

# The Telegraph Magazine

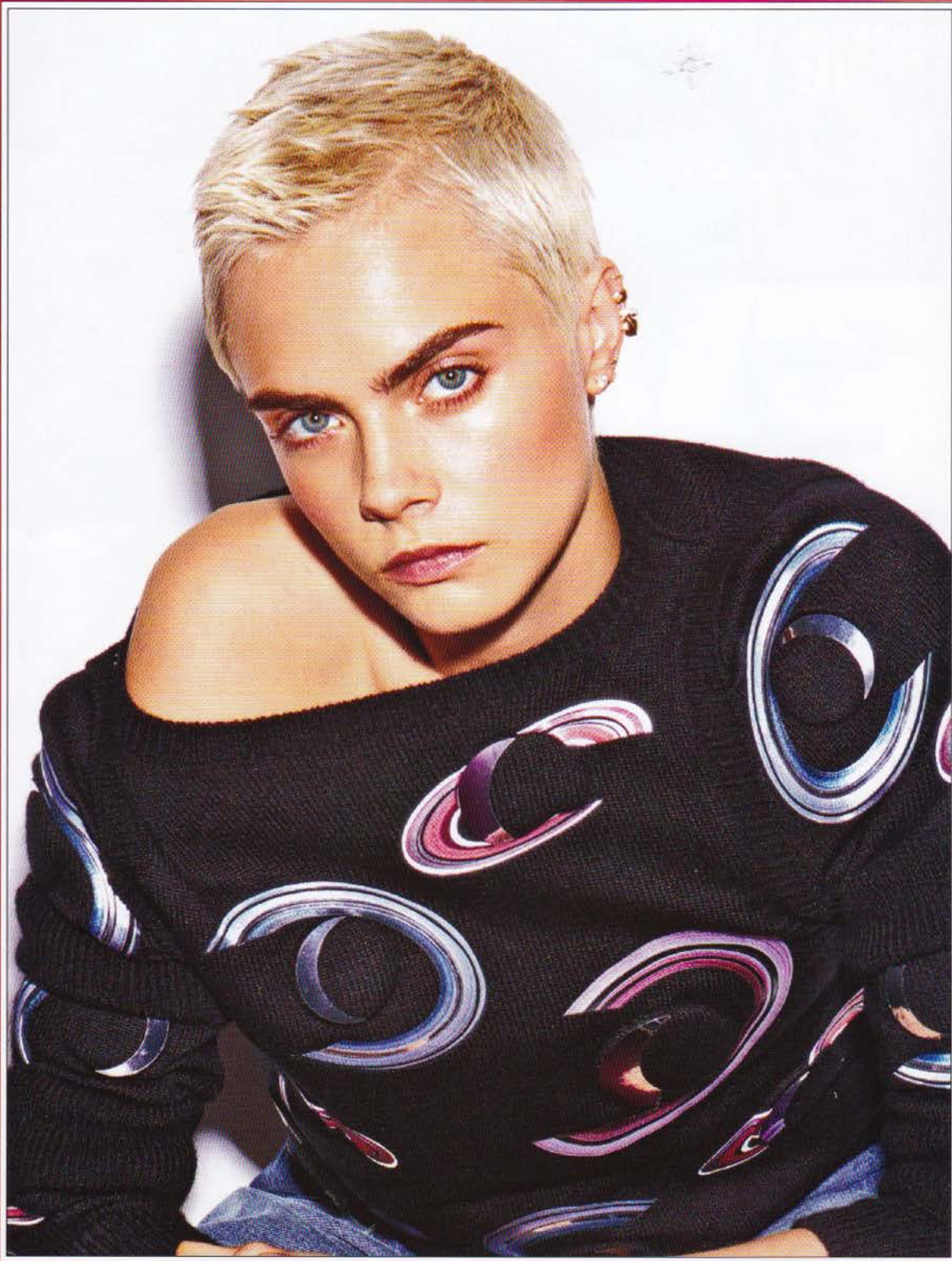
30 September 2017

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## CARA DELEVINGNE

'If I don't tell the truth about myself then why am I here?'



IF YOU'RE AN ART-LOVING billionaire with a couple of homes and maybe a super-yacht to furnish, Roman architect and designer Achille Salvagni is the person to call. For discerning individuals of wealth, his taste, flair with colour

and eye for rare collectables have made him the interior designer of choice.

