



WEB-EXCLUSIVE HOME TOUR

# A Roman Residence with Full-On Poetic Flair

For designer Achille Salvagni and his wife, this early-1900s flat in Coppedè is an ode to heritage, color, and pieces rich with narrative

By [Paola Singer](#)

Photography by [Paolo Petrignani](#)

February 22, 2019

Achille Salvagni's apartment in Rome, a 3,600-square-foot property in the Coppedè neighborhood, is a bit like the city itself: richly layered and full of contradictions, with sharp angles set against flowing curves, and Pop Art paired with centuries-old furnishings. And just like Rome, it flaunts an unapologetic sensuality. "I love to emphasize the poetry of different eras, to mix different periods, all under the big dome of beauty," says Salvagni, an Italian architect and furniture designer known for creating sculptural pieces that are rooted in history. "If you deal with beauty you never make mistakes."

His distinct approach to design can be seen in every corner of the home he shares with his wife and two children, starting with the main hallway, where a set of 17th-century Venetian armchairs flank a modern oak credenza with concave aluminum doors, which Salvagni designed to evoke a warrior's shield. The silk rug beneath it, also designed by Salvagni, shows a map of San Felice Circeo, a coastal town in the Lazio region where he spent his childhood summers. Above the credenza are two 18th-century Parisian prints lit by bronze fixtures culled from an old Roman library. "I love the idea of being surrounded by pieces that have a narrative behind them," he says. "Everything here has a reference—it could be a gift from someone special, a rare antique, or something that reflects a period of my life."



One of the highlights of the apartment are its views of the grand Villa Albani, built in the mid-1700s to house Cardinal Alessandro Albani's collection of antiquities and ancient Roman sculptures. "Some of the most incredible treasures from all over the world are in this villa, including the only piece of the Parthenon outside of Athens and the British Museum," says Salvagni. "Knowing that it's there, so close, makes me feel a little bit special." Salvagni and his wife like to relax in this cozy parlor connected to the living room, featuring a side table and lamp from his own collection.

The apartment itself, inherited by Salvagni's wife, has quite the narrative. It's in a building designed in 1905 by architect Marcello Piacentini, whose most prominent works were commissioned by Mussolini's Fascist government in the 1920s and '30s. Although Salvagni completed top-to-bottom renovations before moving in, he was careful to preserve the style of the space. "As an Italian raised in Rome, I'm obsessed with heritage," he says. "I never wanted to destroy the early-1900s flair of the project, and luckily most people don't even notice that it has been dramatically changed."

One crucial alteration to the layout of the residence was to make the living room much larger. Is it here that Salvagni unleashed his color fantasies, creating a vibrant yet delicate palette inspired by the paintings of Bronzino, Giotto, and Piero della Francesca. Many of the hues used by these great masters—pale pinks, rusty oranges, pastel blues, and bright yellows—are seen in the room’s fabrics, such as the orange velvet that covers a set of curved lounge chairs, and in the artworks on display, including a light-blue painting by contemporary artist Ettore Spalletti. “Colors are part of life; it’s very rare to find black-and-white options in nature,” quips Salvagni. “I think of color as the invisible thread that goes through the space; all the pieces are different, but together they play a symphonic sound.” Indeed, Salvagni’s eye for harmony is as fine-tuned as a composer’s ear.

---



## A Roman Residence with Full-On Poetic Flair



1 / 9



In the Roman home of design Achille Salvagni, white cabinets from Poggenpohl, together with a black marble island and black-and-white marble flooring, give the renovated kitchen a sleek, modern look. But Salvagni added a couple of antiques for good measure. The painting on the back wall is a family heirloom depicting an ancestor who was a prominent member of the Catholic church. “My mother was always scared by this painting when she was a child, so my grandmother kept it in a warehouse,” remembers Salvagni, adding that the portrait does not have the same chilling effect on him or his children.