well as custom-built walnut cabinetry with sliding glass doors and inner lighting.

The bathroom is also custom made, using a complete Corian capsule encompassing the walls, ceiling, floor, sink and countertop. There is a Kohler Purist rain shower, taps and flush box electric toilet. Accessories in chrome are also from the Kohler Purist collection. An integrated recessed lighting system has been installed in the flooring and walls. →



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"In fact there was not really much of the original structure that was left intact. I kept the shape," says Fitzsimons. "We polished the exterior for five months but everything inside was changed. Every working part was replaced with modern versions. I kept all the windows and had them repolished and I replaced the original screening for them. For important architectural elements like these, there was only the need to make them look spanking new."

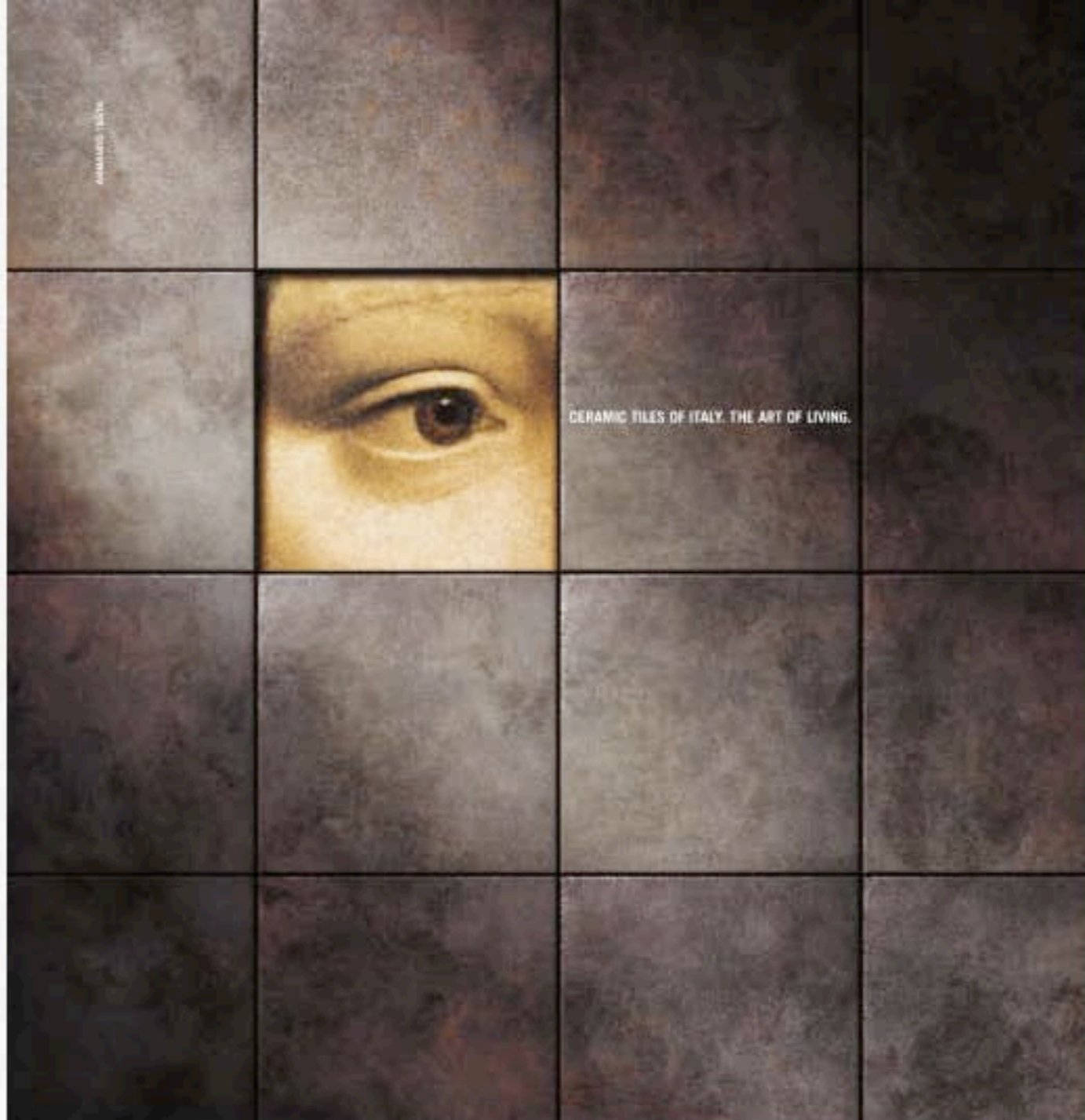
The entire working system of Mobi is also new, including water heater and tanks, pump and plumbing lines, drainage, black, grey and clean water tanks with heaters for tanks, sub floor, electrical, heating and air conditioning systems, electric brakes, venting, battery, electrical panel, alarm system and 110, 220 and low voltage power systems. The underbelly has been sealed and filled, the bearings have been repacked and the suspension system restored to new. There is also a remote rear-view video system installed.

"I don't think there is anything else that Mobi could have handled except jet propulsion," laughs Fitzsimons. "Everything is over-the-top - high-tech appliances, media and décor as well. The custom-welded black walnut that I picked from the actual trees is a pretty good example of how definite I was."

"Not one detail has been missed in the restoration of Mobi. It has either been polished, cleaned, replaced, retooled or hand-made to original specs."

However, Fitzsimons has no intention of stopping there. "I am currently trying to find the right buyer for Mobi. I would like to use what money I get from the sale to refurbish another Aston Martin. I would love to work on a 3D's model of a Ferrari and make it into the ultimate one-bedroom five-star hotel suite on wheels." *designer*

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