



PHOTOGRAPH BY [unreadable]

# FEASION

RESTRAINED AND RESTFUL, AKATSUKI RESORT IN KOH SAMUI REVEALS IN ITS DISTINCTIVE BALANCE OF THAI AND JAPANESE ARCHITECTURAL TENETS



Mixing exuberant Thai flavours and subtle Japanese ingredients may sound like a culinary disaster but when it comes to architecture, Tokyo-based architect Riccardo Tossani has skillfully combined both influences into a delectable dish for the ultra-exclusive five-suite only Avatsuki Resort in Koh Samui.

In anticipation of hosting VIP guests from Japan, the client requested an aesthetic that is Thai in character but inflected with Japanese spirit, and Tossani's cosmopolitan background rises up to the challenge. Tossani's practice which comprises the Australian-born but American and Italian-trained Tossani, his Japanese architect wife, Atsuko Itoda, and a small team of multi-cultural staff have worked on a wide range of projects ranging from a Tokyo nightclub to condominiums, office blocks, fashion boutiques – including Giorgio Armani's store in Roppongi – and urban planning projects, including the main street in Hokkaido's ski resort town of Niseko.



THERE IS A COLLECTIVE CALM AND PURITY OF LINES WHEREVER AND WHATEVER YOUR EYES REST ON



SITE AND SOUND

"The site was the single greatest source of inspiration. Its breathtaking views and association with the gorgeous beach, together with the lush environment and substantial vernacular traditions gave me many ideas about form and planning," explains Tossani.

Tossani maximised the view by building the resort around three cascading pools that are aligned along an imaginary meridian with the offshore islands. The effect of this is particularly powerful on arrival in the grand atrium as guests are greeted with an unforgettable view of the five islets in the bay. While giving a clear sense of order and focus to the sprawling resort, Tossani's use of an axial plan, characteristic of Roman layouts, is a nod to the architect's Italian heritage and architectural training.



Both Thai and Japanese vernacular architecture share a common agenda for harnessing the natural environment to full advantage so Tossani explored the appropriate sustainable traditional practices for the architectural programme. The result is generous roof overhangs and pavilions with steeply pitched roofs in the manner of the local vernacular coupled with vertical louvres in the sliding and fixed partitions recalling the geometry of traditional Japanese design to offer respite from the sun, heat and rain, provide cross ventilation, and preserve privacy.

Furniture and art objects were carefully selected to conform to the minimalist intent of the architectural concept. So low slung beds, slatted benches, sculptural tables and sofas in muted colours are so neutral that they could easily merge into a Thai or Japanese context. However, rather than being depressingly tedious, the purity of lines and exceptional quality of the materials and craftsmanship add to the subtle luxury of the overall design.



The play of water creates a secluded plunge pool

THE PAVILION STYLE STRUCTURE WITH AN ELEGANT PITCHED ROOF AND TALL TIMBER SCREEN-DOORS ARE A PERFECT BLEND OF THAI AND JAPANESE VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE



**FLING**

**HOME PRIDE**

A stay at Akeotsuki is rather like having a Lycoski's private retreat; all to yourself, including a personal chef, butler and driver at your beck and call. Like a private home, the architecture of the resort has a cosy quality because Tossani grouped the suites around the stretch of pools. While this layout is intimate and keeps the human scale, this also means guests are always in easy reach of gardens or water.

Sourced locally as well as from his own workshop, Tossani was careful to add a layer of detail that enhances the sense of crafted, honest hospitality.



FIRST IMPRESSIONS LAST FOREVER SO TOSSANI WOVES GUESTS FROM THE MOMENT OF ARRIVAL WITH A GRAND ATRIUM SPACE DESIGNED IN ALIGNMENT WITH THE AXIAL VIEWS OF THE FIVE ISLETS IN THE BAY



In keeping with the bespoke approach to being at one with nature each of the five villas has a Japanese name that evokes a particular natural element. Sora which means sky has a private shaded balcony. Umi meaning ocean is named for the private lounge deck with a spectacular beachfront view. Hizu or water refers to the private plunge pool. Raku or relaxation has a mezzanine level for in-room massage treatments, or family accommodation; and finally Kokoro or heart is built around an existing coconut tree. Allowing the environment to take centre stage, the suites are minimally decorated and truly capture the concept of Zen.

**NOW AND ZEN**

Devoid of superfluous decoration or glitz, Tossani's almost monastic interpretation of luxury will disappoint those in search of shock and awe. The architect has instead evoked subtle connotations of luxury through the scale and proportions of the spatial experience — large and comfortable yet private and intimate. Lavishness is also present in the uninterrupted views of the bay and the sheer expanse of sky, both reflected in the cascading pools at the heart of the resort.

Teasing the melange of influences into an intriguing yet recognisable tropical architecture that augments the serene surroundings, Tossani has created a fitting pan that lives up to the resort's moniker, Akatsuki, which means dawn in Japanese. **R**

[www.akatsuki-resort.com](http://www.akatsuki-resort.com)



What greater bliss than to wake up to a gallery view from the floor of the sea, miles from the villa's stairs.

Beyond the screen, the Kokoro suite is a sand dune in a constant state of being built.



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THE AUSTERE LINES OF THE SUITE ALLOW THE SPECTACULAR SEA VIEW TO TAKE CENTER STAGE. YET THE QUALITY OF THE MATERIALS MAINTAINS THE FEELING OF LUXURY.