



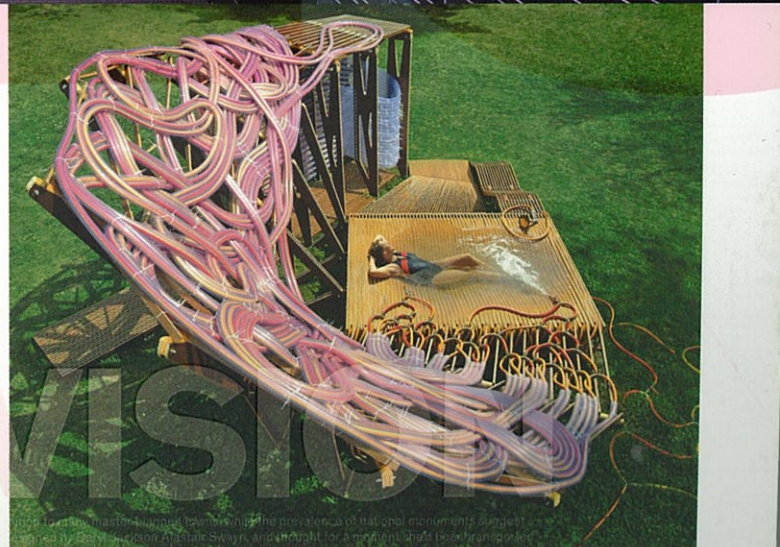
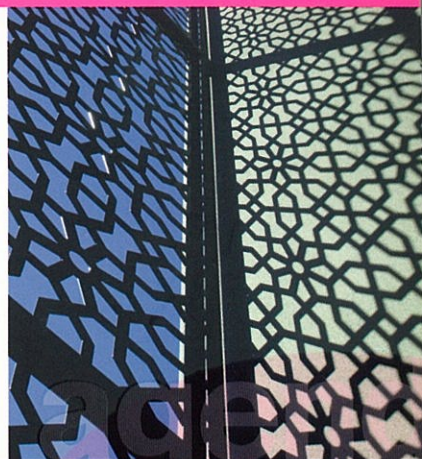
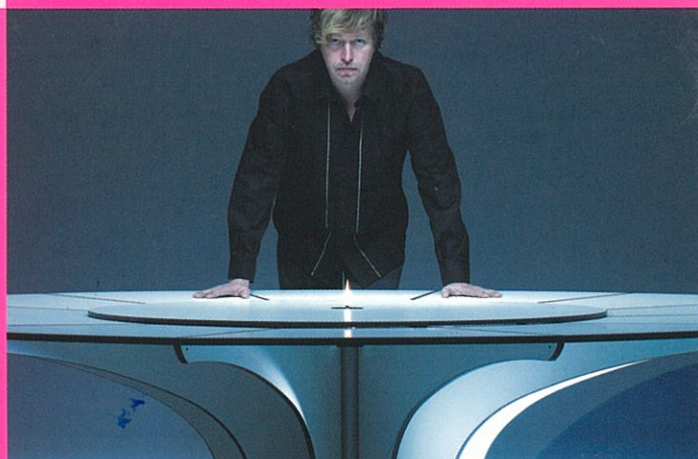
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“A timber piazza has been incorporated into the design of the store to project out and engage with the sidewalk.”



Avant-garde in Japan

Text
Julian Ryall
Photography
Nacasa & Partners Inc.



Italian fashion house Gas is changing its image. The college student look is out; the well-heeled man-about-town is in. Less Diesel, more D&G. In tandem with the evolving brand image is a complete re-think of the shops that house them, starting with the first stand-alone store in Japan, in fashionable Omotesando.

“There is a transformation in the label and the store needed to be more about that evolution,” says Australian architect, Riccardo Tossani, who only completed the three-floor project on the morning of the September 14th opening party, which attracted some of the top names from Japan’s world of design, fashion and acting.

Discussions on the new Gas look began in Italy in December, with the company keen to give the new store an avant-garde feel that would be reflected in the materials and tones of the structure as well as the clothing lines.

“A timber piazza has been incorporated into the design of the store to project out and engage with the sidewalk,” Tossani says. “The geometry of the street intersects with the building, subtly showing that it is not parallel with the street. That shift in the grid is also reflected inside the store, with façades and light tracks offset.

“The street is very important to the store as it represents the culture of the market, the edgy, avant-garde, youthful culture of Omotesando,” he says. “For the shop to blossom, it needs to project that image.”

Tossani’s multi-disciplinary design practice achieved that by ripping out a ground floor and basement level that formerly housed a clothing shop, as well as incorporating a first-floor office space.

Exposed walls in the basement have been left unrendered as a mark of respect to the cultural history of the building, with cracks and stains left to develop a character and natural patina, much like the fabrics on display.

The exterior is coated in creased zinc that wraps through the large windows and continues inside, the material chosen because it will discolour and mark organically with exposure to light, pollution and moisture. Swirling murals by renowned graffiti artist, Kami, evoke the youthful, vigorous nature of the product, while fitting rooms are all spacious, making them “Special places that are comfortable and luxurious, reflecting the value the brand gives the customer,” Tossani says.



The central, tubular staircase frame supports simple treads and is open, revealing both the rear of the store – which includes the ‘denim wall’ – as well as promoting curiosity and inviting the customer to travel to the other levels. A zinc curtain rises in the stairwell from the basement to the roof, emphasising the verticality of the space and acting as a metaphor for the theatre, where, says Tossani, “art, design and culture are celebrated.”

The upper level is more spacious and the purpose-built furniture higher than in other stores, encouraging the browsing customer to interact with the product. The store also celebrates its role in Japan by incorporating the concept of ‘wabisabi’, or the spirit of the unfinished. “We have purposely left areas unfinished – stonework, wood decking, walls, ceilings – because over time those surfaces will develop their own character,” says Tossani. “That lets the customer read much more into the product, leaving it open to the imagination, and that comes back to the philosophy of the brand, a celebration of the natural and evolution of character over time.”

Julian Ryall is a freelance writer based in Tokyo.

Architect/Interior Designer Riccardo Tossani Architecture Design Team Riccardo Tossani (Principal Architect); Atsuko Itoda (Principal Interior Architect); Hirooka Hirotaka (Project Architect); Daisuke Tomiyama, Surasee Thurangan, Satoshi Takahashi (Designers)
Contractor Nomura Ko Gei Sha, Osaka, Japan

Time to Complete Construction 13 July to 14 September 2006
Total Floor Area 330m²

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DURAVIT

2nd Floor

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