

Interiors

Super yachts, skyscrapers and lavish homes. Sophia Charalambous meets the design duo behind luxury interiors company March & White



# Designs for life



ABOVE: a super yacht interior designed by March & White  
LEFT: Elliot March and James White  
Photo: Ryan West



**M**arch & White co-founder James White meets me at his office on Buckingham Palace Road, excited to show me the plans of a high profile project he's been working on that's currently under wraps.

"It's just nice to do something that is quite rapid; it's going to be ready in a couple of months whereas some projects can take two or three years," he says.

It seems James and co-founder Elliot March have life sussed. Elliot is based at their LA office while James holds the fort in London, creating majestic, luxury interiors for some of the most exclusive builds across land, sea and air.

The pair met at university studying architecture, but soon discovered it was the world of interior design that piqued their interest.

James says: "Architecture is great to a certain point but being able to get into interiors and see all these amazing finishes and going to suppliers and seeing what they've created, is what we're drawn to."

Since establishing the business in 2010, they've already had opportunities to work on some of the most exclusive builds around, including 125 Greenwich Street, an 88-storey block designed by architect Rafael Viñoly in New

York, and a property on Pimlico Road with six apartments and three retail units that has taken six years to complete.

They've even been commissioned to design yacht interiors, including Linea (pictured), a 91-metre superyacht, inspired by the Italian coastline, fashion and classic cars.

Working on yachts is very different to residential properties, as Elliot explains: "Designing for an interior for use at sea comes with its own inherent issues and problems that we as designers must overcome. For instance, materials both look and perform very differently in these conditions.

"Wood veneers must undergo extensive UV testing to ensure they will not fade due to the high solar exposure over time, which changes the way you pick finishes and apply colour. The vessel is also moving so things do rattle!

"This must be taken into consideration when thinking about millwork and the detailing. It was one of the main challenges as designers when we encountered our first yacht.

"Our architectural background means we have always considered flow and movement very carefully. In smaller private homes it is about being very clever with space, making spaces feel larger and easy to live in.

"In large or very large homes it is about understanding two levels of circulation, the public and the private.

"On a yacht both come into play and it is really understanding this movement and integration that creates a comfortable interior for the owner."

However, there are aspects of yacht design that have proved useful to the duo, as James explains: "Finishing every surface – in a yacht you have to finish with leather, lacquer panels on the ceiling – is a big difference and something we've now brought into residential units.

"It also works in reverse; with apartments, some larger scale, 30,000 to 60,000 square foot you have to think about the front and back of the house and the flow between the two. We've started to adopt this approach to yachts too."

The pair do realise how lucky they are to work in such an exclusive sector.

James says: "I think we were very lucky to work with private clients and private residential because in the commercial world, developments



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and members' clubs, they have budgets and you have to understand what are the best luxury materials to bring and the clever way of doing it.

"Because we specialised in interiors, we are much better than architects [at] really understanding how furniture works, but because we approach it with an architectural background there is more detail to it.

"The idea of voids and light and sculpting space before you actually start layering material is something that comes from architecture. Great interior designers will also think like that but many of them are also architects."

A particular property that involved a great deal of light manipulation was Headfort Place in Belgravia, which they completed for Grosvenor three years ago. Located in a mews, it was a tired office building they converted into a four-bedroom house.

"The key thing with that project was to create light, because mews houses by their very nature are bright at the front where they face onto the mews but not towards the rear where they're facing larger properties," says James.

"The main driver was to open the rear with full-width glazing and a terrace that then through the staircase dropped light all the way to the ground floor.

"With every project we do, there's a story, there's a thought, there's a narrative and we take that same approach to residential, yachts, and members' clubs."

Elliot adds: "From speaking with our existing clients, a large factor of differentiation is our architectural approach to interiors.



"Our clients are sophisticated in their understanding of space and design. They like the fact that we can work with space and volume at a very high level to shape their homes to work with their current needs, achieving unexpected results.

"Also, our diverse portfolio of luxury projects such as luxury residential high-rise in New York and one-off single homes to super yachts and private members' clubs provides us with a wide and diverse design base in which to solve unique problems and come up with exceptional design."

162 Buckingham Palace Road,  
[marchandwhite.com](http://marchandwhite.com)



ABOVE AND LEFT:  
March & White are  
renowned for their  
luxurious interiors