

# Designing the City

Riccardo Tossani is the principal of the Tokyo based office of Riccardo Tossani, Architecture, established in 1997 and with a branch office in Niseko. With a master's in Architecture and Urban Design from Harvard University and over two decades of experience, Tossani has completed projects in locations such as Australia, Italy, Thailand, and the United States. He directs all design activity at Riccardo Tossani, Architecture, the work of which is published in leading design journals around the world.

**You designed the Giorgio Armani store in Tokyo's fashionable Roppongi District but you also design homes – how do you reconcile these two very different types of architecture?**

Interestingly there is quite a lot of crossover between commercial and residential design, as there is of course between architecture and interior design. We occasionally accept commissions in the fashion industry and have found that while we might start with a flagship store we may also end up with the CEO's private residence, as we did with GAS Jeans store in Harajuku which led to the owner's villa in Vicenza Italy. The opportunity to work with Giorgio Armani was as I anticipated a great learning experience. His sense of design and high expectations resulted in a remarkable environment fusing fashion, culture and architecture, an experiment with unique materials, lighting and architectural details that have direct application to residences. Homes are also high image spaces that have to function in very sophisticated ways. Consider how many different activities take place there and have to be sustained, how families change in structure and needs over time, how deeply technologies have infiltrated our abodes and how quickly they need upgrading, how much of an investment we make in our homes and how much spiritual satisfaction we can derive from them.

**What are the types of residences you have designed and what are you working on now?**

Private residences for us are more an act of love than a way to make money- we do them for the creative opportunities they afford and rarely cover our own costs. Consequently we only accept commissions where the client is enthusiastic about making architecture, and provides the creative latitude that we believe will best serve his interests. Budget restrictions and size limitations are not an impediment to us – we have created wonderful homes under 160m<sup>2</sup> for very tight budgets, and homes larger than 1,500m<sup>2</sup> for more lavish budgets. Part of the challenge is to deliver outstanding design within the owners' budget and schedule constraints. I believe this kind of discipline makes for great and more meaningful architecture. One of our projects currently in construction is an 1100m<sup>2</sup> private 3 level home in Daikanyama that is all glass and photo voltaic panels, with brise-soleil shading, automatic solar blinds and heat/cool radiators working from very low-energy heat pumps. Thermal mass and LED lighting also add to the sustainability and very low carbon footprint, so not only will this be a wonderful home to live in and a beautiful work of architecture, but also relatively cheap to run and with minimum pressure on the environment.

**Why do your clients go to the trouble of building homes in Tokyo?**

While we also work abroad and design chalets and grand homes in Niseko, Hakuba and other regions of Japan, our Tokyo clients face more challenging constraints, which we also find inspiring. Land is expensive and a significant component of the investment, but this offsets risk as land prices tend to be stable and will continue to increase over time especially in the more desirable neighborhoods. Our buildings retain and appreciate in value and when leased generate very good yields. But beyond the numbers, building your own home provides great joy and our clients always feel a tremendous sense of accomplishment at having created a unique cultural legacy.



WAITZE RESIDENCE



Riccardo Tossani Architecture Inc.  
T+ Building 2nd Floor, 3-17-7 Aobadai,  
Meguro-ku, Tokyo 153-0042  
Tel: 81-3-5457-1032 Fax: 81-3-5457-1030  
www.tossani.com  
info@tossani.com

**riccardotossani**  
architecture



DAIZAWA RESIDENCE



FOREST ESTATE NIESEKO

CREATIVE COMMONS  
PHOTO ATTRIBUTIONS:

P.7 Mr. Hayata  
P.56 Hideyuki Kamon  
P.83 Toshihiro Oimatsu