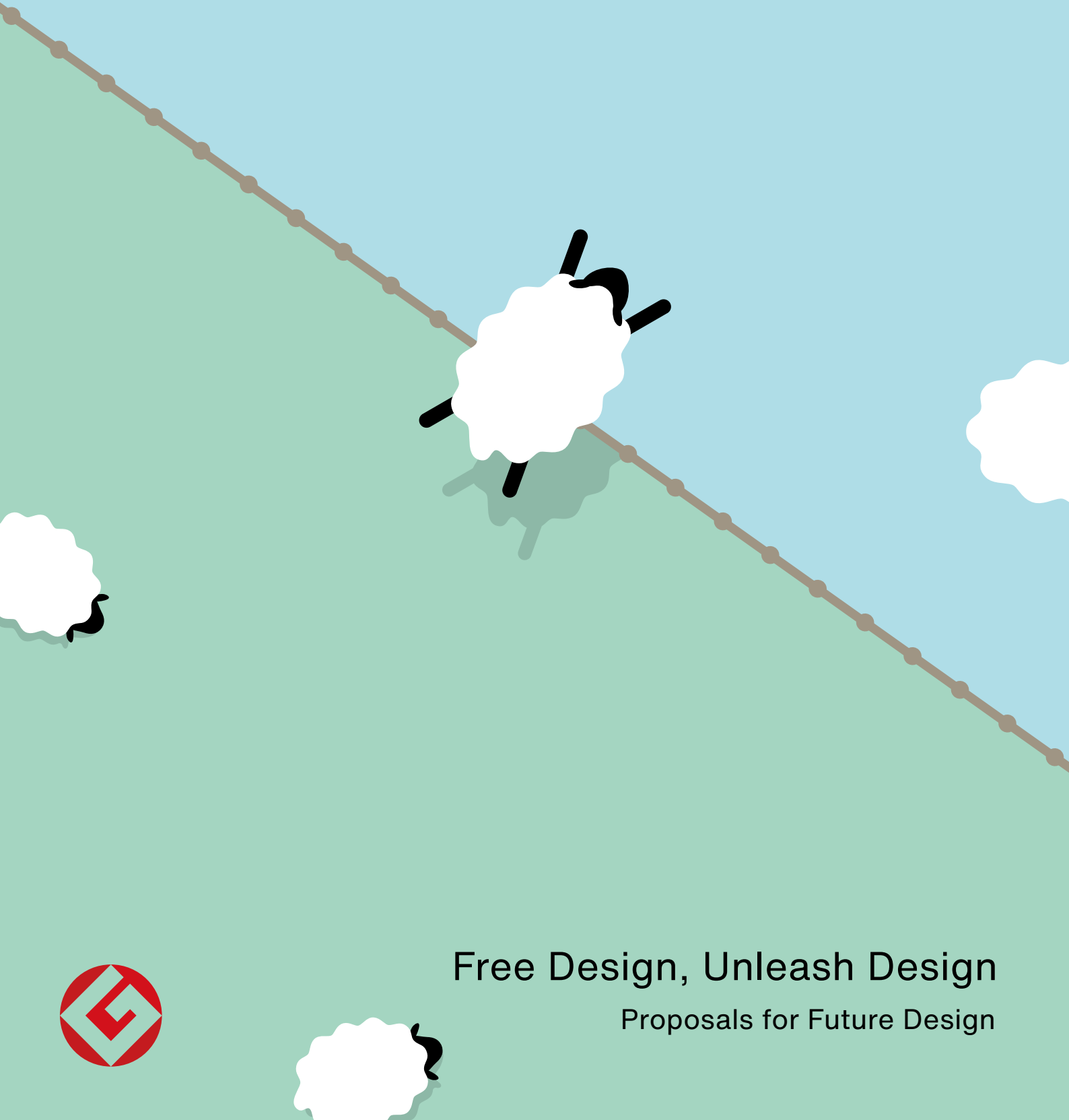


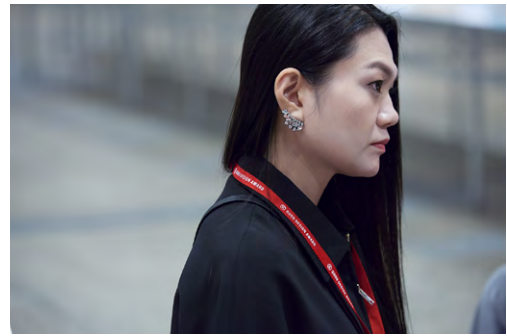
FOCUSED ISSUES

2025



Free Design, Unleash Design

Proposals for Future Design



INTRODUCTION

The GOOD DESIGN AWARD is the only comprehensive design evaluation and endorsement activity in Japan. During the more than 65 years since the launch of its predecessor, the Good Design Product Selection System, in 1957, we have continued to support the development of postwar Japan, taking on responsibility for the changing role of design in society.

Our Focused Issues activities consider and propose new possibilities for design through the screening for the GOOD DESIGN AWARD.

One of the important roles of the GOOD DESIGN AWARD is to “discover possibilities and issues for future society.” Focused Issues is designed to play this role, with a focus on deepening the critical questions that design must face today.

Focused Issues apprehend and analyze the “wave” that arises in design each year. While observing the entries, themes are extracted as a summary after the screening is over. After repeated consideration of the possibilities and of the role and significance of design in future society, the results are presented as a proposal.

The team in charge of Focused Issues consists of six members: three chairpersons/vice chairpersons as Focused Issues directors, and three Focused Issues researchers. Throughout the months-long screening process, which started with the first screening in June 2025, they explored this “wave” separately from the regular screening process by looking at all entries from their own specialties and perspectives.

This report summarizes the results of lateral discussions looking across the range of screening subjects which took place among the directors/researchers responsible for Focused Issues at the GOOD DESIGN AWARD 2025.

We have put together six “perspectives” to serve as “proposals” for various stakeholders on what stances and moves are required at present in design, as well as in business and economic circles, and in politics and government.

We hope that by reading this report, you will become ever more “free” and “unleashed” from what you previously took for granted, empowering you to create.

GOOD DESIGN AWARD 2025 Focused Issues Team

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2025 Focused Issues Team

Focused Issues DIRECTORS



Seiichi Saito

Creative Director
Panoramatiks Principal
GOOD DESIGN AWARD 2025
Chairperson

Born in Kanagawa in 1975. He studied architectural design at Columbia University's Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation (MSAAD). In 2006, he founded Rhizomatiks Co., Ltd. (currently Abstract Engine Co., Ltd.). After the internal architecture department Panoramatiks, he launched Panoramatiks in 2020 under the theme of "CREATIVE ACTION," connecting governments, corporations, and individuals while engaging in cross-disciplinary initiatives spanning regional design, tourism, and digital transformation, from concept development to implementation. He is the EXPO Co-creation Program Director for Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan.



Jin Kuramoto

Product Designer
Representative Director, JIN
KURAMOTO STUDIO Inc.
GOOD DESIGN AWARD 2025
Vice Chairperson

Born in 1976. After working at a home appliance manufacturer, he established JIN KURAMOTO STUDIO in 2008. With the approach of communicating the project concept and story through a clear formative expression, he has been involved in the design development of various genres, like furniture, home appliances, eyewear, and automobiles. He is also a visiting professor at Kanazawa College of Art and Musashino Art University and a part-time lecturer at Musashino Art University.



Yuko Nagayama

Architect
Executive Director,
YUKO NAGAYAMA & ASSOCIATES
GOOD DESIGN AWARD 2025
Vice Chairperson

Born in Tokyo in 1975. After working at Jun Aoki & Associates, she established Yuko Nagayama & Associates in 2002. Her major works include Teshima Yokoo House, the Japan Pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai, Tokyu Kabukicho Tower, the Women's Pavilion and the Panasonic Group Pavilion The Land of NOMO for Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, among others. Her awards include the JIA Young Architect Award (2014), the Yamanashi Cultural Prize of Architecture, the Tokyo Architecture Award Excellence Award (2018), the Lighting Design Award Grand Prize (2021), WAF Highly Commended (2022), and the iF Design Award (2023), among others. She is currently working on projects including Torch Tower.

Focused Issues RESEARCHERS



Naoki Ota

Co-creation Partner
New Stories Ltd. CEO

Until 2014, he was a management member of Boston Consulting, overseeing the Technology Group in Asia. From 2015 to 17, he was an assistant to the Minister of Internal Affairs and Communications, working on digital strategy and regional development. In 2018, he launched New Stories Ltd. to create future value leveraging his expertise and network. He helps to create communities that leverage technology. Since December 2025, he has served as a Special Advisor to the Cabinet Secretariat, contributing to national policy development.



Yutaka Nakamura

Anthropologist
Tama Art University Professor
Atelier Anthropology LLC CEO
KESIKI Inc. Design Anthropologist

He is a cultural and design anthropologist, Professor at the Center for Liberal Arts and Sciences, Tama Art University, CEO of Atelier Anthropology LLC, and Insight Design lead at KESIKI Inc. His research focuses on violence and nonviolence in the "margins," particularly through social design, while collaborating with companies, designers, and business leaders to implement projects in practice. At Tama Art University, he leads initiatives including the Circular Office and the Tama Design University Division of Design Anthropology. His publications include *Walking the Margins of America: Anthropology on a Journey* (Heibonsha, 2021) and *Harlem Reverberated: Voices of Muslims on the Street* (Editorial Republica, 2015), among others.



Aki Hayashi

Editor / Business executive
Representative Director and
CEO of Brand Journalism, Inc

She joined The Asahi Shimbun as a reporter in 2009. In 2017, she was appointed Chief Creative Director of HuffPost Japan, and the following year became Web Editor-in-Chief of Forbes JAPAN. In 2020, she joined AlphaDrive Co., Ltd., where she served as Executive Officer and Supervising Editor-in-Chief, as well as Director of NewsPicks for Business. In 2022, she founded Brand Journalism Co., Ltd. and became its CEO. She is a former Editor-in-Chief of the business magazine *Ambitions*.

THEME FOR 2025

Theme for 2025

Free Design, Unleash Design

“Unleashing” – setting free from rigid frameworks

If we look back on the messages proclaimed during calls for GOOD DESIGN AWARD applications over the past three years, we can sum these up as follows: “Design with Outcomes” in 2023 set our “North Star,” while “Brave Attitude, Organic Design” in 2024 and “A Small Step, Design Leaps” in 2025 were the search for the path (the route) to lead us there.

In recent years, the power of design has penetrated even further than before and expanded into all domains of society. This has surely encouraged many people, and those who might not have seen their own activities as “design” in the past have begun to gain this awareness.

On the other hand, there is a way in which the meaning of the word “design” is becoming entrenched, isn’t there? There are quite a few people who still hold fast to boundaries such as “Up to here is design; from here on is not” or the distinction between “design in the broad sense” and “design in the narrow sense” ... That is precisely why we have set “unleashing” as the first pillar of our theme for 2025.

This means unleashing from all the frameworks by which design is bound: preconceptions about “the way things should be,” old systems, the conventions of the industry. It means freeing designers and the act of design itself from all formulae. It is also an “unleashing” from thinking that can only measure things using short-term economic rationality. It takes back the perspective of “cultural investment,” in which actions to make the world a better place are in themselves design.

It incorporates the belief of the Focused Issues team that the act of design itself should be “unleashed” from all oppression.

**“Freedom” – the power to create choices
Beyond “unleashing” stands
the second pillar, “freedom.”**

This “freedom” does not simply equate to permissiveness. Setting the direction of “how we want to be” according to our own will, and autonomously choosing the route to make this a reality; and the resolve to take responsibility for that choice: we would like what we call “freedom” to encompass these things.

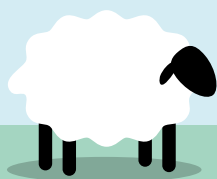
Many of the winning designs have opened up new paths through a strong desire to do something in a particular way, rather than searching for the right answer among options which already existed.

The path (route) to the North Star is not something determined by anyone. Whether they take the shortest route; take a slow approach of continuing activities over 30 years; or take on the challenge of creating abundance with an unprecedented methodology, all are equally valuable designs if chosen by one’s own will and assumption of responsibility.

For companies, this also means that they can be “unleashed” from the identity framework of “we have been making this forever” and attain “freedom” of choice. It is the “freedom” to reconsider their own domains without the fear that people will become confused about what they do.

The reason why we chose “Free Design, Unleash Design,” rather than “Design of Freedom and Unleashing,” is that the design side needs first to take the initiative to become free. Design breaks down its own frameworks and becomes free with resolve. Only then will choices for solving various problems and difficulties in life appear, and society as a whole attain true freedom.

Keep believing in the power of design. This year’s theme embodies our wish for you to believe that one person’s flash of inspiration and passion can move the world, and to continue to take action.



TRENDS BY GENRE

GOOD DESIGN AWARD 2025 Trends and directions by genre of award-winning design

In the GOOD DESIGN AWARD screening process, subject entries are examined in “screening units” classified by domain. This section presents a “screening unit overview,” introducing trends and issues specific to each domain observed throughout the screening process.

You can also read the full reviews for each screening unit on the website below.



www.g-mark.org/learn/past-awards/gda-2025/review

Unit 01 Accessories and Wearable

As technologies are constantly developing, we are required always to update forms of manufacturing to meet the needs of the times. In addition, initiatives which skillfully extracted delicate values that tend to be buried under the shadow of efficiency and rationality attracted attention. On the other hand, moves in which companies went beyond their own domains of expertise and took on new challenges were also seen.

Sae Honda Designer/Jewelry Artist

Unit 02 Personal Care

The entries that were highly rated had in common their effort not only to solve problems and enhance convenience but also, by extension, to regain human pride. People are tenderly embraced in their infancy, support someone else in their prime of life, and are finally supported by those around them in their old age. Design does not limit itself to an endeavor to create functionality and shape in the cycle of giving care and receiving care, but rather is love itself, in that it draws close to people's needs and considers their feelings.

Gen Suzuki Product Designer

Unit 03 Stationery and Hobby

High marks were given to the entries from businesses and sectors that once took “a small step” with new ideas and then added a myriad of improvements and innovations in a step-by-step manner and continued their steady progress, going beyond mere model changes. There were also some, though not many, proposals that seemed to draw close to “small steps” for the design recipients.

Chiho Sasaki User Experience Designer

Unit 04 Household Goods

This is a domain with many mature products which are used on a daily basis, but for this reason, designs which have uncovered tiny issues and troubles with usability that users have come to accept without noticing, and have worked out ways to solve them with unique approaches that suddenly click, stood out. They were recognized for their attitude of trying to make fundamental improvements to problems hidden in familiar everyday life.

Tadahito Ishibashi Product Designer

Unit 05 Home Appliances

What is “the form that should connect us to the next era” and which encompasses not only beauty and convenience but also sustainability potential and ethics, within the constraints of the mass production framework? Some products which had been improved by defying the premise of conventional materials and replacing them with other suitable materials were seen. Down-to-earth yet meticulous and sincere designs that refused to pursue novelty and allowed for an extended period of use also stood out once more for their value.

Sosuke Nakabo Product Designer

Unit 06 Audio, Video Equipment

Good design lies in sound manufacturing. Many companies and products were seen which have appropriately passed on and updated the know-how they have accumulated in the process of developing their successive products, channeling this into the latest techniques to hone their strengths to the limit. A stance of pursuing intrinsic value rather than eccentricity underpins trustworthiness in this field.

Kazushige Miyake Designer

Unit 07 ICT Equipment

Those entries which were rated highly tackled difficult issues or painstakingly reconsidered relationships with people from perspectives such as “conviction and a challenging spirit,” “appealing to human feelings,” or “sustainable mechanisms.” We also saw some signs that new technologies could bring about major changes to society.

Tetsu Miyazawa Design Director/Product Director

Unit 08 Equipment and Facilities for Manufacturing and Medical Care

In the context of many designs that had reached a certain level, we saw designs that offered new functions and values within existing product categories, and designs that proposed new product categories themselves. This unit is also characterized by unsung designs that cannot be seen by the public at large.

Tamotsu Murakami Design Engineering Researcher

Unit 09 Housing Fixtures

In this year's screening, products that rethought phenomena which had previously been taken for granted and displayed a commitment to continuous improvement earned high marks. It is tiny differences in the quality of aspects such as the handling or feel of the very things that we use without thinking which determine the quality of daily life.

Naoki Terada Architect/Designer

Unit 10 Furniture/Equipment and Facilities for Office and Public Space

Through the screening process, responses to major social issues, such as the need for resource sustainability or consideration for diversity as well as disaster management or labor shortages, emerged as a common theme. Designs that focus not only on the attractiveness of the product but also on the totality of the social system in which it is placed are on the rise.

