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**LET THERE BE LIGHT COUNTER-**  
**CLOCKWISE:** Salvagni prefers shades that appear to float, as with Sting. In Hercules, the designer alludes to Egyptian hieroglyphics, Giacometti, and the legendary hero. A silk shade joins the Y scone's cast-bronze components. For Bubble, each hand-carved onyx orb is lit by an LED bulb. Drum's hand-carved solid onyx diffuser is mounted on a cast-bronze base.

# ROMAN HOLIDAY

IN ACHILLE SALVAGNI'S LUXE, POETIC LIGHTING FOR MAISON GERARD, THE ANCIENT INFORMS THE MODERN, AND VICE-VERSA

TEXT JUDITH NASATIR

**DO ALL ROADS** lead to Rome? For Achille Salvagni, an Italian architect and yacht-design specialist who recently developed a collection of limited-edition lighting for Maison Gerard, the answer is obvious. The man has his office in the Eternal City, after all. The effect of working in a place where the entire span of human design history is clearly visible at every turn plays out intriguingly in everything Salvagni touches. As he says, "I don't want to lose the roots, but I need the green branches." In these pieces, he surely expresses both. Echoes of the Roman Empire's great legacy of decorative arts reverberate effectively through Salvagni's contemporary forms both through the choice of materials—specifically onyx, bronze, and gold—and the remarkable, old-world artisans that he's ferreted out to craft each piece: "My bronze guy takes care of the Vatican City bronzes. For my onyx, I use the supplier of onyx for Rome's churches." He's also studied all the patinas, tools, and materials, he says, to "convert them with a new language. I need them to go farther."

Benoist Drut, Maison Gerard's guiding light, first met Salvagni to please a colleague. Drut says he was immediately, uncharacteristically taken with his designs: "Usually I'm quiet when I review a portfolio. But I was immediately wowed by the work. Achille is in the great tradition of the great designers of previous centuries. Like Ruhlmann and the other *ebenistes*, he uses the best craftsman in the field. Almost everywhere you turn with him, there's a reference to the past—and then he transcends it." As those ancient Romans might say: *lux aeterna*. **SEE RESOURCES** ■

