

# The Telegraph

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## Africa's answer to the Tate Modern has arrived in Cape Town



Zeitz MOCAA – the first major institution dedicated to contemporary African art in the world and the largest and most significant museum built on the continent in more than a century CREDIT: IWAN BAAN

By **Trisha Andres**, TRAVEL WRITER

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"My favourite area in Cape Town is the waterfront," said architect Thomas Heatherwick, 47, as we surveyed the views from the geometric windows of his latest project, Zeitz MOCAA – the first major institution dedicated to contemporary African art in the world and the largest and most significant museum built on the continent in more than a century. The lumbering Twenties building, in which the museum is housed, sits on the Victoria & Alfred Waterfront.

Surely he's biased? "Incredibly," laughed Heatherwick, whose other notable projects include the Olympic Cauldron, the New Routemaster bus and the cancelled Garden Bridge. "But just look at the quality of the light," he pointed at the sky. "I love the topography: Table Mountain's grey sandstone monolith in the background set against the sea. Then there's history too: fishing boats, container ships, naval vessels, piers and shipyards. It's retained its sense of place."



The V&A Waterfront CREDIT: PETER ADAMS

The new museum, a former grain silo used for exporting maize, has been cleverly re-purposed. Comparisons to London's Tate Modern, a converted power station, seem inevitable. "I don't mind Zeitz MOCAA being compared to Tate Modern. The original buildings may have had different functions but their reincarnations serve a similar purpose," said Heatherwick.

"There is this idea that a city is not a city unless it has a contemporary gallery," he continued. "Think for instance of Guggenheim in Bilbao. Is that true? I don't necessarily think so. But I do think that for decades, all people cared about were the Great Masters. Now the time has come for modern-day artists to showcase their work because they also deserve a platform, and that was what the Tate Modern was instrumental in providing, and it's paved the way for other museums to do the same."

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Athi-Patra Ruga's Proposed Model for Tseko Simon Nkoli Memorial at Zeitz MOCAA

A new lighthouse for art, Zeitz MOCAA is destined to lead the way, displaying works not just from Cape Town and the rest of South Africa but also from across the continent. “We’ve waited so long for this: a platform for Africans to tell our story and create our own identity,” said Mark Coetzee, 53, the museum’s executive director and chief curator.



"Inside, visitors are greeted by a dragon made of car tyre inner tubes, satin ribbon and leather hung mid-air in the gallery's Gaudi-esque atrium" CREDIT: DWAYNE SENIOR

Inside, visitors are greeted by a dragon made of car tyre inner tubes, satin ribbon and leather hung mid-air in the gallery's Gaudi-esque atrium. The sculpture, by Nicholas Hlobo, was originally created for the Venice Biennale in 2011. With 100 galleries set over nine floors, the museum is a mammoth marvel. Each room is a joy, lined with work that Jochen Zeitz, the German philanthropist and former Puma chief executive, collected with Coetzee over the years. One can easily spend an entire day here but if time is limited, I'd recommend Isaac Julien's nine-screen projection *Ten Thousand Waves* and the installation *Now and Then* by Kyle Morland and the late El Loko laid out in the museum's rooftop sculpture garden on level six.



Isaac Julien's nine-screen projection Ten Thousand Waves

Above the museum sits the pillowed glass-encased Silo Hotel, decorated by Liz Biden, founder of South Africa-based hotel group the Royal Portfolio. The décor is eclectic, with Egyptian chandeliers and velvet Chesterfield sofas and a colour scheme inspired by the rainbow.



The pillowed glass-encased Silo Hotel

There are no designer names. Instead, Biden has hand-picked and commissioned one-off and bespoke pieces as well as artwork from

There are no designer names. Instead, Biden has hand-picked and commissioned one-off and bespoke pieces as well as artwork from young African artists. The views from the rooms are also arresting: Table Mountain, City Bowl and the harbour, peering out through the frame of geometric thick-lined window panes.

Outside, the waterfront is abuzz with activity. The V&A Waterfront has often been cited as one of the most visited sites in Africa – consistently beating the Winelands and Robben Island. “One of the key challenges around the developments in the V&A’s Silo district is keeping the soulfulness of the area. While we make way for new buildings, new hotels and new establishments, we have to ensure that the legacy of the area remains intact,” said Heatherwick.

A short walk from Zeitz is the Southern Guild, a design gallery, which opened in June. It moved from the industrial area of Woodstock to its new location at the Silo and showcases curated exhibitions and work from home-grown artists and designers. Works on display include covetable terracotta ceramics in yellows, blues and reds from Andile Dyalvane and a steel-and-cork cabinet with two identical Cape women painted on the doors by Wiid Design and Lionel Smit.



A short walk from Zeitz is the Southern Guild, a design gallery, which opened in June

Still much of Cape Town's creative core is rooted in Woodstock. An important area for the city's multi-racial community and a stone's throw away from District Six, Woodstock had a fraught history under Apartheid. Today, it's undergoing gentrification with new boutiques, restaurants and entire streets lined exclusively with galleries and artist studios. Although rapid development has obvious implications for the local community, Woodstock's regeneration has transformed it into the centre of Cape Town's – and arguably Africa's – contemporary art scene.



Cape Town's creative core is rooted in Woodstock CREDIT: NICKY WILLCOCK

On a street art walking tour ([townshiparttours.co.za/woodstock-creative](http://townshiparttours.co.za/woodstock-creative)), Malawi-born Cape Town resident Juma Mkwela guided our group of six to Woodstock, which is wedged between the docks and the slopes of Devil's Peak, to see it for ourselves. Former US first lady Michelle Obama even popped in with her family in 2011 to lunch on aubergine ratatouille and beetroot apple coriander salad at The Kitchen ([lovethekitchen.co.za](http://lovethekitchen.co.za)).

Link to story: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/arts-and-culture/a-touch-of-the-tate-modern-at-the-cape/>