

NO 08 A PHILOSOPHICAL APPROACH

British architectural designer John Pawson, CBE, who was a speaker at Design Indaba 2019, chats philosophy, design challenges and what architecture means to him.



John Pawson remodelled the interior of Moritzkirche, or the Church of St Moritz, in Augsburg, Germany.



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HETHER it's been residential projects, monasteries, museums, bridges or objects, John Pawson has spent more

than 30 years championing simplicity in his work. Here, he highlights stand-out projects and shares how spatial themes continue to inform his practice decades later.

Traditional architecture, interior design, the design of objects... for you, it all falls under the architecture umbrella. What does architecture mean to you? For me, architecture is building with added intention. Rather than simply setting out to enclose space in whatever fashion and by whatever means, architecture is about precise arrangements of mass, proportion, surface and light, which come together to make atmosphere. My aim has always been for everything I do to carry the essence of the philosophy. Whether a fork, a bridge, a bowl or an entire monastery, it's all architecture and each separate piece of work should contain all of the thinking.

Is there a specific project you feel particularly connected to? I always say that my favourite project is the one



In his own home in London, John remodelled the interior. The rear elevation is sliced open, with an enlarged aperture on the first floor and a glass wall at basement level.

on which I'm currently working. When a new commission comes in, my engagement with the design process is very intense. For a long period, I just keep my head down and work away at it. Having said that, my ongoing work with a community of Cistercian monks to create an entirely new monastery in the Czech Republic is very special. The cloister and church were consecrated in 2004, but we are still adding elements of the monastic city - last year, the foundations of a chapel for visitors were laid.

What is your design philosophy?

My philosophy is shaped by a set of defining spatial themes that I set out in my book *Minimum*, published more than 20 years ago: mass, light, structure, ritual, landscape, order, containment, repetition, volume, essence and expression. I am interested in the quality a space or an object has when it can no longer be

improved by subtraction. Every time I sit down to design, these thoughts are at the front of my mind.

What do you think is the biggest design challenge society faces today?

Sustainability is obviously a huge issue in architecture. This relates to choices of materials and ecologically sound approaches to the way buildings heat and cool themselves, but also resonates through so many other considerations as one is working on a design.

Are there any projects coming up in 2019 that you're excited about working on?

It's hard to pick and choose, because I'm always excited about all of the projects on my current to-do list. If I ever stopped being excited, I should have to ask myself some serious questions...

designindaba.com
johnpawson.com



John designed the interior of the building that now houses the Design Museum in London.