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Kawasaki Motors Ltd.

Wacom's pen displays continue to fuel Kawasaki's passion for design. Wacom Cintiq Pro 27 fosters further innovation.

Company Profile

Kawasaki motors corporation

Since its foundation in 1896, Kawasaki Heavy Industries, Ltd. has been involved in a wide range of businesses from ships, aircraft, rolling stock, motorbikes, robots and industrial plants, and has constantly introduced innovative products to the world. Kawasaki Motors is the only division of the Kawasaki Heavy Industries Group that develops products for the general consumer market. The company boasts a broad product line-up that includes motorcycles, the JET SKI® personal watercraft, ATVs (all-terrain vehicles) and utility vehicles. Wacom's Cintiq Pro pen displays are used in the design process. www.kawasaki-cp.khi.co.jp/corp/

Wacom pen displays trigger digitisation of design work

Kawasaki Motors Co. has developed a wide range of products that embody the 'joy of driving and fun of handling' under the vision 'Let the good times roll'. Kawasaki brand motorbikes, known for the Ninja, Z-series and W-series, in particular, continue to attract many fans around the world, not only for their high performance and equipment that incorporate cutting-edge technology, but also for their innovative and distinctive design that sets them apart from the rest.

The Styling Section of the Design Department, which designs all of the company's products, has been using Wacom pen tablets for over 15 years. Mr. Yu Shibuta, a lead and styling designer who has been with the company for 19 years, looks back.

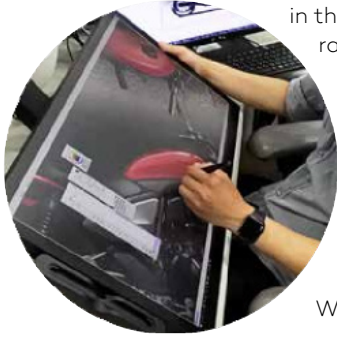
"When I first joined the company, most of the design work was still done by hand using analogue methods. When I joined the company, I was not a good artist, and I was not as good as my seniors. Around that time, a board-type pen tablet that no one else was using was sitting in a corner of my office, and being a new-fangled person, I tried it out straight away. As I was using it, I thought I could express myself as well as my seniors with it, and I got more and more absorbed in digital technology."

As Mr. Shibuta became more and more familiar with pen tablets, the advantages of digital workflow over analogue in terms of expression and work efficiency became recognised



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in the department, and the usage rate of pen tablets gradually increased. When several pen displays were introduced, they were so highly rated that there was a battle within the department, and from there, digitalisation proceeded at a dash, and now each designer has a Wacom pen display.

Evolved Wacom Cintiq Pro 27 reduces work stress for designers

The Styling Section has been introducing the latest products: the pen display Wacom Cintiq Pro 32 in 2019 and the latest Wacom Cintiq Pro 27 in 2023. Mr. Shibuta gives the following assessment of the comfort of using the Wacom Cintiq Pro 27: "When I was using a 32 inch, the main unit took up about half the desk and was heavy, so it was a bit difficult to get around. 27 inch is much lighter and more compact, so it's easier to handle. The resolution is higher, the bezel width is narrower and sleeker, so the screen size is smaller than before, but it doesn't feel smaller."

Another major benefit of the Wacom Cintiq Pro 27 is that it eliminates the reflection of fluorescent lights, he says. "Until now, I used to deliberately hold the unit upright to avoid the reflection of lights. This is a bit of an unreasonable way to draw, so my neck and back started to hurt when I worked for long periods of time. With the new model, I don't have to worry about the reflection when I lay it down, so I can draw at a very natural angle and it's a lot less stressful."

Ms. Tomomi Murayama, a styling designer in the department, studied design almost exclusively drawing by hand when she was a student, and started using a pen display for the first time after joining the company. At first, Ms. Murayama was a bit bewildered by working digitally, but after installing the Wacom Cintiq Pro 27, she says that her confusion has disappeared.

"In my case, perhaps because I have a long experience of hand-drawing, my pen pressure is a little strong, so with the previous pen display I have used, the pen slipped on the screen and I found it a little difficult to draw. Even if I changed the pen to one with friction resistance, it would wear off quickly. But with the Wacom Cintiq Pro 27, the screen itself has friction resistance, so it's very close to the feeling of drawing on paper, which is the biggest advantage for me."

Another styling designer, Mr. Kaewsomsri, has been designing Kawasaki products in Thailand for 9 years. He has been using a Wacom pen tablet for many years since he was working in Thailand, and since he works in Japan, he uses a Wacom Cintiq Pro 27 for everything from idea-level sketching to presentation-quality creation and even 3D modelling. "I like to use the pen in a rather analogue way, and don't use the side buttons very often. But I do use the ExpressKey™ on the device a lot. The ExpressKey™ on the new Wacom Cintiq Pro 27 has a grip shape, so when I put my hand on the side of the pen display, it fits perfectly and feels very natural."

Drawing and communicating. Contributing to improved team communication.

Nowadays, 3D-based design flow is becoming the mainstream, and in the Styling Section, some designers make simple 3D models, but when they need to make proper 3D models for mass production of products, they work in cooperation with external 3D modellers. Mr. Shibuya says that Wacom's pen displays also play a major role in such communication with external parties.

"Since Corona, we have been communicating with 3D modellers remotely more and more. In that case, it was difficult to convey our thoughts over the phone or by e-mail when we asked for corrections to the 3D models we had received, so we had to spend a lot of time and energy on that. Now, using an LCD pen tablet, I can draw detailed instructions on the captured 3D, such as 'a bit more of a line here', and send it to them in a flash. Now that I can do that, it's easier to convey my thoughts, and the speed and quality have improved."



The company's design department was one of the first to introduce pen displays into design work, which had previously been mainly hand-drawn, and has actively promoted digitalisation. In the future, the company intends to focus on the technique of drawing sketches directly on the VR space. With an unwavering design philosophy of being unconventional, fearless, and particular, the company will continue to create one-of-a-kind designs with Wacom's pen displays.



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