Tomoya Tabuchi Designer

Unit 11 Mobility

Today, when the environment surrounding us is rapidly changing, bringing projects with potential for new value as far as the stage for social implementation requires the creators to change, too. I was reminded of this once again. Precisely because this is a field that requires a lot of resources, great importance is attached to taking on challenges that go beyond existing frameworks.

Kota Nezu Creative Communicator

Unit 12 Housing (Detached House and Small Sized Housing Complexes & Cohousing)

Housing which pursues the comfort of individual spaces, complete within individual homes and premises, has faded into the background. Instead, I came to feel that houses and developments aimed at realizing a fulfilling life by carefully designing or maintaining relationships that encompass neighbors, adjoining sites, neighborhoods, and even the community, rather than the individual, have surely grown into a major force.

Masahiro Harada Architect/University Professor

Unit 13 Housing (Medium to Large Sized Housing Complexes & Cohousing)

The screening began by discussing the definition of "community." Here, the community to be evaluated is the endeavor to build loose relationships among people and between them and the area in which they live, rather than closed and strong bonds. Initiatives that could serve as role models for the new era from this viewpoint attracted attention.

Mari Tochizawa Architect

Unit 14 Construction (Industry and Commercial Facility)

Whether or not entries suited their local communities and offered universal values or future visions became the overarching criteria for the screening. All the projects which were highly rated have something in common – an attitude of boldly and painstakingly identifying what is really necessary for both the local community and the project implementer and giving shape to it, rather than pursuing short-term economy and efficiency alone. I hope that such out-of-the-box efforts to offer universal values will go on to renew industrial and commercial facilities.

Yuri Naruse Architect

Unit 15 Public Facility, Civil Structure, and Landscape

The discussion took place particularly from the viewpoint of public nature, and made me realize that there are also many items in other units designed with a focus on their public nature, such as commercial architecture or housing. There were not only facilities maintained by public entities, but also quite a few projects that understood public nature from their own particular standpoints and took on design challenges.

Kaori Ito Urban Researcher

Unit 16 Interior Space

Our interest was strongly attracted towards entries which showed a perspective on society and a future vision, at the same time as design excellence. As a unit which has existed independently from this year, the potential of spatial design spanning everything from detached houses and apartment buildings to offices, commercial facilities and public buildings was on display.

Hisae Igarashi Interior Designer

Unit 17 Media and Contents

New forms of design that convey daily life and culture in ways that go beyond conventional means of communication and expression stood out clearly. As the sharing and spreading of experiences on social media changes users' values, there is a growing tendency to assume that the process of visualizing and sharing experiences itself will be incorporated into design.

Daisuke Moriuchi Designer

Unit 18 System and Service

Award-winning entries that earned particularly high marks this year have translated advanced and complex processes for solving social issues into simple and sophisticated service designs which have borne fruit. Moreover, when it comes to generative AI, it is not enough to think of it solely as a tool for better convenience and efficiency. I look forward to encountering designs that use generative AI for its power to facilitate "a small step" in enlarging the capacity of individuals, making collaboration between people easier, and changing society.

Hidetomo Nagata Strategist

Unit 19 Initiative and Activity for Regional

I would like to pick up three points which stood out in the screening process this year. First, the existence of projects which have lasted for a long time. Second, the appearance of a few projects which are sending a multi-layered message that involves not only addressing immediate issues but also posing questions to society as a whole. Third, the power to integrate tangible and intangible designs for the good of society demonstrated by the entries.

Yuki Uchida Urban Designer

Unit 20 Initiatives and Activity for the General Public

There are three noteworthy trends. The first is the commercialization of resource circulation. The second is the existence of large-scale initiatives in which government-led projects have implemented designs for total optimization. The third major trend concerns initiatives for children's learning. Initiatives to improve the environment for the disabled and the elderly were also seen.

Naoko Hirota Design Director

PROPOSAL 1

Free Design, Unleash Design

In order to make our society and our lives better, we need design in which the tangible and intangible become one. I think that we have already arrived at a shared understanding of this kind of statement. However, are processes implemented to make such ideas, actions and activities a reality within companies and organizations? Do the recipient and society realize the power of design? Can design take place with creators and recipients sharing the same expectations? Do management and the financial and business sectors have the vision to bring together the passion, abilities, perspectives, and courage of individuals to create a design for an outcome, all while connecting organically?



My
Proposal

Seiichi Saito

Chairperson,
GOOD DESIGN AWARD
2025

Where will design go from here?

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, “design” was born out of the Arts and Crafts movement. This movement was sparked by criticisms that the Industrial Revolution was eroding people’s ways of life and craftsmanship. This spirit lived on into the twentieth century, when design permeated and expanded into various fields, and it entered a new phase in the twenty-first century: the definition and concept of design have come to be recognized as encompassing not only merely the design of tangible things, but also that of intangible ones.

The selection of Otera Oyatsu Club (Temple activities for solving poverty problems) as the GOOD DESIGN GRAND AWARD winner in 2018 triggered a lot of discussion. Discussions arose all over the place between design with a lower-case “d” (such as product or graphic design) and that with an upper-case “D” (such as social or business design), and these discussions gradually consolidated into the present concept of design which encompasses both tangible and intangible aspects as one. The term “design” came to be used in documents produced by the national government and municipal governments, and the term “designing future society” was used in the theme of Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan. However, in my discussions with people from various fields, I feel that some people understand and applaud the current way in which the concept of design is expanding, while others are concerned that it has become too broad. Where will design go from here?

Is there “freedom” in today’s design?

The term “free design” may seem like a list of mismatched words. But for me, as I have taken a bird’s-eye view of the

GOOD DESIGN AWARD, it is filled with questions that we need to ponder now. If ideas, actions, and activities which make something better are the starting point for design, what kind of state are these in now? If “freedom” means the right to choose between multiple options, is design free today? Is it not simply an extension of the past, but rather headed for a North Star which can be shared by society as a whole? Are the perspectives and experiences of designers being understood and evaluated in high resolution? Are organizations or teams not unconsciously crushing this potential? Are they not perhaps narrowing the options? How well do we understand the relationship between the power of design and its social and corporate returns? Have societies and organizations been able to create a situation in which people can feel that they are designing, even without any professional training? I believe that design should always be free, for both the creator and the recipient, and that this is an idea necessary in order to move to the next phase.

“The unleashing from rule-based thinking” brought about by design

This year, I was again able to encounter a lot of expanding designs. They have the power to unleash us from rule-based perspectives, processes, initiatives, and implementations.

Unleashed from the conventional concept of “temporary housing”

“DLT Timber Temporary Housing,” which won the GRAND AWARD, realized an initiative to create a rich life and environment even when people are forced to migrate in disaster-prone Japan through the use of DLT, a material that

can be activated immediately. I think it is a beautiful design precisely because the designers have been confronting disasters, earthquakes, and reconstruction for many years, and also because they developed it with an eye to what would come next.

Unleashed from the preconception that “someone will do something about it”

Climate change has made summers hotter and winters colder than ever. Measures to equip schools built during the period of high economic growth have become a major issue. In the “School Insulation Workshop,” students, teachers, and local residents take the lead on efforts to improve the efficiency of thermal insulation, an area in which people tend to depend on the local government. I think that this is a design activity in which people play the leading role in improving the issue through their own abilities, rather than waiting for someone else to do it.

Unleashed from the process of scrap and build for large-scale events

The design which takes place in order to hold many large-scale events may attract attention, but I think it is rare for proposals to go as far as considering how the design will disappear after the event ends. With the Grand Ring, the symbol of the Osaka Expo, this was considered from the planning stage. We can anticipate that similar initiatives will be implemented as a matter of course at future events held by national and local governments and the private sector in Japan.

Changes in the “people involved with design,” and a transformation of consciousness

More than 20 years have passed since the concept of the Creative Class was first proposed, and I think that its nature is now changing greatly. I feel that the number of people who are conscious of being involved with design is increasing: not only those who create design, but also among those who are involved with the design process and those who use design. However, do the companies which generate various products and services have an awareness of taking part in design? For example, are management, sales, and retail understood as being part of design?

Freeing design means always having a large number of options and having the ability and systems which permit choice. Unleashing design then means the transformation of systems and consciousness to make freedom a reality. Without both of these, it is difficult to display the true power of design. Because we have moved from the era when we treated citizens, consumers, and markets as large groups to the present day, where the power of technology enables us to have direct conversations with high-resolution communities and thinking actors, I strongly believe that we need to transform the people involved with design and our consciousness.

Expectations for the impact of design on society and companies

There is an argument that design and culture do not directly contribute to economic indicators such as GDP or stock prices. I myself do not think this at all, but it is true that there is no equation to prove it. Is design really a non-financial activity? I would like you to reflect on your own current efforts and think about the following questions:

- 1 **Is design accepted in your organization?**

- 2 **Do those around you believe in the power of design? Do they have the opportunity to believe in it?**

- 3 **Does your team have shared outcomes? Do they have the opportunity to discuss outcomes?**

- 4 **Is there a discussion of the relationship between design and economics in your business or activities?**

- 5 **Is there always freedom (multiple options) in the design processes with which you are involved?**

- 6 **Is the final product or service a good design for your team, yourself included? Do you have systems or processes able to evaluate this objectively?**

“Good design” means not only tools that can be used safely in daily life, but also the process itself of creating good tools, and even something which has the power to create a situation where the people involved and society become a little better than they are now. This is precisely why I want more people to know about this power and to bring their own abilities and roles to participate in the activities which we call design.

Free Design, Unleash Design

Design has been expanding at an accelerating rate over the past few years, but is now reaching its limits. In order to break free from this situation, is it not necessary to change not only design itself but also the environment surrounding it?

Design activities are very strong, flexible, and beautifully sublimated. Nevertheless, in order to overcome boundaries and bring better products and services to even more people in the minutiae of society, we need to rethink our attitudes and processes.

This is why I would like us to reconsider “freeing design” and “unleashing design.” I hope that we will change our rigid ways of thinking and develop a wider variety of designs than ever before, and that this will become the culture. I myself want to be conscious of this, and to make use of it in my activities.

PROPOSAL 1

Free Design, Unleash Design

Commentary: Background of the proposal and related topics

Edited by the Editorial Team

The Arts and Crafts Movement as the origin of design

As mentioned in this proposal, “The Arts and Crafts Movement” is often referred to as the origin of design, even today. This movement was an international art movement that emerged in Britain and other Western countries in the later nineteenth century. It was born out of criticism that the mechanization and mass production caused by the Industrial Revolution were impoverishing people’s ways of life and eroding craftsmanship and beautiful living environments.

William Morris took a leading role, going beyond simply raising the status of decorative arts to advocate a spirit of social reform which encompassed the revival of making things by hand, integrity towards materials, and the pursuit of beauty in life. At the core of this thought were John Ruskin, who found the ideal nature of art in the way artisans created and worked in the Middle Ages, and Morris, who put this theory into practice.

This movement was a response to the social structure and values of the “industrialization” era, and contained the aspect of a social movement to achieve overall harmony between humanity and objects. Considered to be the start of design history, this movement was an attempt to “unleash” people from the prevalent rule-based thinking and what was “taken for granted” by society at that time; its spirit and values still persist in modern design almost 150 years later.

The “creative class” in transformation

This proposal has gone back to the concept of the “creative class” when thinking about the actors responsible for the “freeing” and “unleashing” of design. This concept was put forward by the American urban economist Richard Florida in the 2000s, and refers to a completely new type of worker, making about 30% of the labor force in many advanced countries. Their role is to grow the economy through innovation of new ideas, technologies, and content. In concrete terms, it includes scientists, engineers, architects, designers, educators, and artists, in addition to knowledge workers, who use their own judgment to solve complex problems.

A key characteristic of the creative class is that they share values on a global level and that intrinsic rewards, rather than monetary rewards, are essential in motivating them. They have a high degree of global mobility and are attracting attention as a driver of economic growth, with competition to acquire them developing between cities and companies. However, as pointed out in this proposal, the situation is changing, more than 20 years after the concept was proposed. We are entering “an era in which society as a whole is taking part in design activities,” with an awareness of being actors in these activities spreading beyond the creators to all those involved in the process and to the citizens who purchase and use these products and services.

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PICKUP GOOD DESIGN

GOOD DESIGN Selected from the Perspective of PROPOSAL1



Housing

DLT Timber Temporary Housing

This temporary housing project was built in response to the 2024 Noto Peninsula Earthquake. DLT (Dowel Laminated Timber), made without adhesives by inserting wooden dowels into aligned timbers with predrilled holes, was assembled into box-shaped units and stacked to shorten the construction period. Twelve two-story buildings, accommodating 166 households, were constructed in Suzu and Wajima.



Activity

School insulation workshop

The classroom's poor insulation caused ineffective cooling in summer and lingering cold in winter, even with air conditioning. To improve comfort and save energy, pupils initiated an "Insulation Workshop." Engaging teachers and local residents, the workshop influenced local authority decarbonisation policies and grew into a nationwide design movement.



Tableware

seiseisha uzra series

"Uzra" is a series of Hizen Yoshida ware that uses a new environmentally friendly material called "Seido". It can be fired without using glaze, reducing CO₂ emissions by about 40%. Iron powder, which is often considered a defect, is also included in the design, achieving a high yield rate. The design that combines practicality and beauty was created by Shin Azumi.

Appendix

FURTHER DIVING

Reference works for a deeper understanding of the proposal

Selection and text by Seiichi Saito

BOOK

Hannah Arendt, "The Human Condition" (1958)

I think that our era is an era of "activism." If design becomes not only "labor" and "work" but also turns into "activism" for more people, I believe that people and local communities will be created, and it will also strengthen industries and economies in the end.

BOOK

Jennifer C. Lena, "Banding Together: How Communities Create Genres in Popular Music" (2012)

Even today, when the term "co-creation" has become commonplace, many people still face many obstacles. The book is filled with tips on how to break through those obstacles.

SONG

Gill Scott Heron, "Free Will" (1972)

The Revolution Will Not Be Televised: this is a song that gives hope to people who are engaged in a variety of activism behind the scenes.

PROPOSAL 2

Return “emotions” to design

I would like to propose the restoration of “emotionality” to design. This is not simply a question of “preferences” or “beauty.” When the heartfelt sensibility that wells up from within the creator dwells within the product or space as an “emotion,” it transcends logic and shakes the hearts of others, creating deep empathy. In the modern age, where function and logic are given precedence, design could be a “point of connection with society” to promote mutual understanding among humanity and co-create culture. I would like to redefine this possibility from the perspective of “emotions.”



My
Proposal

Jin Kuramoto

Vice Chairperson,
GOOD DESIGN AWARD
2025

The “reversion” of design that is needed now

Over the past few years, I have come to feel a sense of danger – that there is perhaps a tendency for design to originate too often from the “outside.” Marketing data, solutions to social issues, cost performance... If we satisfy external conditions and logic, like solving a puzzle, we can certainly reach a “justifiable answer.” Logic is a useful armor that protects us.

However, I wonder if, equipped with that armor, the creator may not be putting a lid onto their gut feeling hidden deep inside which says “This is what I really want to make,” or “I like this, without rhyme or reason” – a form of impulse which could be called “selfish.”

In the past, during the Industrial Revolution, mass production by machines became possible, and homogeneous and inexpensive products flooded the world. While people gained convenience, they lost the “beauty” of the tools that had hitherto been handmade by craftsmen and the “richness of life” to appreciate them. It was William Morris’s Arts and Crafts Movement which lamented this situation and tried to bring beauty and joy back into daily life once more. This is said to be one of the origins of modern design.

I cannot help but think that the situation we face now, though different in form, has some overlap with this era. In this period, when design methods have become widespread and anyone can easily create items of a certain quality, are we not losing the “spirit” and “emotions of the creator”? This is why I want to propose a kind of reversion. This means moving away for a time from logic and the search for correct answers, and diving deeper into the indi-

vidual aesthetic consciousness and passion welling up from within the creator. It means then placing the “emotions” and “tastes” which emerge from there back in the center of design. We have come full circle and are now in a phase where this is the newest value.

“Umami” design, which is more flavorful the more you chew

So what are the “emotions” and “tastes” that we want to see in future design? When I work on my own designs, I sometimes use the word “umami” to express them.

It is the depth of a design which, although it seems simple at first glance, the more you chew it, the more flavor oozes out, and the more you continue to use it, the more you love it. Behind the scenes, it is packed with the enormous ideas of the creator, and an aesthetic sense which resembles a determination to realize them whatever it takes. Designs with such “umami” will not be consumed and then be over, but rather are able to accompany us in our lives for a long time.

In this year’s winners, we were able to find designs with such “umami,” evoking the resolve of the creators.

