

Okayama Prefectural

Office Building

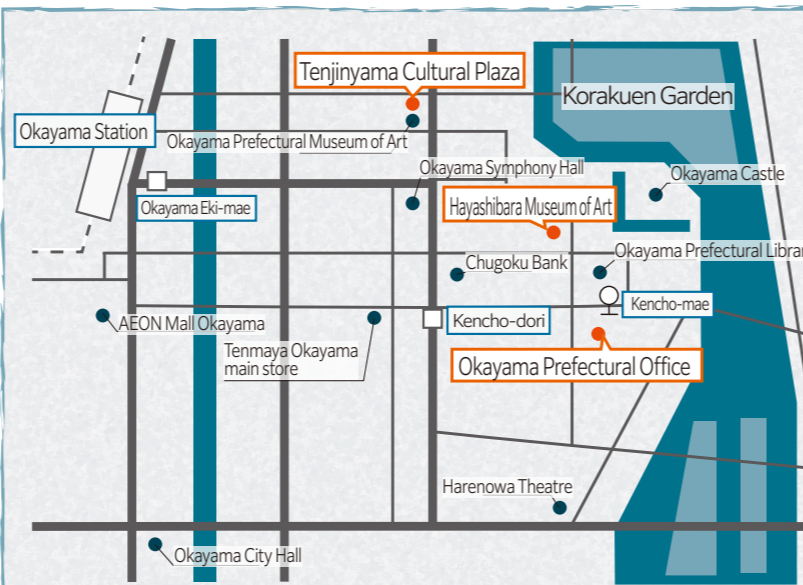
Architecture

Guide

Okayama Prefectural Office Building



岡山県庁舎

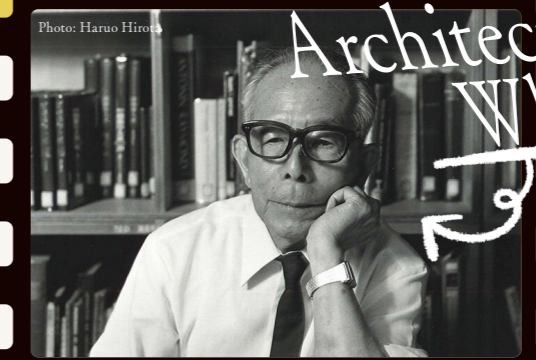


Access

- On Foot from JR Okayama Station
Approx. 2 km from the East Exit of JR Okayama Station (around a 25-minute walk)
By Bus from JR Okayama Station
Okaden Bus: Take the bus bound for "Kencho / Okaden Takaya"
Uno Bus: Take any bus bound for "Shinogozo," "Katakami," "Seto Station," or "Nagaoka / Eki-mae"
Ryobi Bus: Take the bus bound for "Saidaiji"
In all cases, get off at the "Kencho-mae" stop
By Tram from JR Okayama Station
Take the tram bound for Higashiyama and get off at "Kencho-dori" stop

Contact

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TEL: 086-226-7499 (Architectural Advisory Division)
Reception hours: 8:30 AM - 5:15 PM (Closed on weekends, national holidays, and from December 29 to January 3)
URL: https://www.pref.okayama.jp/
Design Support: Okayama University
Supervising Faculty: Atsushi Kawanishi, Hirofumi Hori
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School of Engineering, Architecture, Civil Engineering and Environmental Management Program
Urban & Regional Planning
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Architect Who was Kunio Maekawa?

Kunio Maekawa is the architect of the Okayama Prefectural Office Building. He first became interested in architecture during high school, later graduating from the Department of Architecture at Tokyo Imperial University (now the University of Tokyo). After being deeply inspired by the writings of Le Corbusier, he traveled to Paris to study in the architect's atelier. Upon returning to Japan, he worked at the office of Antonin Raymond before founding his own practice, Maekawa Kunio Associates, Architects & Engineers, in 1935. Over the course of his career, Maekawa designed more than 200 buildings, with a significant number dedicated to public use. His works are still widely encountered, often without people realizing they are standing before a Maekawa building. Known for his pursuit of modernist principles and a deep commitment to public architecture, Maekawa is recognized as one of the leading figures of postwar modernism in Japan. Maekawa and his staff continually sought to adapt the ideas of modern architecture to the Japanese context through their unique approach.

