

Former Osaka Shōsen Building

This building was originally a passenger waiting lounge and office for Osaka Shōsen Kaisha (OSK), a global shipping company. Constructed in 1917, the building was used as a branch office until 1991, when it was purchased and restored by the city.

This was the tallest structure in Moji at the time it was built, and its conspicuous design likely functioned as an advertisement for OSK. Its edifice would have stood out during Moji's period as a bustling port filled with competing trading agents, and it still serves as a local landmark today.

The facade is reinforced concrete covered with faux-brick tiles. The rooftop dormer windows and the octagonal tower with a domed spire and diamond-shaped ornamentation at its base are elements of Secession-style architecture, which was popular mainly in Austria and Germany around the early twentieth century.

The first floor has an exhibit space for local artists, including the Watase Seizō Gallery, which showcases the Kobe-born and locally raised artist's work in manga, advertising, and illustration. Watase Seizō (b. 1945) is perhaps best known for the 1983 *Heart Cocktail* manga series, which shows his melding of colorful West Coast pop art from the United States with traditional Japanese scenes and settings.

Unlocking the 1890s

A hallway leading off the exhibit space has a 1.4-metric-ton safe made in 1896 for Mitsubishi Gōshi Kaisha (a precursor to the modern Mitsubishi Company), one of Moji's many turn-of-the-century trading companies. The locking mechanism and dial are inscribed with Japanese characters rather than Arabic numerals. Visitors can try unlocking and opening this safe for themselves.