

*A Look Into Luxury Home and Style*



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## *Home on the Water: A Conversation with Achille Salvagni*

*Topic: Life & Style*

**D**esigners don't work for free. Certainly not high-end designers who count celebrities and captains of industry among their client base. High-end designers also don't win prestigious awards on their first project in a brand-new and technically challenging industry.

Yet, it was the convergence of those two unique events just over a decade ago — the designing of the Mikymar Motor Yacht for an interior design client who assured him it would launch the designer into a new arena, and the World Yachts Trophies Award it won for interior design in the 2007 Cannes Boat Show — that elevated the design career of extraordinary Achille Salvagni.



Today, the Rome-based designer and member of Elle Decor's A-list, deftly moves from land to sea and back again, designing award-winning luxury interiors in both niches while continuing to make time for his acclaimed bespoke furniture. He also glides between his home and firm in Italy's capital and the flagship London store he opened in Mayfair in 2015, continuing to evolve his craft in one of the more challenging locales.

"I loved the challenge of creating a residence on the water because there's so much more to consider — from a technological, engineering and spatial point of view," he says. "For instance, you have to consider motion, a finite amount of space and the clients' lifestyle."

That's especially true when it comes to today's yacht owners, who are increasingly more environmentally conscious — which explains the requests for eco-friendly materials, he says — and also far younger than in previous generations, a trend that is only expected to grow. Salvagni once told Coldwell Banker Global Luxury that "elegance and beauty are above the barriers" of current trends, and that sentiment remains, whether he is designing a custom furniture piece, adding a timeless look to a multimillion-dollar estate for returning clients or adding Scandinavian appeal to a luxury yacht for moneyed millennials.



Salvagni talked to us about a few more of his design principles, how he establishes a sense of luxury, the influences that inspire his work and what it means to create residences on water.

***Coldwell Banker Global Luxury*** How long have you been designing the interiors of yachts?

***Achille Salvagni*** I've have been doing yacht interiors for the last 15 years.

***Coldwell Banker Global Luxury*** How did you get into this line of work?

***Achille Salvagni*** In 2000, I began my own architectural and interior design practice that focused on luxury residences. After completing several projects, clients started to ask me if I would consider designing the interiors of their yachts as well. Since I was a child, I've always loved being on the water, so it was something that I was personally interested in doing.

When designing yachts, one must be very well versed in all of the necessary regulations. There are few designers globally who are adept in both residential and yacht interiors. I'm very grateful to be one of them.



***Coldwell Banker Global Luxury*** How has Italy's yachting traditions have influenced your work, being an Italian designer?

***Achille Savagni*** Italy has always played a significant role in yacht building and custom-made yachts in particular. The town of Viareggio is the center for custom-built yachts of up to 50 meters. Once a yacht exceeds 50 meters, there is a lot more engineering involved, and Germany is the center for those. The leaders in superyachting all operate out of Viareggio — Rossinavi, Benetti and Azimut. I always look to the past for inspiration for the future; looking at the great traditions of some of these companies that are centuries old, you can't help but be inspired by their beauty and the evolution of boat making.

***Coldwell Banker Global Luxury*** What is your main goal when designing the interior of a yacht?

***Achille Savagni*** I always approach my yacht interiors as if they are residential interiors, even though they are one connective piece of cabinetry. I am inspired by daily life, the quality of light, the colors and harmony of nature in perfect proportions. I believe that creating something unexpected and unorthodox is the key to a harmonious environment.

A signature of many of my designs is the use of rounded curves instead of crown moldings; this creates continuity between the walls, paneling and ceilings. My interiors are defined by a sense of calm, because I think there is great beauty in simplicity and neutral rooms that reveal the sculptural qualities of furniture and objects. My spaces are always delicately enhanced with the use of soft, serene and neutral color palettes.



***Coldwell Banker Global Luxury*** You also approach each yacht project as if it is a residence on the water. Can you talk a little about this?