Take, for example, “CLASSICS The Small Luxury,” a handkerchief series which won a GOLD AWARD. Considering efficiency and uniformity, the edges ought to be sewn with a sewing machine, but instead the non-uniform fluctuation of hand-sewing has been deliberately retained. You can feel the pure aesthetics of the creator in this: “Because it feels good,” “Because it is beautiful.” When the user holds it, they get a sense of affirmation which has no rhyme or reason,

a feeling that something is good about it, and this evokes a feeling of wanting to take good care of it.

The same is true of the “Sigma BF” interchangeable lens mirrorless camera. Considering only economic rationality, the machined metal casing is nothing but a risk, and the challenge of using silver for all parts also represents the crystallization of the creator’s tremendous resolve and aesthetic sense. As a result, we are seeing even those who had not previously been interested in cameras reaching out for it, saying “I want this!” against the backdrop of a shrinking camera market.

“Good things” create “points of connection” that transcend logic

Strangely enough, the “emotions” that are born out of such individual passions and obsession reach directly to the sensibilities of the recipient without the need to explain it verbally. We know a good thing when we see one. It may seem outrageous to say so, but is it not possible that this shared sense of “knowing” could become “points of connection” in society?

The winning design which could be called the prime example of this is the “Grand Ring,” a wooden structure at the Osaka Expo. The close scrutiny of the social significance and cost of the project and the many debates and frictions before construction must still be fresh in our memories. “What are you going to do with it after the Expo ends?” “Isn’t it a waste?” ...The logical criticisms were perfectly reasonable.

However, when that overwhelming wooden structure was actually built, the “power of the space,” which transcended logic, silenced and moved many people. There is a kind of “aura” which leaves no room for argument residing in things which were made by the creator’s shouldering the risks and fighting to the end. It swallows even critical words and moves people’s hearts. Of course, it is important to eliminate inconveniences and solve social issues.

However, there is a “richness” that will slip away if that is all. We ought to be able to believe once more in the primordial power of design: that the mere presence of something overwhelmingly beautiful, brimming with emotional richness, can enrich people’s minds, transform landscapes, and even beautify the conduct of its users. I believe that increasing the number of “points of contact,” in which everyone feels “It’s good that we have this,” will have the power to lead society in a positive direction.

Cultivating an aesthetic consciousness through “warm-up exercises”

What, then, can organizations and individuals do to create designs with such “emotions”? This is not something that can be solved using methods or manuals; the only way is to cultivate the “aesthetic sense” of the creators themselves. For example, I often say “Design thinking workshops are no more than a warm-up exercise.” Design thinking is a great tool, but it is not a magic wand that automatically gives you creative answers. It is a sort of stretching exercise in order to understand the importance of “observing” and “directing our gaze to society,” and to loosen up our entrenched ideas. The true locus of creation lies beyond this. If you do not have a standard for what is “good” within your own body, you will not be able to make an appropriate decision when it becomes necessary. A body that does not do its daily “warm-up exercises” will not produce a good output in the instant.

On this point, I was deeply impressed by the attitude of Danish textile company Kvadrat, which I visited in the past, including from a business perspective. Their beautiful office is located in the middle of a vast meadow, in the countryside far from Copenhagen. Sheep graze in the grounds, and works of contemporary art have been placed everywhere. Most surprising of all, the company pays for employees to go to museums and see movies, encouraging the development of their individual aesthetic consciousness.

They know. The site where items are produced is a series of countless “decisions,” at every stage from planning to manufacturing and sales. The ability to choose the more beautiful option, the more tasteful option, the more honest option at each of these small junctures cannot be acquired by reading a manual alone. It can only come from a collection of individuals each with a rich aesthetic sense. As a result, Kvadrat has become a leader in textile design worldwide.

Rather than trying to track the “correct answer” in marketing terms, they believe in their own sensibilities and resolve to cultivate “emotions.” I look forward to a future in which these individual “small steps” become a huge wave which attracts widespread empathy and creates a culture.

PROPOSAL 2

Return “emotions” to design

Commentary: Background of the proposal and related topics

Edited by the Editorial Team

The “Mingei Movement,” which pursued “beauty”

This proposal advocates the restoration of the “emotion” and “aesthetic consciousness” that modern design tends to lose due to logic and functionality; the “Mingei [Folk Craft] Movement” is the origin of the movement that developed in Japan driven by this approach.

The Mingei Movement was a lifestyle and cultural movement advocated in 1926 by the thinker Soetsu Yanagi and the potters Shoji Hamada and Kanjiro Kawai. It was also influenced by the Arts and Crafts Movement mentioned in Proposal 1 and Proposal 2. It challenged the ornately decorated display pieces which formed the mainstream in the craft world at that time, and presented a new sense of value which said that everyday items made by nameless craftsmen contained as much beauty as works of art. There have been moves to revalorize the Mingei Movement every so often; most recently, in 2012, product designer Naoto Fukasawa was appointed as the fifth director of the Japan Mingei Museum, prompting various discussions, exhibitions, and designs related to Mingei from a modern perspective. The Mingei Movement was a wake-up call to an age in which the culture of handiwork was disappearing due to industrialization. This proposal, which regards design in the present as a “reversion” that recovers the “spirit of the creator” and “emotions,” has many aspects in common with the pursuit of “beauty” by the Mingei Movement.

The importance of “tacit knowledge”

The sense of “understanding without the need for explaining everything in words” and the “umami” that resides in the body of the creator described in the proposal are concepts defined as “tacit knowledge” in the domains of management studies and philosophy.

The concept of tacit knowledge was proposed by Hungarian-born physicist and philosopher Michael Polanyi in his 1966 book “The Tacit Dimension.” The implication of this is symbolized by the famous phrase, “We can know more than we can tell.” In contrast to “explicit knowledge,” such as manuals and data, which can be verbalized or digitized and transmitted objectively, it refers to knowledge that is difficult to verbalize, such as personal experiences, bodily sensations, hunches, or intuition.

As Kuramoto points out, “emotions” such as the unevenness of hand-sewn handkerchiefs and the texture of Sigma cameras can be considered to have been born out of tacit knowledge, which is to say the accumulation of the creator’s bodily experience.

Kvadrat’s investment in fostering an aesthetic consciousness among its employees, which is mentioned in the proposal, is precisely behavior which enriches the soil of this tacit knowledge.

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PICKUP GOOD DESIGN

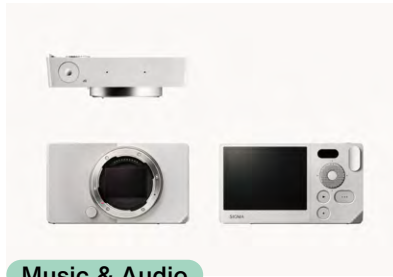
GOOD DESIGN Selected from the Perspective of PROPOSAL2



Personal Accessories

CLASSICS the Small Luxury

The 108-color handkerchief series treats “color” as another form of language, designed as a tool to convey feelings. To encourage many people to pick one up, we offer 108 color variations, assigning meaning to every 12 colors and organizing them into 9 themes. This design resonates with the emotions of both the giver and the user, expanding the joy of selection and the range of expression.



Music & Audio

Sigma BF

Sigma sees the camera as a tool that transforms consciousness and sparks creativity. Starting from this belief, we rethought what it means for a camera to be part of daily life, something that stays close and grows familiar. Free from convention, we redesigned the camera from its core. The result is the Sigma BF, created to awaken the pure joy of photography: the essence of capturing the moment.



Public Facility & Civil Structure & Landscape

The Grand Ring

The Grand Ring is the symbol of Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan and expresses the concept of ‘Unity in Diversity.’ It is built using a fusion of modern construction techniques and traditional Nuki joints, like those found in Japanese shrines and temples. Serving as the main route for visitors, it ensures smooth movement and provides a sheltered, comfortable space from wind, rain, and sunlight.

Appendix

FURTHER DIVING

Reference works for a deeper understanding of the proposal

Selection and text by Jin Kuramoto

PRODUCT

Apple’s first-generation “iMac” (1998)

With its translucent body and vivid colors, it completely changed the conventional image of a gray PC and combined innovation with the familiarity of home appliances. This invention greatly expanded the possibilities of product design.

PRODUCT

First-generation Mini “Mk -1 (Mark One)” (1959)

This product was born out of the social context of a fuel shortage, and designer Alec Issigonis served as both engineer and designer. It is a rare entity in which functionalistic packaging is directly linked to the external design, and an excellent example of the integration of both roles.

MOVEMENT

Memphis Design Group (1980s)

Memphis was a postmodern design movement, characterized by vivid colors, geometric patterns, and playing with materials. With its bold and decorative style which defied modernism’s focus on functionality, it extended the possibilities of design.

PROPOSAL 3

Continue to take on challenges for the “things which the future will take for granted”

“Now” is a point on the way between the past and the future, and is no more than a cross-section of the unbroken flow of time. We are being asked at all times what we should do for the “things which the future will take for granted.” It is important to see and think about design in a time frame that connects the past and the future, not as something transient. If there is a good idea, it continually draws in those around it; if there is an idea that resonates, people get involved proactively. I would like to create an atmosphere in which people can think together, transcending their respective positions.



My
Proposal

Yuko Nagayama

Vice Chairperson,
GOOD DESIGN AWARD
2025

The importance of “continuity”

The works which made me realize the importance of “continuity” from the first small step were “DLT Timber Temporary Housing,” which won the GOOD DESIGN GRAND AWARD, and “Genbe River, a Clear Stream Where Fireflies Dance and Aquatic Flowers Bloom,” which won a GOLD AWARD. The GOOD DESIGN AWARD is also sometimes talked of as an “award which appreciates new buds.” However, sometimes new buds do not last, but wither. It is very difficult to continue on and develop them further even after the initial momentum is lost.

Shigeru Ban, the architect behind “DLT Timber Temporary Housing,” established a non-profit organization called VAN (Voluntary Architects’ Network) after the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake in 1995, and has since taken the initiative in providing disaster relief in Japan and overseas. In 2022, he also worked in Ukraine to install a system of paper tube partitions in evacuation centers to maintain privacy. The Noto evacuation center is designed to take the concept of temporary housing one step further and to become a permanent home while also serving as temporary housing. Using a new DLT system, he has created a pleasant living environment through the expression of wood, and people who have moved in there have been heard to say that they do not want to leave. The results of sustained research in anticipation of emergencies have been demonstrated.

“Genbe River, a Clear Stream Where Fireflies Dance and Aquatic Flowers Bloom” is another long-lasting initiative which started in 1990. After the river was polluted by

industrial and domestic wastewater during the high growth period, the local government and an NPO teamed up and brought architects and landscape designers on board to create an attractive space in which people could get close to water. This has now become the identity of the people of Mishima. They have continued and maintained these activities over 35 years, but apparently decided to apply for the GOOD DESIGN AWARD because they wanted to take a fresh look at this landscape that has come to be taken for granted by the younger generation, and pass it on to the future.

The design of infrastructure, community resources, and public spaces

The design of new infrastructure arrangements in small communities also stood out. “Shima Ame Lab.” is located in Akashima, Goto City, Nagasaki Prefecture, the only “island in Japan to live entirely on rainwater.” Its main activities are the construction of a “rainwater field,” a facility to store and purify rainwater, and the design of an experiential environmental education program, Rainwater Life Experience, in which people from outside the island can also participate. These activities have the potential to go beyond the scope of this island and develop into something that will support us in the event of future disasters. The “Oohito Subaru Micro Hydropower Plant” is a project in the Oohito district of Hinokage Town, Miyazaki Prefecture, to convert agricultural irrigation channels to micro hydropower generation during the agricultural off-season, returning the profits to irrigation management and community activities and increasing

disaster resilience. The appearance of the power station is also attractive as architecture, blending into the landscape through the reuse of stone materials from the traditional stone warehouses used for storage and livestock sheds. I think it is a system that can be applied to many regions going forward as a model for the utilization of the local resources that have lain buried until now.

There were also many attractive designs of initiatives by local authorities. “Chiyoda City Park Development Plan.” The number of prohibited activities listed on the signs at the entrance to parks has increased in recent years, and there have been many times while raising children that I wanted to ask, “Whose are these parks, after all?”. The initiative by Chiyoda City reviewed these prohibitions and restructured 58 parks to permit previously prohibited activities, such as fireworks, ball games, and water play, by giving each of the parks features appropriate to its size and position.

New design in forward-moving primary industries

Designs of various initiatives related to primary industries were also impressive. “Reposaku” is a smart farming platform system being put to practical use in Hokkaido. Agricultural work involved dozens of vehicles being driven across vast farmland following instructions given by a boss. By grasping each other’s positions with a high degree of accuracy, within an error margin of 12 cm, in real time, the number of communications was drastically reduced and their work efficiency was greatly improved. The visualization of advanced technologies led to the transfer of skills, and the way in which it encouraged young generations to participate in agriculture made it a great initiative. The screen, with colorful lines on a black background representing the work trajectories, was also beautiful and impressive as an interface.

“Farm Based Community Educational Design” responded to the COVID-19 pandemic by taking on pasture-based dairy farming, which is rare in Honshu, rebuilding the company’s value on the occasion of its 80th anniversary. The cycle in which the cows’ manure returns to the soil, nurturing the grass which cows eat once more and turn into milk, has become the landscape of the farm, making it an attractive place which draws people to it. Centered on the concept of “better cycles for animals, people, and land,” the project presents a new way of being for a dairy farm, and this spirit is carried through to the packaging and logo of the milk produced there. “Forestry that Doesn’t Cut Trees” was also a fresh idea. In forestry specializing in forestation, large drones are put to use playing a role in transporting felled trees, a substantial burden until now. I also thought it was a great initiative in terms of encouraging women’s participation in the area of forestry.

Designing in a time frame that connects the past and the future

This was my third year as vice chairperson. I have realized various things over these three years. In the first year, an overseas judge pointed out to me that the GOOD DESIGN AWARD had many works that focused on local issues rather than global issues. Seeing the origin of design born from where we stand, first implemented in the micro-community and then eventually expanded, I felt that this was precisely where the role and potential of future design lay, and that paying attention to these fine details was what would open up the future.

In the second year, I realized once more that even if the scale was still small at the idea stage, people would become involved if there was something that they could relate to, and there was potential for making big moves towards the realization of the idea.

And now this year, the third year. Activities which have continued for more than 30 years won the GRAND AWARD and a GOLD AWARD. How should we sustain and develop ideas from the initial stage and create standards for the future? It was like looking at this trajectory. The things which we take for granted that we can encounter today may be the result of someone’s idea in the past and someone’s efforts to hand this down.

“Now” is a point on the way between the past and the future, and is no more than a cross-section of the unbroken flow of time. We are being asked at all times what we should do for the “things which the future will take for granted.” It is important to think about design in a time frame that connects the past and the future, not as something transient. If there is a good idea, it continually draws in those around it; if there is an idea that resonates, people get involved proactively. I strongly hope that the dissemination of the GOOD DESIGN AWARD will foster an atmosphere in which people can think together, transcending their respective positions.

PROPOSAL 3

Continue to take on challenges
for the “things which the future will take for granted”

Commentary: Background of the proposal and related topics

Edited by the Editorial Team

Towards the “things which the future will take for granted” with “backcasting”

This proposal emphasizes the need to understand design activities in a time frame that connects the past and the future, and to constantly ask what we should do now in order to realize the things which the future will take for granted. Backcasting is a methodology which has strategically systematized this way of thinking.

Backcasting is a concept proposed in the 1980s by John B. Robinson, a Canadian environmentalist. It is a method of first envisioning the ideal future state and then calculating backward from that vision to determine the activities that should be carried out in the present and their order of priority. It is the antithesis of traditional “forecasting,” which predicts the future based on current trends.

Nagayama’s emphasis on a stance of “continuing” and “developing” initiatives even after the initial momentum has been lost to establish “standards for the future” is essential to the backcasting process of working back to the present from this long-term goal (impact) and designing the necessary steps and milestones. By practicing backcasting, we should be able to discover options of which we would not normally be aware, unfettered by the constraints of the current situation, and to envisage scenarios in which we can integrate even what currently appear to be insurmountable binary oppositions.

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Social transformation through “transition design”

The “transition design” approach, which has been gaining attention in recent years, ought to be effective when we tackle long-term transformation in the direction of the “things which the future will take for granted.”

According to design researcher Cameron Tonkinwise, one of its proponents, transition design is an interdisciplinary design approach that seeks transformation at the system level to address the “wicked problems” confronting twenty-first century society, such as climate change and pandemics. In contrast to conventional design, which seeks solutions within existing systems, transition design starts with a long-term vision for the future and focuses on the need to fundamentally transform the system itself. This method adopts the idea of “backcasting,” introduced earlier, in which we first envisage a desirable future and then design a path from there to the present.

