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A NoLIta Condo by the Architect Tadao Ando

By RONDA KAYSEN

His buildings have risen in Tokyo, Milan, Shanghai and even Butwal, Nepal, but Tadao Ando, the Japanese architect lauded for his artistry and elegance, has never designed one in New York City — until now.

At the corner of Elizabeth and Kenmare Streets at the edge of NoLIta, demolition work began in early March to make way for a seven-story condominium, Mr. Ando's first stand-alone project in the city, although he has designed a restaurant (Morimoto in Chelsea) and residential interiors in Manhattan.

Fans of Mr. Ando, a Pritzker-Prize-winning architect, have already weighed in, with the project, at 152 Elizabeth Street, receiving about 200 inquiries from potential buyers, according to Leonard Steinberg, the president of Compass, which is marketing the property. Sales are expected to begin in April, with prices for the seven units starting at around \$6 million for a half-floor apartment and likely to rise to more than \$30 million for the four-bedroom penthouse, according to Mr. Steinberg.

The boutique condominium is expected to open in November 2016. The building's design will resemble a glass jewel box suspended in poured-in-place concrete — classic Tadao Ando, who typically likes to blend buildings with their natural surroundings and almost invariably employs concrete. The southern facade along Elizabeth Street will have a garden wall planted with vines, including Virginia creeper, which turns a brilliant red in the fall.

With 152 Elizabeth Street, Mr. Ando joins an exclusive club of celebrity architects who have made their mark on the city's landscape. Developers competing for buyers willing to pay stratospheric sums for new construction tend to select architects with star power, especially for smaller buildings that lack the impressive views of a skyscraper. Mr. Ando is currently designing another ground-up condo elsewhere in Manhattan, though he declined to elaborate on the specifics of that project in an email interview.

Jonathan J. Miller, the president of Miller Samuel, an appraisal company, said, "A building like this at this price point wouldn't be built without a starchitect. It's almost like a requisite for entry into the market."

Sumaida and Khurana, the condominium's developer, recently tapped the Portuguese architect Álvaro Siza, another Pritzker laureate, to design a 400-foot-tall residential tower at 11th Avenue and West 56th Street, a building that will be his first in the United States.

Big names certainly draw attention, particularly for small developments. Last summer, Mr. Steinberg said he was relaxing in a hotel pool in Capri, Italy, when another guest asked him if he had heard anything about a Tadao Ando building coming to Manhattan. "All of a sudden the entire pool started talking about Ando and his magic," Mr. Stein-



berg said.

A self-taught architect, Mr. Ando has won not only the Pritzker Prize, often called the Nobel Prize of architecture, but also the Praemium Imperiale, a prize awarded by the Japan Art Association; the Kyoto Prize from Japan; and the Carlsberg architecture prize from Denmark.

When Mr. Ando won the Pritzker in 1995, Paul Goldberger wrote in *The New York Times* that "Mr. Ando's work possesses a degree of moral authority not seen in architecture" since Louis Kahn.

His buildings are found mostly in Asia, but he has designed notable ones in the United States, including the Modern Art Museum of Fort Worth and the Pulitzer Foundation for the Arts in St. Louis. He recently worked on the expansion of the Clark Art Institute in Williamstown, Mass., including a visitor and exhibition building, the Clark Center, which opened last July.

In his use of concrete, "I want to create a space which no one has created before with a very common material which anyone is familiar with and has access to," Mr. Ando wrote in an email interview through a translator. "Concrete can be made anywhere on earth."

The corner of Elizabeth and Kenmare Streets is near NoLIta, Chinatown, the Lower East Side and Little Italy. The immediate neighborhood is a mix of gritty Chinatown storefronts, 19th-century tenements and trendy boutiques.

"When I saw this site, I said, this is the opportunity to bring Ando-san to New York," said Amit Khurana, a founder of Sumaida and Khurana, of his initial impression of the four-story brick parking garage at the site. "It was that industrial energy feel of it. Everything about this site is concrete."

Persuading Mr. Ando, who is 73 and works exclusively out of his office in Osaka, Japan, to take on the project required some finesse. Mr. Khurana shortened a trip to Madrid to meet with representatives



glimpse onto the exterior garden wall. The hallways will be paneled in wood from floor to ceiling with movable pocket doors. Even some walls between rooms can be removed, enabling, say, the living room to be enlarged by taking out a bedroom wall.

“It’s this interior space that’s very fluid, that’s very open, that can have and does have separation of private areas and more public areas,” Mr. Gabellini said. “You can say it’s loftlike, but it even takes that idea and thinks about it in more depth.”

The penthouse, which will be wrapped in glass, will have two floors of interior living space and a private rooftop deck with a soaking tub, outdoor kitchen and lounge area. A spiral staircase of stainless steel, stone and glass will connect the three levels. The living room will open onto a private terrace, with a reflective pool and two water walls framing a view of the Empire State Building. The 3,200 square feet of outdoor space will create a sense of tranquility common in Mr. Ando’s work.

“This idea of simplicity also comes from a belief to create a place of understatement,” Mr. Gabellini said. “To create the architecture of quiet.”



of Mr. Ando at a NoLiTa restaurant in September 2013. He arrived directly from the airport, soaked from the rain and still carrying his luggage. A week later, he flew to Japan, bringing Mr. Ando, who had been a professional boxer in his youth, a book about Muhammad Ali. During their first encounter, he said, Mr. Ando drew a sketch of what would become 152 Elizabeth Street.

“It was amazing, he sketched it right there on the spot,” Mr. Khurana said.

It took the architect a week to agree to the project. Soon after, Mr. Khurana reached out to Michael Gabellini, an architect and interior designer who redesigned the Rainbow Room at Rockefeller Center. “Amit called and said, ‘I have Ando,’” said Mr. Gabellini, a partner of Gabellini Sheppard Associates, who is designing the interiors with Kimberly Sheppard. “And, of course, with that we began a very intense and very passionate discussion about what the possibilities were. Very clearly, it’s a collaboration of kindred spirit.”

Mr. Gabellini’s minimalist style, like that of Mr. Ando, frequently draws on space and light to build a serene environment.

Residents will enter the building on Elizabeth Street, passing through a vestibule lined with a water wall with grooved glass panels that allow the light to filter through. The lobby will feature a fog and light sculpture visible through floor-to-ceiling glass.

“I wanted to create intimate space,” Mr. Ando said. “The water element acts as a buffer and transition from the busy and loud urban fabric to the quiet and private residence.”

Units will have floor-to-ceiling windows, exposed concrete and 250-year-old Danish oak floors with 20-inch-wide planks. The kitchens will have custom cabinetry, an expandable island and countertops of honed Fango stone. Units on the second and third floors will have backsplashes made of translucent glass, offering a

