

## **Former Naniwa Warehouse**

The Naniwa Warehouse is located at the south end of Otaru Canal and is one of the largest remaining warehouses in Otaru. The timber-framed stone structure was built in 1925, with over 2,644 square meters of open-plan space; it opened onto the canal for convenient loading and unloading.

In 2022, the building was repurposed as the House of Western Art. It is part of Otaru Art Base, five historical buildings that are open to the public as museums and art galleries. The museum's collection dates from Otaru's heyday, featuring stained glass windows, Art Nouveau and Art Deco glassware, furniture, porcelain, and other Western art objects produced in Europe and the United States from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth century.

Five rooms over two floors include collections of glass from well-known French artists, including Emile Gallé (1846–1904), August Daum (1853–1909), Antonin Daum (1864–1930), and René Lalique (1860–1945). One room is dedicated to ornate porcelain vases and figurines from German manufacturer Meissen. In the largest room, collections of furniture in Victorian, Art Nouveau, and Art Deco styles are arranged in room sets.

The warehouse was built by Naniwa, one of several warehouse companies founded following the expansion of Japanese shipping in the late nineteenth century. Otaru became one of Japan's leading warehousing centers owing to a rapid increase in cargo passing through the port from Japan, Russia, and Europe.

The Naniwa Warehouse Company was a subsidiary of the Suzuki Trading Company, headed by Suzuki Yone (1852–1938), known at the end of World War I as “the richest woman in Japan.” The company was a conglomerate with diverse interests, dealing in sugar, camphor oil, flour, rice, real estate, steel, mining, and shipping. The Suzuki Trading Company went bankrupt in 1927 as Japan, along with most of the world, slid towards the Great Depression.