The “atmosphere in which people can think together, transcending their respective positions” proposed by Nagayama aligns exactly with the “empathy and co-creation,” the autonomous realization of “open” design by those directly concerned, and the shift in the mindsets of individuals and society emphasized by transition design. In order to lead society in a sustainable direction, the key is surely for a long-term vision to be shared not only by a handful of experts but also by various stakeholders, and for them to cooperate in intervening in the system as a whole.

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PICKUP GOOD DESIGN

GOOD DESIGN Selected from the Perspective of PROPOSAL3



Public Facility & Civil Structure & Landscape

Genbe River, a Clear Stream Where Fireflies Dance and Aquatic Flowers Bloom

This project revived a once-polluted stream through the efforts of Mishima's residents, who stepped into the river to clean it themselves. The design concept is "ecology-up," promoting harmony between people and nature. Today, the river has become a rich ecosystem where children play and catch fish, tourists walk in the water, fireflies dance, and Mishima Baikamo blooms underwater.



Activity

Farm based community educational design

We are a dairy farm with an 85-year history in Yukicho, Hiroshima. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, we transitioned to pasture-based farming. Collaborating with the local community, we developed grazing lands, a farm experience, and renewed our logo and packaging to reflect a life-connected dairy philosophy.



Public Facility & Civil Structure & Landscape

XINZHONGSHAN LINEAR PARK

This transformative urban project in Taipei revitalizes an overlooked park into a dynamic and vibrant public space for residents, commuters, families, and visitors. With programmable site-specific designed spaces that support day and nighttime use, it reconnects neighborhoods, fosters local commerce and promotes social interaction while emphasizing inclusivity, accessibility, and sustainability.

Appendix

FURTHER DIVING

Reference works for a deeper understanding of the proposal

Selection and text by Yuko Nagayama

PROJECT

MASS MoCA (Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art) (1999)

A project born in order to make a cultural museum the starting point for revitalizing the city of North Adams, out of concern that the streets would be flooded with unemployed people after the closure of the factory. It was built after gaining the support of many of the city's residents and obtaining a grant from the state of Massachusetts, and is an excellent example of revitalizing an art district.

BOOK

Taku Satoh, "Plastic Thinking" (2017)

A book about how to understand design by Taku Satoh, who has long been interested in activities which go beyond the framework of graphic design. I really related to the way in which he approached design starting from the small realizations in his daily life.

EXHIBITION

Design Ah! Exhibition neo (2025)

What surprised me when I got to the venue was that it was packed with people of all ages, from parents and children to young couples and older groups. The cropping with an original everyday design perspective and the entertainment value engage people.

PROPOSAL 4

Generate blank spaces and renewal from architecture

The systems that support our lives often depend on invisible design = architecture. My proposal is to interpret the power of design, which generates blank spaces for innovation at the same time as being a constraint, from three winning designs for a farm, parks, and traditional crafts. It is to look for signs of designs that will overwrite the operating system of society; to reconsider how far the design of invisible decisions can be opened up and with whom it can be shared, using architecture as a clue.



My
Proposal

Naoki Ota

Focused Issues Researcher,
GOOD DESIGN AWARD
2025

A wave which shakes existing systems

We are supported by “systems” in many aspects of our lives: when we eat, move around, work, or relax. Systems are not necessarily always good. Bad things can also happen: things can take time, cause stress, or be expensive. Further, we are not always very aware of these systems; we do not think that systems can change, or can be changed. We have entered an age in which design has gone beyond form to deal with structures. How, then, can society be designed? What I sensed from many of the designs in this year’s GOOD DESIGN AWARD was that design was creating the “architecture” upon which Lawrence Lessig shone a light 25 years ago, “design that shapes the structure of society.” Architecture in this context is the “invisible design” that dictates human behavior and relationships, much like laws and markets. At the same time as being a structure which constrains human behavior, architecture is also a venue which enables certain relationships and innovation. The potential to change systems is created by this balance.

1. Architecture in which you feel the cycle with your body “We are made of poop”

Rather than simply filling our heads with information about the cycle of life consisting of the farm and the cows, milk and us, the “Farm Based Community Educational Design” of Sagotani dairy farm creates connections “in a form that values the real thing in the real location, that hooks us up physically” (Kosuke Kubo, third-generation owner of Sagotani dairy farm). What is the figure of only 2% “pasture-based dairy farming” in Japan all about? Cows eat grass grown on the farm, not imported feed. Cow dung becomes compost and enriches the soil. The taste of milk from cows raised in the midst of nature changes depending on the season. This is delivered to customers as is, as

“Spring & Summer Milk” and “Fall & Winter Milk.” When they visit the farm, they learn through physical experience that the milk which they drink each day is connected to the cows’ poop. The architecture of Sagotani dairy farm is designed not only for the farm to be thoroughly equipped in physical terms, but also to create through this a “bodily experience which makes you aware of the cycle.”

2. Architecture of the rules which open up freedom “Be sure to take your used fireworks home”

While it is becoming impossible to play freely in many parks due to the increasing number of restrictions saying “Do not do XYZ,” the parks in Chiyoda City are being transformed from ones which had many, uniform restrictions into diverse parks where you can enjoy various “things that you want to do.” Among the words of Yuki Yamada, who was responsible for the design of the “Chiyoda City Park Development Plan,” “Make rules so that people can do the things they want” left an impression on me. What rules should be in place so that people can enjoy fireworks in parks? How about for dog runs or skateboards? Rules that users make with the local government while considering the characteristics of the area in which the park is located are both a constraint and also architecture, in that they create room for freedom.

3. Architecture which renews tradition to transcend time “There are four things that we changed during modularization, and three that we did not”

Taiwan Yuan-Li Handiwork Association, which won a GOOD FOCUS AWARD (New Business Design) with “Next Artisan, a New Way to Preserve Traditional Rush Weaving Art,” is not only preserving this traditional craft that has continued for over 300 years but creating lasting change with an eye to the future. This is symbolized by the fact that the

average age of certified craftspeople has fallen from 70 to 40. Behind this is the design wisdom of modularizing this tradition, starting from oral tradition. “Standards” are set for techniques which are carried out in different ways from person to person, and turned into a curriculum, paying attention to what to change and what not to change. I was very impressed by the dynamic gaze of Po-Chun Hsiao of the Yuan-Li Handiwork Association, who said, “In Taiwan, we preserve living traditional techniques.”

The relationships and innovation generated by architecture

The potential of architecture lies in generating blank spaces for innovation. As Tasuku Mizuno explains in his book “Legal Design” with reference to Lessig’s framework, Creative Commons generates an intermediate domain between the protection of rights by copyright (All Rights Reserved) and the domain in which no one has rights (No Right), in which the creator of information content retains copyright but releases some rights (Some Rights Reserved). This blank space is the ground on which various people, objects, and ideas meet and change occurs. This blank space is deliberately created in Chiyoda City’s parks and in the activities of Taiwan Yuan-Li Handiwork Association. The functions of parks in Chiyoda City are modularized, and they are broadly divided into “functions that all parks have” and “functions that make each park distinctive.” The former includes the natural environment function, relaxation function, and disaster management function. Yamada says that the domain lying in between the thinking of Chiyoda City as a whole and the design of individual parks is what is interesting in park design. What makes this intermediary tier interesting is perhaps generated by architecture.

The Yuan-Li Handiwork Association is modularizing standard forms of techniques and culture. Po-Chun Hsiao described it as a pyramid structure: as architecture, the standard forms of physical and technical elements make up the base, creating blank space (the top of the pyramid) where new elements such as contemporary design and environmental consciousness can be freely experimented with.

Meanwhile, Mr. Koshiba of SMART Fukushi Lab, which promotes Go-tore, a training program for nursing care prevention and autonomous trips outside the house which won an award in 2024, said he was confident about Go-tore, but received a shock when someone told him, “This is not a model for success. It’s a service that you were able to set up because you have human resources in Kurobe.” He took this as an opportunity to focus on the people and communities which are the soil producing change, creating blank space for coming up with creative solutions for services.

In such ways, architecture has the power to change things that you might not have previously thought to change, starting with their structure. However, there is a caveat.

This is lack of transparency. Architecture is not necessarily used solely for good. Rather than working directly through laws or markets, governments and companies may attempt to achieve their goals through architecture, for example through using experts in ways that conceal their underlying intentions and are opaque to citizens and users.

Throw architecture wide open and build it up

Compared with the period around the year 2000 in which Lessig focused on architecture, architecture has become extremely influential today due to smartphones and social media. With the issue of the emblem for the Tokyo Olympics, which arose in 2015 and was cited as an example by Mizuno, intolerance and violence on the Internet can be said to have significantly raised the threshold, drawn by copyright, between the area which is considered alright and that which is considered out of bounds.

In the three winning designs featured here, the experience-based tours of Sagotani dairy farm, the creation of rules for Chiyoda City’s parks, and the making of a textbook by the Yuan-Li Handiwork Association, the importance accorded to the transparency of the architecture is wonderful. However, as a general rule, it is desirable to pay attention to transparency when architecture is used. Moreover, considering the relationship between design and the renewal of systems, the accumulation of decisions between people (architecture) can also have the power to change laws. For example, by making many contracts for services which lay between “living” and “staying,” sharing led to the revision of the Hotel Business Act, and the requirement to set up a reception desk at a simple lodging house came to be relaxed if certain requirements were met.

Going forward, design will become the starting point for changing systems, including not only spaces and products but also society’s invisible designs that prescribe people’s relationships and behaviors. In the process of change, the blank spaces that architecture creates will open up the potential for new encounters, behaviors, and relationships. When generating these, it will be important for each of us to reconsider these designs as we use them, rather than having experts carry out the process unilaterally.

Conclusion

Perspectives that generate system change

What regulates what?

Consider, for example, carrying someone in a car.

When regulations draw lines concerning behaviors and relationships, what kinds of blank space exist outside these, what kinds of trial are taking place?

If these blank spaces are eroded, how does this happen?

PROPOSAL 4

Generate blank spaces and renewal from architecture

Commentary: Background of the proposal and related topics

Edited by the Editorial Team

Reconsidering “architecture”

The invisible design of rules equaling “architecture” which is the central theme of this proposal is the concept of a modality of regulation controlling human behavior put forward by Lawrence Lessig, a US constitutional law scholar. Lessig categorized society’s modalities of regulation into four forces: “law,” “social norms,” “market,” and “architecture.” Architecture refers to the restriction of behavior by the “state of the world” or the “created environment.” In our modern information society, the “codes” embedded in the hardware and software that make up the Internet have come to play a central role as this modality of regulation.

One of the key features of architecture is that it has the character of “prior regulation” which makes behaviors impossible or extremely difficult in advance, whereas the law imposes sanctions for violations after the fact. This allows regulations to be automatically enforced without human judgment, even if the individual following the regulations is unaware of the constraints. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, this concept of “architecture” was frequently referenced, particularly in the study of the information society; but this proposal is distinctive in the way in which it understands architecture as “signs of designs that will overwrite the operating system of society.” Architecture is the “invisible design” that prescribes human behavior and relationships, much like laws and markets. And precisely for this reason, Lessig also points to the danger that this architecture could be abused as a “roundabout way” of achieving national policy intentions in ways that are obscure to the citizens. Therefore, “rethinking how far we can open up and with whom we can share” the invisible design which is architecture becomes extremely important for design to increase the transparency of social structures.

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The methodology called “systemic design”

A methodology called “systemic design” has been attracting attention in recent years as a way to approach the “wicked problems” in the background to this proposal: problems about which information is scarce and where consensus building is difficult. Systemic design is an interdisciplinary approach that combines the characteristics of systems thinking and design to address complex social issues. In Japan, design researcher Masanao Takeyama and others are moving ahead with research and social implementation using this approach. While the traditional design approach has expanded from design of tangible objects as far as service design, systemic design sees the target of design as being not only immediate deliverables and user experiences, but also the “social system itself,” such as the customs, ways of perception, and systems that support service routines.

The purpose of this methodology is to promote “system-level transformation” (system shift), which takes a holistic view of the entire system and affects its structure. As a concrete process, it uses systems thinking to make visible the complex interaction of social issues (system map) and identify “intervention points” (leverage points) that can produce sustainable results with fewer resources. The attempt to generate “blank spaces” and “renewal” through architecture, which is the aim of this proposal, overlaps with the aspiration of systemic design toward system-wide intervention in complex problems, rather than rigid mega-plans. It can perhaps be said to reinterpret design not merely as a problem-solving technique, but rather as a methodology to see through the structure of society as a whole and promote transformation by working on the “normative rules” of the system itself.

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PICKUP GOOD DESIGN

GOOD DESIGN Selected from the Perspective of PROPOSAL4



Activity

The Misanthrope Society

The Misanthrope Society is a restaurant designed to support people with depression by offering a flexible, friendly work environment. It creates a patient-centered social space that encourages connection and reintegration. It also raises awareness and helps the public better understand and accept depression.



Activity

Chiyoda City Park Development Plan

Chiyoda City is advancing (1) park basic policy formulation, (2) park facility renewal, and (3) soft measures in an integrated manner. These efforts aim to achieve short- to medium-term improvements that address local issues and needs, as part of a broader strategy to meet diverse user needs amid a growing daytime population.



Activity

Next Artisan, a new way to preserve traditional rush weaving art

Yuanli rush weaving, a 300-year-old craft, is fading due to an aging artisan population. To preserve it, the association launched a certification system that documents traditional knowledge and promotes creative transmission through competitions, workshops, and training—ensuring its sustainable future.

Appendix

FURTHER DIVING

Reference works for a deeper understanding of the proposal

Selection and text by Naoki Ota

BOOK

Adam Kahane, "Everyday Habits for Transforming Systems" (2025)

We live inside a variety of systems, but it is difficult to feel that we are actors who can change them. In this book, the author, who has been involved with system transformation such as the conclusion of the climate change treaty, describes how small choices in the structures and values underlying the issue can change systems.

BOOK

Takuo Dome and Goro Yamazaki (ed.), "Solving Wicked Problems Together" (2022)

Words such as "co-creation" and "co-assistance" are often used, but who are the principal actors? Opinions differ according to people's positions and ways of thinking, and it is difficult to find a solution that can be agreed upon by everyone. This book reveals ways of thinking, mechanisms, places, and networks for solving "wicked problems."

PROJECT

Toyooka Theater Festival (2020 -)

At this theater festival, which has been held every September since 2020, facing the mental and physical "weight" that remains after watching a play has recently become my rhythm. I think this feeling, which is different from fatigue or exhilaration, is the load and the reverberations unique to a play created half by those on the stage and half by the audience.

INTERVIEW 1

Tyrol-Do, Design to Alter Our Consciousness – Three Years after Winning GOOD DESIGN GRAND AWARD

Takashi Yoshidada ×
Daisuke Sakamoto × Naoki Ota



GOOD DESIGN AWARD serves as a “guidepost” for the future direction of design. However, an award is ultimately just a milestone. Whether awarded works truly continue to shape society cannot be judged at that moment alone. With this question in mind, Naoki Ota set out to revisit “Magical Dagashiya Tyrol-Do,” which received the GOOD DESIGN GRAND AWARD three years ago, to explore what has happened since.

Why Are They Still in the Middle of the Journey?

Yoshidada(Y): Winning the top honor in Japan’s largest design award has certainly earned the trust of local residents and local government. I think the increased media exposure has helped parents to feel reassured that their children can go there. As a result, the number of children has also increased.

Sakamoto(S): When Ikoma City conducted a survey on child-related measures a while ago, I heard many children mention Tyrol-Do as their place where they feel they belong. I was very happy about that.

I also think the Grand Award has had a significant impact. A wide variety of adults, not only local people but also people from outside the prefecture, have come to drink at Tyrol Sakaba (bar).

Ota(O): Has the operation become stable as more people come and go?

Y: No, the management has been difficult. With the increased number of children, we need more donations.

Of course, more adults now come to drink at Tyrol-Do in support of the children. I think it’s great that they choose

a bar where a donation is added to each snack or beer. Some even ask, “Isn’t it too cheap? Does this include a donation for the kids?”

But as a practical matter, if you offer too high a price, customers won’t come. I think it would be ideal if people could buy 600-yen beer at 1,000 yen including a donation, but it’s still a dream.

O: There are already more than 10,000 kodomo shokudo (community kitchens for children) across Japan. It is said that there are already more than 10,000 cafeterias. However, there are not many that can be operated only by donations. In fact, the owners of the cafeterias pay for shortfalls.

Y: Most of them are like that. We expanded to several locations, but suffered financially. I realized once again that everyone was enthusiastic but it took more than enthusiasm to manage it.

Our co-leader, Ms. Keiko Ishida, runs a welfare organization. Because we run it as a department of the office, we can continue it. Therefore, we are not successful yet. Rather, we feel that we are viewed positively with the expectation that we will be successful. However, receiving the GOOD DESIGN GRAND

AWARD gave me a lot of confidence that this is the direction that society should take.

