



EXHIBITOR Magazine's World Expo Awards

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Beneath the monumental embrace of World Expo 2025's Grand Ring — the largest wooden structure on Earth — visitors moved from desert sands to towering forests to the farthest reaches of space. They traveled millions of years into the past and caught glimpses of a tech-forward future that asked them to confront what it means to be human. Each pavilion they encountered told the story of a country's ambition, ingenuity, and soul.

EXHIBITOR magazine has a decades-long history of celebrating the world's best exhibit design. Early this year, as the world's attention turned to Osaka, Japan, our team dove in once again, launching our sixth World Expo Awards competition. This competition honors the exceptional pavilions that redefine what's possible in exhibit, event, and experiential design.



This year's winning entries expertly reflected Expo 2025's theme, "Designing Future Society for Our Lives," by exploring utopian ideas of sustainability, playfulness, love, and the thread that connects our past to our future. A panel of world-class designers, marketers, architects, and storytellers selected the winners featured on the following pages while the People's Choice Award was determined by thousands of online votes from readers and Expo enthusiasts across the globe.

The designs here are more than just feats of engineering. They're evidence that at the intersection of design, story, and human imagination, something awe-inspiring emerges, whether those factors collide in a towering Expo structure backed by a grand budget or in a 100-square-foot trade show booth. They're where concept meets reality in unforgettable ways.

WORLD EXPO AWARDS JUDGES:

JORGE ALVES, FOUNDER AND LAB MASTER, MIND TROOPER, LISBON, PORTUGAL;
 MINA CHOW, FAIA, NCARB, ADJUNCT PROFESSOR, USC SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE;
 FACULTY FELLOW, USC CENTER ON PUBLIC DIPLOMACY; FOUNDING PRINCIPAL, MC²
 SPACES DESIGN MEDIA PRODUCTION, LOS ANGELES, USA; MICHAEL CHRYSAL,
 CEO AND FOUNDER, FORUM YOUR BRAND BUILDER GMBH, SOLINGEN, GERMANY;
 DANILO DANGUBIĆ, AADIPL ARCH RIBA, FOUNDER, DANILO DANGUBIĆ ARCHITECTS,
 BELGRADE, SERBIA; CHETAN FERNANDES, GLOBAL PROJECT DIRECTOR FOR EXPO
 RIYADH 2030, HOPSCOTCH GROUPE, PARIS; MARIE-JOSÉE FRIGON, PRESIDENT
 AND FOUNDER, TRAFIC DESIGN INC., MONTREAL, CANADA; DR. SERINA HIJJAS,
 PRINCIPAL, HIJJAS ARCHITECTS & PLANNERS, KUALA LUMPUR, MALAYSIA; ÁLVARO
 TORRELLAS HURTADO, COFOUNDER AND CREATIVE DIRECTOR, ICARIA ATELIER,
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 A O.O., PRZEMIEROWO, POLAND; PETER JUNG, CO-FOUNDER, MILTON EXHIBITS
 GROUP, KOWLOON, HONG KONG; STAN KRUSS, FOUNDER AND CEO, EXPO CENTRIC,
 SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA; MITCHELL MAUK, PRINCIPAL, MAUK DESIGN, SAN FRANCISCO,
 USA; BEVERLY PAYEFF-MASEY, DIRECTOR, MASEY ARCHIVES, NEW YORK, USA; NICO
 UEBERHOLZ, CEO, UEBERHOLZ-PLANB GMBH, WUPPERTAL, GERMANY; DEBBIE WONG,
 RETAIL INNOVATION AND SUSTAINABILITY SENIOR DESIGN MANAGER, L'ORÉAL LUXE
 TRAVEL RETAIL ASIA PACIFIC, SINGAPORE

FOR JUDGES' BIOS, VISIT EXHIBITORONLINE.COM/AWARDS/EXPO.



BEST LARGE PAVILION

SAUDI ARABIA PAVILION

DESIGN: Fosters + Partners

FABRICATION: Tanseisha Co. Ltd

Imagine an entire Saudi Arabian village transported to Japan and nestled onto 37,500 square feet of space at World Expo. The Saudi Arabia pavilion was more than a celebration of the country's art, culture, and technology. It was a journey to another land.

The journey began with a wending path that was a veritable study in line management and design. Guests were entertained by their stroll through a forecourt landscaped with Saudi Arabian flora and peppered with QR codes that provided information on

the plants. Staff members in traditional garb greeted each visitor from a dais, and they had a seeming preternatural ability to ascertain which language to use to address each guest.

As visitors approached the towering, two-story pavilion, cool breezes swept away Osaka's oppressive summer heat, present around the clock. This was no magic trick, but scientific sleight of hand steeped in cultural tradition. Saudi Arabian villages rely on passive cooling techniques, such as shading and narrow streets, to manage heat.



Pavilion designers applied modern technology to this ancient strategy and used fluid dynamics to funnel air through the pavilion that was noticeably cooler than its surroundings.

Introduced as “An Epic Journey of New Discoveries,” the pavilion presented a spatial narrative that set the stage for Expo 2030 in Riyadh, and invited visitors to explore the country’s past, present, and future. The pavilion reached nearly 55 feet in height, 340 feet in length, and 110 feet in width. By day it held the buzz

of a bustling city but by night it gently glowed, enticing late-night passersby into its central courtyard where they’d find traditional musical performance accompanied by awe-inspiring graphics projection mapped onto the towering surrounding walls.

Radiating from the central courtyard was a series of interactive exhibits that highlighted Saudi Arabian visual and musical artists, technology, and dreams of future cities. For those lucky enough to secure a reservation at the pavilion’s restaurant, a meal

became a cultural discovery. The restaurant’s signature Saudi Experience menu consisted of 16 different tasting dishes from various regions of the country. Every bite told a story.

Through interactive design and heartfelt personal connection, the pavilion not only left visitors with a greater understanding of Saudi Arabia, but served as a reminder that design, culture, and technology can transport visitors across time and place. The experience set a high bar for what the world can expect in Riyadh 2030.



