

Technical Overview

From “Concept” to “Co-creation”

Design philosophy
for emotional inspiration
to create the future

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To be meaningful, it must be fun

I was engaged in the Expo 2025 exhibition project as concept and design director. While primarily striving to fulfill my responsibilities to ensure the presentation would effectively convey appealing and memorable messages to visitors, I was also trying to enjoy myself using that precious opportunity, according to the statement: “To be meaningful, it must be fun.” This is no spur of the moment kind of thing. Rather, it is a life motto I have cherished over the years while building careers in the fields of education, theater, painting, robotics, motorcycles, and hydrogen technology.

Everything is for the good of children for the future

In the past, I pursued in earnest a career in theater, forming a theater company, writing plays, directing stage plays, and appearing on stage. So, I have a very strong passion to make work “emotionally inspiring.” This background, I guess, may have been behind my assignment to the directorship of the Expo 2025 project.

Upon assuming that role, I decided to give primary consideration to general visitors, rather than professionals and specialists. “Our exhibits must wow families and children to grab their hearts and minds.” That emotional experience may not necessarily make many children immediately begin to dream of becoming an engineer, but at least can pique their interest in doing creative activities, which may lead to their future

aspiration. This is how we determined the overall direction to take for developing the exhibition project.

Our exhibition theme is phrased as “Impulse to Move,” and this encapsulates the essence of our message. It is associated with my belief that humans are predisposed to derive irreplaceable inspiration from kinetic activity as well as public concerns about the recent rapid evolution of AI technology, giving rise to a fear of it outperforming humans in the future. In what areas can humans essentially outdo AI? I asked myself this question and found the answer, which is “moving.” Humans are able to move to many different places and environments, seeking to experience and discover new things and get inspiration from them. This constitutes the very unique value of human beings, in terms of which AI is no match for humans.

Integrate sensitivity (side A) and reasoning (side B) to deliver inspiring experiences

The design concept of the Expo 2025 exhibition was developed centering around the two axes represented by sensitivity (side A) — intuitive and emotional appeal — and reasoning (side B) — convincing technical basis. We aimed to deliver genuinely inspiring experiences by integrating the sides A and B.

Side A: Emotional appeal of design

For the purpose of designing futuristic mobility models like CORLEO and ALICE SYSTEM, it is important to place greater emphasis on ensuring an appealing look than engineering

functionality. To design the two exhibit models according to this policy, we entrusted the relevant tasks to the motorcycle design team, a function that excels in intuitively presenting an attractive appearance and a strong sense of presence.

To be honest, I myself was initially skeptical about the design idea of ALICE SYSTEM. It just did not hit me right. However, I was impressed by the team members’ strong passion and changed my attitude in order to appropriately respond to their passion. It was because I noticed that I should display leadership sensitivity by giving trust to the value the members were seeing even though I was not. That recognition was a major lesson I learned from interactions I had with the project team members. And I am glad seeing their efforts resulting in a good interactive exhibition.

Side B: Convincing technical and conceptual basis

Also, when something is inspirational, it must have a convincing technical basis — the principle of side B. This principle was embodied by O’CUVOID, a technology for a decentralized hydrogen power generation system with units swappable and supporting parallel connection. With the lightweight body, easy-to-maintain system, and affordable costs, this model is a realistic proposal.

We put particular emphasis on establishing a convincing technical basis that could satisfy the rigorous standards of professional engineers and industry representatives. For this purpose, we drew on our strategic hydrogen technologies developed over many years. I believe this was a reason ALICE SYSTEM has been accepted as a realistic future technology rather than being dismissed as a wishful dream story.

Kawasaki-style Sagrada Familia Concept
— Exhibition for co-creation platform

I think the exhibits should be a proposal for the future rather than just products exhibited at the expo. The exhibits are a “blank canvas” for viewers to fill by responding to the relevant proposal, providing a source of future creations.

This view was inspired by a visit to the Sagrada Familia in Barcelona, Spain, in my younger days. The world-famous church has not been completed, giving a blank canvas for supporters from around the world to fill, forming something like a platform for co-creation. Subsequently, I visited the church a number of times, and confirmed the steady progress of construction each time. This is where I got the idea for a future kotozukuri business model.

These experiences have been reflected in the creation of KAWARUBA, a co-creation hub opened by Kawasaki on the site of Haneda Airport to invite researchers, engineers and designers from inside and outside of the company to strive for advanced prototype development.

CORLEO and ALICE SYSTEM evoke a feeling of strangeness and incompleteness, which was created intentionally in order to provide a “blank canvas” to be filled by future efforts. I hope this blank canvas, like the Sagrada Familia, can spark imagination to promote future creations and provide centripetal force.

Realistic hydrogen strategies
and mobility functions

One of the biggest challenges facing hydrogen adoption today is the classic “chicken-and-egg” dilemma: hydrogen is too expensive because there’s not enough demand, and there’s not enough demand because it’s too expensive. As a solution to this situation, we are offering “hydrogen-ready” products, a viable option that can accommodate a full range of implementation from 1 to 100 percent.

In this context, we are promoting hydrogen use in the mobility sector to provide a breakthrough. In doing this, we are capitalizing on our past experience in developing electric motorcycles and hybrid vehicles while overcoming challenges by first confirming individual capacities and then spurring organizational capabilities. At present, we are proactively seeking to collaborate with automakers in Japan and overseas.

Present proposals that can spark
worldwide interest

The technology of CORLEO, ALICE SYSTEM, and O’CUVOID is not simply for the sake of industrial production. Instead, it implies a proposal for the future and a design blueprint for co-creation.

Going forward, Kawasaki will present itself to the world as a provider of co-creation platforms, which is more than just delivering finished products. Present new proposals constantly, seek partners who share our passion, and shape a future together. Unite all these elements — dream-like ideas and solid technical capabilities, sensitivity and reasoning, and individual capacities and organizational capabilities. We will pursue these endeavors as a “designer of inspiration.”