Tyrol-Do is a “Device” that Changes the Consciousness of Adults

O: You said “it’s still a dream,” but how much effort have you made to convey the social value of Tyrol-Do in an easy-to-understand way to the local people?

Y: Recently, we have just started to focus on that. At Tyrol-Do, we deliberately kept the social aspect understated. We’ve put a lot of emphasis on the attitude “this is a candy store” and “anyone can come regardless of whether they’re in need or not.” That’s why we’ve intentionally avoided using words like Kodomo Shokudo too often.

We’ve been running it for a few years now. I feel that the word has become established. No one thinks that Tyrol-Do is a place where people in need come. Now that I feel at ease with that part, I think it’s better to convey the meaning of our activities more often and clearly.

O: But the years of “not calling it Kodomo Shokudo” were a necessary process. With the process accumu-

Takashi Yoshidada

Educator, designer, and musician. He is the head of the art school Atelier e.f.t., co-director of Tyrol-do, representative of Tokyo Coffee, an initiative that explores society through the lens of school refusal, and vocalist of the band DOBERMAN. His publications include “*Ikita kunai mo Warukunai?* (Not Wanting to Go Isn’t Bad?).”

Daisuke Sakamoto

Creative director. He relocated to Higashiyoshino Village, Nara Prefecture, in 2006. In 2016, he founded Office Camp LLC. In 2022, *Mahō no Dagashiya Tyrol-do* received the GOOD DESIGN GRAND AWARD. In 2023, he launched LIVE DESIGN School.

lated, we now have a situation where people come without prejudice.

Y: That's right. At the same time, during the process, the differences from Kodomo Shokudo became clear. Of course, Kodomo Shokudo is also an important activity. But our goal is not to feed children in need. Indeed, we created a system whereby children could eat curry anytime at a price of less than 100 yen. But children need more than curry to grow properly. A different approach is needed to respond to these support needs.

Our goal is to change the consciousness of adults. Through small donations on a daily basis, adults gradually develop a sense that local adults raise local children. That, to me, is what a truly symbiotic society looks like. I see Tyrol-Do as a device to spread this viewpoint without being preachy.

O: From the outside, it looks like a place where local adults help children. However, the adults change themselves because of Tyrol-Do.

Y: I think there is a clear change happening. People who eat and drink here can see stacks of donated cash in front of themselves. They understand that a drink at Tyrol-Do helps children eat curry. They come to visit regularly. One day someone came for a drink and left tens of thousands of yen, saying that his child always came here.

Also, a person running a business in Ikoma says that this is like a tax, and holds drinking parties with fellow business owners here every month. A farmer nearby grows vegetables and delivers them to us, saying, "This plot is for Tyrol-Do." There are so many such episodes. In addition, like-minded people gather and become acquaintances soon. There are many miraculous moments in which perfect strangers talk seriously about Ikoma. I feel that this

has become a place to change people's consciousness.

Adult Behavior of "Sharing the Loss"

O: At first, did you not have an idea of a device to change adults?

Y: It became clear in the process. I think our co-leader Ms. Ishida had a sense from the beginning. In her long experience of engaging in a welfare business for persons with disabilities, she had doubts about a society in which the division of roles is clearly defined as "welfare is done by welfare offices" and "education is done at school." She thought we all should take on the roles. Through the management of Tyrol-Do, these thoughts have been translated into language and shared with us.

It's a little bit against the social trend of trying to keep everything orderly and efficient. I think there is a big hint here for future society. Mr. Sakamoto often says, "Tyrol-Do is a system where everyone shares the loss." I think it is very important to act in such a contradictory way.

S: Tyrol-Do can be managed by the so-called yasegaman—a kind of playful self-restraint by adults (laughs). I think that's what adults are supposed to do. The idea is that "it's good if only children get benefits." Adults lose money a little at a time.

And we never want to make our behavior look like "we're doing good things so everyone can eat." After all, we want children to think that they eat using the Tyrol tickets they've earned. That's why I want to keep telling people that this is Magical Dagashiya where magically enhanced adults gather.

Y: Choosing loss is not logical, so it's hard to understand. However, affluence actually lies in what is left out of economic rationality.

We don't receive any money from this activity, but we don't feel we lose money at all. In fact, we're getting far more benefits. Of course, money is one of the sources of happiness, but in other words, it is only one thing.

O: At home, we often do things that aren't economically rational. But when we go out, for some reason, we think about profit and loss, and we can't do the same.



Y: I think it is a big problem that people can individually understand, but not in society. That's because people behave on business norms. Tyrol-Do is an activity to introduce into society a kind of living norm.

Small Daily Actions Change the OS of Society

O: The theme of Focused Issues I'm thinking about is "Design to Change the OS of Society." Now, many things are causing institutional fatigue. We should ask new questions and explore new and different approaches. This is the interesting point of design.

As I listen to you, I feel that what Tyrol-Do is doing is design to promote such a paradigm shift in society. Changes actually occur in the form of living, such as how to spend time and money and how to interact with people. These changes lead to changes in consciousness, such as sharing loss. Even a big decision to change the life stage is similar to small everyday actions and thoughts.

Y: I think that changing the OS of society is exactly what we try to do, including Tyrol-Do. Someone chooses something because they like it. Their behavior is contagious. I also think the behavioral contagion creates a new culture.

But many adults have come to believe that one person's small actions have no power to change society. I feel that the root of many problems lies in the fact that we have not been taught to "create by ourselves." People assume that there is an established society from the beginning.

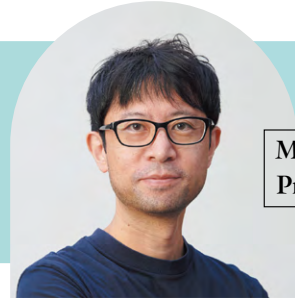
I want to teach children that they are there to build a society. I want adults to regain the sense that they are building a society.



PROPOSAL 5

Preserve the indigenous rhythms of life with wild finance

Designs which started from a sense of something lacking and, while valuing the rhythms, tempos, and gestures unique to their own lives and environments, had pieced together systems including finance could be seen here and there. The fact that they were looking ahead to longer time frames and bringing in insights from technology and “outside” while originating in endogeneity was also thought-provoking. Rather than just lamenting what was lacking and complaining about it, or giving up on it as something which could not be helped, they were calmly planting the seeds of culture and carrying these through to implementation. At the same time as being the decolonization of design, this seems to be the decolonization of time.



My
Proposal

Yutaka Nakamura

Focused Issues Researcher,
GOOD DESIGN AWARD
2025

An era in which “time” and “bodies” become subject to negotiation

The way in which “time,” an asset that cannot be recovered, and “bodies,” which are the basis of existence itself and also cannot be recovered if they are lost, have become subject to negotiation in the life of human beings as social creatures seems to symbolize the fundamental problem of the twenty-first century.

Is it possible to redesign desires which are generated and change in a context in which the attention economy has run rampant? In particular, is it possible to co-redesign desires that were manufactured during the expansion of technology and capitalism from the twentieth to the twenty-first centuries? How far is it possible to take back time for living and preserve the necessary rhythms of life? Can we move from a society that has seen intelligence as the amount of information possessed, the ability to process this, and the ability to speedily find the right answer to a given problem, to a society that values the ability to reframe, to rebel and create alternative answers, to generate something using limbs and other body parts and consider this? What will design design then, and how will it do so?

Co-redesign of management through “Forestry that Doesn’t Cut Trees”

NAKAGAWA Co., Ltd., which has developed “Forestry that Doesn’t Cut Trees,” is outstanding particularly in terms of its financing and corporate organization. Mr. Nakagawa started by reconsidering his daily life, in which he refused to play with his children even when they begged him, saying that he had work to do; and by thinking through how he could redesign “work” in order to safeguard time for himself and his family. “I wondered what kind of work would be fine

even if I took a few days or months off. Even the fastest trees take 30 or 40 years to grow after you plant them. Even if I take a month or two off, this is no more than the margin of error”. When it came to breaking into the forestry industry, Nakagawa also decided what he should and should not do. He first decided not to work in felling trees, which is one of the riskiest areas of forestry and one which prevents women from entering the industry. At the same time, the company would focus on tree planting, the area within the industry with the greatest understaffing.

However, the surprise is what comes next. Although Nakagawa founded the company, he did not become the president, but instead works as a regular employee. On top of this, he makes the details of everyone’s pay visible. In this company, those who do the most important and difficult work on the ground are paid the highest. As a result, this overlaps with the generation who are currently raising children and have the greatest need of money. Moreover, they are paid by the day despite being permanent employees, so that they can take leave at any time. In addition, it is also surprising that the company as a whole tries to maintain a 10% profit margin. “If it’s less, 8%, it’s hard to grow while paying back loans. But if it rises above this figure, it inevitably creates people who cannot smile somewhere along the way. After some trial and error, we came to the conclusion that 10% was the best.”

Co-redesign starting from “water”

Shima Ame Lab, a remote island promotion project being carried out on Akashima Island in the Goto Islands in Nagasaki Prefecture by the laboratories of Toshihiro Kasai and Sho Kondo at the Fukui Institute of Technology, also started by identifying the essence of the issues on which they ought to

work. “At first, I understood food as being the most essential thing, and decided we should try farming,” says Kasai. “I saw rice as especially important, and rice-growing became possible. However, I realized that we cannot do anything without water².”

One of the advantages of using rainwater is that it can be done anywhere there is a lot of precipitation. It is cheaper than tap water, is extremely soft, and contains few impurities. Therefore, it also has the advantage of preventing limescale buildup. Moreover, by storing water during heavy rains, flood damage can also be reduced. Most places in Japan today are fully equipped with water pipes and sewerage systems, so this may not feel real, but in areas where infrastructure is still being developed, it plays an important role. Kasai says, “If were just a question of technology, I would be enough. But it has to spread. I really feel the power of Professor Kondo’s design in this area.”

River Village Ltd., a university venture company which won an award for its “Oohito Subaru Micro Hydropower Plant,” aims to revitalize local communities by focusing on river water. It has succeeded in generating about 320,000 kWh of electricity annually using by taking advantage of the existing land elevation difference and using some of the irrigation water. The electricity generated is sold to Kyushu Electric Power, producing annual sales of about 10 million yen. This type of plant usually incurs maintenance costs. However, the use of a special filter and the calculation of its gradient make this plant virtually maintenance-free.

How has it been possible to use irrigation water, generally considered the most difficult to use for other purposes, in the Oohito district of Hinokage Town, made up of 73 households (53 farming households and 20 non-farming households)? And how did they raise the 95 million yen required to build the power plant? Much of the credit for this goes to Hiromichi Tanaka, chair of the Oohito Agricultural Cooperative for Power Generation. It was by no means an easy road, Tanaka says. He went round obtaining agreement village by village, asking each member to invest in the project³. “At first, I asked each household for an investment of 50,000 yen. But people told me “We’re living off our state pensions. We can’t afford 50,000 yen!” 40,000 yen was too much, 10,000 yen was too much, even 5,000 yen was impossible, they said.” In the end, they settled on 4,000 yen per household. Using this investment, the company obtained an unsecured loan from Miyazaki Bank, and the plant was completed in November 2017.

Co-redesign of the “Tokyo” rhythm

When you look at Tokyo as a single, isolated region, what are the distinctive characteristics? What I understood after once walking around Tokyo for about five years was the differences in facial expressions and rhythms in each area. “Ginza Sony Park Project” redefined the place which is

Ginza, all while capturing the local rhythm and linking it to the corporate purpose. It is a bold experiment which takes a large blank space in a prime Ginza location. Daisuke Nagano (now President and Chief Branding Officer of Sony Enterprise Co., Ltd.) has been involved in the project since its inception under former Sony Group President Kazuo Hirai, and has thought hard about the significance of the site. “Sony was struggling when the project started, and could have decided to sell it for cash. We could also have increased our tenant footprint as much as possible and generated revenue. The reason why we did not do so, despite hearing these opinions, is that even if this would have been OK in the short term, we looked ahead to what lay beyond those choices,” says Nagano⁴.

They devised a strategy considering everything as a whole: the significance of the fact that Akio Morita called a space in a corner of the Sony Building which was completed on this spot in 1966 “Ginza’s garden;” the unique rhythm of Ginza, which was more multifaceted than it is today and was where the start-up spirit could be found; and Sony’s brand, which had been created with a counter-cultural element. “We didn’t aim to make it a public space right from the beginning and so decide on a park. I believe that the accumulation of the private leads to the public.”

The fact that something “public” or “semi-public” emerges beyond the exhaustive pursuit of individuality – the time and space in which I can be myself – seems to offer an important hint for rethinking the future of “society.”

A “third way” that takes back control of time

The examples discussed so far have the following points in common. 1) They are long-term, long-lasting projects; 2) make use of something in the locality (topography, local character, rhythm, etc.); and 3) they experiment to arrive at sustainable financing, rather than one based on short-term sales, in order to last.

Let us work together to create a “third way” in which we confront complex problems, do not keep silent and retreat into “manufacturing” through selective blindness, and do not become implicated in the attention economy through aggressive claims. The decolonization of time is possible. Let us preserve our own indigenous rhythms of life with wild finance and wild design. Let us take back control of our time. Make haste slowly.

1. From an online interview with Masaya Nakagawa, NAKAGAWA Co., Ltd., October 27, 2025.
2. From an online interview with Toshihiro Kasai and Sho Kondo, November 3, 2025. The same applies to the following paragraph.
3. From comments made during fieldwork in the Oohito district of Hinokage Town, Miyazaki Prefecture, on November 13, 2025, and materials received at that time. The same applies to the following paragraph. Hiromichi Tanaka, chair of the Oohito Agricultural Cooperative for Power Generation; Tomoki Takebayashi of Takebayashi Landscape Architects Ltd.; and Terukazu Yamashita of River Village Ltd. accompanied the fieldwork and talked with me.
4. From fieldwork and a tour of Ginza Sony Park on November 11, 2025, and from an interview with Daisuke Nagano. The same applies to the following paragraph.

PROPOSAL 5

Preserve the indigenous rhythms of life with wild finance

Commentary: Background of the proposal and related topics

Edited by the Editorial Team

Premise of “the over-concentration of population and functions in Tokyo”

This proposal focuses on the creation of systems based on “wild finance,” which derives from inherent local rhythms and motivation intrinsic to the creators. The premise behind this proposal is that the “inherent rhythms” of contemporary Japanese society have been suppressed; in other words, “the over-concentration of population and functions in Tokyo” is the current situation in Japanese society.

While the population of Japan as a whole continues to decline, the population of Tokyo is on the rise: the estimated population figures keep hitting record highs, reaching 14.26 million as of September 2025. The current situation in which people, goods, and money all gather in Tokyo has been criticized as “over-concentration.” According to estimates by the National Institute of Population and Social Security Research, the ratio of the Tokyo area population to that of the nation will continue its gradual rise, and so over-concentration is projected to continue. In particular, if we look at the 2050 population in comparison with that in 2020, it is even estimated that only Tokyo will see an increase. Moreover, this phenomenon is not limited to the Tokyo metropolitan area. It has also been pointed out that even in regional areas, “decentralized concentration” will develop, in which the population becomes concentrated in the cities at the center of regional economies.

The local projects cited as examples in the proposal are those which, despite this background, are starting from a sense of something lacking and setting up their own mechanisms without relying on a huge central logic or short-term revenues. This proposal can be said to suggest that prior-

itizing the “indigenous rhythms” contained in each region, unleashed from the homogeneous logic of “time” and “capital” generated by the “center” which is Tokyo, is exactly what will become the key to future design.

“Bricolage” and “Wild Thought”

“Bricolage” and “wild” appear as important keywords in this proposal. These are important concepts in cultural anthropology, Nakamura’s original area of specialism, and in recent years they have been increasingly referenced in the domains of business and design, too. “Bricolage” is a concept presented by French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss in “La Pensée Sauvage” (*Wild Thought*, 1962). The French verb “bricoler” originally means “accidental, involuntary movement,” but bricolage can also be translated as “skillful handiwork.” This way of thinking is characterized by the process of making things using the limited number of tools and materials which are “on hand” in each place, not prepared in any planned manner. Those who engage this work are called “bricoleurs,” and the materials they use each have their own histories and, at the same time, have the symbolic nature of “still being usable.”

Lévi-Strauss called the mythical and magical way of thinking of non-Western indigenous peoples, which is the antithesis of modern Western science, “wild thought” and compared its form to bricolage. The approach laid out in the proposal, which combines the resources which are “on hand,” such as the local topography, cultural resources, and existing irrigation supply, aims at long-term sustainability, and experiments with “wild finance” through a process of trial and error, may perhaps share something with this bricolage intelligence.

