

The Jo Fensham Yacht Furniture Design Prize

In collaboration with CIFA

Brief

Competition Brief, Overview and Background

The **Jo Fensham Yacht Furniture Design Prize**, in collaboration with **CIFA**, brings together architecture, design, craftsmanship, and life at sea.

The initiative is led by **Tariq Fensham**, Managing Director of **Jo Fensham Yacht Upholstery**, who is herself a qualified architect and UCT graduate. The competition builds on Jo Fensham's forty-five-year legacy in yacht interiors and reflects Tariq's interest in bridging her two worlds — architecture and ocean.

The Prize is intended to explore the future of freestanding outdoor furniture for yachts, with a strong connection to **Cape Town's identity**, marine living, innovation, and design culture.

The Prize is a cross-disciplinary design initiative inviting registered design professionals, candidates, and design students in Cape Town to submit ideas.

The competition is open to registered professionals, candidates, and students in the following disciplines:

- Architecture
- Interior design
- Industrial and product design

Entrants must be practising or studying, must be permanently resident in **the Western Cape** and must be registered with a relevant professional body or accredited educational institution. Employees, directors, shareholders or owners of Jo Fensham Yacht Upholstery and those of the judges and/organisers, or their immediate family members, are disqualified from entry into the competition.

Registration opens on **4 June 2026 at 7pm** and closes at **5pm on 7 August 2026**.

Entrants will remain anonymous and will be issued with a competition number on registration.

Registration will be administered by **CIFA**. There is no entry fee.

Registration link is here

Prizes

The competition includes first, second, and third prizes, together with a People's Choice award.

- **First Prize:** R10 000
- **Second Prize:** R5 000
- **Third Prize:** R2 500
- **People's Choice Award:** R1 500

Beyond the prize money, the Prize offers public recognition and visibility within the worlds of architecture, design, furniture, creativity, and boatbuilding in Cape Town and beyond.

Strategic intent and vision

The Prize celebrates the intersection of architecture, marine design, and craftsmanship, while reinforcing Cape Town's position as a global hub for yacht innovation.

It is intended to generate strong yacht furniture concepts that may evolve into real products within **Jo Fensham Yacht Upholstery's** expanding furniture offering.

The Prize seeks ideas in which the winning concepts are beautiful, unique, comfortable, and creative interpretations of Cape Town.

The furniture must balance creativity, craftsmanship, marine practicality, and commercial potential.

Winning designs may be developed further by **Jo Fensham Yacht Upholstery** into a range of modular outdoor furniture suitable for future manufacture.

Winning and shortlisted designs may be exhibited and published at the discretion of the organisers.

The winning design may be built as a prototype and exhibited publicly.

Copyright and design rights provisions form part of the competition conditions.

Competition brief

There are no separate competition categories. All eligible entrants will enter for the same Prize.

The core concept is the design of freestanding outdoor furniture suitable for yachts, particularly for cockpit or deck environments, where there is increasing demand for modular, movable outdoor furniture that enhances life on board.

Entries must include concept designs for:

- A dining chair
- A two-seater sofa
- A coffee table

The individual pieces must be related and must form a coherent family of pieces that work together as one.

Within this family, **cushions, fabric or upholstered elements** must be included.

Design language and inspiration

The furniture should speak clearly to **Cape Town** and, more broadly, to the idea of a contemporary South African design language in a marine setting.

Cape Town has a strong identity in catamaran building and is a significant historical centre of boatbuilding and boat repair globally. Entrants are encouraged to consider this broader marine context in their response.

The furniture should feel at home on a yacht but also be distinctly rooted in Cape Town.

Entrants are invited to interpret these suggestions in whatever way they choose.

Functional and technical considerations

Technical and manufacturing detail are not critical for this competition, and the intention is to allow interpretive freedom.

Entrants are invited to exercise their creativity, but designs are expected to be:

- Beautiful, distinctive, and comfortable
- Ergonomically considered
- Functional

- Aesthetically resolved from all angles
- Modular or flexible where relevant

Materials may include:

- Stainless steel
- Polyester powder-coated aluminium
- Hardwood
- Carbon fibre
- Suitable and appropriate plastics or polymers
- Other materials suited to the marine environment
- Materials suited to future mass manufacture

Cushions and fabric elements are expected to form part of the overall concept.

To ensure that the designs speak for themselves and to avoid reliance on textile design to convey the concept, fabric and upholstery elements must be indicated in white.

