

Thomas Heatherwick on designing with heart and soul

 By Ann Nurock

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For most South Africans, Thomas Heatherwick has become a household name for his design of the Zeitz Mocaa in Cape Town. But there is so much more to this man, which he revealed in his talk at Design Indaba.



British designer, Thomas Heatherwick, on the Design Indaba 2018 stage. © Design Indaba.

Thomas's purpose in architecture is rooted in heart. For him, the biggest objects like buildings are the ones that have the least soul and are sterile.

He believes in three basic principles:

Soulfulness

It's not about big buildings and linear lines but rather about making something that connects with people. There must be a tension between sculpture and building, between form and function.

Heatherwick has added soul to a [university building](#) in Singapore that creates space around PODs arranged around an open space. He removed the corridors and provided incidental breakouts for social interaction. The budget for this project was very tight and therefore the floors and columns needed to be concrete, so they had to give love to this material which became imperfect as it was the cheapest and for him this was okay.

Redefining heritage

Heatherwick loves working with things that are old. "Buildings that have already lived a life." With the V&A Waterfront [Zeitz Mocaa](#) he repurposed a grain silo into a museum gallery space which became the heart of the first museum of African art in SA.

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Human scale

With the new [Google Head H/Q](#) in California, Heatherwick designed a space where everyone was in one building on one floor. Everyone needed to get daylight so he created courtyards all over and at levels of different heights.

Heatherwick's latest project in New York is based on a staircase type structure in Rajasthan, India. The purpose is to create a space for social engagement via a mile of extra space with 2,500 steps, 154 flights of stairs, 80 public spaces and is 16 stories high. This sculptural building named the [Vessel](#) opens later this year.

For Thomas Heatherwick, it's the "dirty" lines that create and he avoids those lines that are clean as for him these obstruct and destroy the heart and soul of any building.

ABOUT ANN NUROCK

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