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SPOTLIGHT

# Spirit of the Seas

ACHILLE SALVAGNI DRAWS ON THE PAST FOR FUTURISTIC YACHT DESIGN

## Future Perfect

(CLOCKWISE FROM THIS PHOTO) Computer renderings of the *Tuhura* superyacht with interiors by Achille Salvagni. [oceancoyacht.com](http://oceancoyacht.com), [achillesalvagni.com](http://achillesalvagni.com).

**H**ow do you decorate an ultramodern outrigger canoe? In simplistic terms, that was the assignment for Italian architect Achille Salvagni when recruited to design interiors for the proposed yacht *Tuhura* (which means discovery in Maori).

Like his past prize-winning boat designs, the result has been an acclaimed contrast to conventional “floating townhouses.” Salvagni’s approach mixes tradition with audacity to create vessels that are ageless and authentic.

The plans for *Tuhura* (exterior design by Lobanov Design) embrace traditional Polynesian island influences. Teak stalactites and stalagmites separate the spacious lounge and intimate dining area, and a circular fireplace recalls the centerpiece hearth of primitive lodges. Separated by thin recesses that leave the junctions invisible, the walls, ceiling and floors appear to float. Wood and metal are used throughout in weathered finishes that evoke the wear and tear of wind and water. Tatami covers the floors. The result is a contemporary “brushed teak habitat” that acknowledges the primitive shapes and grandeur of the past.

Describing a yacht as “a big piece of furniture,” Salvagni interchanges characteristics of the vessels with his award-winning residential and furniture designs. Like airplanes and cars, boats pose the challenge of cleverly using limited space. “A yacht is a big cabinet,” he says, “there are different details, but still it’s a wooden box.” Versatility is essential, every fixture must allow access to the boat’s underlying systems. Unlike houses where

walls and furnishings can be fixed in place, everything has to be movable. “On a yacht you have 3-D craftsmanship, you can never get rid of the back.”

Inspired by the ancients who worked with limited resources, Salvagni rejects showy materials, choosing instead to focus on the sculptural plane, noting, “It’s a new frontier of luxury that is much more connected to the natural, to the wellness of your soul rather than the precious material.” Wood plays a big role, treated naturally and never covered over with plaster or lacquer. Because of its industrial, mass-market nature, plastic is anathema. He says, “It doesn’t give a positive reaction except function and efficiency, not any inspiration, mood or positive flow.”

Since a yacht travels and, unlike a house, doesn’t need to be connected to its view or neighborhood, Salvagni bases his interiors to the owner’s personality, collaborating only with copacetic clients, whom he gets to know well. Designing the yacht *Endeavor* for cosmopolitan German collectors, Salvagni selected soft neutrals to showcase the clients’ extensive art collection, while red accents reflect their love of the Orient. “I have to understand exactly what the clients are looking for and then try to transport their ideas into concrete pictures, to a little bit more than a dream,” he explains. — *Sharon King Hoge*



PORTRAIT: PAOLO PETRIGNANI