

About the National Museum of Western Art, Tokyo

1. Overview

The National Museum of Western Art is the only Le Corbusier–designed architecture in Japan.

The museum was built to house artworks (paintings, sculptures and etc.) that had been collected by a businessman Kojiro Matsukata and stored in Paris, then had belonged to the French government at the end of World War II. Most of the collection was returned to the Japanese government in 1953 under the condition that a new art museum be constructed for academically conveying the history of Western art to the Japanese people. The Japanese government built the National Museum of Western Art in Tokyo's Ueno Park to fulfil this condition.

Le Corbusier was selected to design the museum, with his former apprentices Kunio Maekawa, Junzo Sakakura and Takamasa Yoshizaka and the Engineering Division, Educational Facilities Construction Department, Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (then) providing design assistance and construction supervision. Construction began in March 1958 and was completed in March 1959.

The Main Building of the museum is known for embodying the architect's idea of a "museum of unlimited growth (Musée à croissance illimitée)" in the flat roof, the shapes of square, the spiraling corridors and the floor plan that allowed expansion of the museum's holdings by spiraling out. The museum is valuable because it clearly demonstrates Le Corbusier's design concepts such as pilotis (the first-floor support columns with no walls that connect the space underneath to the surrounding environment), the rooftop garden, ramps, lighting design that uses natural light, the Modulor (Le Corbusier's system of measurements based on human proportions and the golden ratio), reflecting the overall outstanding universal value of the work of the world-renowned architect, Le Corbusier, who represents architects of the twentieth century.

2. Designations as a Cultural Property

December 2007: Important Cultural Property of Japan (Main Building)

July 2009: Registered Monument of Japan (surrounding grounds)

3. Location

7-7 Ueno Koen, Taito City, Japan

(Facade)



(Exhibition Room)