BEST SMALL PAVILION

SWISS PAVILION

DESIGN: Manuel Herz Architekten, Bellprat Partner

FABRICATION: NUSSLI Group

Symbolism, art, technology, and, yes, Heidi animated Switzerland's storied past and its anticipated future at World Expo's Switzerland pavilion. At just 1,200 square meters, its relative size was no metaphor for the vast imagination applied to the interactive design and sustainable construction. The modular space traced Switzerland's journey from its Alpine heritage to its emergence as a global leader in technology via four interconnected spheres made of recyclable ETFE film. With the entire shell weighing in at just 450 kilograms, the ultra-light, air-supported material helped earn the distinction of lightest Swiss Pavilion ever built for a World Expo. A guided journey, aptly named "From Heidi to High-Tech," began upon entering the first sphere, where a 10-meter, three-dimensional aluminum paper-cut display left judges scouring the artwork for its many Swiss-centric details — Heidi included — and tongue-in-cheek Easter eggs. The second sphere encouraged visitors to stand before a pool that sent giant bubbles aloft and speak their visions of a satisfying and collaborative future, either in English or Japanese, into specially designed microphones. Their thoughts were then transformed into soaring virtual bubbles, brought to life right before their eyes using AI technology. The Anticipation Sphere, the third, showcased a rotating exhibition that was updated every two months throughout the duration of the show. Current technological advances and visionary breakthroughs around the themes of the Augmented Human, Life, and Planet were spotlighted. Another feature here was the impressive Geneva Public Portal to Anticipation, which translated a cutting-edge scientific database (the GESDA Science Breakthrough Radar) into an interactive public experience using insights from more than 2,100 leading scientists across 197 countries. The final sphere celebrated Switzerland's joyfully inventive spirit, with Swiss novelist Johanna Spyri's eponymous character, Heidi, swinging side by side with Japan's animated version of the Girl of the Alps. The fictional child's name further lent itself to the Heidi Café on the pavilion's rooftop, where a fusion of Swiss and Japanese flavors — and a great view — hit home the message that "small" is often a matter of perspective.



BEST ACTIVITY/INTERACTIVE GUEST EDITOR'S CHOICE

UZBEKISTAN PAVILION

DESIGN: Atelier Brückner

FABRICATION: NUSSLI Group

The Uzbekistan pavilion didn't just tell the story of a country rooted in tradition yet poised for a bright future. It brought that story to life via three immersive installations: glowing interactive plinths, a panoramic projection wall, and a 360-degree lifting theater.

Just past the pavilion entrance was a dim room where visitors encountered a series of internally illuminated plinths (i.e., architectural blocks topped by interactive elements). Employing lighting, multimedia, and embedded touch-points, these tactile installations begged exploration, covering topics such as renewable energy, urban development, and youth empowerment.

Hailed by jurors as “mesmerizing beacons of communication,” the

plinths also caught the eye of designer Mitchell Mauk, who honored the entire pavilion with a Guest Editor's Choice Award. While Mauk lauded the pavilion's exterior and its forest of architectural forms, he also praised the plinths. “The display [of plinths] was something I'd never seen, as it was an exhibit display with only glowing artifacts,” he said. “Here, the absence of color made the attendee focus on the message and form.”

A second focal point comprised a panoramic projection wall. Here, three layered projections responded to visitor movement, creating a dynamic learning landscape. However, the third leg of the activity triad — the 360-degree lifting theater — was visitors' most memorable interaction.



Visitors left the darkened room to step into a 360-degree cinematic experience, where projected narratives unfolded across a cylindrical screen. Visuals depicted Uzbekistan's landscapes, architectural treasures, and future visions, while animated transitions flowed seamlessly between ancient heritage and contemporary progress. All the while, traditional Uzbek music blended with orchestral scores, shifting visitor from passive observers to engaged participants. But the true magic came as the entire theater ascended through the pavilion with movement so subtle it went unnoticed by many visitors. At the film's conclusion, visitors were surprised to step out onto the pavilion's upper outdoor deck into the Garden of Knowledge, a forest-like arrangement of towering wooden columns, breathtaking in scale.

While the experiences no doubt captivated visitors, they were far more than spectacle. They delivered meaning through design, brought Uzbekistan's story to life, and turned abstract themes into memorable moments.

PHOTOS: JOSEF SINDELKA



BEST ELEMENTS

NETHERLANDS

DESIGN: Tellart

FABRICATION: Tellart; RAU Architects



Water, one of the five natural elements, is critical to human life, and it is particularly significant to life in the Netherlands, where the Dutch have learned to adapt to its powerful caprice. Living below sea level has brought both challenges and collaborative opportunities, the latter highlighted at this year's pavilion where the theme of Common Ground — a Dutch concept of problem solving emphasizing shared values — was center stage. The Netherlands seeks not just to channel water away from its cities, but integrate it into the daily lives of its people and unlock its potential.

The 1,157-square-meter space's sustainable construction included a variety of symbolically circular

elements, the most dynamic of which was the large central dome whose architecture served as both the medium and the message. Within the pavilion, the exterior dome was revealed to be a sphere, and as visitors streamed past it to discover the experiences inside the pavilion, the brilliant visual illustrated — figuratively and spatially — the force of nature and its life-giving energy. The sun sculpture was representative of a future led by clean, renewable, and universally accessible energy for all, and, coming full circle, its design was inspired by the “Tower of the Sun,” an avant-garde sculpture by Tarō Okamoto for Expo '70.

Upon entering the space, visitors received their own Energy Orbs: handheld devices that powered a range of interactive installations and hit home

the illuminating aspect of immersive storytelling. When guests approached the Orb Check-In Mirror, for example, they placed the orb against the glass and their charged orbs began to glow a vibrant orange that signaled the beginning of the collective adventure at hand. Technology was on full display in the pavilion: Each orb contributed unique elements, shifting from orange to blue to represent individual drops of water and emitting pulses of light that added layers to a sophisticated soundscape created in Max and conceived by Resonate Audio.