***Achille Salvagni*** Whether it's a superyacht or a residence on land, it's all about listening to the clients, really hearing what it is they want and then delivering something that is way beyond their expectations. My job is to give them their fantasy and a whole lot more.

***Coldwell Banker Global Luxury*** How does the idea of “residence on the water” materialize in your projects?

***Achille Salvagni*** For a recent project, I created the owner's apartment on the main deck with a slightly unconventional layout. This client had a really clear vision of what they wanted their private quarters to be like, so we divided their suite into a beautifully appointed office that also doubled as a private sitting room and a bedroom; the bedroom was subdivided visually into a reading area, a central sleeping area and a media room

complete with daybeds and a 50-inch television. For the master bathroom, it was equally dramatic — complete with a solid white-marble bath and a huge shower area with floor-to-ceiling windows on each side.



**Coldwell Banker Global Luxury** What role does art play in your yacht work?

**Achille Savagni** My interiors are also very much a reflection of clients and their personality. Many of them are art collectors, and we incorporate a few of the most important pieces that they want to have on board. Because it's a boat, you don't have many sculptures or small, delicate pieces. Most times, there are paintings and a small number of decorative objects.

**Coldwell Banker Global Luxury** Are there any new yacht trends or interesting developments that you observed in the last year?

**Achille Savagni** More environmentally conscious interiors — we incorporate natural, organic and environmentally friendly materials for a variety of surfaces, from floors and walls down to the items we choose for their bed linens, upholstery on furniture, and throws, for example.



**Coldwell Banker Global Luxury** Have you noticed a shift in the kinds of yacht clients who are now asking for your services?

**Achille Salvagni** There are many more affluent clients in their late 20s and 30s who are working with custom yacht makers and seeking our services to design the interiors than in the last decade. These clients are all international, have multiple homes, are collectors and have much more knowledge about design. They are sophisticated, with a taste level to match.

**Coldwell Banker Global Luxury** Why do you think you're seeing more affluent millennials interested in yachting?

**Achille Salvagni** There has been research that the median superyacht owner will shift from ages 45–55 to 35–45 in the next 20 years. The population of ultra-high-net-worth individuals is still on the rise, and a remarkable 20% of the top 100 billionaires are under the age of 50.

I think once you have homes in places you enjoy visiting or when you start traveling private, the custom superyacht seems to be the next purchase. There is a sense of

independence in that you can travel the seas anywhere, at any time. It's a real sense of freedom.



***Coldwell Banker Global Luxury*** What are some of the unique design elements?

***Achille Salvagni*** They want a timeless, classic approach to interiors. They do not want anything too trendy; my clients tend to want to have items that last. They look for elegant finishes such as bespoke hand-cast bronze, hardware and hand-carved marble bathtubs.

***Coldwell Banker Global Luxury*** Is technology a factor for them?

***Achille Salvagni*** Technology is always an issue, but with the way I design interiors, you never see it. It's discreet and hidden from the client's view.





***Coldwell Banker Global Luxury*** How do you create a sense of luxury in your yacht work?

***Achille Savagni*** It's all about the materials and creating gracious layouts. Understated luxury gives a beautiful experience that stimulates all the senses. For instance, furniture that is upholstered in cashmere, cotton, silk and velvet from companies like Loro Piana is very inviting.

The yacht's personality is created using the pureness of industrial materials such as alpacca for public areas and a striking contrast between dark and light elements from deep ebony to bleached teak wooden floors. Each deck has its own style that as a whole works in harmony to deliver a very comfortable and stylish home. We create everything custom, from the architecture to the furnishings, and mix them with important fine art, antiques and pieces that are sentimental to the client.

Knowing how the owners want to live and how they envision guests enjoying themselves on the yacht is the other big factor in designing a luxury superyacht. Nothing is conventional when it comes to the design. All the spaces are designed to be gracious, well-appointed and flexible for private moments and for entertaining several guests.

