

SURFACE

PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

Inside Achille Salvagni's Sumptuous New London Atelier

Taking over a double-height space in London's tony Mayfair district, the newly unveiled atelier puts the Roman designer's sculptural, materially rich furniture on full display.

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All photography by Simon Upton

Known for history-laden interiors and materially rich furniture with an avowed sense of modernism, Achille Salvagni has remained incredibly prolific during a period otherwise marked by distance and stasis. Among the Roman multihyphenate's current projects are a

40,000-square-foot private residence in Mumbai, two residential developments and two townhouses in New York, a modernist estate in Miami, and two superyachts. But he's perhaps most proud of his recently opened atelier on London's bustling Grafton Street in Mayfair, a stone's throw from art-world mainstays like Thaddaeus Ropac and Sprueth Magers.

The newly revamped space, which sprawls across two light-filled levels, serves as a welcome upgrade from a former showroom that his bustling atelier quickly outgrew. It also plays host to a never-before-seen collection of sculptural furniture that puts his material fascinations on full display. (Look closely—the space's finishes mirror those found on his sculptural pieces.) Though gut-renovating a showroom seems like an ambitious feat and proves that productivity is still possible during lockdown, the entire space offers a much greater lesson: Homes continue to be the epicenter of our lives, so why not invest in some comfort? Below, Salvagni tells us everything we need to know about the new atelier.



Achille Salvagni

Project Description: In just five years, Achille Salvagni Atelier has become an exclusive go-to destination for London's collectors and design connoisseurs. Quickly outgrowing our original location, we found a new space that met our current needs and gave us the freedom to experiment with themes and concepts while pushing material boundaries. Set across two light-filled floors in the heart of Mayfair, the new space sits on the intersection between Grafton Street, Hay Hill, and Dover Street, moments from Berkeley Square, and within the prominent local art and design scene that includes David Zwirner, Thaddaeus Ropac, Gallery FUMI, Mazzoleni, and Sprueth Magers.

The new atelier creates a unique occasion for us to add our own touch of sophistication and elegance to the neighborhood. This move, for me, represents a step forward in a city that has become my second home. My team and I are optimistic and excited about the future of the atelier, and more broadly of London as an unparalleled cosmopolitan hub. I believe strongly that through adversity we become more creative, innovative, and connected.

Inspiration: Set across two light-filled floors, the new space offers visitors the unique opportunity to step inside the world of Achille Salvagni Atelier and dream alongside us. Through intelligent architectural innovations we're able to truly bring the space to life.



Blueprint: The space is 2,100 square feet spread over two floors with double-aspect views due to its prominent corner position. The ground floor's high ceilings and large arched windows, coupled with large light wells, flood the lower level with natural light.

Our signature use of noble materials, traditional craftsmanship, and attention to detail pervades the space. The original interior walls have been wrapped in hand-finished plaster to create a uniform “skin” that envelops the space, rounding off the corners. We’ve carefully drawn out the ground-floor windows into the gallery to give them greater depth and lined the frames in polished bronze to create contrast with the white interior and offset the objects on display.

Standing just off-center in the gallery, a large rounded pillar unites the space. Complementing this, the gallery’s main wall is punctuated with wall-mounted plinths that frame a selection of objects, an imaginative method of maximizing space. Further touches of highly saturated color include the staircase, which has been created in Azzurro Cielo—a sky blue Argentinian marble—and a rich blue backdrop on the lower level evokes the lapis blues of Fra Angelico. We’ll showcase both iconic and new works in rotating exhibitions throughout the space.

Project Takeaways/Uniqueness: To accompany the unveiling, I created a new collection of furniture and accessories during lockdown. What I designed reflects the reemergence of the home as the epicenter of our lives, and the importance of having environments that are warm, inviting, and offer emotional and physical comfort. While elegance is always at the forefront of my work, I took this time to look inward and explore ways to incorporate new materials and revisit old favorites, such as Murano glass and parchment finishes. The result is something a bit unexpected; we have created them in bold, bright colors to bring a sense of joy to the home.





Project Challenges: When we first obtained the space, it had been empty for a year and the previous occupier had literally ripped everything out, leaving very little to work with. We knew if we were going to make it into a truly magical space that we'd need to strip it back even further, all the way to its raw shell, and start again. Not one wall was straight, the floors weren't level, and it quickly became obvious that we'd have to be extremely creative to maximize exhibition space while maintaining enough auxiliary space for offices and storage that we'd also need.

Our buildout was delayed six months due to the coronavirus with our craftsmen returning to Italy for lockdown. When they could safely return to work, they were more determined than ever to finish and make it a truly jewel-like space. The attention to detail is down to the centimeter with shadow gaps, tray ceilings, LED lighting and perfect plasterwork. Coordinating the project during Covid-19 presented its own unique challenges. The studio, however, is adept at working internationally and adjusted quickly to the "new normal." In many ways, it made certain aspects easier. For example, with the building empty, we didn't need to worry about noise complaints.

From an architectural perspective, it's an interesting space because the main-floor gallery could be perceived as a room with proportions our clients might have—a single large volume with a high ceiling that makes for a very grand but contemporary space. The ground floor has a much lower ceiling and is linear, so it's much like designing a yacht interior, which we specialize in.

What's Inside: I'm quite proud of the first collection. The centerpiece is a sculptural sofa, Alligator, that's upholstered in a soft white sheepskin. Composed of gently curved modular segments, it's cradled by exquisitely detailed 24ct gold-leaf legs. A new cabinet, Indore, draws inspiration from 1930s Art Deco cigarette boxes and echoes Dutch painter Piet Mondrian's geometric clarity. There's an elegant counterpart to this—Hera, a cabinet finished in a coral parchment that recalls pomegranates, which are associated with the ancient Greek goddess who gives the piece its name.

