

## **Former Osaka Shōsen Building**

The Former Osaka Shōsen Building was originally a passenger waiting lounge and office for Osaka Shōsen Kaisha (OSK), a shipping company that once served routes all over the world. Built in 1917, the branch office operated continuously until 1991, even after OSK merged with Mitsui to form Mitsui OSK Lines. The grand octagonal tower and tiled facade make this building a prominent landmark.

### *Eye-Catching Architecture*

The building's facade is reinforced concrete covered with faux-brick tiles, a contrast to the wooden, untiled sides that face away from the street. The building has elements of Secession-style architecture, such as the dormer windows along the roof and the octagonal steeple with a domed spire.

When it was built, the Osaka Shōsen Building was the tallest structure in Moji. Its conspicuous design likely functioned as advertising for OSK at a time when Moji was a bustling port used by many competing shipping companies. The visually striking exterior made OSK stand out to potential customers, and its steeple was a landmark for company ships.

Today, the building's first floor has a community space with exhibits dedicated to local artists and craftspeople. Nearby is the Watase Seizō Gallery, which showcases the Kobe-born and locally raised graphic artist's work in manga, advertising, and illustration. Watase Seizō (1945–) is perhaps best known for the 1983 *Heart Cocktail* manga series, which melds colorful West Coast American pop art with traditional Japanese scenes and settings. A small corner room stages a mock-up representation of his workspace, complete with a drawing desk and record player.

### *Unlocking the 1890s*

A turn-of-the-century safe stands in the first-floor hallway. This safe was built in 1896 for Mitsubishi Gōshi Kaisha (a precursor to the modern Mitsubishi Company), one of the many trading companies that operated in Moji in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The locking mechanism and dial are typical of the period and are inscribed with Japanese characters rather than Arabic numerals. Visitors can try unlocking and opening this safe for themselves.