Spatial constraints

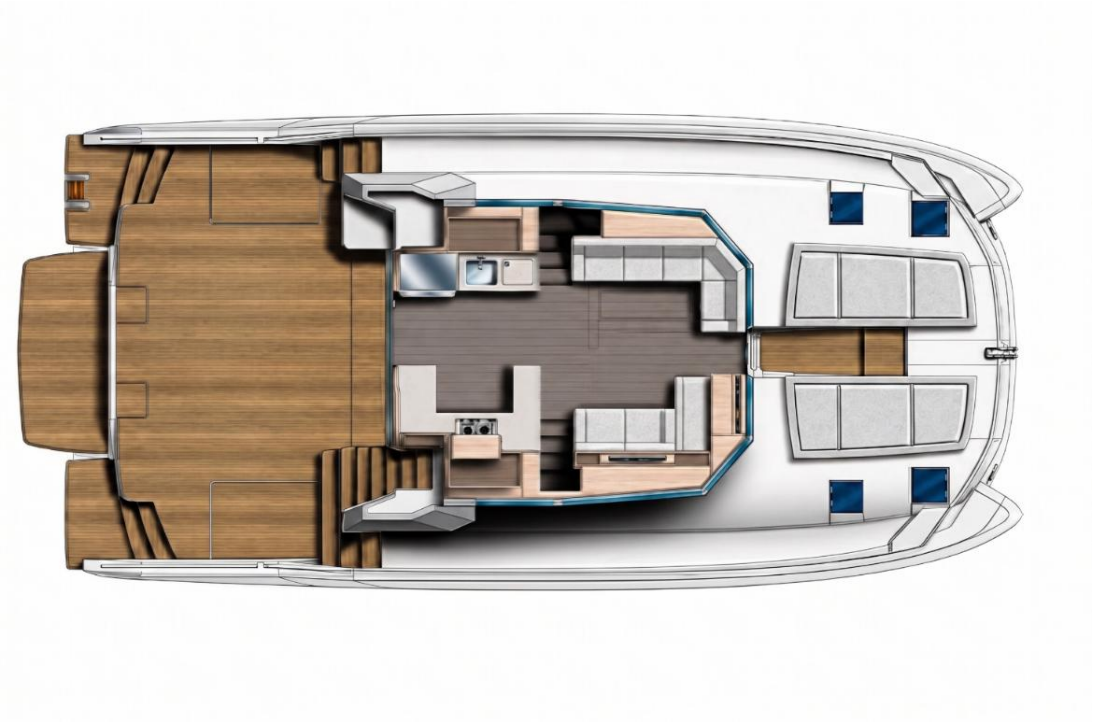
The furniture should be designed with a clear yacht context in mind.

A **generic general arrangement drawing** and a **generic aft three-quarter yacht view** are included below with the brief as supporting reference material for entrants. These are intended to help entrants understand the marine setting, scale, and lifestyle context of the furniture.

The three objects should be considered as belonging within a clearly defined onboard setting, while still allowing reasonable design freedom within that space.

Entrants should assume a seating and use scenario appropriate to **six people**.





Note: Assume the dimensions of the aft cockpit as 6.7 m wide and 3.8 m deep without the lifting platform.

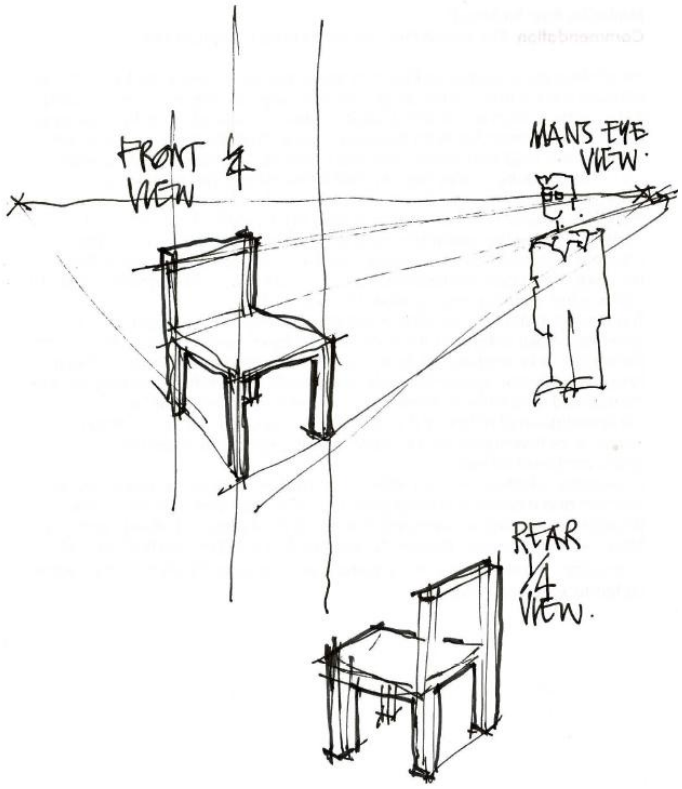
Submission requirements

Presentation of the entries must include:

- Drawings necessary to convey the idea at 1:10.
- A three-dimensional model of the **dining chair only** at 1:10.

