

WHAT'S IN STORE

salon set

A new store in SoHo for the modern-thinking mind



Sabrina Schilcher and a Rodolfo Dordoni sofa. Below left: A Rodolfo Dordoni chaise on a Judy Ross rug. See Resources.



Sabrina Schilcher is a furniture designer with the instincts of a couturiere. Stepping into Salon Moderne, her boutique in New York's SoHo neighborhood, is like being transported to the sumptuous showrooms of Coco Chanel and Elsa Schiaparelli. Dressed up in silk and satin, Schilcher's sofas, chairs, and stools preside in austere splendor over her expansive storefront space. "I love the lux-

urious materials of fashion," says the Viennese-born designer, who honed her eye in Milan while working for Thierry Mugler. "Take satin," she continues, running a hand over her black satin skirt. "It was popular in the '40s and is coming back now. It's time to apply it to furniture."

Schilcher's homages to fashion include witty visual jokes as well as subtle allusions. A satin throw

pillow adorned with buttons and ribbon becomes a bodice. A pearl champagne satin side chair evokes the smoky glamour of a 1940s gown. And the curved frame of a tufted silk sofa suggests the collar of an opera cape.

Like the finest apparel, Schilcher's pieces are made to order (she recently designed a sofa in embroidered cotton for the artist Eric Fischl). Her collection comprises both her own work (often in collaboration with her friend Alison Spear, an architect) and pieces by several other designers (from the Italian firm Ferlea to New York designer Judy Ross) who share her spare aesthetic and penchant for natural materials. Thus the oversize wicker and velvet ottomans in orange, aubergine, or beige, a series of chain-stitched rugs in bold geometric patterns, and lamps with whimsical shades in silk or linen by designer Fernando Santangelo.

Schilcher's furniture also dresses up or down, according to mood or season. Her maple bed, for instance, comes with a winter wrap—a cashmere cover that slides over a headboard of summery raffia. The biggest surprise in Salon Moderne, however, is the most of the sofas and chairs wear slipcovers, not upholstery. "Everybody thinks of slipcovers as loose and sloppy," Schilcher says. "Not true. Our slipcovers are like very tight-fitting dresses." In fact, her most popular item is an Italian sofa snugly slipcovered in pale green cotton. A strip of velcro and a hidden zipper preserve its sleek silhouette.

Although Schilcher believes that elegance and practicality are not mutually exclusive ideals, she understands her clients' concerns about her approach. "People tell me, 'I have children. I can never have a white sofa,'" she says. "But yes, you can. Just take off the slipcover and clean it." Coco Chanel might have been appalled, but parents are delighted.

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