The audio component represented the juxtaposition between chaos and harmony and began at the water basin installation just inside the pavilion entrance. Chaos was represented by textured layers of manipulated water sounds that symbolized the historical struggle between the Netherlands and the force of water. Harmony emerged through stylized classical orchestral arrangements that symbolized the country's cultural and technological achievements born from the always-present tension between human and water. The soundscape personalized the visitor experience by responding to each Energy Orb, an effect that culminated at the Pledge Station, where attendees were invited to join others by stepping into an ever-growing communal circle, or a “common ground.” Visitors were asked to move the orbs in sweeping motions in front of the Promise Mirror. As guests watched in the looking glass, the orbs began to pulse in unison, memorably demonstrating the importance of people's cooperative commitment to creating a sustainable future.



BEST STAFF

UAE PAVILION

DESIGN: Earth to Ether Design Collective

FABRICATION: UAE Expo Office, Atelier Brückner, Rimond, Process Iguchi, Shelter, R/O/U/Y/A, SLA

Cultural storytelling can be the tide of connection, which is precisely what the winners of the Best Staff at World Expo 2025 accomplished. UAE Pavilion's Youth Ambassador Programme was the realization of a quest to cultivate a team of 46 ambassadors who embodied the UAE's unwavering allegiance to global engagement.

The journey to Osaka began months prior to opening day. A rigorous, multi-tiered training curriculum started with more than 5,400 hopeful applicants. An extensive process involving 309 interviews distilled the ocean of thousands to a pool of less than 50 unique candidates who would represent the UAE. This elite group of young leaders included 24 Emiratis, 20 Japanese, and two expatriates. Fluent in seven languages — including Japanese, English, Arabic, Korean, French, Tagalog, and Chinese — the final crew became the voice of the UAE to the global community.

Before stepping onto the world's stage, the small team engaged in a cultural deep dive in Emirati tradition paired with specialized training in Japanese customs. They experienced informative site visits at the Expo and engaged in navigating the waters of role-play training. By the time they surfaced in the UAE Pavilion, the tight-knit group was dripping with authentic hospitality.

The Youth Ambassadors circulating in the UAE Pavilion exhibit were more than booth staff. They were cultural diplomats, rich with storytelling abilities in global tongues. Their passion for engagement washed every connection with Emirati warmth, making every visitor feel a part of the UAE's story. Even when attendance surged to an impressive 32,000 guests in a single day, their commitment to courtesy never drifted. One judge said, "Even with thousands of people walking through the UAE pavilion every day, the Youth Ambassadors seemed able to make each person feel like a cherished guest."

What began as an innovative approach to team building cascaded into something greater: a reimagining of cultural diplomacy. The Youth Programme set a new high-water mark that defined a legacy of global engagement.



BEST INTERPRETATION OF THEME

DYNAMIC EQUILIBRIUM

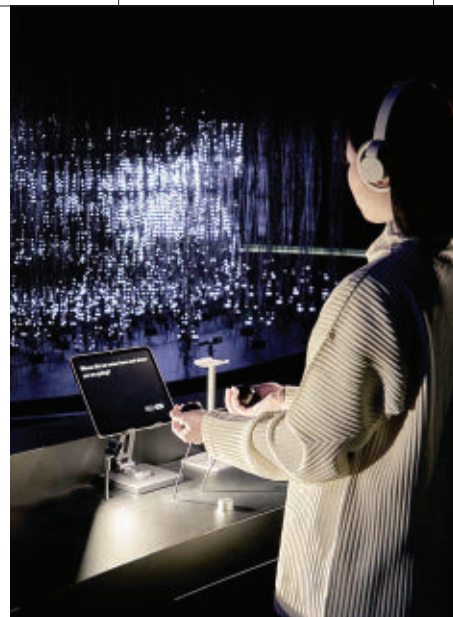
DESIGN: Shin-Ichi FukuokaNaoki,NHA|Naoki Hashimoto Architects,Takram

FABRICATION: Kajima Corp., Tanseisha

The Dynamic Equilibrium of Life pavilion was a matter of life and death. Producer and biologist Fukuoka Shinichi wanted it to make the most optimistic of points — how and why life doesn’t really end — in an experience judges called “an artist’s philosophical exploration.”

Representing the moment when life takes form, the structure’s curved exterior was appropriately christened “Embryo.” When visitors entered the sparse pavilion, their silhouettes were projected onto the centerpiece called Clathra, a circular 3-D multimedia sculpture made

of 320,000 LED lights. (The installation’s name originated from the protein clathrin, which forms a scaffold-like frame inside cells.) Measuring roughly 33 feet in diameter, 100 feet in circumference, and standing eight feet tall, Clathra behaved more like a constellation of sentient stars than a string of light-emitting diodes. The visitors’ projected shadows — if they waved, their silhouettes waved back — soon dissolved, merging with a glittering torrent of light particles rendering the 3.8-billion-year-old drama of life on Earth. The glowing, swirling storybook formed an ever-



changing stream of layered images, starting with a eukaryotic cell, the 2-billion-year-old biological building block for more intricate life. The older-than-old cell and its descendants cooperated with each other and even produced more resources for other life forms to thrive. Out of this altruism — not Darwinian competition — plants and flowers bloomed, dinosaurs rumbled, birds soared, and Homo sapiens appeared along with countless other flora and fauna. Mesmerizing, even spellbinding, the presentation depicted life continually breaking down and rebuilding itself through a “dynamic equilibrium” that ignores entropy, nature’s tendency for things to irretrievably break down and end. The world might be burning and the end might seem near, it said, but life will always find a way.

PHOTOS: JUNPEI KATO, MASAKI OGAWA, MASAO NISHIKAWA, KEIGO NISHIO, SHUTA SHIMMYO

BEST SUSTAINABLE DESIGN

SAUDI ARABIA PAVILION

DESIGN: Fosters + Partners

FABRICATION: Tanseisha Co. Ltd

Few environments captured the essence of their respective countries better than the Saudi Arabia pavilion. As proof, it took home multiple awards in categories ranging from Best Large Pavilion to Best Use of Technology. However, beyond showmanship and emotional impact, the pavilion delivered a minimal blow to Mother Nature, earning it the top spot in the Best Sustainable Design category as well.

