

Global Store Louis Vuitton

Kobe, Japan

Client	LVMH
Team	BARTHELEMY GRINO : Architect OBAYASHI CORPORATION : Technical consultant
Mission	Complete services
Nature	New construction
Program	Store and carpark
Status	Completed
Year	2002
Cost	NC
Area	11 000 m2



Kyu Kyoruchi in Kōbe was one of the rare ports in Japan to be open to the world in the 19th century. The neighbourhood was particularly damaged by the earthquake of 1995.

Commissioned by the French company LVMH, the Kowa Building was erected on the footprint of a building destroyed by the 1995 earthquake. In locating four levels of parking lot above two levels of commercial space, it adopts a form typical of new construction in the neighbourhood. Within its simple, rectangular volume, the design consists of three disassociated elements that organise the programmatic requirements and variety of cultural references. The distinct components of an above-ground parking structure are enunciated by inserting the elevators and fire stairs between the access ramps and the parking spaces. The façade expresses

this insertion with a break between the system of alternating aluminium and prefabricated concrete panels that clads the access ramps, and the reversible system of extruded aluminium louvers that integrate light and signage and wrap the parking lot. The building as a whole is distinguished by a triple play of façades, static smooth and monochrome for the ramps at the rear of the lot, the animated louvers on the upper front inspired by the vertical signage widespread in Japan, and finally the enigmatic metal weavings behind the glass of the lower commercial façade inspired by both traditional Japanese weavings and the brand's checkerboard monogram. The ensemble celebrates fine workmanship and the authenticity and quality of materials, offering an exceptional occasion to interrogate the relationship between architecture, fashion and branding.

