

Made for everyone

The Japanese sanitary experts at TOTO develop universally designed solutions that are accessible, comfortable and easy for everyone to use.



Universal design (UD) involves designing products and spaces to make them accessible to all people – whatever their age, gender, physical abilities or individual health needs. After following this approach for decades, TOTO recently established their own Universal Design Studio. Here, designers develop solutions based on real-life situations that go far beyond technical standards. The following examples show how this new standard is impacting everyday life in our diverse society – along with the role consistent user guidance plays in designing modern sanitary facilities.

TOTO thinks about people in every step of their design process. Experts in design, architecture, technology, product development and anthropometry – the study of the measurements of the human body – work closely together to develop products and spaces that are as accessible and user friendly for as many people as possible. Rather than relying on assumptions, these designers make decisions based on tests involving users with a wide range of needs. They ensure that the orientation, operating logic, movement patterns and safety aspects are all consistent. This approach ensures that that products and room designs work in everyday situations – in private bathrooms as well as high-traffic public areas.

Everyone's needs in mind

TOTO has been developing bathroom solutions especially focused on the needs of people with disabilities since the 1960s. This wealth of experience spanning decades shapes today's work, along with the founder's guiding principle envisioning friendliness and respect as the starting point of every innovation. TOTO uses this as the basis to analyse the specific needs of different audiences –

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including the elderly, parents with small children, people with various gender identities, those with disabilities and stoma patients, to name a few – and translates these into design recommendations. “Universal design isn’t a niche topic. It’s a key aspect of design in our day and age. And the bathroom is a space in which excellent design makes all the difference when it comes to comfort, independence and dignity – whether in private or public spaces,” explains Matthias Kortenhorn, Sales Director Northwest Germany & Senior Sales Manager at TOTO Europe. The consistent application of universal design is becoming increasingly relevant in societies shaped by demographic changes and longer life expectancies – in both Japan and Germany.

Tokyo Toilet Project – public toilets as urban icons

From 2020 to 2024, the Tokyo Toilet Project reinterpreted the idea of the public toilet in the city’s Shibuya neighbourhood. The initiative, in which 16 renowned international architects expertly designed and installed public toilets at 17 different locations, has since gained international recognition. Names involved in the project include Pritzker Prize winner Tadao Ando, Toyo Ito and Shigeru Ban, each of whom developed unique concepts that bring stunning architecture to functional infrastructure.

TOTO supported the Nippon Foundation’s initiative as a consultant and supplier of the sanitary facilities, contributing their universal design expertise. The goal was to make public toilets more hygienic and fundamentally more attractive, transforming them into spaces in which people feel safe and comfortable. Each toilet is individually outfitted and has its own distinctive architecture – an interplay of functionality, guidance and an understanding of universal design fully aligned with people’s real needs.

Osaka Healthcare Pavilion at EXPO 2025 – tomorrow’s toilet

The Osaka Healthcare Pavilion at EXPO 2025 raised awareness for holistic health. Visitors had the opportunity to explore a variety of technologies and concepts that connect nutrition to the body and spirit while integrating personal health data.

This overarching concept also included accessible sanitary facilities designed and provided by TOTO as an Official Partner to EXPO 2025. TOTO worked closely with 22 “troubleshooters”, people with a variety of different disabilities who contributed their experiences to improve public toilets for everyone. The result was the toilet of the future – one that goes beyond functionality to be socially inclusive, respectful and welcoming of all users.

Miyajima Omotenashi Toilet – accessible hospitality

The Miyajima Omotenashi Toilet is located just a few steps from the renowned Itsukushima Shrine on the Japanese island of Miyajima. The publicly accessible sanitary facility effortlessly combines comfort, ease of use and aesthetics. Spacious areas allow people with wheelchairs and their companions plenty of room

while clearly structured, easy-to-understand control elements are intuitive to all. Warm materials, gentle lighting and an inviting atmosphere make this space more than just a public toilet. Instead, it's a place where people feel welcome and can experience TOTO's universal design philosophy first hand.

Design for a diverse society

Universal design is a fundamental principle at TOTO – not an optional product add-on. Through ongoing research, real encounters with users and a willingness to rethink new standards, TOTO developers are creating solutions that simplify people's everyday lives to make participation both easy and natural.

More information

[The Tokyo Toilet Project](#)

[The Tokyo Toilet Project, Update 2022](#)

[The Tokyo Toilet Project, completed](#)

Learn more about TOTO's involvement at EXPO 2025 in Japan:

[TOTO: Bronze Sponsor of EXPO 2025](#)

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1 Japanese graphic designer and creative director Kashiwa Sato developed a consistent pictogram system especially for the Tokyo Toilet Project. It shows the available functionalities and accessible elements at a glance, supporting clear, intuitive guidance for people with a variety of different needs. Photo: The Nippon Foundation/TOTO

2 The glowing “WHITE” cubic toilet installation by Kashiwa Sato, a well-known Japanese graphic designer and creative director, is located at the west entrance to the bustling Ebisu Station. Photo: The Nippon Foundation/TOTO

3 Designer Miles Pennington sees his contribution to the Tokyo Toilet Project as a shared community space with sanitary facilities, not a conventional public toilet. The partially covered outdoor area provides versatile space for a variety of purposes. Photo: The Nippon Foundation/TOTO

4 Pictograms on the automatic sliding doors in the covered outdoor area give people a quick overview of the sanitary facilities available in each space. Photo: The Nippon Foundation/TOTO

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5 Designed by famed Japanese architect and Pritzker Prize winner Shigeru Ban, the toilet pavilions are transparent when not in use – an image that went around the world. Passersby can see the interiors for themselves and judge how clean they are. Locking the door colours the glass, creating an opaque wall that protects the user's privacy. Photo: Satoshi Nagare

6 An architectural framework for holistic health, the Osaka Healthcare Pavilion at EXPO 2025 is an exhibition space featuring technology and accessible infrastructure – including the sanitary facilities designed by TOTO in line with universal design principles. Photo: TOTO

7 Information board for the inclusive toilet at the Osaka Healthcare Pavilion: This sign explains the design and use of the accessible sanitary facilities, explaining the principles of universal design to all visitors. Photo: TOTO

8 Detailed view of the information board for the inclusive toilet at the Osaka Healthcare Pavilion: The details explain the individual functionalities, illustrating the aim of designing sanitary facilities to be accessible and easy to understand for people with different needs. Photo: TOTO

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9 The sanitary facilities in the Osaka Healthcare Pavilion exhibition space illustrate how universal design unites comfort, sustainability and accessibility. Photo: TOTO



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About TOTO Europe

TOTO brings luxury to bathroom culture, creating innovations that deliver the ultimate in design, comfort and hygiene without revealing the sophisticated technology integrated within. Japan's leading supplier of bathroom products, TOTO develops comprehensive solutions for high-end private and public spaces around the world, including the European market since 2009. The company is shaping bathroom design with innovative sanitary ware, faucets, and, most importantly, WASHLET – selling over 70 million worldwide. TOTO's Japanese design philosophy reflects a respect for others. It centres on people and their needs, inspiring intuitive, easy-to-use products and elegantly understated designs.

More about TOTO: eu.toto.com