Beyond mere material selection and reuse considerations, designers employed computational fluid-dynamic simulations to devise a footprint that channeled cooling summer winds through its streets and featured lushly landscaped environments that shielded visitors from harsh northerly winds in cooler months. Similarly, the design optimized seasonal sunlight and shade to ensure comfort year-round, blending environmental intelligence with cultural authenticity.

This intersection of culture and sustainability wasn't lost on jurors. "What impressed us most was how seamlessly the design married science and tradition, showing that sustainability can be both innovative and deeply rooted in heritage," one judge said.

Within the overall footprint, the structure reflected a lightweight, low-impact philosophy. It employed a modular system that reduced reliance on concrete and steel, with façades clad in super-lightweight honeycomb aluminum panels and thin layers of stone. Rooftop photovoltaic panels supplied up to 10 percent of the pavilion's energy needs, while rainwater recycling and energy-saving luminaires further contributed to its net-zero carbon operation. What's more, 99 percent of the structure, building services, and façade were conceived for reuse, recycling, or recovery.

These efforts aligned with the country's green initiatives and earned the pavilion top global certifications, including an S rating — the highest-level rating from Japan's Comprehensive Assessment System for Built Environment Efficiency (CASBEE). The Saudi Arabia pavilion proved that sustainability and spectacle can go hand in hand in an experience that was as responsible as it was remarkable.







BEST PRESENTATION/STORYTELLING

KUWAIT PAVILION

DESIGN/FABRICATION: Lava, NUSSLI Group, Insglück Gesellschaft für Markeninszenierung mbH

From the moment visitors arrived at the Kuwait pavilion, cultural symbolism and connectedness took center stage. While a soaring wing-shaped roof gave a symbolic nod to Kuwait's dunes and waves, its modern design spoke to the country's future. Inside, the cultural story unfolded across five choreographed chapters — from an immersive 4D activity within a cleverly constructed oyster shell to a sensory immersion within a desert atmosphere. However, the pavilion's final chapter, the Visionary Lighthouse, served as the pavilion's emotional climax, connecting visitors via a shared immersive experience.

Housed beneath a vast dome, the Visionary Lighthouse invited visitors to step into an abstracted desert landscape crowned by a star-filled sky. However, this was no passive spectacle. Rather, each person became a co-creator of the night. At interactive "wish machines," guests spoke aloud their personal hopes for the future, and an AI system instantly transformed those words into radiant shooting stars, projected in real time across the dome.

After making their wish, visitors reclined on sculptural dunes, hearing their own voices blend with those of others, seeing their stars orbit and connect to form shared constellations. As more voices joined in, the starry sky grew denser and more dynamic. Images of people and landscapes emerged, and the chorus of wishes filled the space with a collective sense of hope. In that moment, private dreams became part of a greater whole.

It was this sense of hope and community that won over judges. "The Visionary Lighthouse was ingenious," one judge said. "Through the wish machines, individual wishes became real, connected with others, and acted together. The experience clearly relayed that when we work together, everything is possible."

By turning individual desires into a collective vision, the Visionary Lighthouse captured the World Expo's spirit of imagination and possibility. Thus, the pavilion's legacy was not its structure alone, but the shared hope it sparked in everyone who entered it.





BEST EXHIBIT/DISPLAY GUEST EDITOR'S CHOICE

USA PAVILION

DESIGN: Alchemy, BRC Imagination Arts, Trahan Architects

FABRICATION: BeWunder, ES Global / Alchemy, True Staging

Presenting America as a narrative adventure, the USA Pavilion set a spirit of imagination and innovation at the center of its story. Visible from throughout the Grand Ring encircling the Expo, the pavilion anchored around a translucent cube that appeared as if suspended in air, flanked by two triangular buildings. Giant LED screens broadcast scenes of American landscapes as guests waited in snaking lines to begin a journey through time and space, in an experience encompassing more than 32,000 square feet.

Designed to evoke a sense of intrigue from the first steps, a dynamic layout highlighted the potential for progress under a unifying theme of “Imagine What We Can Create To-

gether,” an idea so compelling that the pavilion was awarded a Guest Editor’s Choice Award from Chetan Fernandes who said, “All senses were engaged to create a lasting experience.”

Kinetic and contemplative elements included lighting effects layered over a musical score and historical NASA footage. A moonlike ambiance with a neon glow cast over photos of lunar landers built by Blue Origin, Firefly Aerospace, and Intuitive Machines.

The “Altitudes of Observation” exhibit visualized life from the Ocean’s trenches to the International Space Station. A model Artemis rocket introduced efforts to land and sustain humanity on the Moon. ICON’s 3D-printed technology exemplified the versatility of automatic robotic



systems. A tribute to the James Webb Space Telescope captured the awe of deep space.

And holding up historic success as inspiration for the future, there was a piece of the Moon on display — an artifact from the final mission of NASA’s Apollo program and a nod to the Moon rock from an earlier Apollo mission celebrated in Osaka at the 1970 World Expo.

The walk through space culminated in the pavilion’s suspended cube where visitors experienced Launch, an immersive recreation of a NASA rocket launch. Attendees stood surrounded by LED screen displays and atmospheric smoke as they took a visual journey from Earth to the moon to galaxies beyond. Jumping from screen to screen, Spark — an animated red, white, and blue star — served as a multilingual mascot symbolizing the energy that drives imagination.

“The spark behind this immersive world hit us right away,” said one judge. “Among the stars, the creative design and storytelling inspired hope and excitement for future exploration.”

PHOTOS: HUFTON + CROW, WILD + ROSE

BEST EXTERIOR DESIGN

GERMANY PAVILION

DESIGN: Lava, Facts and Fiction GmbH

FABRICATION: GL Events

Building off the Japanese word “wa,” which means both “circle” and “harmony,” Wa! Germany embodied the circular economy. Here, every element from the architecture and garden to its internal narrative explored a sustainable — and circular — cycle.

