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## LUXURY'S NEW LOOK

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# Sensational!



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Cutouts in fashion and at home prove that absence has a compelling presence

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Achille Salvagni looks to centuries of the best Italian design to inspire his own distinctive furnishings and lighting. *By Stephen Patience*

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Architect Peter Marino on what constitutes real luxury today—and why he dislikes the word

A side table by Achille Salvagni.





Spider chandelier of bronze and onyx.



Saturn cast-bronze-and-onyx sconce.



Oyster sconces.



Lens LED light fixture of glass and alabaster.



Salvagni in his Rome studio.

## MODERN MAESTRO

*The best of Italian luxury, from the Renaissance to the 1950s, inspires the luminous designs of Achille Salvagni*

"Aggressive is an adjective that, for me, really characterizes luxury," laments Achille Salvagni when discussing the upper tiers of the furniture market. "I want to recover a sense of balance." And the Rome-based architect is a man with ample experience in high-end decor, having designed super-yachts (and, subsequently, their owners' domestic interiors) before recently launching his own line of limited-edition furniture and lighting, available in New York through Maison Gerard.



Side table of lacquered and polished fiberglass.



Clouds mirror.



Santiago sofa.



Shield cabinet of oak with aluminum doors.

The collection is decidedly influenced by Salvagni's homeland, informed as much by the restrained chic of such 20th-century Italian maestros as Gio Ponti and Paolo Buffa as it is by the sumptuous tastes of the High Renaissance (one of Salvagni's heroes is the 15th-century printmaker Aldus Manutius, who hailed from the architect's family's hometown of Bassiano). Throughout his work is a concerted effort to contrast the rough with the smooth, the precious with the commonplace, the natural with the artificial. So while the burnished aluminum doors of his Shield cabinet have an organic quality that suggests goldfish scales or rock crystal, the Spider chandelier has the sparse graphic wit of a midcentury Googie design, its asymmetrical spokes resembling a cartoon motif from the title sequence of a Doris Day comedy. And although there are undoubtedly lavish materials employed in the objects' manufacture—witness Salvagni's recurring use of patinated bronze (his supplier also caters to all the bronze needs of the Vatican)—they are offset with less-rarefied elements: polished fiberglass, say, or the LEDs used in his high-tech Lens ceiling lamp.

The result is a measured response to the dominant trends of industrial design, which, as Salvagni sees it, focus too much on branding and not enough on personality. "You've heard of the Slow Food movement," he says, alluding to a similarly modern rejection of overly processed and prepackaged consumption. "I think of this as Slow Design." **STEPHEN PATIENCE**

PORTRAIT: SERENA LAUDISA; CHANDELIER, EMERALD, SIDE TABLE, LENS LIGHT FIXTURE, SATURN SCONCE: COURTESY OF MAISON GERARD/ROBERT LEVIN; SEE RESOURCES

## EMBROIDERY

### MIGUEL CISTERNA

The Chilean-born Miguel Cisterna, now a Paris resident, was for many years the creative director of the legendary Atelier Brocard, where he oversaw the restoration of Madame Recamier's salon at the Louvre. Lately he has turned his talents to the creation of hand-embroidered contemporary screens, fabrics, and lampshades using what he calls "poor man's materials" like raffia. Designer Delphine Krakoff hired him to fashion towering draperies festooned with scarabs for her Paris apartment. Says Jamie Drake, "Miguel's work is truly couture, an often overused term. His use of straw and raffia, juxtaposed with silk and crystals, is dynamic and surprising." 212-674-7611; [maisongerard.com](http://maisongerard.com)

### COMBRAY

This new company, founded by Paris-based sisters Aurélie and Laure Hug, makes hand-embroidered textiles with designs inspired by the Hugs' backgrounds in art and their travels around the world. While Combray hews to traditional methods, the siblings like to experiment with contemporary designs and materials. 646-945-4812; [combraydesign.com](http://combraydesign.com)

### JEAN-FRANÇOIS LESAGE

Grandson of the founder of the legendary fashion-embroidery house Maison Lesage, Jean-François operates his home furnishings atelier in Chennai (formerly Madras), where 12 designers and

200 craftspeople create his sumptuous cushions, pillows, throws, and other accessories. Lesage, who lives in India, maintains a showroom in Paris. 917-628-0466; [jeanfrancoislesage.com](http://jeanfrancoislesage.com)

### MACONDO SILKS

Founder Gianluca Berardi considers the bespoke products of his firm, from historical brocades to modern designs, to be art. Among the fabrics he has created are chinoiserie draperies for designer Juan Pablo Molyneux and a headboard for Diane von Furstenberg that reproduces a favorite painting in silk. 212-625-0420; [macondosilks.com](http://macondosilks.com)

### PENN & FLETCHER

Designers such as Charlotte Moss and Noel Jeffrey have turned to former theatrical designer Ernie Smith's custom house for hand- and machine-made pieces. The company's studio has produced work for films, plays, historical houses, and leading museums. 212-239-6868; [pennandfletcher.com](http://pennandfletcher.com)

### PAUL RENWICK

The Scots-born Renwick, former design director for Jasper Conran and Calvin Klein CK, specializes in global and archival patterns in linen and cashmere, handmade in Kathmandu. Among the designers who have commissioned work, which often brings a masculine edge to the craft, are Peter Marino, Annabelle Selldorf, and William Sofield. 212-414-0676; [paulrenwick.net](http://paulrenwick.net)



Pillows, lamps, and a folding screen embroidered by Miguel Cisterna.