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PICKUP GOOD DESIGN

GOOD DESIGN Selected from the Perspective of PROPOSAL5



Activity
Forestry that doesn't cut trees

We advocate “forestry without cutting trees,” and contribute to the local community by developing large drones to reduce labor and by providing materials for disasters. We grow seedlings from acorns collected by local people and facilities that employ people with disabilities. Seven companies have been established based on our model and are currently expanding their businesses.



Activity
Shima Ame Lab.

We carried out activities to secure domestic water and promote remote island revitalization on Akashima, located in Goto City, Nagasaki Prefecture—the only island in Japan where people live solely on rainwater. Specifically, we built dedicated facilities for collecting rainwater for daily use and designed programs that allow participants to experience a lifestyle based on rainwater.



Public Facility & Civil Structure & Landscape
Oohito Subaru Micro Hydropower Plant

In Oohito, Hinokage Town, Miyazaki Prefecture, an environmentally harmonious design for a new model of micro hydropower was developed to support local life and traditions. Using local materials and techniques, the facility blends into the landscape, providing a sense of harmony and comfort. Profits from electricity are reinvested into community needs like irrigation canals and traditional arts.



Industry and Commercial Facility
Ginza Sony Park Project

Ginza Sony Park is a unique platform. During the reconstruction of the Sony Building, the site was transformed into a temporary park, offering “urban margin” and continuous change. Its final form is designed to adapt to the changing needs of society, people, Sony and the city itself. The park’s innovative structure and seamless integration with Ginza demonstrate a new model for urban coexistence.

Appendix

FURTHER DIVING

Reference works for a deeper understanding of the proposal

Selection and text by Yutaka Nakamura

BOOK

David Graeber and David Wengrow, “The Dawn of Everything” (2023)

This book, which became Graeber’s posthumous work, critically redesigns mythologized human history, unleashing us from the assumption that the current social order was “inevitable.” It is a book that shows that “other presents” and “other social designs” could well have been possible, awakening the imaginative power not to close down the future.

BOOK

Tsuneichi Miyamoto, “The Forgotten Japanese” (1960)

It is impossible to avoid this book when thinking about Japan’s history, present, and future. It makes clear how biased today’s account of “the Japanese” is, and the records of village meetings can be read as indigenous “democracy” before the introduction of North American-style democracy.

PROJECT

DESIGNEAST 2025

Under the slogan “Designing the situation in which we design,” music was played, food was served, workshops were held, and through exhibitions and talks, not only knowledge and ideas but also thoughts, emotions, facial expressions, and actions were exchanged/fraternized/mutually felt. It seemed like a movement to spread holistic design.

INTERVIEW 2

Design of “blank space” given shape in Ginza

Daisuke Nagano × Yutaka Nakamura



Focused Issues Researcher and anthropologist Yutaka Nakamura, in his 2025 proposal, put forward the idea of “Preserve the indigenous rhythms of life with wild finance.” In devising this proposal, he was inspired by the Ginza Sony Park Project, a GOOD DESIGN GOLD AWARD recipient. Nakamura spoke with Daisuke Nagano, President and Chief Branding Officer of Sony Enterprise Co., Ltd., who led the project, about this process and the site at present.

Daisuke Nagano

Joined Sony in 1992. After working in areas including sales, marketing, management strategy, and the CEO's office, he took up his current position in 2017. He led the Ginza Sony Park Project from 2013 as project supervisor, opening Ginza Sony Park in its final form in January 2025.

The “symbol” of Sony. Decision to rebuild

Nakamura(YN): What was the background leading up to this project in the first place?

Nagano(DN): The concrete idea for this project started in 2013. Its predecessor, the Sony Building, was completed in 1966 and served as a landmark that became the entrance to Ginza from the Sukiya-bashi intersection. However, almost 50 years had passed since its completion, and its reconstruction was being considered.

There were three main pillars of the discussion. The first was economic value, the second was brand value, and the third was “the meaning of the place.” At the time, in 2013, Sony was in a difficult situation, with existing businesses and real estate being sold and factories being closed. But if news bulletins had announced the sale of the Sony Building under such circumstances, how would the people with roots in this area who had loved it over its nearly 50-year history have felt? Thinking about that brand risk, we

decided to leave it unsold and start the process of rebuilding.

YN: The issue touched the Sony brand itself, didn't it?

DN: Yes. Responses to a survey about the Sony Building also revealed a negative view: that it symbolized Sony's inability to change. At the same time, however, Sony's business had grown considerably since the building was completed, and the Sony Building alone was no longer sufficient to represent Sony.

YN: There is a great deal of research into symbolism in anthropology, and symbols are precisely what communities demand. Put the other way round, without symbols, you cannot build communities.

From “garden” to “park” — opening up the building to the public

DN: That's how we changed course towards rebuilding. As we researched once more the meaning of the place

and the thoughts of the founders and designers at the time the building was completed, I arrived at a breakthrough. This was the space of only 10 tsubo called “Sony Square,” facing Sukiya-bashi intersection.

They did things completely unrelated to Sony there in each season. They put tulips on display, put up Christmas trees, and brought in sea creatures from Okinawa during the summer holidays. Despite being Sony's land, it was open to the Ginza neighborhood, and Morita called it “Ginza's garden.” I came to interpret this as meaning that the essence of the Sony Building was in fact “a facility open to the neighborhood,” and that this encapsulated the essential thinking of the founders and designers. That is how I arrived at the idea of creating “Ginza's park.”

However, “not building anything for a long time” isn't interesting, either. Since I thought there was probably room for growth in its economic value, too, I drew up a story in which the Sony Building would be demolished, left lying flat for a certain period of time, and then rebuilt again.

YN: So you didn't make it into a park out of an awareness of the public interest right from the outset.

DN: That's right. It simply ended up becoming a public space as the result of trying to carry forward the founders' thinking and the designers' intentions. I don't have a sense of having invented anything new. In the end, I think it comes down to whether or not each person has strong ideas and can realize these, and whether or not the team as a whole can share such an understanding.

YN: The passion of an individual gets others involved and sets big things in motion — I am made to realize once again that this design embodies exactly the theme of the 2025 GOOD DESIGN AWARD, "A Small Step, Design Leaps."

The brand value created by choosing rather "not to build"

YN: When the building disappeared, the rental income would also disappear. How did you resolve such economic concerns?

DN: We planned it meticulously. Simply put, it was a structure in which revenue would decrease, but in return, "brand profits" would increase. We measured media exposure forecasts and ad conversion value, and also measured brand value by asking what people thought of Sony's initiative. By converting this "invisible value," we developed a logic saying that constructing a park could produce a more positive result than immediately rebuilding the building.

Moreover, if Sony Group compa-

nies or other companies held events or promotions here, we would get a fee for usage of the space, so we could generate a certain amount of revenue even without tenant income.

A good reference point was Bryant Park in New York. It used to be unsafe, but after a managing body was established and seasonal events were held — a film festival in summer, a skating rink in winter, and a market during the holiday season — people began to gather there. As a result, the surrounding area became more attractive, producing economic effects such as higher rents in nearby buildings.

In Japan, parks are generally seen as being under government jurisdiction, but Bryant Park showed that a park in a dense urban setting can also contribute to the local economy as a business.

The "blank spaces" and "programs" arrived at through experimentation

YN: Was there anything unexpected when you actually opened Ginza Sony Park?

DN: There were many things. However, since we don't clearly define what this place is for, we could say that everything is unexpected. We are often told, "This isn't a park." But parks are not only stereotypical spaces with lawns, benches, and trees. We thought that one of the essences of a park was "blank spaces."

YN: So you re-examined the definition of a park itself.

DN: Architect Fumihiko Maki once said, "A public space is a collection of private spaces." I have come to realize that this is exactly what is happening at Ginza Sony Park. There are elderly men who read newspapers in the same place every day, young women who drink coffee, and elementary school children who meet their mothers there. In other words, it has become a private space for each of them. The word "public" gives people an impression of uniformity, but if you break it down one by one, there is a private space for each person.



YN: What I have felt through fieldwork in New York, Europe, and other cities is that there are very few places in Tokyo where you can sit and relax without paying. Given that context, it is really remarkable that you created a place like this right in the middle of Ginza.

DN: I think Sony as a company has been creating such experiences for a long time. The Walkman made music to "listen to with everyone" into music to "listen to alone." And when we think about the meaning of Ginza as a location, some people go there seeking out new information because it is a place with a high population density. Although they may have no specific aim, thanks to a "hunch" that they might find something interesting there coexisting alongside a "blank space" entrusted to them, a city park is formed. And so we need a "program." An urban park in which people who have a purpose mingle with those who don't — that's what we're aiming at.

I think that if, instead of tearing down a building and rebuilding it right away, more sites were turned into parks for a while, there would be more parks in Tokyo, and the appearance of the city would probably change even further.



PROPOSAL 6

Design “centripetal forces” in an age of centrifugal forces

What are we drawn towards? “Big tasks” stood out among the winning designs in FY 2025. The valuing of individuality, deepening division, and accelerating mutual criticism: in today’s society, centrifugal forces tend to be at work. In order to successfully tackle big issues and lead large-scale projects that generate big value to success, we surely need to design “centripetal forces” that will move diverse people. Or are these perhaps unconsciously designed...?



My
Proposal

Aki Hayashi

Focused Issues Researcher,
GOOD DESIGN AWARD
2025

The arrival of an age in which “centrifugal forces” are at work

These days, we live in an age in which centrifugal forces are at work. Filter bubbles and echo chambers cause polarization on the Internet. People whose opinions have become polarized tend to find it difficult to accept ideas which differ from these. According to a 2024 survey by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, 60.6% of respondents had witnessed “posts which hurt someone (slander)” on the Internet. In a survey conducted by Bengo4.com in the same year, as many as 29.8% of respondents said they had been slandered on the Internet or SNS. According to a survey by Teikoku Databank, the number of start-up companies increased from about 120,000 in 2016 to about 150,000 in 2024. In a 2025 survey by PERSOL Research Institute, the ratio of full-time employees engaged in second jobs was 11.0%, the highest since the survey began in 2018. The labor market is also becoming more fluid. Centrifugal forces are also at work at the national level. When Britain left the EU in 2016, it rebelled against supranational integration under the slogan of “taking back sovereignty.” The administration of U.S. President Donald Trump won support for its “America First” anti-globalism policy.

The difficulty of accomplishing “big tasks”

This proposal does not reject centrifugal forces. Centrifugal forces also have significant positive impacts, including respect for diversity and individuality, the expansion of choice, and regional revitalization.

At the same time, it is also true that it is getting harder to accomplish “big tasks.” There are rising personnel and hiring costs, human resource shortages, and declining engage-

ment... In an environment in which it is difficult to retain people, it is also difficult to keep projects going and accumulate knowledge. The cost of building consensus among diverse stakeholders is increasing, and decision-making is becoming more complex and prolonged. What kind of design motivates and engages people despite this?

Examples of the design of “centripetal forces”

I will start by introducing some excellent examples of designs with “centripetal force” that draws people in from among the FY2025 winning designs.

1. “The Grand Ring,” Expo 2025 Osaka, Kansai, Japan – “collaboration” that generated centripetal force

“The Grand Ring,” which won the SPECIAL AWARD FOR FUTURE SOCIETY DESIGN, became the central pillar of the 2025 Osaka Expo, which attracted more than 29 million visitors in total.

A joint venture between three companies, Obayashi Corporation, Takenaka Corporation, and Shimizu Corporation, was responsible for the design and construction. “We had a common goal of making the Expo a success, and each company put their pride on the line and focused on realizing it,” said Masaaki Mitani of Obayashi Corporation, who served as the coordinator. The three rival companies worked together, sharing information that they would not usually disclose, and discussing and resolving issues faced by each company.

Naoyuki Kunikiyo, senior designer at Sou Fujimoto Architects, felt the power of the ring right from the construction stage. Despite receiving harsh criticisms before the opening, “I hardly heard any negative comments onsite. I believed

that the tide would turn once people actually came to see it," he said. Mitani also said "I was absolutely confident that visitors would be convinced. You could also see the difference in the craftsmen's eyes. Everyone became more and more excited." They also went all out to consider their workers. There was insufficient manpower. They sought procedures to complete the job within the limited time available, and adopted a method of assembling units on the ground and lifting them up in order to reduce work at heights. As a result, it was completed a month ahead of schedule. With a total circumference of approximately 2 km and a building area of approximately 60,000 m², the ring, which accommodated pavilions from all 160 countries and regions, embodied the concept of "unity in diversity" and became the world's largest wooden building. The "blank spaces" of the ring were used and loved in their own ways by visitors.

2. "Co-myaku" – unleashing people's innovativeness, turning into a movement

Many other Expo-related designs won awards in 2025. "OPEN DESIGN 2025: Designing a Generative Commons for Co-Creation at Expo 2025," which was chosen for the GOOD DESIGN BEST 100, developed the Expo design system as a protocol to encourage participation and co-creation. "Co-myaku" turned into a movement as fan art spread on social media. It unleashed diverse innovation with minimal rules, and attracted people's attention with the effective use of centrifugal force.

3. "Sigma BF" – centripetal forces of organization and product, born out of thinking about the essentials

The interchangeable lens digital camera market has shrunk to about 1/3, in terms of units, since its peak in 2012. The big camera makers are diversifying into businesses other than cameras and pursuing operations which make use of centrifugal force. The "Sigma BF" camera released by Sigma in 2025 was selected for a GOLD AWARD and the ECONOMY, TRADE AND INDUSTRY MINISTER'S AWARD. "BF" stands for "Beautiful Foolishness." Returning to the "box" that is the origin of the camera, Sigma pursued a simple yet elegant design. "The camera's significance comes from being a device that brings awareness to beautiful moments in everyday life and evokes creative feelings," said CEO Kazuto Yamaki.

Many listed companies are pressured by quarterly investor relations and have to prioritize short-term measures. At unlisted company Sigma, on the other hand, medium- to long-term management and organizational development have influenced the creation of unique brands and products. "I want to make things that will be talked about decades from now," Yamaki said.

Employee turnover is under 1%, and this engagement is staggering. Almost all of the manufacturing process is carried out in Japan, and more than 1,600 people work at

the Aizu plant in Fukushima. The award was picked up by local newspapers and made the company's employees and the community proud. "Because we're free, we think about what we're released from and for what purpose, and we act responsibly." Yamaki's management philosophy, which is unconstrained by received ideas, led to the creation of a product with strong centripetal force.

4. MUSIC AWARDS JAPAN – rebuilding the industry's centripetal force

Centripetal forces have also been at work in the music industry, prompted by the shock of the COVID-19 pandemic. "MUSIC AWARDS JAPAN" was selected for the GOOD DESIGN BEST 100. Tatsuya Nomura, Chair of the Executive Committee, said "For the first time, five industry groups have come together to bring Japanese music closer to the world." They did so under the banner of the four basic principles of "Transparency, globalization, praise, and innovation." They established clear regulations and selection criteria. About 5,000 people from the music industry voted. The archive of the first awards ceremony in May 2025 has had a record number of views. Domestic streaming of the winning songs increased by an average of 31%. "The big takeaway is that the industry was able to unite and work in the same direction. The way in which we moved forward based on the philosophy worked well," Nomura said. A new award has been born that will bring light to the music industry with its clear philosophy and highly transparent process.

Five common elements of "centripetal force" designs

Common elements have become apparent from these award-winning examples. First, exhaustive thinking about the essentials and a clear vision. Going back to the origin or the essentials and setting out a clear vision creates a strong centripetal force. Second, a high degree of transparency and fair processes. Third, an attitude which values the pride and behavioral principles of the people involved. Fourth, decision-making from a medium- to long-term perspective that is not swayed by short-term results or evaluations. Fifth, inclusion and sharing of diversity. Three companies worked together in a joint venture on the Grand Ring, and five groups on the MUSIC AWARDS.

The courage to take on big tasks in an age of "centrifugal forces"

In contemporary society, the nail that sticks up tends to be hammered down. I want to applaud the courage to confront big challenges and take on big tasks that generate big value. What are needed are designs with strong centripetal forces that draw a wide variety of people in tightly. These are born out of thinking about the essentials and a clear vision, highly transparent processes, an attitude of looking after the people involved, a medium- to long-term perspective, and respect for diversity.

PROPOSAL 6

Design “centripetal forces” in an age of centrifugal forces

Commentary: Background of the proposal and related topics

Edited by the Editorial Team

“Collective impact,” generating collaboration and movements

This proposal emphasizes the importance of designing “centripetal forces” that move diverse people toward a single goal and create collaboration and movements in order to accomplish “big tasks” in today’s society, which is increasingly divided and prone to centrifugal forces. “Collective impact” should be a useful reference as a concrete methodology to link this process to social impact.