Drawings

- Drawings may be hand-drawn or prepared on CAD and must be submitted in digital format as well as hard copy.
- Drawings should be presented at 1:10 on **A2 landscape sheets**, 1 sheet per element. The submission layout should be planned so that exhibition of all entries in the CIFA Gallery is practical.
- Drawings should include the information necessary to communicate the concept, layout, materiality, and relationship between the pieces.
- 3-d drawings should be shown as a "person's-eye-view" including one front ¼ view, with the back-rest on the left and a rear ¼ view with the backrest on the right.



Renders

- Renders should clearly show the intended materials.
- The furniture itself must be shown in full colour.
- The background must be white.
- Fabric and cushion elements must be shown in white and must not show any patterns or textile design.

Model

- The model must be of the **dining chair only** and must be produced at **1:10 scale**.
- The model should communicate function as well as form.
- Hand-built models are acceptable and may be built using any material that suitably conveys its material and design concept.

Submission

Entries must be submitted to:

Asa Gordon
Cape Institute for Architecture
116 Loop Street
Cape Town

Entries close at **12h00 noon on 30 September 2026**.

Judging panel

The judging panel will include representatives from the boat-building industry and CIFA.

From the boat-building industry

- Gregory Weeks, Anthony Key – Robertson & Caine
- Silvia Sacchi – Southern Wind Shipyard
- Anton du Toit – Du Toit Yacht Design
- Margit Smit – 40 Knots
- Paul and Mary-Clare Tomes – HopYacht
- Leon Scheepers, Jedd McNeilage – Kinetic Catamarans

From CIFA

- John Wilson-Harris
- Claire Abrahamse
- Dani Reimers
- Michael Borgström
- Sean Weldon

Tariq Fensham will act as convenor and industry adviser, actively involved in discussion and interpretation, but not as a voting judge.

Adjudication Criteria

Entries will be adjudicated in line with *The South African Institute of Architects Rules & Guidelines for Endorsement of Architectural Competitions*, and as further provided below.

Vitruvius' three tenets[1] have been augmented with a fourth for this prize, namely, ecology.

- Commodity: planning, operational functional aspects
- Firmness: construction, technology, quality, ergonomics
- Delight: context (physical and social), sustainability, history
- Ecology: financial sustainability, skill and resource availability

[1] *Three fundamental principles of architecture outlined by the ancient Roman architect and engineer Vitruvius in his treatise *De Architectura* (On Architecture). These tenets, which still form the foundation of architectural design today, are:

- **Firmness (*Firmitas*)**: The building must stand robustly and remain in good condition. It requires strong foundations, durable materials, and solid structural integrity to withstand the elements.
- **Utility (*Utilitas*)**: The building must function well and be highly beneficial and appropriate for its intended use by the occupants.
- **Beauty (*Venustas*)**: The building must aesthetically please and delight its visitors, uplifting the human spirit through proportion, symmetry, and harmony

Through the Process of Peer Review, the following can be derived:

- An Award for third place: 70+%
- An Award for second place: 80+%
- An Award for first place: 90+ %
- And a fourth award for the entry most popular with the audience.

Judging and exhibition process

Venue

Judging and exhibition will take place at:

CIFA Gallery
116 Loop Street
Cape Town

Exhibition

The shortlisted entries, and particularly the models, may form part of a public exhibition and judging display.

The **exhibition** and **winner announcement** will take place at the **First Thursdays in November 2026** at the CIFA Gallery.

The **People's Choice voting** will take place on 5 November 2026 at **First Thursdays in November 2026** at the CIFA Gallery.

Prizes will be paid by electronic transfer within 7 days of the winners' announcement, or confirmation of the winners' bank details, whichever comes last.

What	Date / period
Registration opens	4 June 2026
Registration Period	04 June– 7 August 2026
Entries close	30 September 2026 at 12h00 noon
Judging panel review period	October 2026
People's Choice exhibition and voting at First Thursdays, CIFA Gallery	First Thursday, 5 November 2026
Winner announcement at the CIFA Gallery and Entries exhibition starts	First Thursday, 5 November 2026

Rights and post-competition development

The rights and duties of entrants and **Jo Fensham Yacht Upholstery** are recorded in a written Acknowledgment document to be completed by all entrants before they may participate. The Acknowledgment document, read with this brief, forms a binding legal contract between entrants and Jo Fensham Yacht Upholstery.

Questions and details

For any questions, email info@cifa.org.za

For more information about the competition and to download the brief and enter, visit jofensham.com or cifa.org.za.