DELVING DEEP INTO THE ESSENCE OF THE FAR EAST, A DESIGNER IMPARTS CHIC TRANQUILLITY AND UNPRETENTIOUS CALM TO A PALM BEACH GETAWAY.

WRITTEN BY JOSÉ S. ADAMO / PHOTOGRAPHY: PAOLO PETRIGNANI
It is very easy to evoke a style," says Rome-based architect and designer Achille Salvagni. "It's much more difficult to evoke a mood." Conjuring an atmosphere requires skill and great subtlety, both of which Salvagni possesses in abundance. That's why the owners of this Palm Beach apartment—a yachtsman and his wife, for whom Salvagni had previously designed a private boat—engaged him to appoint the ground-floor pied-à-terre they had purchased, which boasts a garden and views of the ocean.

"The couple wanted everything very calm and clean," explains Salvagni, "a relaxing place with Asian influences but not overly decorated." As usual, Salvagni started with the envelope of the condo. With the help of Anderson-Moore Construction Corp., he collapsed four bedrooms into three, created more classically symmetrical axes throughout, and imparted a more important impression of arrival to the entryways. A spacious octagonal foyer now greets visitors, and a hall directly across from the front door lends the space a sense of processional enfilade that culminates at the main living area. A custom pendant above the center hall table, appropriately called Lents, creates a portal that directs the eye to the terminus of this axis. "I'm obsessed with focal points," says Salvagni.

The Far Eastern vibe begins as soon as one crosses the threshold. But the two Buddha heads atop pedestals in this space are only the most overt manifestation. "Asian style is much more a state of mind than the inclusion of certain objects," says Salvagni, who instead diffusely utilized materials to insinuate the pervasive serenity that is characteristic of this aesthetic. "The whole house is done in very velvety, calm surfaces," he says. For example, brushed oak and limestone, "treated with a leather finish to feel like stones smoothed by water," he says, immediately
The elliptical entry to the master suite serves as a dressing area encircled by closets. A niche set into the piano-vaulted room surrounds a small desk made of parchment and mahogany, designed by Belagio's Amao in his NeoMo line sporting a custom finish by Leath.
Opposite: A pair of Ming chippendale chairs in the living room's coffee table is again from the Asia collection. Beyond, there is a 1960s floor lamp that also serves as an occasional table with a pair and a Roman lamp from the 40s.

Below: Opus side seating in the living room includes Salka's Viatora sofa in navy blue velvet by Ebro Paredes, a chaise chaise by Osher in Dedar cotton and a bar cart inspired by Jean Royère's Polos. The dining room's massive coffee table rests on a custom silk carpet by Moho.
The palette of materials and furnishings, too, is kept natural and primarily neutral—ivory, white and beige. "Touches of pale blue—covering one living room sofa and recurring as piping trim on another and present in a minimalist painting in the dining area—relate to the sky outside."

With the envelope complete, Salviati turned to the furnishings. "He could have "gone the obvious route," he says, lotting the rooms out with Chinese after tables, chinoiserie patterns and other obvious cultural markers. But, he says, "I mixed in pieces from different eras—the 1920s, 50s and 60s with 18th-century and contemporary pieces. The glue is beauty. You can put an iPhone on a 1960s cabinet over an 18th-century rug, but it still has an Asian sense of serenity."

Instead, the Sino-centric sensibility materializes almost imperceptibly. It shows up in flashes of Chinese red on the feet of a sofa and the base of the coffee table in the living room, in the red buttons tufting the backs of dining chairs and in the red beads suspended on silk cords tied to the drawer pulls of the master bedroom nightstands. Forms can also hint at Asian exemplars. Those nightstands, for instance, were custom-designed by Salviati to appear as luxurious stacking boxes—one polished mahogany, the other parchment—that vaguely recall Japanese tatami chests. Or the Eastern suggestion is articulated with equal understatement in the dining room screen, which evokes shop from a Japanese teahouse yet iterates the concept in wood and bress.

Of course, there are more obvious Asian signifiers, such as another Buddha head in the master bedroom, an 18th-century Chinese Buddha statue in the living room, or a custom hand-painted silk mural behind the master bed resembling a bamboo forest partially shrouded in mist. But these elements are thrown into the design blender with Western classical statuary—Alexander the Great’s bust in the master bedroom, a 1940s Roman torso behind one of the living room sofas—and both vintage and contemporary furniture.
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-ACHILLE SALVAGNI
Saidough completed the master bedroom's hand-painted silk mural of stylized bamboo, as well as the master bathroom's Art Deco corner tub, etched with bamboo. Beside the headboard and the bamboo, a seating area nearby pairs 1950s Hollywood Regency armchairs with a Barbara Barry ottoman for Mitchell Gold.
Most of the contemporary furnishings are customized pieces from Salvagni’s own Atelier collection, and they give the spaces a ’50s and ’60s Italian peneche reminiscent of Gio Ponti and Paolo Buffa. Their tracity in contrasts between sinuous curves and faceted angles, as well as exquisite craftsmanship and materials. By juxtaposing organic and angular forms, Salvagni balances masculine and feminine elements, thus achieving a sense of polar orientations working in harmonious conjunction.

Finally, even the smallest details are bespoke, imparting a level of downplayed couture that can be sensed more than seen. No one, for example, would know that every fringe on the many cabinet doors are custom-designed. Or that the door pulls in the foyer, which were inspired by the Claude Lalanne center hall table, are each completely unique, the same goes for the Chinese red buttons on the dining chair backs. "Simplicity is necessary," Salvagni says. "If the design is too aggressive, it will overcome the natural environment outside."

We miss these details initially because all of it exists within an environment that, though unquestionably chic, is also basically simple. And what concept is more Asian than simplicity?"