

The Kanmon Building

At first glance, this unobtrusive structure looks like just another office building, but it once held the head offices of shipping company Kanmon-Kisen Co., Ltd. Small design details distinguish the Kanmon Building among the city's historic architecture.

Defiant Architecture

The Kanmon Building dates to 1931, during the Shōwa era (1926–1989). Its dark-gray exterior and blocklike profile stand out among the neighboring historic buildings, such as the Former British Consulate and the Akita Shōkai Building.

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In contrast to the neoclassical architectural style of the older buildings, the Kanmon Building's design seems to thoroughly embrace modernity. Like the Akita Shōkai Building, it is constructed of reinforced concrete, but its design takes advantage of the material's potential for creative expression. This starts with the windows, which stretch the entire height of the cutoff above the main entrance (a design that would be impossible with brick) and includes the decorative projections on the building's left and right sides. A bamboo-like faux column stands to the left side of the entrance, while the right side has a small porthole that hints at the building's origin as the offices of a shipping company.

A closer look reveals further asymmetry, as the windows have different shapes and sizes, and the projections appear somewhat haphazard. Some features are mysterious, such as the seemingly purposeless bronze piping over the octagonal windows near the roof and the crumbling ceramic animal face to the right of the main door.