Praised by jurors as “a clear concept and message that was magically communicated in two letters,” the Germany pavilion was based on an architectural layering effect. The office wing, which served as a structural foundation, acted as the back of house for the organization. Built from a modular steel framework that was repurposed after the expo, the wing was covered with a layer of dirt so that it disappeared below ground and gave birth to a lush garden environment above.

Within the garden, seven timber-clad cylinders rose from the landscape like sculptural forms in motion. Their curved façades, crafted from glue-laminated timber, radiated warmth in a deliberate counterpoint to the hard edges of traditional expo architecture. Each of the seven cylinders, which were disassembled and repurposed after the event, offered a specific purpose — from exhibitions to dining.

Equally powerful was the landscape surrounding the cylinders, which was curated as a temporary but thriving ecosystem. Within it, every plant was borrowed, not bought, as they were sourced from and later returned to an Osaka nursery. Along with these climate-resilient plantings, the environment featured landscaping designed to manage stormwater runoff (aka bioswales) and gravel trenches that demonstrated how water, soil, and vegetation interact regeneratively. Interspersed throughout, interpretive signage transformed the landscape into a learning tool, showing visitors how circular thinking applied as much to ecology as it did to architecture.

Together, the pavilion’s structure and garden expressed a holistic vision of sustainability that extended beyond the expo grounds. Wa! Germany proved that circular design isn’t just a theory. Rather, it’s a realistic experience for those who choose to live responsibly.





BEST UNIFORMS

THE BALTIC PAVILION

DESIGN/FABRICATION: Linen ID Studio, Ltd.

It's only fitting that one be appropriately attired for an event as grand as World Expo. For host countries Latvia and Lithuania in the Baltic pavilion, the staff not only dressed for the occasion, but embraced the booth's innovative and sustainable showcase through its dress code.

A flowing, parchment-colored wardrobe of trousers, vests, shorts, and shirts was neutral in hue but anything but boring. Modern cuts on sleeve lengths, simple but effective D-ring buckles, and a distinctive side-hip apron stamped with the "ONE" logo created a cool elegance that was strikingly modern. The contemporary cut of the jib was gentled by the use of 100 percent hand-stitched linen, which harkened to the traditional costumes of Latvia and Lithuania. A subtle tattoo of olive-hued, deconstructed squares trailed the sleeves and marched across the chests of the shirts in a staccato of further nods to the booth's logo. The soft folds of the fabric kept staff effortlessly cool, both literally and figuratively.

Designed as a capsule collection, the pieces provided the booth guides with freedom of personal expression without them straying too far from a cohesive "We are One" collection. The final look was chic, fashionable, perfectly appropriate, and authentically beautiful.

PHOTOS: VENTS ABOLINS, REINIS STRAUTINS

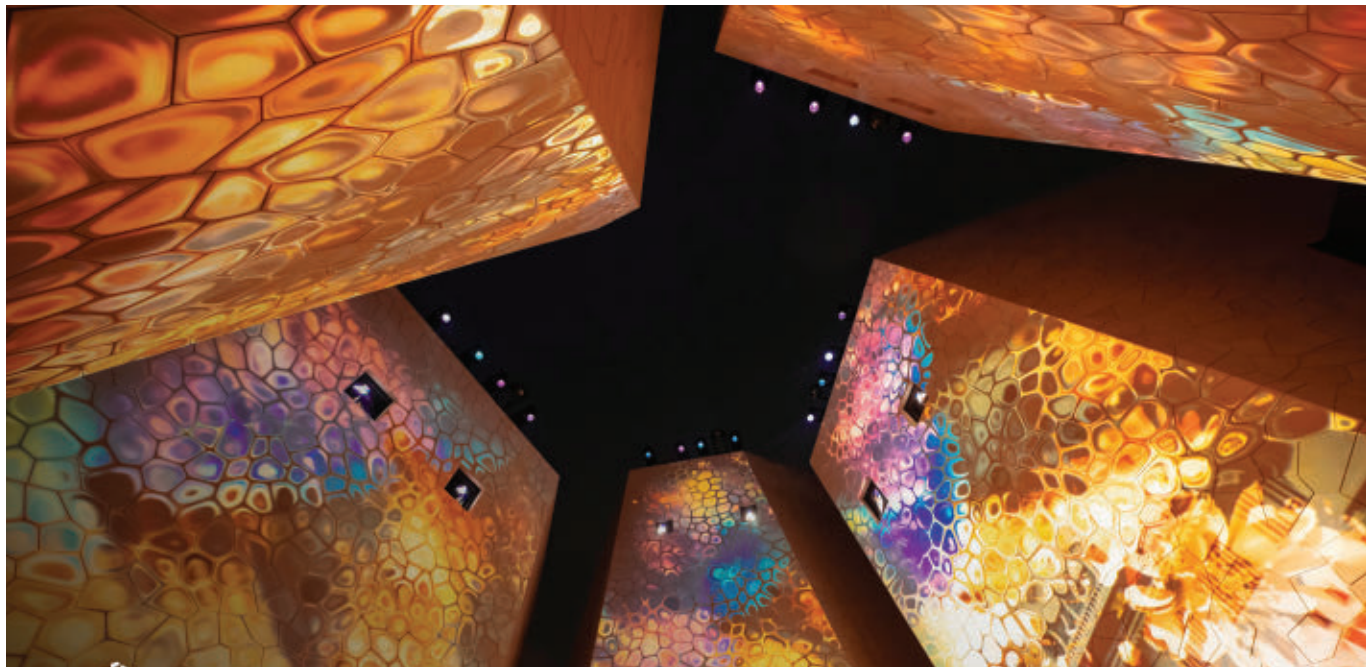


BEST USE OF TECHNOLOGY

SAUDI ARABIA PAVILION

DESIGN: 59 Productions, Blkk Design, Done & Dusted, Fosters + Partners, Insignia Worldwide, Squint Opera, THA Staffing & Beyond Limits, TGP International

FABRICATION: Ando Hazama, BeWunder, Black Engineering, TAIT, Tanseisha Co., Ltd.



Integrating pioneering technologies into “An Epic Journey of New Discoveries,” the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia pavilion presented a standout immersive narrative by rethinking their venue as a programmable canvas. Infusing storytelling with technological innovation wove a mesmerizing and evolving tapestry into the surrounding architecture.

