

Practice creativity with confidence

 By [Juanita Pienaar](#)

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This year the annual Open Design Cape Town Festival will host a [Steam Symposium](#). The Festival will bring together an extended community of innovative thinkers, designers, entrepreneurs, educators, students and members of the public for a series of interesting experiences, talks, workshops, exhibitions and more. The symposium will be the first of its kind in Africa and will join art and design together with subjects, maths, science and technology to inspire innovation, and will take place at the Cape Town City Hall next Monday, 14 August.



Africa's first Steam Symposium adds art to Stem

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One of the speakers that will be featured at the event, Richard Perez, is the founding director of UCT's School of Design Thinking. Perez says the school specifically works with those that are not formally studying or practicing design and focus on unlocking their creative confidence so that they can apply design principles in their fields of interest. He believes the symposium provides an opportunity to illustrate how design-led thinking can play a role in maths and science as an enabler for innovation and new outcomes.

Below Perez talks some more about why the integration of art and design to traditional Stem subjects (maths, science and technology) is so important. He also unpacks the 'design thinking' concept and shares his vision for the future of 'Steam education'.



Richard Perez, founding director of d-school.

■ ***Why is the integration of creativity and the vision of art and design thinking to the traditional Stem subjects so important?***

When we design products, systems or services we ultimately are designing for people. It is critical that we design the right thing before designing it right. Art and design explore the relevance of what we need to design. Maths and science ensure that we design it right.

■ ***You founded the UCT School of Design Thinking. Can you please elaborate on the concept of 'design thinking'?***

Design thinking is ultimately an approach and mindset to understanding and solving challenges that we face. It has a strong human centered approach to ensure that solutions address real needs. It adopts key design principles such as understanding the problem before you start, creative thinking and prototyping. It has a bias towards action and embodies the value of working in multi-disciplinary teams.

■ ***How do you think South African youth, in particular, can benefit from the Steam Symposium?***

It is important to know that you can combine both art, design, maths and science into your career. The skills of the future that are going to be in demand are those that can deal with complexity, creative thinking and collaboration. Those that can come up with new solutions to traditional problems. All traits of a design thinker.

■ ***What is your vision for the future of Steam education?***

To ensure that people realise that we have this natural ability to be creative. And no matter what you study, don't loose it. Our ability to **practice creativity with confidence** is what will define South Africa's future.

■ ***What inspires you?***

Exposing people to their inner designer that they never knew existed.

Any exciting plans lined up for d-school and/or any other projects you can tell us about?

We are launching a new design course at UCT in collaboration with the electrical engineering department for their final year students where we are combining traditional engineering design with design thinking. They will now not only learn how to design this thing right i.e. the technical aspects of design but now also make sure they are designing the right thing, i.e. the human centered aspect.

ABOUT JUANITA PIENAAR

Juanita is the editor of the marketing & media portal on the Bizcommunity website. She is also a contributing writer.

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