

# Heavy hitters excite the twitterers

 By [Chris Moerdyk](#)

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I drove to the Cape Town CBD yesterday, Tuesday, 23 February 2010, for the opening of Design Indaba and ended up in the middle of the night on a deserted piece of railway track somewhere between Stellenbosch and Paarl. I learnt a lot last night. [[view twitterfall](#)]



Not only that the Blue Train is a particularly nice venue for a welcome cocktail party and dinner but that Design Indaba has come a long, long way since it started out with a clutch of HB pencils and a handful of locals with long hair and an earring.

## Nicely designed learning curve

I learnt that this year's Design Indaba has drawn some of the world's top designers. So, you might ask, how do I know for sure they are top designers and not just ordinary designers with good spin doctors?

Well, the big clue is that prior to leaving for my assignment on the Blue Train, my son, an architecture honours student at UCT, telephoned me in a state of enormous excitement and a list of questions he insisted that I put to some of these luminaries. When kids get animated in the presence of their parents, and claim someone is a top designer, you better believe it.

## Drawing a bank

I also learnt last night that Absa has got the biggest corporate art collection in South Africa, which is why it's one of the big sponsors. Something else I found out was that the former broadcast sponsor, SABC, fell asleep on the job and that DStv took the gap with the alacrity of Bryan Habana in full flight.

Something else I discovered was that the Design Indaba Expo fashion offering has well and truly cracked the international market by attracting 350 buyers, with 160 of them from overseas. That, I reckon, is absolutely amazing. Think about it. I am willing to bet that not even the 2010 FIFA World Cup in June will attract as many as 160 foreign fashion buyers.

I was also absolutely awestruck to hear from the horse's mouth that Design Indaba founding supremo, Ravi Naidoo, seriously intended getting up at 6am this morning to go running along that road just below the Table Mountain cable station. Given the cornucopia of wonderful food and vineyard full of wine served us on the Blue Train, I was seriously tempted to join him just to watch as Ravi and his mates wilt the fynbos as they breathed out during their run.

I also learnt from *Sunday Times* editor, Mondli Makanya, that the only way to enjoy a good Scotch is to have it poured over a mountain of ice, then to immediately remove two-thirds of the ice cubes from your glass with your fingers and then, during the course of drinking it, you add back ice cubes one by one until the glass is empty or until you fall over. All of which added enormously to this event being a celebration of creativity.

## Heavy hitters

Design Indaba has certainly come along way. It has lured people such as Bruce Nussbaum, former assistant managing editor at *BusinessWeek* and founder of the award-winning Design & Innovation online channel and NussbaumOnDesign blog in 2005.

Harry Pearce, Pentagram partner based in London, with a client portfolio including Williams F1, Kangol, Shakespeare's Globe, Saks Fifth Avenue, the Science Museum and Boots.

Then, of course, there was the fellow my architect son desperately wanted me to meet and ask 25 pages of questions.

Alejandro Aravena is the principal of Alejandro Aravena Architects and the executive director of Elemental, a "do-tank" focusing on projects of social impact. In 2008 he was named one of the 20 essential young architects by *Icon* magazine and won the Silver Lion for "most promising architect" at the Venice Biennale. In 2009 he won the Marcus Prize for Architecture, which recognises emerging talents, and was one of 10 recipients of RIBA's 2010 International Fellowships. No wonder my kid wanted to meet him.

