

Vintage Styling and Design Development of Motorcycles

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Nowadays vintage designs can be often found anywhere, and consumers are embracing them. As such, motorcycle manufacturers also offer products with vintage designs. However, on large-scale complex products such as automobiles and motorcycles, design methods and quality standards often hinders the realization of vintage appearance. On the contrary, current advanced technology ensures reliability and durability, allowing consumers to enjoy products gracing nostalgic designs with peace of mind. Kawasaki introduced "W650" a 1960's vintage design motorcycle in 1999, later souped up the displacement to 800cc, and still continues mass-production. In 2021, we revived the motorcycle brand Meguro, originally acquired in 1962, under the name "MEGURO K3."

In designing the "W650", we researched various classic vehicle designs and set the direction Kawasaki should take. The engine, for example, showcases bare basic functions; intake, exhaust, and valve drive system sit on top of a cylinder donning circular cooling fins. We deemed one of the cylinders of an air-cooled radial engine from an old aircraft as the most beautiful basic form, so much so that we used it as a benchmark⁽¹⁾. As for the body work, we decided to instill as much British design essence as possible — such as curved forms — since we were truly inspired by British motorcycles in terms of balance and form compared to many other similar European motorcycles. The body works on many British motorcycles stood out the most with their curved surfaces leaving a lasting impression.

In 2021, in order to reconstruct the Meguro brand which has been dormant since 1962, we introduced the "MEGURO K3" utilizing "W800." Using design cues from the Megro era on every inch of the vehicle, this model interprets the original vintage design suitable for today.⁽²⁾

In particular, we decided that the emblem which is equivalent of a crest must be made of metal, and reviving the original design was essential. Mimicking the original cloisonné with aluminum was a meticulous work; single emblem required injecting 5 different colors of paint into 61 slots one by one manually with a syringe.

Motorcycles circa 1960's often used chrome plated fuel tanks, a key vintage aesthetics. However, modern quality standards lead us to an alternative — the silver mirror coated paint we originally developed for MY2015 Ninja H2. This paint reflects just enough light to keep the right darkness, and the vehicle not only exudes its vintage character but also appears fresh with advanced technology.

"W650/800" and "MEGURO K3" are modern interpretation of vintage design: the engine demonstrates form and function, the body work takes advantage of cutting edge paint, and the emblem shines as if a jewel. Although large displacement motorcycles may be utter hobby, added values are extremely important. They allow customers to experience nostalgia and emotional satisfaction by riding, viewing, and polishing their vintage design motorcycles.

Lastly, as much as we cannot avoid the wave of electrification, demand for motorcycles that fill people's needs still exist. We look forward to the designs of future vintage motorcycles, so that they will continue to strike a chord in our hearts.



Fig.1 Air cooled vertical twin engine



Fig.2 MEGURO K3