Collective impact is defined as the commitment of a group of key players from different sectors to a common agenda in order to solve a particular social issue. This is based on the recognition that strong collaboration across sectors, rather than “isolated impact” in which individual organizations pursue their own activities, can bring about large-scale social change.

Complex social issues cannot be solved solely by a handful of organizations, such as companies and NPOs. Therefore, it is essential that diverse players such as governments, businesses, and citizens work together toward shared goals.

In order for collective impact to succeed, five conditions must be in place: a shared agenda, a shared measurement system, mutually reinforcing initiatives, ongoing communication, and a backbone organization to support activities. The examples mentioned in the proposal of the “Grand Ring,” in which a joint venture between three rival companies focused on “shared goals,” and of “MUSIC AWARDS

JAPAN,” in which five major music industry organizations came together under the banner of a clear philosophy of “Transparency, globalization, praise, and innovation,” are good examples of collective impact achieved through centripetal design such as essentialism and clear vision, diversity and inclusion, and a highly transparent process.

“Purpose-driven management” once more today

A company’s “purpose” (raison d’être) plays an important role as a source of the “centripetal force” which draws in diverse people, the central theme of this proposal. Purpose serves as a compass for businesses and individuals in an uncertain and fluid era, and is critical to realizing long-term value creation and business sustainability. In the past few years, “purpose-driven management,” in which a company clarifies its purpose and relationship with society and makes these the core of its business, has attracted worldwide attention. One of the reasons for the focus on purpose-driven management is that, in 2019, an association of the CEOs of major US companies revised their traditional “shareholder first” policy and declared a “stakeholder capitalism” respecting the interests of a broad range of stakeholders, including employees and local communities. Purpose has the power to drive innovation in an organization by giving employees meaning in their work and emotional support. In this age of centrifugal forces, purpose-driven management creates a powerful “centripetal force” to draw a wide variety of people to one large goal.

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PICKUP GOOD DESIGN

GOOD DESIGN Selected from the Perspective of PROPOSAL6



System & Service

OPEN DESIGN 2025

Designing a Generative Commons for Co-Creation at Expo 2025

“OPEN DESIGN 2025” is a project rooted in the official design system of Expo 2025 Osaka-Kansai and based on the concept of “open design.” Rather than a static guideline, it was implemented as a participatory protocol. Symbolized by “Co-myaku,” it created a cultural commons across physical and digital spaces, inviting reinterpretation and shared creativity.



Media & Contents

MUSIC AWARDS JAPAN

This is Japan’s largest international music award, jointly organized and operated by the five leading organizations in the Japanese music industry, transcending boundaries. It aims to promote Japanese music culture to the world and create new opportunities for the future of music by building global connections, particularly throughout the Pacific Rim region.



Media & Contents

Serendie Design System

Serendie Design System is an open-source design system by Mitsubishi Electric. It aims break down barriers across job categories, internal or external organizations, and national borders, enabling the agile creation of new value. By making everything from UI components, development code, to guidelines publicly available, it supports open and collaborative business and organizational culture.

Appendix

FURTHER DIVING

Reference works for a deeper understanding of the proposal

Selection and text by Aki Hayashi

PRODUCT

SONY “Walkman” (1979)

Akiyo Morita, who was chairperson at the time, said: “We don’t respond to the market. We create the market.” The company went ahead and put the device on sale despite internal objections that a tape player without a recording function would never sell. This is a symbolic example of a departure from the subservient attitude of “creating what customers want” to design as the agent that creates the market.

BOOK

Kiyokazu Washida, “Work for Whom? Beyond Labor Versus Leisure” (1996)

In this book, the author, a philosopher, tries to break down the dichotomy between work and play, labor and leisure, unleashing the meaning of work from the curse of efficiency and productivity. This book is a philosophical foundation for revisiting the question of what to work for and why.

PROJECT

“Design Management’ Declaration,” Japan Patent Office, Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (2018)

The participation of the design manager in the management team and design involvement from the earliest stages of business strategy construction were specified as necessary conditions. Its significance lies in the positioning of design not as something solely for designers, but rather at the core of management as “an important management resource for enhancing corporate value.” An epoch-making document from the national government that set free those responsible for design and their roles, opening the way forward.

INTERVIEW 3

Design is a half-a-century-old management capital. What is the happy relationship between design and management?



Shingo Torii × Aki Hayashi

Focused Issues Researcher and editor/business executive Aki Hayashi, in her 2025 proposal, put forward the idea of “design ‘centripetal forces’ in an age of centrifugal forces.” To deepen this proposal, Hayashi spoke with Shingo Torii, Chairperson of the Osaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Representative Director, Vice Chairman of the Board of Suntory Holdings Limited. As a leading figure in the Japanese business community, Torii continues to combine abstract concepts with concrete manufacturing and materialize his vision. Through dialogue with him, she explores hints for Japanese companies to create innovation again.

Shingo Torii

Joined Suntory in 1983. Contributed to the improvement of whisky quality as the third-generation Master Blender in 2002, and became Vice Chairman of Suntory Holdings Limited in 2014. Took office as Chairperson of the Osaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry in 2022, after serving as President of Kansai Keizai Doyukai (Kansai Association of Corporate Executives). With the spirit of “Yatte Minahare,” he is leading the economic, cultural, and regional development of Kansai.

The founder’s “design-oriented” DNA

Hayashi(H): How has design been involved in your challenges as a leader of the Japanese business community? I would also like to hear about the positioning of the design organization within Suntory and how design literacy is communicated to employees.

Torii(T): In Suntory, its founder Shinjiro Torii was a very design-oriented person. He had a strong interest in design from the time he founded the company in 1899 at the age of 20, and I feel that it still influences the company today.

Even before the company was founded, a trademark was registered under the name of his brother. This was at a time when the trademark system had only just been introduced in Japan. The fact that design was reg-

istered at such an early stage shows his foresight and enterprising spirit.

H: He considered not only product quality but also appearance and mark as a core element of brand identity.

T: That’s right. He didn’t know the word “brand,” but he was trying to create one. He placed as much importance on design as on taste and aroma. From the very start of the business, design was already there. He understood that design is a face and trust.

Culture where non-designers can choose design

H: Design has been the starting point of business since the founder’s time, and it has permeated the organization.

T: A symbolic example is the story of an engineer who developed the

beverage C.C. Lemon. She not only proposed the name based on doubling the vitamin C content, but also decided the package color herself.

At the time, Suntory had the freedom to think about the overall structure beyond the usual division of roles. Even non-experts could grasp what was happening in the world and decide the direction of design. This reflects a culture of the “freedom to grasp what is in the background.”

H: Design is involved from the upstream process.

T: Yes. What matters is a culture where ideas can emerge freely without being blocked. If someone says, “Do as I say,” neither the company nor society will last long.

This culture continues today. For

example, the design department office was reorganized to create a space that facilitates co-creation, where designers, engineers, marketing, and sales staff can all gather. The design section functions as a mediator that connects concept and actual products.

Design is not a cost center

T: Before I joined the company, the design office was under the direct control of Keizo Saji, the president at the time. Normally, it is the president's office or the corporate planning office that falls under direct control, but in this case, it was the design office.

H: In the 1970s to early 1980s, it was very progressive for a large company to place a design organization under direct executive control.

T: Moreover, Keizo Saji was personally close to the heads of the design office and met with them frequently. He did not interfere, as he was not a design expert. Rather, I think he wanted to engage with their creativity and gain new perspectives through those interactions.

H: So design was valued as management capital and brought in-house.

T: I'm sure he did. I think he understood design intuitively, not as a management theory. This stands in contrast to the situation in modern Japan, where design is often regarded as a cost center and subject to cost cutting.

Suntory's historical challenges — for example, continuing to invest in the beer business for more than 60 years — are rooted in the belief in and investment in design by its executives. I also feel that design is inseparable from the global presence of Japanese whisky.

For instance, the lettering on the Yamazaki label was handwritten by Keizo Saji. The idea of placing large Japanese kanji on the label was bold and unprecedented at the time. After all, design is credibility.

“Actual product comes first” and the proximity between management and design

T: Suntory is based on the “actual product comes first” principle. Even though things can be created virtually, we make actual products as much as possible and discuss them. People respond differently when they see and touch real objects.

For example, the PET bottle of lemon green tea that mimics a bamboo tube was created through this approach. At the time, most bottles had the same shape, but this was a challenge born from working with actual products.

H: The distance between management and design—and between management and products—is very close. That seems to be the driving force behind continuous innovation.



T: The distance between abstract concepts and concrete manufacturing is also close. Managers understand both the ideal and the reality, and work to integrate them. This act itself is a form of design—aligning the abstract with the concrete.

H: What emerged through this dialogue is that design is not just decoration, but a concept that connects management, on-site practice, and society through an “actual product comes first” philosophy. This way of thinking offers a universal clue for Japanese companies to survive uncertain times and continue to innovate.




APPENDIX

Six Proposals in the Making

We have presented the six Proposals in the previous pages. These proposals were written through a number of discussions and hearings over 6 months, concurrently with the screening process of the GOOD DESIGN AWARD 2025. This section provides background information on the activities of the Focused Issues Team up to the creation of the six proposals.



GOOD DESIGN AWARD	2025	Focused Issues
Application Period	April	
	May	
1st Screening	June	Form the team
2nd Screening BEST 100 Special Screening	July	Observe and discuss screening entries in a cross-sectional manner
	August	
	September	
Award Announcement	October	Determine the theme for proposals
	November	Prepare proposals through interviews with award winners and external experts
	December	
	January	Interview movies here 
	February	Present proposals

Don't care even if people ask you, "Will it make a profit?" Rather than being bound by short-term figures, try believing that investment in culture and society will end up by driving the economy.

Instead of fighting a lone battle, try thinking about the "centripetal forces" which will engage and involve the people around you.

Rather than giving up because "it's a rule," try considering whether you can rewrite these rules and the structure (architecture) itself.

Take down the sign that says "We are an XYZ establishment, so..." and try leaping agilely into different fields and domains.

Start from Today

Free Design, Unleash Design

"Freeing and unleashing" start not only with large-scale activities, but also with the small daily routines of each individual. Why don't you try getting rid of the small "limits" in your everyday work and life?

Try valuing things that move you, such as "emotions" and "tastes," rather than merely functions and specifications.

Before bemoaning a "lack," try enjoying "bricolage," which uses whatever is to hand in ingenious ways.

Don't choose from existing options, but instead try creating methods that do not yet exist yourself.

Stop scrambling to update what is right in front of you, and try thinking on a "long timeline" about what will remain 30 or 100 years from now.

Try prioritizing the "indigenous rhythms" and comfort at our feet over global solutions.

Believe in the power of design, have courage and try breaking down the stereotypes (limits) about "how things should be."

Tracing the forms of freeing and unleashing

Selection and text by Sakura Nomiya

Activities that shape society have emerged in situations where a wide variety of possibilities were available, even while taking into account existing frameworks. Reconsidering the present makes room for new things to enter, and our lives become richer by flexibly acting in response to the situation. This section introduces diverse initiatives across history in response to this year's theme of "freeing and unleashing."

1910s, Japan

Tool for autonomy and freedom

Tin prosthetic leg

Zensho Hospital (now Tama Zenshoen Sanatorium), year of production unknown (Taisho period)

In 1911, an inmate of a sanatorium for leprosy came up with the idea for, and made, a tin prosthetic leg. Because it had a simple structure and could be made using familiar materials readily available within the sanatorium, this method of production spread and was widely used until after the War. Users would adjust the prostheses to match to the condition of their legs, or custom-make and decorate them to look more like legs. This was a design enabling people to make the freedom to walk by themselves with their own hands.



Photo credit: Minami Hirayama (at the National Hansen's Disease Museum)

Sakura Nomiya

As a researcher of design history, she plans exhibitions and writes and translates books and magazine articles. After working at the National Museum of Modern Art, Tokyo (2017-2021), she currently serves as the Director of the IGARASHI TAKENOBU Archive (Kanazawa Institute of Technology).

In selecting examples, we have focused on the fact that they were repeatedly shared and implemented in society, rather than just being used once. For this reason, examples from the twentieth century onwards were chosen, taking into account the social background against which this quality could be observed more clearly.

1920s, Japan

Symbol of the education demanded by future society

Jiyu Gakuen school buildings (now Jiyu Gakuen Myonichikan), Frank Lloyd Wright, 1922

The school opened as interest in education centering on children's interests and individuality was spreading, with Taisho Democracy acting as a tailwind. The low-rise school buildings, which are built to surround a large schoolyard, are bathed in gentle natural light, creating an odd sense of liberation. The beginning of a question which persists even today about what a space providing a free and lively learning experience should be like can be found here.



Photo credit: Kakidai (Wikimedia Commons), CC BY-SA 4.0

1920s, France

Reframing the image of women

Interior for Madame Mathieu-Lévy's Apartment on Rue de Lota, Paris Eileen Gray, 1920s

This was the living space of a female boutique owner, and was sometimes used as a location for advertising photos using herself as the model. It has a strong presence as a space a woman to live independently and freely, liberated from the premodern image of women who were supposed to devote themselves to their families and be pure. The elimination of decoration in modern design also played a major role in creating a neutral impression.



Photo credit: photographer unknown (Wikimedia Commons), public domain

1930s, America

A material whose shape can be freely altered

AD-65 radio Wells Coates, 1932

A radio which used Bakelite, a type of plastic, for the body. Taking advantage of this plasticity, it featured a smooth and minimal shape without corners. At the time, radios with the appearance of large and heavy furniture were the norm, but these models became popular because they were small and could be used to create an accent in one's interior decoration. With the birth of new materials, a move to search for hitherto unknown forms began.



Photo credit: Daderot (Wikimedia Commons), CC BY-SA 4.0

1930s, Finland

Liberating the mind and healing the body

Armchair 41 Paimio Alvar Aalto, 1932

A chair designed for a sanatorium. The backrest is slightly tilted because it is easier to breathe when you are half sitting. Overturning the preconceived idea that isolation wards are dark and frightening, the place is enveloped in bright colors and light, with warm wooden furniture placed in it. We can glimpse the desire to liberate the minds of the patients, whose spirits become low, and the people working there.

Photo credit: ©Artek





Photo credit: Sui-setz (Wikimedia Commons), CC BY-SA 3.0

1960s, Japan

Getting the feeling of being able to go anywhere

0 series Shinkansen
Japanese National Railways, 1964

In 1964, the year of the Tokyo Olympics, the Tokaido Shinkansen, the world's first high-speed railway, went into operation between Tokyo and Shin-Osaka. The Yume no Chotokkyu [Dream Super Express], which could reach speeds of over 200 kilometers per hour, played a key role in spreading the word about the wonders of free and speedy travel. In addition to its "button nose," which was designed taking into account air resistance, the two-tone white and blue color scheme is still engraved in people's memories as the iconic look of the Shinkansen.



*Images of the work can be seen via this link (accessible as of February 2026)

1950s, Switzerland

Marriage of stillness and motion

Acoustic Society's 5th Spring Concert
Josef Müller-Brockmann, 1953

Rules are often equated with constraints, but they also guarantee certainty. The arrangement of textual information based on a grid gives a very quiet and stable impression. On the other hand, the arcs of different lengths, which are placed freely everywhere on the screen, create large swells that seem to engulf the viewer. The dynamism of the sound can be conveyed precisely because the two coexist.

1960s, Italy

A leap beyond what was "taken for granted"

Sacco
Piero Gatti, Cesare Paolini,
Franco Teodoro, 1968

Who decided that a chair must have a seat and a back? It teaches us that it is important to question the premise behind the forms of things we take for granted. This is the origin of the so-called "beanbag" that quickly became a part of our lives, easily leaping beyond words like ergonomics and universality.



Photo credit: Daniela De Ponti, CCO

1950s, Japan

The most fun time is when you look for freedom

Forest and Grove
Ryuichi Yamashiro, 1955

This poster was created experimentally in the 1950s, around the time when phototypesetting technology began to be introduced. Grouping letters in this way is impossible with movable type, and it takes considerable time to arrange a large number of characters randomly by hand. This is a fun piece in which the experimental creation of an expression that can only be achieved by phototypesetting comes across. The restricted phase when we are trying to understand technology and are in the midst of development is surprisingly interesting.



*Images of the work can be seen via this link (accessible as of February 2026)

1940s, America

Supleness unleashes the form

Leg splint
Charles and Ray Eames, 1942

Molded plywood is a material made of laminated thin timber that can be easily bent under pressure. It thus enabled curved surfaces and distinctive shapes to be created at will, which had been difficult with conventional plate materials. The Eames husband-and-wife team, who focused on this characteristic, worked on a medical splint. During the wartime shortage of materials, it made a significant contribution as a medical device using alternative materials.