Promoted as a “ritual of shared memory and emotion,” the immersive theatrical experience *Tales of Water* reimagined a folk tale about Saudi Arabia’s pearl divers and created an entrancing hero’s journey of descent, discovery, and return. Enclosed within the towering walls of two-story central Saudi Courtyard, the choreography and design behind the

360-degree, ultra-high definition 4K audiovisual experience married a Saudi vocalist and a Japanese cellist with expansive animated film projections and spatialized sound effects evoking sea surges and mythical creatures. Precision-calibrated systems placed viewers within the heart of the story, and dynamic and real-time synchronization ensured each performance stood as a unique experience.

Turning visitors’ experience with the sea from story to science, Sustainable Seas partnered with King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST) to demonstrate a collaborative marine regeneration effort that was first spearheaded by a biomedical engineer who applied 3D bioprinting to mitigate coral loss.

With 220 coral-like pieces as a focal point, the exhibit’s live 3-D printing of eco-friendly coral structures led to daily additions to a growing coral wall. Through its rapid prototyping, cost-effectiveness, and scalability, the project exemplified sustainable innovation. Visitors also experienced an interactive gallery featuring dynamic textured environments layered with data and multilingual insights into Saudi Arabia’s investments in energy, life sciences, and space exploration.

“The attention to detail on the projection mapping was extraordinary,” said one judge. “But in each exhibit, the technology was deployed with such creativity and purpose that visitors surely were drawn to return again and again.”



PEOPLE'S CHOICE

SINGAPORE

DESIGN: KR+D Pte. Ltd., DP Architects Pte. Ltd.

FABRICATION: Kingsmen Exhibits Pte. Ltd.

Inspired by Singapore's nickname "The Little Red Dot," the island-country's pavilion stood nearly 55 feet high, and the structure showcased its sustainability with an exterior comprising 17,000 recycled aluminum discs. The discs, varying in size, color, tone, and texture, were inspired by "Seigaiha," a geometric pattern of overlapping circles signifying waves, echoing Singapore and Japan's shared identity as island nations. The pavilion became a landmark of sorts for those visiting the Expo site and the vivid red color of the pavilion exterior clearly caught the eyes of the public as well, earning the Singapore Pavilion the People's Choice Award.

Inside the pavilion, bespoke soundscapes and a lush paper-cut "forest" led to the Dream Repository where visitors wrote a wish on touchscreen Dream Creation Stations and flung it into a collective space with those of other visitors. A riff on "Ema," the Japanese tradition of writing wishes on wooden plaques, the activity concluded when guests moved up a ramp to a domed enclosure where the individual dreams coalesced on a 360-degree overhead screen into a shared vision for a better tomorrow.





EDITOR'S CHOICE

PAKISTAN

DESIGN: 3rd Floor Public Relations

FABRICATION: Trade Development Authority of Pakistan

The theme for Pakistan's pavilion at Expo 2025, "Universe in a grain of salt," was an homage to a line in William Blake's poem *Auguries of Innocence*: "To see a world in a grain of sand." Pavilion curator Noorjehan Bilgram mirrored the idea that the tiniest part of something can represent the entire construct by capturing the depth of Pakistan's culture in grains of salt. The pavilion was inspired by the Khewra Salt Mines, the second-largest salt mine in the world, known for its production of pink Himalayan salt.

The exterior of the pavilion both enclosed the interior in mystery and highlighted Pakistani artistry. Hand-hammered copper tiles, crafted by artisans from Peshawar and hand-selected by Bilgram, referenced the centuries-old tradition of copper artistry in Pakistan. Visitors also encountered art that bridged cultures: Japanese and English translations of a bespoke poem by Pakistani poet Zehra Nigah evoked salt as a symbol of nourishment, and hand-painted images on the entrance wall were by Farooq Mustafa Maeda, a Pakistani artist who has for decades made his home in Japan.

Stepping into the pavilion was like stepping into a salt lamp that glowed from within. The floors and walls were constructed entirely of pink salt tiles, with white salt crystals masking the seam where wall met floor. Dust from thousands of daily footsteps was washed away nightly with salt water so that the floor maintained its crystalline shimmer. Six -foot-tall craggy art installations, made of salt and reminiscent of rock candy, created clear paths through the pavilion and cordoned off a wellness booth where visitors could sit and absorb salt's purported health benefits. To enhance the immersive effect, every 50 minutes, bursts of salt-infused steam filled the pavilion.

Although the curative claims of Himalayan salt remain unproven by science, the pavilion's serene glow and the quiet ritual of walking among pink crystals made the chaos of the Expo dissolve like salt when exposed to warm water and reminded visitors of the beauty held within even the tiniest crystal.



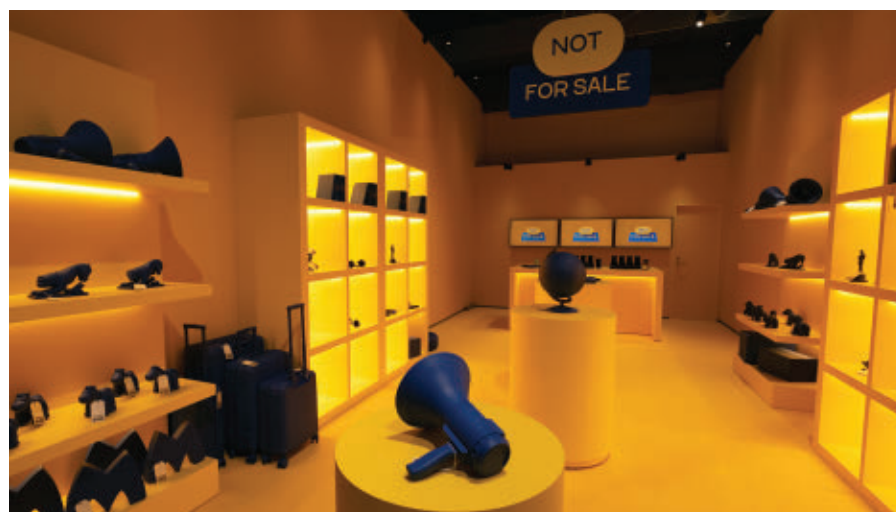
Quiet Giants

For nearly two centuries a World Expo has displayed the crème de la crème of design and exhibiting. Expo 2025 in Osaka kept this torch lit with a pavilion inspired by a legendary novelist, a building that stealthily moved visitors into the air, and a structure that sang like whales. But there were others — smaller, quieter, less flamboyant — that still stood out like a Vermeer in a room full of Picassos. Here are four whose skill at exhibiting can be distilled into one word: masterpiece. *By Charles Pappas*



