



Nissan. While we consider this data, it is not directly integrated into our designs. If you simply react to opinion surveys, you try to please everybody, and that results in boring cars. We try to tune into the inner voice of the customer, looking into their life and values to discover what they really want. When you're sitting in Japan, for example, it's difficult to know the values of customers elsewhere in the world. Our global design centers bring us closer to that customer. Mr. Ghosn is the chairman of the design decision committee, which includes all the related executives, and they are a source of insight as well.

The Alliance with Renault has been useful in our work. We study each other, benchmark performance, and share best practices. While it is impossible to effectively benchmark against your competitors, the Alliance transparency policy allows us to identify a particular process and examine everything, and Renault can do the same. This leads to new ideas. It's stimulating working with them, but of course neither company wants to turn out the same cars. It's healthy to maintain these differences and our identities. That is what makes the relationship an alliance.

I think we did a very good job during the Nissan Revival Plan (NRP) and NISSAN 180. One of our greatest

successes is that top management made significant investments in design immediately after implementing the NRP. If they hadn't, there would not have been any new products during NISSAN 180. Although the NRP focused on cost containment, management recognized that design was essential in building the cars that people long to own.

That investment continues today. We will soon open the Imagination Factory design center in Japan. We have also expanded the Farmingham center, renovated the San Diego studio, and built the new Nissan Design Europe in London. Nissan has world-leading design facilities and a highly talented and motivated staff. We have no trouble recruiting top designers.

Although we've accomplished a lot, we can never afford to be complacent, especially after the way our competitors have responded to our strong statements in design. While we do have great cars, as a brand Nissan is still not at the top of the industry. You will see more exciting designs from us in the next few years, however, and by 2010 we intend to be the top brand. We are working on that even as we focus on designing profitable models. Contributing to Nissan's sustainable growth is our responsibility as designers, and we take it very seriously."



ZAROOT concept car



AZEAL concept car