Highlighted Works in Okayama Prefecture

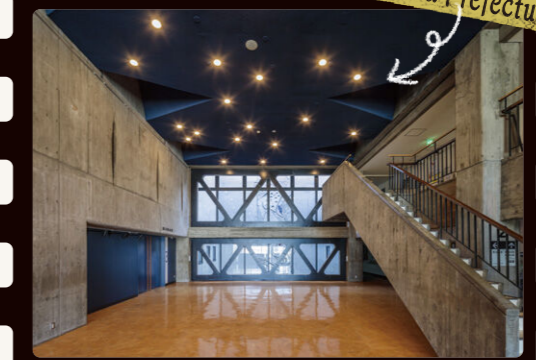
In addition to the Okayama Prefectural Office Building, Kunio Maekawa also designed the Hayashibara Museum of Art and the Tenjinyama Cultural Plaza of Okayama Prefecture.
Hayashibara Museum of Art
Completed in 1963 as the Okayama Museum of Art, the building was commissioned in memory of the collector Ichiro Hayashibara, a prominent businessman in Okayama. This was Maekawa's first museum project. Its exterior is featured by unevenly shaped bricks, laid by hand, which lend the building a textured, organic quality that blends harmoniously with its surroundings.
Tenjinyama Cultural Plaza of Okayama Prefecture
Opened in 1962 under the name Okayama Prefectural Cultural Center, this complex is comprised of a library, exhibition rooms, and a hall. The T-shaped composition of the first and second floors reveals its distinctive appearance. Although finished in concrete, the building features artistic flourishes such as a relief titled Tori-bashira (Bird Pillar), and sculptural air vents that add a refined visual element.



Hayashibara Museum of Art



Tenjinyama Cultural Plaza of Okayama Prefecture



Let's go to the MAP! I'll guide you through Maekawa's vision for the Okayama Prefectural Office Building! Kenchiki-kun, a university student of architecture

Guide Map

Architectural Highlights

You can see everything

Let's follow the map and explore!



from the first floor!



Concrete Handrail

A reflection of Maekawa's exploration into the industrial potential of reinforced concrete, the handrails were part of efforts to implement industrialization. The railings are softened by curved top edges and rounded corners, reducing the cold impression often associated with concrete. This cross-sectional design emerged from Maekawa's pursuit of architecture through technical and functional innovation.



Pilotis

As part of the prefectural government complex envisioned as a symbol of postwar democracy, the entrance to the Main Building is designed as a generously open space. By elevating the floor slab up to the third floor, the ground level becomes a free, open space, creating a welcoming zone that connects the east and west ends of the Main Building as well as the basement. This accessible design embodies the concept of the prefectural office as a "house of the people."

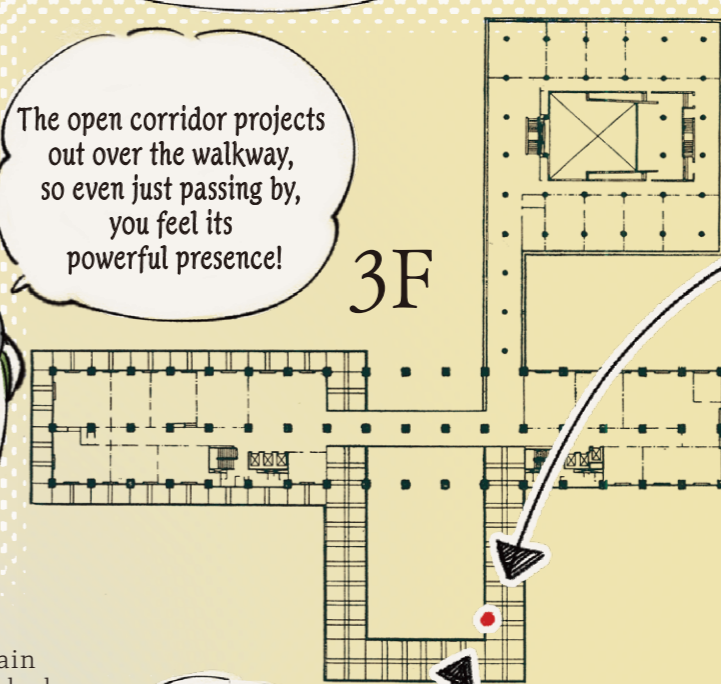


The concrete was cast using cedar boards, so it retains the texture of the wood—giving it a softer, warmer look.

The open corridor projects out over the walkway, so even just passing by, you feel its powerful presence!



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Open Corridor

As a porch and a canopy at the building's entrance, the open corridor clearly defines the entryway. Raised to the height of the third floor, the U-shaped open corridor creates a vast arcade, enhancing the sense of openness to the approach. Facing south, one can see through the pilotis into the courtyard and beyond—one of the many places where Kunio Maekawa's originality shines. When viewed from below, the light fixtures mounted on the underside of the corridor serve not only as night lighting but also feature 16-color dimming options, creating an atmospheric and almost dreamy ambiance. Note: For safety reasons, public access to the open corridor is prohibited.

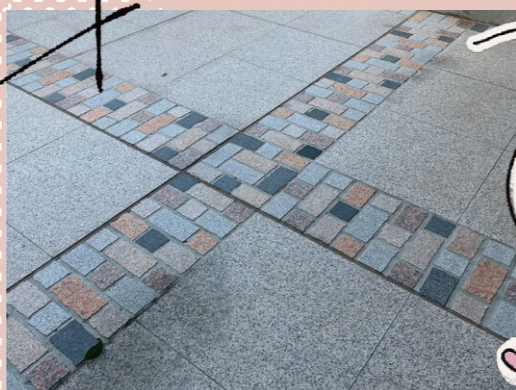


Sunken Garden

At the time of its construction in 1957, visitors could pass through the pilotis from the open corridor on the north side and enjoy a view that extends across the garden to the Asahi River and beyond. The space was designed to secure views, ventilation, and natural light. Today, the garden has been reconfigured with benches, transforming it into an open and welcoming space for anyone to access and relax.



