



Treasured classic: Thomas has a Spun chair by Thomas Heatherwick at home

My design London

ABRAHAM THOMAS, 36, is the new director of Sir John Soane's Museum in Lincoln's Inn Fields. Soane, the great neoclassical architect and educator, added a museum to his home in 1812, which remains a major London tourist draw to this day.

Thomas's rise has been meteoric. As a successful IT consultant at Deutsche Bank nine years ago, he was awarded an assistant curatorship at the Victoria and Albert Museum and within a year was promoted to curator of designs. With the V&A's successful Thomas Heatherwick exhibition to his credit, he is now on a mission to promote Soane's 19th-century gem.



Lazy Sundays: London Fields Lido, in Hackney, heated and open year-round



Designed to help diabetics: Google X Lab's smart contact lens measures glucose in tears to avoid pinprick tests



Best for browsing: Sotheran's antiquarian booksellers in Sackville Street, Piccadilly, is good for old prints

Abraham Thomas

NEW DIRECTOR OF SIR JOHN SOANE'S MUSEUM

By Corinne Julius

WHERE I LIVE

I've lived in Shadwell in E1 for 12 years in an Edwardian two-bedroom flat built by the Mercers' Company. My partner, also a curator, works in the States, so we have a transatlantic relationship. I am two minutes from the river, so often walk down there. I love the nearby Victorian industrial buildings, some now converted like the hydraulic power station with its accumulator tower, and the glorious Abbey Mills Pumping Station. And I'm near enough to London Fields Lido to enjoy a dip on a lazy Sunday.

The flat is a mix of basic contemporary. I treasure my G Plan desk chair covered in an original Festival of Britain fabric, and my maroon Spun chair by Thomas Heatherwick. I have lots of my own framed photography on the walls and I collect vintage film posters.

I LOVE LONDON BECAUSE...

London is so inspiring as a design city. I love the celebration of Victorian industrial buildings, given a new contemporary purpose. London also has "design permeability" – design isn't confined to one discipline, it stretches across many. I love collaboration and London allows that, in part because of the design and architecture schools.

SPOTTING DESIGN TRENDS

I go to the graduate shows at the RCA, Central St Martins, The Bartlett, the AA and now the new courses at the Cass, at the London Metropolitan University, under Professor Robert Mull, which has architecture, design and applied arts in one school. I also look in unlikely places, especially at the work of film production designers. They create whole worlds.

DESIGN HEROES

Stephen Frankfurt, who started out making ads and created art films from them, and then Syd Mead, who worked in the advanced styling



At work: Abraham Thomas at Sir John Soane's Museum in Lincoln's Inn Fields



Summer venue: Frank's café, on the 10th floor of a car park in Rye Lane, Peckham



Close to home: Abbey Mills Pumping Station in E15 is among Thomas's favourite Victorian buildings

studio for Ford, did interiors and then created worlds for films like Ridley Scott's Blade Runner.

FAVOURITE GALLERY/MUSEUM

The Mediatheque at the British Film Institute. Just log on for free at a viewing station and choose from over 2,500 highlights from the BFI National Archive. My other choice is the Museum of Brands – its founder was ephemera collector Robert Opie. I am fascinated by typography design and how it impinges on our lives.

MOST TREASURED POSSESSION

A paper sculpture that Heatherwick recreated when we filmed him. He had done this piece of origami and 10 years later he used it as the basis of the design for the vents for the Paternoster Square project. It sits proudly in my office at the Soane, echoing Soane's approach to amassing models, artefacts, paintings and drawings as educative tools for design. We're opening the next phase of our redevelopment of Soane's original model room next year.

SECRET SHOPPING

I love Magma bookshop in Covent Garden, they have a wonderful selection of contemporary design/architecture/film/photography books and magazines. They are brilliant for unusual presents. And Sotheran's the antiquarian booksellers in Sackville Street. I love to browse for prints.

FAVOURITE RESTAURANT

I love to graze at the foodie pop-ups, at Street Feast, or the railway arches by London Fields – Climpson's Arch, for example. Frank's café, designed by Practice Architecture on the 10th floor of the Peckham multistorey car park, is a favourite. It's open in summer. For a romantic meal I go to Andrew Edmunds in Lexington Street.

BEST NEW DESIGN

Google X Lab's project using a smart contact lens which measures glucose levels in tears instead of diabetics having to do painful pinprick blood tests. That's what design should do, it should make your life better.

Secret shopping: Magma bookshop in Covent Garden, great for unusual gifts

DANIEL LYNCH

ALAMY

REBECCA REID

ALAMY