

Es Devlin announced as speaker at Design Indaba 2018



By [Juanita Pienaar](#)

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British stage designer, Es Devlin, famous for creating kinetic stage sculptures for artists like U2, Kanye West and Beyoncé, has been announced as one of the speakers at the 2018 Design Indaba.



© [Es Devlin Facebook](#).

Born in Kingston upon Thames, Devlin studied music at the Royal Academy of Music from the age of 12 and went on to graduate from Bristol University with a Bachelor's degree in English Literature before she studied set design on the Motley Theatre Design Course in London. Back then already, Devlin's brilliance was evident and shortly after she won the Linbury Prize of Stage Design in 1995.

Bored by music concerts visually

Devlin has worked on projects for the likes of La Scala Milan, Leipzig Opera, Royal Opera House and the Royal Shakespeare Company. She also did work on Ernst Bloch's Macbeth and Cullberg Ballet. She told *Vice Noisey* in an [interview](#) that when she began, she was bored by a lot of theatres.

“ I was into music. I was bored by music concerts visually, too. I was visually unexcited and not fascinated by theatre because I found it very old-fashioned. Opera I found exciting because opera designers were beginning to do something more abstract. Then, in the early 90s, I started seeing people begin to use projection, and begin to envelop film and theatre together. ”



Neri Oxman announced as speaker at Design Indaba 2018

Juanita Pienaar 29 Jan 2018



Devlin shot to fame in 2005 when hip-hop artist, Kanye West commissioned her to work on a project for his *Touch the Sky* World Arena Tour. She also commented on working with West in the [interview](#), saying, “The first thing to say about Yeezus, compared to the other projects, is that Kanye is obviously evolving as an artist every day. His relationship with his

design team is also evolving. He really is the director of every decision and one has to say that.”

In search of connection and meaning

In addition, Devlin also did work for the Pet Shop Boys, Jay Z, Adele, Beyoncé and Lady Gaga.

“ A true aficionado at her craft, this is some of Es Devlin's work for [@Adele's World Arena Tour](#) 🎨🎨

The set designer will share more about how she creates the way we experience some of the world's biggest performances and productions [@DI_Festival](#). <https://t.co/1pYUCApHIX> [pic.twitter.com/6r3xyWrwz0](https://t.co/6r3xyWrwz0)— Design Indaba (@designindaba) February 11, 2018 ”

Talking about working with these famous performing artists, Devlin told [The Independent](#) that, “They’re standing in front of 80,000 people – you generally don’t do that as a barefoot creature, you have your character on... Generally, humans operate in search of connection and meaning.”



Johannes Torpe announced as speaker at Design Indaba 2018

Juanita Pienaar 5 Feb 2018



Devlin was also part of the design team on the opening ceremony of the 2016 Rio Olympic Games and MTV Europe Music Awards (2011 and 2010). In an interview with the [Financial Times](#), Devlin said the brief for the Olympic Games was very brief.

“ Terrible brief. Desperate brief. A flag. A Union Jack flag. What are you going to do? I really struggled. ”

In 2015, she was appointed Officer of the Order of the British Empire for services to stage and set design. She also won three Olivier Awards, three TPI Awards and two Critics Circle Awards.

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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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