Salvagni now produces his own limited-edition lighting and furniture, too. Made by Roman artisans in marble, onyx, lacquered wood and bronze,

these beautifully crafted pieces are sold by design gallery Maison Gerard in New York and, since 2015, in his own showroom in London's Mayfair.

Not that his home in Rome's Quartiere Coppedè, which he shares with his



Achille Salvagni with his wife, Valentina, and children, Victoria and Gaetano, in their apartment

## ROME WASN'T BUILT IN A DAY

Inside designer Achille Salvagni's family home in the Italian capital, centuries-old heirlooms sit alongside contemporary art.

By Bethan Ryder. Photographs by Paolo Pettrignani



## Clockwise from right

A soft, natural colour palette inspired by old-master paintings unites a mix of styles, from Salvagni's own designs to inherited pieces and investment art; the kitchen and bathroom are defined by graphic black-and-white flooring; a series of etchings depicting an ancient battle scene lend a classical element throughout the apartment







wife, Valentina, a university professor, and two children, Gaetano, seven, and Victoria, four, is decked out solely in Salvagni. That's not his style. Like the surrounding neighbourhood, renowned for its mix of architectural genres, Salvagni brings together different periods, sourcing pieces from auctions, flea markets, galleries and antique shops, with a few of his own designs sprinkled in.

**'I seek out old-master colours because they're timeless... not aggressive, but calming'**

There's a strong Italian thread throughout, with notable appearances from his personal favourites, 20th-century design greats Paolo Buffa and Gio Ponti. But, he says, 'I prefer to create a stage for many souls to find their own space. I love many styles; it's a mismatch.' Albeit a fabulous one, where a 1930s Buffa card table stands in front of a Biedermeier cabinet, Gio Ponti vessels line up next to Etruscan vases, and a Louis XV console sits beneath a canvas by contemporary artist Ettore Spalletti.

Inherited gems include Tang vases and an early-20th-century self-portrait by Giorgio de Chirico, a gift from Salvag-





**Right** Salvagni's bronze-and-onyx Spider chandelier hangs above a table also of his own design in the dining room. The chairs, by Tomaso Buzzi, were reupholstered by Salvagni.

**Far right** Above a Paolo Buffa bar cabinet hangs an artwork by Giuseppe Uncini. The Venini glass sculpture dates back to the 1920s



ni's father, as well as an early-19th-century plaster bust from his mother's side of the family. 'He was so serious I put a pair of swimming goggles on him,' Salvagni says. 'I like to be a little ironic sometimes to demolish the seriousness.'

The colour scheme is classical, complete with soft ultramarine, sienna, ochre and umber, natural pigments that date back to the Renaissance. 'I seek out old-master colours because they're timeless,' Salvagni explains. 'I'm convinced that how you feel in a space is connected to the colours. If they come from the past they are not aggressive or overpowering, but calming.'

Despite his professional expertise, most decisions were taken jointly, though Salvagni had the final word, 'because my wife trusts me'. She evidently shares his attention to detail as the pair spent an entire afternoon with a decorator testing different white paints for the living-room walls. 'It faces west

and because of the art it was really important to get the right white. We didn't want the wall to turn a strange yellow when the sun sets, so we had to add some grey tones to avoid that.'

The abundance of light was one of the key factors that prompted the family to move in. Salvagni had been searching for a central Rome property

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with a large terrace for over a year when tenants vacated this apartment, which had been a wedding gift to his wife from her parents. 'We stepped in and it was full of light. We looked at the beautiful views and thought, "Why not?"'

It took a year to reconfigure the 3,500sq ft listed apartment, transforming it into a three-bedroom family home with quarters for a housekeeper and

nanny. It was originally composed of many smaller rooms, with two bathrooms, but Salvagni connected spaces to create larger living areas and installed five bathrooms, repeating architraves and restoring 19th-century elements. He avoids generic suppliers right down to hardware, preferring to design his own bronze door handles and hinges.

And how do two young children fit into such an impeccable space? 'I need this balance and purity, otherwise I cannot breathe; for me it's a sense of daily inspiration,' says Salvagni. 'The children's bedrooms are in the same style, but of course it's their space, because children need their freedom. However, they will grow up experiencing this and you can't underestimate the power of beauty in shaping your future.'

*Achille Salvagni's latest show, Kyoto, is at Achille Salvagni Atelier, 12 Grafton Street, London W1 ([achillesalvagni.com](http://achillesalvagni.com))*