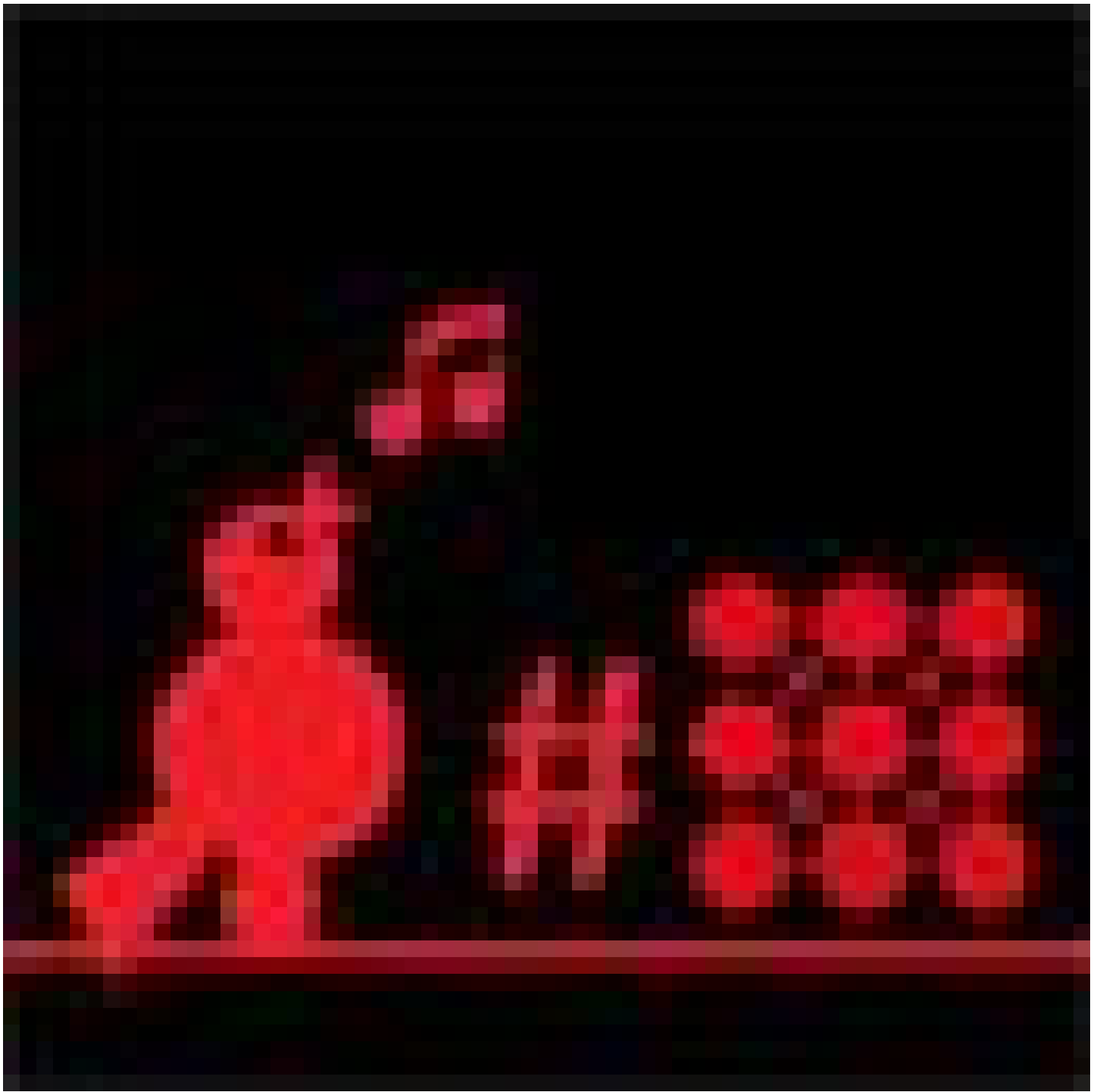
## Bedtime for the oldies

Trouble was, I didn't get to see him because I was so fascinated by hearing what Absa had in its art collection and Mondli Makanya's fascinating ice cube machinations that, before I knew it, we were back at Cape Town station and I was been ushered out of the Blue Train lounge by security guards muttering something about "old people not knowing when they are supposed be in bed."

I could go on name dropping ad infinitum but I don't have to do that because everyone who is anyone among Design Indaba speakers is [here on Bizcommunity.com](http://here.on.Bizcommunity.com), where a lot more and less rambling information on Design Indaba is available.

Now, all I need to do is appease my disappointed son. I thought I might offer to introduce him to Mondli Makanya for whisky cubist lessons or even that he might be allowed to join Ravi Naidoo on one of his early morning runs.

Problem is, I suspect that he might just react the way other UCT students do when they see a blue light convoy.



# DESIGN INDABA

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## ABOUT CHRIS MOERDYK

Apart from being a corporate marketing analyst, advisor and media commentator, Chris Moerdyk is a former chairman of Bizcommunity. He was head of strategic planning and public affairs for BMW South Africa and spent 16 years in the creative and client service departments of ad agencies, ending up as resident director of Lindsay Smithers-FCB in KwaZulu-Natal. Email Chris on [moerdykc@gmail.com](mailto:moerdykc@gmail.com) and follow him on Twitter at [@chrismoerdyk](#).

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