

Toyota Auto Kyoto

Kyoto, Japan 1989-1990

The Toyota Auto Kyoto building was the second of three projects completed in Japan in the early 1990s (along with the Gotoh Museum in Chiba and the Matsumoto Corporation Headquarters in Okayama). Occupying a site in Kyoto's Higashiyama district, it sought to engage with its context and was inspired in equal measure by Kyoto's medieval labyrinth of passages and courtyards, and the picturesque hills that encircle the city.

The building's principal façade is turned ninety degrees to the street, echoing the irregularities and setbacks characteristic of the city's streets. The main concrete volume rises ten metres (the maximum height allowed by local regulations) above two neighbouring traditional houses, and forms one side of an outer box. Softening the impact of the solid concrete screen, this pale grey 'shoebox' contains a loosely compartmentalised black stainless-steel box, which rises out of its enclosing layer to form a small rooftop pavilion with panoramic views of Kyoto's sacred hills.

From the outset, the client described the project as a multi-use building conceived and presented as if it were a private house. What would be the garage at ground floor level in a house is here a Toyota car showroom; the lower level dining room a restaurant; the library and dressing rooms upstairs a bookshop and clothes shop; and the rooftop pavilion a client entertainment apartment. Each of these spaces maintains a sense of coherence through the materiality and the richness of their surfaces. References to its locale permeate the building – a *shoji* screen grid of glass blocks; expanses of smooth white Kyoto plaster; and pale Japanese oak. Thus the building marries tradition with innovation and the domestic with the corporate through an architectural vocabulary that is elaborate yet retains an overall sense of formal simplicity.

Project start	1988
Completion	1990
Gross floor area	1,413m ²
Client	Toyota Auto Kyoto Corporation
Architect	David Chipperfield Architects
Contact architect	Makoto Nozawa + GETT
Landscape architect	Naoko Terasaki
Structural engineer	Whitbybird
Services engineer	Nakajima Setsubi Co., Ltd
General contractor	Fujita Komuten
Photography	Alberto Piovano



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