To read a more comprehensive version of EXHIBITOR's staff favorites from World Expo, visit ExhibitorOnline.com/ExpoFavorites

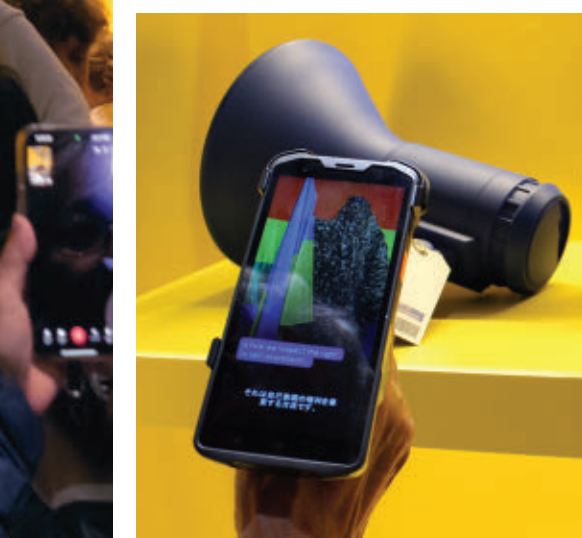




THE HIGH COST OF LIVING

DESIGN/FABRICATION: Bickerstaff.734

FABRICATION: Bickerstaff.734



Oscar Wilde once defined a cynic as a “A man who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing.” Yet while Russia tries to reduce Ukraine to smoke and rubble, its brutal attacks haven’t made a dent in the resilient country’s core values — a feat captured in the confines of its small space at Expo 2025.

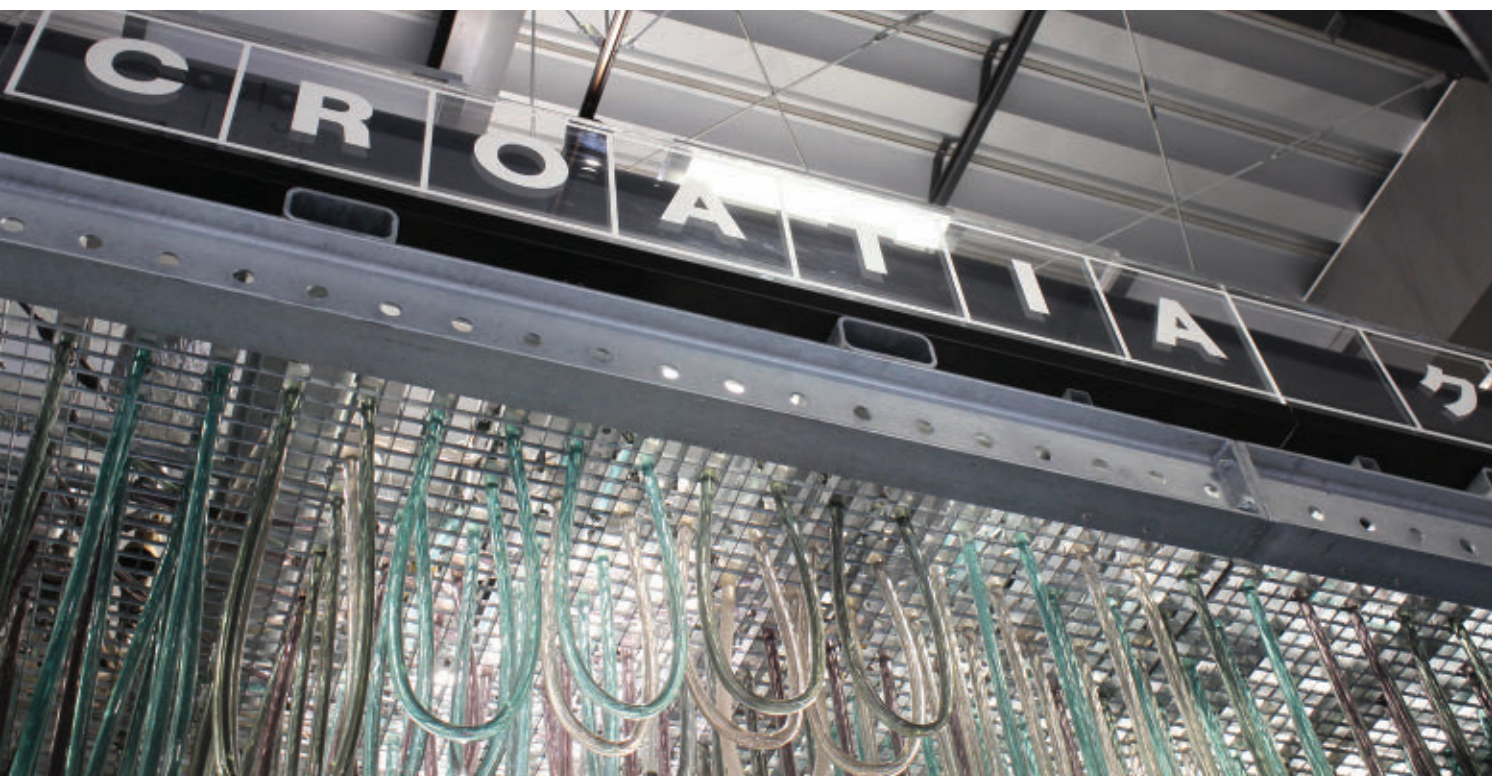
Under the provocative theme “Not for Sale,” Ukraine’s pavilion was designed in the guise of a store where you can buy absolutely nothing. The pavilion and everything in it were enveloped entirely in the country’s colors of blue and gold. The stunning space featured 18 items — such as a rose, a globe, or a model horse — that symbolized the country’s values, all in deep blue and most of them manufactured of 3D printed plastic.