It's set below ground level, so it feels open yet still calm and cozy!!



The subtle use of color is so stylish...

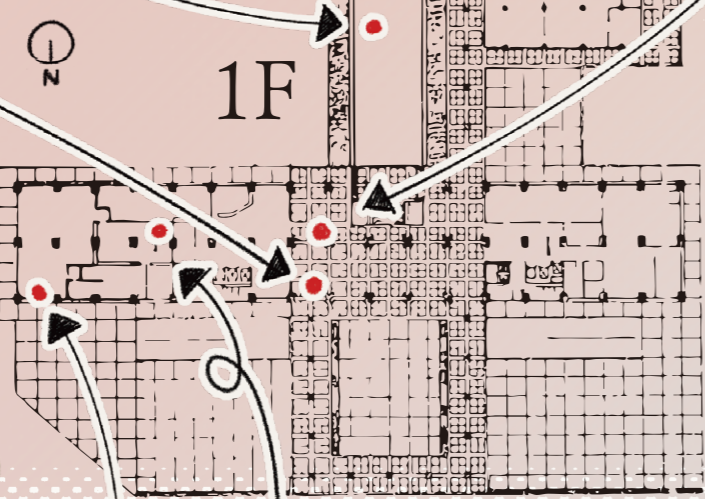


The very bottom row uses hollow ventilation blocks.



Mosaic-pattern Brick Wall

The exterior of the Okayama Prefectural Office Building features brick blocks in five to six color variations based on orange tones, bringing a warm and vivid palette to the architecture. Characteristic of Maekawa's designs, the bricks are not applied as tiles pasted but laid. Although the building has undergone renovation work, the original design has been reproduced without compromising its aesthetic integrity.



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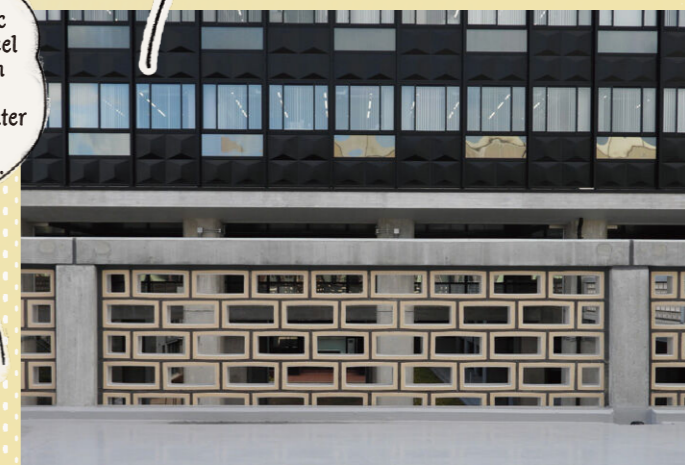
Striking Facade

The exterior walls of both the Main Building and East Wing are finished in jet black, creating a bold and solid presence. These are non-load-bearing curtain walls, first to be used in Japan for a government building. The folded panels enhance structural strength while producing a rich textured surface. In the back of the glass panels of the current spandrel windows are local charred cedar from Okayama Prefecture, contributing to further design value to the building's main front appearance.

During the seismic retrofitting, the steel was replaced with aluminum—making the sash lighter and improving the performance.



So cool



Hollow Brick

Hollow bricks—developed as brise-soleil (sunshades) and frequently employed in Maekawa's architecture—are applied throughout the building. At the Okayama Prefectural Office Building, they form a continuous band like a single-line drawing along the third-floor balconies of the Main Building, the East Wing, and the Old Assembly Annex, including the open corridors. This establishes a visual and spatial connection between the interior and exterior.

Whoa!



When it was first completed, it is said that you could see all the way to the Asahi River. I wish I could've seen that...

Natural flow...



This "one-stroke drawing" circulation design, a signature method in Maekawa's architecture, was based on the natural flow of people. You can see it reflected at the Hayashibara Museum of Art in Okayama, too.

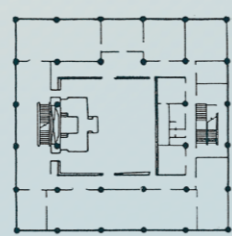
Trace of 2nd-floor Beams

If you look slightly upward at the concrete columns in the Citizen's Hall on the first floor of the Main Building, traces of former beams and floor slabs can be spotted. These were removed in the 1991 East Wing extension, raising the ceiling height and creating a spacious, open environment. The brown-toned light fixtures mounted to the concrete columns were also installed at that time.



Wow—

The Bizen ware decoration pairs beautifully with the simple concrete columns!



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