

## **IN THE CITY WHERE DREAMS COME TRUE. Building Lives in New York City**

Giulia Madron (January 13, 2014)



Giorgio Villa is a talented Italian architect who came to New York to follow his passion. Where is he now? Working for one of the most famous American architects in the international scene: Richard Meier.

Bringing an architect to New York is like bringing a child to an adventure park. The Big Apple is the symbol par excellence of modern architecture and it's the city where dreams come true. And it really became the dream of Giorgio Villa, a young and talented Italian architect who moved to New York to follow his passion.

Born in Bergamo, near Milan, Giorgio studied architecture at the prestigious Academy of Architecture of Mendrisio, in Switzerland, an international Institution where important architects from all over the world teach and form new talents in this field. After graduating in 2009, he had the opportunity to go to Tokyo, Japan, where he worked for the studio of Sou Fujimoto, one of the most compelling contemporary architects in the world.



After this incredible and exciting experience in Japan, he moved back to Europe and worked for a period in Switzerland, first in Zurich and then in the Engadin region. But he never stopped dreaming about New York. In Italy there is a motto: "Insist, persist and achieve." He made these three words his own.

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We interviewed Giorgio and asked him to tell us his enviable experience as an Italian architect in the United States.

### **Giorgio, when and why did you choose to come to NY?**

I was always interested in the American culture. In particular, I always dreamed of having the opportunity to work in New York. During the spring of 2012, while I was working in Switzerland, I came here with some portfolios of my works. My intention was to find a job. When I arrived, I started to submit some applications. I did a couple of interviews including Richard Meier. After a month I was back in Europe again, they made me an offer that I accepted. Since I was studying at the University I was always fascinated by the modern architecture of the first half of the XX century and the studio of Richard Meier is one of the greatest contemporary representatives of such architecture. Therefore, there is some affinity in terms of aesthetics, architectural language and approach in general. I think this is one of the reasons why they chose me.

### **What can you tell us about New York?**

Some people say that New York is the center of the universe. In some sense I agree with them. Little pieces from all over the world are grouped here, coexisting together in harmony each with their differences. Living here makes you definitely more open-minded since you have to interact with people who have a completely different background compared to yours. It's a city full of striking sceneries linked often to a cinematographic imaginary. From a visual point of view this is extremely stimulating, especially for those who do the same job as I do. However it is really hard to describe just using words, it has to be experienced in first person. Furthermore, a great thing about New York is that it is constantly evolving and renewing itself. It is a very dynamic city. In the next few years some important interventions, such as the Hudson Yards on the west side, the new Whitney Museum near the High Line, the World Trade Center in downtown and several other buildings will be completed, giving to New York a new skyline.

### **What does it mean working with an architect of international fame such as Richard Meier?**

Working here gives me the opportunity to participate at the design and the planning of relevant buildings that will be constructed all over the world. Currently, we have projects going on in Mexico, Korea, United States, Brazil, Colombia, Italy, Germany, and Israel. Architecture is a very complex discipline that requires many years to be learned in all its components. So the fact that I am working with people who have many years of experience and numerous achievements is something that enriches me enormously. Another positive factor is that inside the studio there are people who come from all over the world: United States, Italy, Germany, Spain, France, Belgium, Korea, China, Venezuela, Colombia, Burma...so we all breathe an international atmosphere. Moreover, the quality of the works produced is very high with a great attention to all the details.

### **On which projects are you working on at Richard Meier & Partners?**

At Richard Meier & Partners I am involved in several different projects such as a Hotel in Jesolo, Italy and the new headquarter for Engel & Völkers in Hamburg, Germany. My main contribution is on a large scale project in Mexico City on the Paseo de la Reforma, one of the most important streets of the city. It is a mixed-used building which consists of an office tower of 180 meters and a smaller volume that hosts a hotel, interconnected by a base of thirty meters intended for retail stores, restaurants, a fitness center and a large parking lot. The peculiarity of the tower is that it is crossed



by two-thirds from a central atrium connected to the outside through two large openings, favoring natural lighting and natural ventilation. It's a large project, with a high-level of complexity. It is a great challenge and at the same time a privilege to be able to contribute to.

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