

What is VILLA COUCOU?

Design: Takamasa Yoshizaka + U Laboratory

Construction: Komatsubara Komuten Ltd. (Completed in 1957)

VILLA COUCOU is a residential heritage site located in Shibuya, Tokyo, and is regarded as one of the architect Takamasa Yoshizaka's masterpieces. Yoshizaka trained under the French architect Le Corbusier and, after returning from his atelier in 1952, established the Yoshizaka Laboratory (later renamed U Laboratory) at Waseda University. He oversaw the design and construction supervision of VILLA COUCOU. Our company was entrusted with the construction, and when Le Corbusier visited Japan in 1955, he personally visited this building.

At that time, and transported to the site as it is today. Instead; molds were created on-site, components were shaped, and concrete was cast in place. The building was designed with a careful consideration of the plasticity of the concrete. Since the structure of VILLA COUCOU has an overall undulating form, designing the concrete was particularly challenging. However, the building was freely shaped as desired by casting the concrete on-site.

One of the highlights of the interior, the cantilevered concrete staircase, has a story that recounts the challenges faced when, even after its shape was decided, Professor Yoshizaka would promptly change it, causing considerable difficulties. The distinctive handrails feature many curves, and while such tasks would now be performed by machines, in those days, skilled craftsmen carved them from large wooden blocks on-site and adjusted their lengths as they installed them.