Photo credit: Daderot (Wikimedia Commons), CC BY-SA 4.0

1950s, Japan

Effectiveness born from limitations

Speed kettle
Sori Yanagi, 1953

This kettle was made to promote gas-saving after the War. It is flat because the surface touching the flame has been made wider so that water can be boiled quickly. In fact, a cylinder runs through the center of the main body, from the bottom to the top, and it is designed so that heat can spread across this area when it is heated. It was born out of the inconvenience of a lack of materials, but remains an effective product in terms of energy savings.



Photo credit: YANAGI DESIGN



*Images of the work can be seen via this link (accessible as of February 2026)



Photo credit: Jordy Meow (Wikimedia Commons), CC BY-SA 3.0

1970s, Japan

House for living without being tied to a place

Nakagin Capsule Tower
Kisho Kurokawa, 1972

Architect Kisho Kurokawa predicted the emergence of "Homo Movers," people who are constantly on the move and seeking new information and values due to the development of transportation and communications. This was in 1969. He imagined a world as yet unseen, and after thinking about the architecture necessary for that purpose, he came up with the idea of providing living spaces in interchangeable capsules. This was long before the word "nomad" became widely used in Japan.

1970s, America

Broad-mindedness that underpins freedom

I ♥ NY concept sketch
Milton Glaser, 1976

There is an anecdote saying that a quick drawing on a paper napkin in a taxi became the original picture, and the logo was born. Thanks to the simplicity of form, it is used freely in various places, but it can be said to have spread because of the tolerance which permits this. Come to think of it, one of New York's most iconic symbols is the Statue of Liberty.

1980s, America

Ignorance = inconvenience

SILENCE = DEATH
SILENCE = DEATH project
(Avram Finkelstein, Brian Howard, Oliver Johnston, Charles Krelloff, Chris Lione, Jorge Socárras), 1987

A poster created to spread information about the AIDS epidemic widely, and which became the visual symbol of activism. Placing the pink triangle which symbolizes Nazi persecution of homosexuals at the center, it sent a powerful message that silence leads to death. The creators also hoped that raising awareness would eliminate discrimination against sufferers and infected people, who were being oppressed.



Photo credit: DemonDays64 (Wikimedia Commons), CC BY-SA 4.0

1980s, Japan

New forms created by an age of choice

Legum Cordless Telephone
Takenobu Igarashi, 1989

With the liberalization of sales in 1987, cordless phones became available in various colors and shapes. It was also around this time that office automation equipment began to spread, and workplace interiors changed as a variety of machines were introduced into offices. Back then, phones were primarily targeted at women, but linear, inorganic designs intended for men came onto the scene.

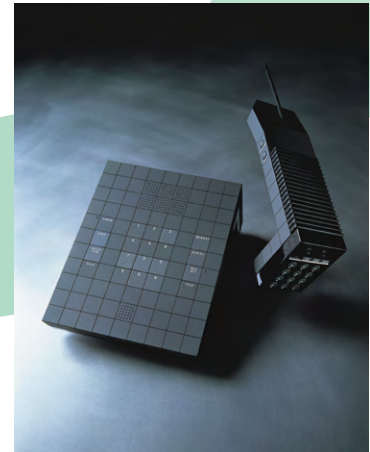


Photo credit: Igarashi Takenobu Archive



*Images of the work can be seen via this link (accessible as of February 2026)

1990s, Japan

The world changed by a simple texture

Essential Shampoo Bottle
Kao Corporation, 1991

The raised markings on shampoo bottles for tactile identification are now commonplace. Though a small change, they made it easier for people with visual impairments to distinguish products and use them independently. What began as an initiative by a single company gradually spread, eventually becoming an international standard. A small insight that significantly improved everyday life.

1990s, America

When text and images began to move

Flying Letters
John Maeda, 1996

Today, it is easy to move text and images freely on a screen using various applications, and static graphics are now less common. This work, which laid the foundation for digital expression, was an interactive "book" that responded to mouse movements, created using programming languages. The content was viewed by loading data from a floppy disk included with the book onto a computer.



*Images of the work can be seen via this link (accessible as of February 2026)

2020s, the world

Small piece of cloth to ward off anxiety



*Images of the work can be seen via this link (accessible as of February 2026)

How to make masks
Johns Hopkins Hospital, 2020

Six years ago, the world was rocked by the COVID-19 pandemic. There was a shortage of masks, and people tried to protect their daily lives however they could with the help of information about how to make cloth masks which they found on the Internet. For how long will we be able to remember that time, when we were not allowed to go outside without wearing a mask? The data on how to make them is stored in the Design Museum.

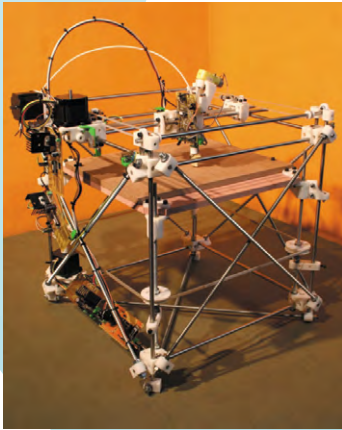


Photo credit: Adrian Bowyer (Wikimedia Commons), CC BY-SA 3.0

2000s, the world

Machinery for free innovation

RepRap project
Adrian Bowyer, 2005

The expiry of patents on fused deposition modeling, the leading technology, led to widespread open sourcing of home-made 3D printers. Now that experiments have been repeated all over the world and people have become able to buy them cheaply, the innovativeness of individuals is directly reflected in society. As a result of this change, the role and raison d'être of designers, who were hitherto indispensable in the field of manufacturing, are being reconsidered.



Photo credit: David Fuchs (Wikimedia Commons), CC BY-SA 4.0

1990s, the world

Unlocking the joy of using

iMac G3
Apple, 1998

Until then, computers were just convenient machines, and their appearance was a secondary concern. Then this came on the scene, with its futuristic appearance due to its skeleton body. The fact that you could freely choose the color according to your personal taste was attractive, and it came to be widely accepted as an element of interior decoration. Users were able to use it as soon as they plugged it in, unleashing them from the hassle of cabling and increasing freedom in terms of where it could be placed.

2020s, Japan

There is so much freedom in communicating

Voting poster
Expression & Politics, 2021 –

A site bringing together posters encouraging people to vote created on a voluntary basis by graphic designers and illustrators. The desire to make society even a little better and the creative motivation to convey something visually overlap successfully. Along with the spread of social media, the intention to participate in politics has been made visible. The data can be freely downloaded and printed.

Photo credits: Expression & Politics, creators: (top left) Taku Bannai, (top right) Marie Watanabe, (center left) Jujiro Maki, (center right) Nanaiko Ueto, Reiko Wakai, Naoko Shimizu, (bottom left) ΔΔ (Yuuri Mikami, Takuya Hoda), (bottom right) Saki Souda



Photo credit: Evan-Amos (Wikimedia Commons), public domain

2000s, Japan, North America, Europe

World of freedom unfolding from a black box

PlayStation 2
2000

What shocked me more than anything as a child was its appearance. I remember that it was cool to see the totally black box standing in front of the TV screen in my friend's Japanese-style room. The sound when it started up, combined with the motion graphics, surely made many people feel that the future was finally here. I was moved by the world of freedom created by the 3D computer graphics which spread across the screen.

2000s, Japan

Depicting the ideal and thinking outside the box

White Series
Noda Horo, 2003

Enamelware kitchen products were usually patterned, and there was apparently initially opposition from within the company, saying that pure white containers would not sell. The person who came up with the idea did housework every day while working. That was exactly why they desired this ideal. Lightweight and compact. Food cooked in advance looks great. Thinking outside the box, that what they wanted was surely connected to what everyone wanted, was the starting point.



Photo credit: Noda Horo

DISCUSSION



Continuing freely, meticulously, and for a long time: the future of design as “hope”

“Freedom” not to be bound by any framework, and the weight of “continuity”

— Looking back on the 2025 GOOD DESIGN AWARD, what signs of change did you notice?

Saito: As symbolized by the theme of this year’s Focused Issues, “Free Design, Unleash Design,” I feel that there were a great many initiatives that bravely took “a small step.” For example, we saw many new implementation methods which were not bound by existing frameworks, such as the Oohito Subaru Micro Hydropower

Plant, a small-scale, decentralized hydroelectric plant created through a process that no one had ever thought of before, or the Reposaku smart agricultural infrastructure offered by an agricultural digital transformation startup.

Another strong impression was of “continuity.” The GRAND AWARD winner, “DLT Timber Temporary Housing,” is the result of many years of tackling a challenge by architect Shigeru Ban, while the GOLD AWARD winner “Genbe River, a Clear Stream Where Fireflies Dance and Aquatic

Flowers Bloom” is an activity that has continued for more than 30 years. And these have not simply lasted for a long time, they continue to be updated to suit the times. This was also a year in which I felt the depth of the time axis, sublimating the accumulated experiences of the past into modern values.

Nagayama: I was particularly conscious of the “time axis” this year, too. The fact that activities which began 30 years ago are still evaluated highly is also proof of how forward-looking the initial actions taken at that time were. This is a highly volatile era, and that is

exactly why we are required not only to provide immediate novelty, but also to think over the long range of what will happen 30 years from now, and to plant the seeds which will develop into the standards of the future. I think that this year's selection of the GRAND AWARD and the GOLD AWARD reflected an appreciation for such "strength that transcends time."

Kuramoto: I think that design approaches are becoming "polarized," in a positive sense. One is a move in which designers are at the center of a large social "wave" which draws in the people round about. The methodology of designing an ecosystem as a whole, including the region, the manufacturing site, and the residents, has become firmly established over the past few years.

The other, in contrast, is "artisanal deep dives." Just like with the "Sigma BF," an interchangeable lens mirrorless camera, and the "Classics the Small Luxury" handkerchief, the focus has been on manufacturing that pursues every last detail with unyielding tenacity and pries open the next door with an acuteness like pushing a needle through a hole, hasn't it? The "breadth" that draws in society and the "depth" that takes an individual's aesthetic sense to the limit: I think that the appearance of these two extremes simultaneously and at a high level was a characteristic of this year.

Moving back and forth between a "bird's eye view" and an "insect's eye view" in an instant

— *Taking into account this year's trends, what are your thoughts about the issues that designers and the design industry should tackle going forward?*

Saito: I think that we need to demonstrate "the value of investment in design" to society. This is all the more true now that the domain of design has expanded and designers have obtained the right to question and rebuild processes and structures themselves.

How much value is design generating within a company or region? Can we define and believe completely in this without being swept away by the winds of economic rationality?

At the same time, it is important to enhance the literacy of the recipients (consumers). On what contexts and histories is the design built? Creating design which naturally and unobtrusively interests people in the underlying philosophy and story – "translating the context," so to say – will surely also become an important task for the designer.

Nagayama: The key to deepening "the recipient's understanding" is the design of the communication itself, isn't it? No matter how great the way you run your business is, that's not enough to convey this. Only when the "interface," such as the packaging, website, or user interface of the app, is attractive will the thinking behind it reach you. Looking at this year's winning designs, not only the excellence of their initiatives but also the extremely high quality of the communication and graphics conveying this stood out. I felt once again that design functions as an engine for social implementation.

Kuramoto: I feel that the ability to move "back and forth between perspectives" has once more become essential for designers. The bird's eye view, which is the perspective of the social environment and business, and the insect's eye view, which is particular about the texture of the material and 0.1 mm details: these are related to the "big wave (the macro level)" and the "artisanal deep dive (the micro level)" which we talked about earlier. The ability to move between these completely different scopes in an instant will become more and more important. The moment after a peer-to-peer discussion of the social significance with the business executive, the designer has a heated debate with the craftsman at the production site about the fit of a single screw. I believe that

such amplitude is what will become the backbone of today's increasingly complex projects.

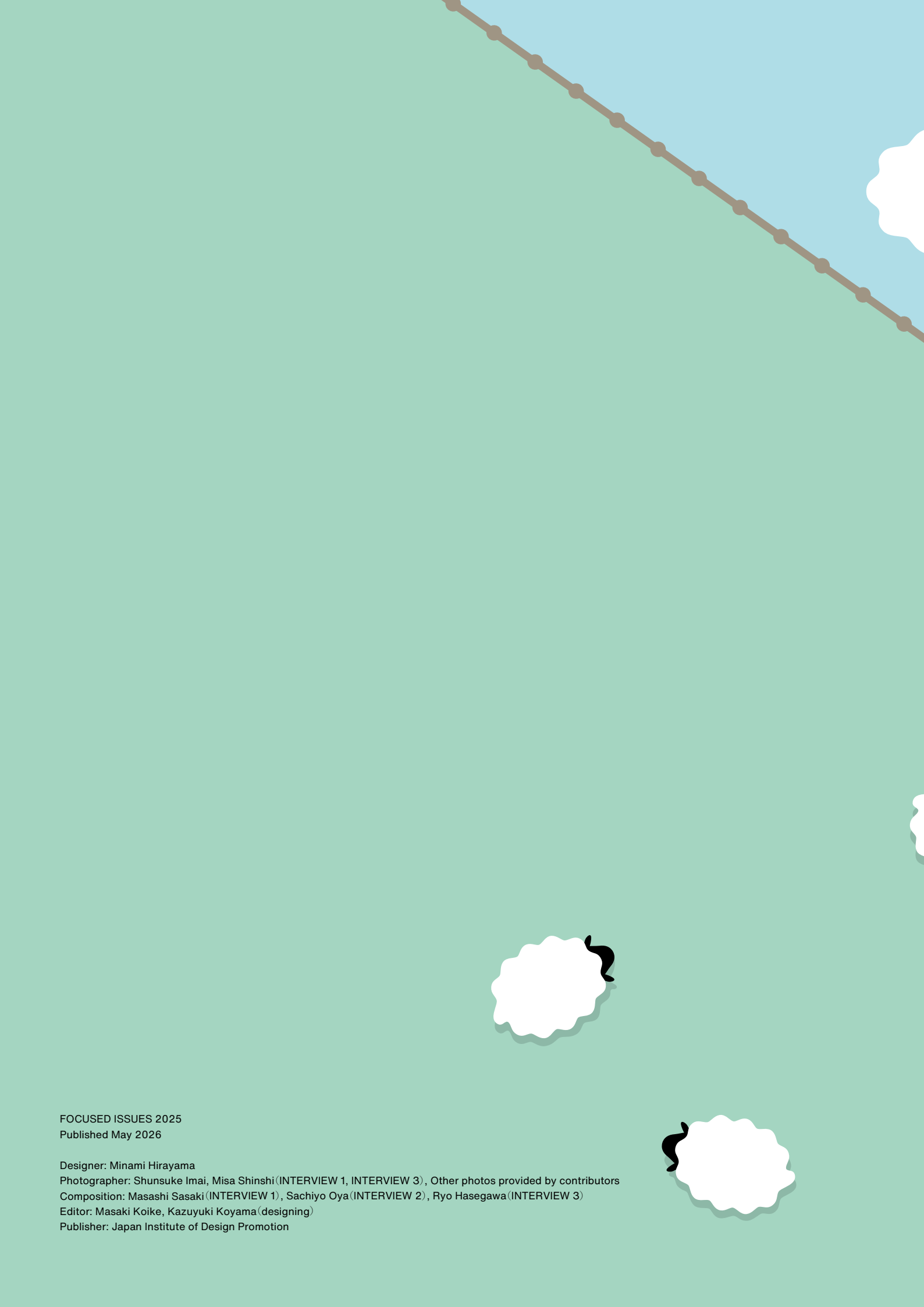
Design is "hope"

— *Finally, please could you give us a message for the design industry and for the GOOD DESIGN AWARD going forward?*

Saito: I believe that "design is hope." Even while the political and economic landscape is anything but bright, there is still much that can be aided by the power of design. We, as creators, are to believe in its power, use it to the full, and help society, as the recipients, to realize its value. I hope that the platform which is the GOOD DESIGN AWARD will continue as an activity that empowers society as a whole by making such "hope" visible.

Nagayama: Over the past few years, the domain covered by applicants for the GOOD DESIGN AWARD has broadened to a surprising extent. This is also evidence that the very definition of "design" itself is expanding. By continuing to present high-quality case studies that evoke "a sense of the future," the GOOD DESIGN AWARD gives creators hints for their next steps and recipients the realization that they, too, might be able to change something. I would like it to continue to be an entity which encourages society as a whole, acting as the origin of such a positive cycle.

Kuramoto: When design is in the driving seat, we always see wishes along the lines of "It would be great if things turned out like this..." The future is uncertain, and making predictions entails risk. However, we find the courage to envision a "good future," and then backcast from there to give shape to "What do we need now?" This chain of "small steps" will gradually but surely make society better. I am looking forward to a world which continues to be filled with designs that have the power to shrink the distance between the future and the present.



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