Every day the pavilion staff armed thousands of visitors with a price gun, which they used to scan the barcode on objects’ price tags. Instead of a price popping up, what appeared

on the scanner’s screen was a short video. Click the object shaped like an M, which stood for the logo of the metro system in Kharkiv, and you witnessed a video of children studying their schoolbooks in the subway underground while the air above them shrieked with bombs. Click on a headlamp — the type commonly used by construction workers for repairs — and you watched doctors operating with nothing more than the light of a smart phone to guide their surgeries.

Neighboring the pavilion was another smaller, equally stark space. Here were actual relics of the war: a raft; a helmet from DTEK, whose workers restore electricity for millions under relentless Russian shelling; and a bullet-smashed yet still working siren system that might be a metaphor for Ukraine itself. Thousands of visitors passed through the pavilion every day for the six months of Expo 2025, as many as 1,500 an hour, silent as if in church and reverent as if pilgrims at a shrine.







FIRE AND ICE

DESIGN/FABRICATION: TARHIV Architecture & Urbanism Ltd.

Almost every pavilion at every World Expo, from Azerbaijan to Zimbabwe, had one thing in common: thermostats locked at a constant temperature. Croatia turned this standard upside down in a first-of-its-kind pavilion called “Climadiversity” that exported its weather 5,800 miles to Japan.

To call attention to the way climate and human culture shape each other, the Mediterranean country filled its pavilion with about eight miles of water-filled tubes that snaked through the 53-square-meter space (roughly 570 square feet) floor-to-ceiling like a rainforest of piping. More than just an avant-garde work of art, the plastic conduits and the three tons of liquid coursing through them varied in temperature depending on where you stood in any of five different areas. The temps in these microclimate zones were neither random nor constant, however. The relative coldness or warmth could change every 30 minutes depending on weather data

transmitted live from 45 weather stations in Croatia, bringing the country’s climate to the Expo in real time.

A subtle gradation in the pavilion’s floor took the 2,500 daily attendees — usually six at a time — upward so that they climbed from warmer locations at the bottom that represented the seaside to cooler ones at the top that represented the mountains, just as they would in Croatia. When guests entered any of the areas, their own body heat altered the hyper-local climate, fulfilling the designers’ aim. To demonstrate, a series of monitors displayed the guests’ thermal images that visitors could access, download, and share. Reds, yellows, and oranges indicated a hotter location, while blues designated a cooler setting.

What news stories about melting icebergs and rising sea levels cannot always achieve, Croatia’s pavilion did in a way you could feel on your skin. It showed that the fate of the climate is our fate as well, linked as tightly as Earth and gravity, cause and effect.





THREADS OF TIME

DESIGN: Shifa Zghoul and Ahmad Jubra

FABRICATION: Daiko Nitten

Jordan may be small, but its impact on the world is huge. It's home to several Dead Sea Scroll discoveries, and archaeologists found there the oldest-known evidence of bread-baking. It's about 14,000 years old, and it predates by far the arrival of agriculture. In the same way, the Jordan pavilion at Expo 2025 measured a modest 300 square meters but offered an experience rivaling neighbors that were more than 10 times its size with budgets to match. Designed by architects Shifa Zghoul and Ahmad Jubra with the theme "Weaving Possibilities," the pavilion's exterior set the tone with a kinetic aluminum facade inspired by the red-and-white Jordanian shemagh, the traditional headdress. Inside, instead of the expected array of travel posters and tchotchkes a diminutive country often outfits its pavilion with at a World Expo, visitors discovered an experience rich in history, culture, and aesthetics that spoke to all five of their senses.

Naoki Kusumi, a Japanese artist renowned for his sublime mastery of plaster, created a red mud wall that evoked Jordan's ancient rose-red city of Petra. Using a variety of natural earth pigments and layered-plaster techniques, Kusumi created a tactile surface suggestive of Petra's streaked rock formations and the surrounding desert's ever-shifting sands. Although only a few months old, the wall could have been a contemporary of the Magi or the Ceasars. The journey through Jordan continued with an installation by textile artist Ishraq Zraikat. Called "Passage," the weaving's horizontal light stripes on dark brown and black goat hair referred to the Bedouin tent, a "house without a door" that symbolizes Arab hospitality. Across from it was the Stone Piano (aka Desert Soundscape), consisting of a series of 500-million-year-old limestone blocks that were transformed into a unique xylophone so ancient it came from a time when the day was only around 22 hours long. The

limestone wasn't carved to make the correct tone. Instead, each fossil was tested in the desert to see what note it would sound. When visitors struck the blocks with a mallet, the ethereal sounds were visually translated into notes projected on "Strata," another Zraikat weaving above.

Travelers to Jordan in search of awe have to take more than a few footsteps before they encounter Petra, or the vast Wadi Rum desert. Barren and beautiful, it has been crossed by Lawrence of Arabia and filmed in "Star Wars: Rise of the Skywalker." Visitors to the pavilion only had to travel a few feet to reach the Theater of Civilizations, where they were asked to slip off their shoes and socks and step into the circular space where they could rest on red sand shipped in from the Wadi Rum. Transporting more than 150 tons of the rust-colored sand from the desert, the pavilion was required to clean it again and again until only 22 tons were considered hygienic enough to use as a seating area.

Once people sat, the lights dimmed and the stars came out over the fabled sandy wilderness on a 360-degree projection screen, and a live narrator introduced the natural magic of the UNESCO Heritage site in multiple languages. Even when the show ended, people lingered as if moving would break the spell of being in an enchanted land. "If you want to keep people in your pavilion," joked Zghoul, who also served as Jordan commissioner general for the pavilion, "take their shoes." However, stealing footwear wasn't necessary to make people linger in a pavilion every bit the marvel that ancient cities and legendary deserts are.

