

POLYMATHS IN THE NEWS: THOMAS HEATHERWICK

Every week, we post a story about a public figure who's been described as a polymath. This week's subject is a British designer whose work marries art with science.

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"A tiny canal bridge in London doesn't just open for boat traffic, it curls up like a caterpillar. A suave redesign of London's familiar double-decker bus invites passengers to the upper deck with a curving ribbon window that follows a winding staircase. An exposition building in Shanghai is covered in what look like porcupine quills. A pier in the Hudson is reimagined as a miniature island park with an amphitheater nestled within Lilliputian hills. All are the work of Thomas Heatherwick, a **polymath** British designer of sculpture, furniture and architecture who leaps boundaries few artists and designers dare to cross." - James S. Russell, *The New York Times*, July 30, 2015

Polymaths tend to be creative, and few exemplify that tendency as fully as Thomas Heatherwick. But the 45-year-old London-based designer's work is also resolutely practical. Working with architects, engineers, and urban planners, Heatherwick says that his work doesn't fall into a neat style: "It is more like solving a crime. The answer is there, and your job is to find it. So we go off and do bits of research that essentially eliminate suspects from the enquiry. And then you follow up leads and gradually narrow down the potential solutions. Ultimately what you're left with is the answer."

The designer is known for his projects' audacity, grace, sensitivity to context, and what James Russell calls Heatherwick's "technical bravura."

Heatherwick's work is being featured through January 3, 2016 at New York's Cooper Hewitt museum, the designer's first major American exhibition.

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