

【Shiga Kōgen Roman Museum】

The Shiga Kōgen Roman Museum opened in 1997 to coincide with the Nagano Winter Olympics, which were held the following year. It was designed by famed Japanese architect Kishō Kurokawa (1934–2007), one of the founders of the Metabolist Movement. The movement, named from the biological concept of metabolism, embodies the belief that structures, like living organisms, should grow and transform with their environments.

The focal point of the building is the conical glass structure that houses the museum café, which allows natural light to flow freely into the interior. As the day progresses, shadows cast by the surrounding trees are projected through the glass into the interior space, and at night the same interior space is transformed into a glowing beacon. Outside, a small stream winds around the structure, mirroring the flowing oval of the main gallery.

The first floor of the museum houses a collection of 2,000-year-old Roman glass vessels in conical display cases that were designed by Kurokawa. The glass objects' natural beauty is enhanced by their rare iridescence, which is acquired during centuries spent buried underground. The second floor houses seasonal exhibits that predominantly feature artists with a local connection. The grounds contain modern sculptures by American artist Dean Ramos, who did an artist's residency in the nearby town of Koumi in 2017. His weather-worn stoneworks can be found in several locations within the area.