

Bio

Thomas Meyerhoffer is not simply a designer; he is an innovator who, through close partnerships with leading brands, small startups, and everything in between, has reinvigorated—and in some cases resurrected—individual companies and redefined entire product categories. His groundbreaking designs have been displayed in museums and books and covered by international media. Yet his products are most often found in homes, offices, and garages around the world. Thomas is that rare designer whose work resonates as strongly with gallery curators, as it does with consumers simply looking for new ways to have fun.

While Thomas has a long record of success in broad categories like furniture, technology, and sporting goods—his award-winning sail designs for NeilPryde completely changed the sport of windsurfing—he is equally passionate about smaller endeavors. Working alongside the founders of the tech startup Chumby, he created the first “soft computer,” a beanbag-like Internet companion that was earning the company extensive media coverage before it had even been brought to market. Like all of Thomas’ designs, the Chumby was crafted from the sculptural, organic shapes that have become a Meyerhoffer hallmark. That same aesthetic can be seen in the eMate, a curvy, translucent computer that Thomas designed at Apple while working for that company in the 1990s. That computer gave rise to the iMac, which, of course, forever changed the computer industry.

Recently, Thomas has been applying his acquired knowledge about product innovation to launch a line of wildly groundbreaking surfboards. What began as a few experimental boards that he crafted at his Bay Area studio, has become a full-fledged product, praised by surfers for truly unique performance characteristics and by design critics for Thomas’ trademark sculptural, tactile shapes. Prototypes of the boards were even displayed in the Cooper-Hewitt Design Museum.

This Fall, Thomas helped to launch his newest design The Wikireader from Openmoko, a palm-sized electronic encyclopedia containing the more than three million English language articles of Wikipedia that can be accessed anytime, anywhere without an internet connection. Its skewed form indicative of a different approach to technology.

Whether working on his own designs or immersing himself with a well known brand, Thomas approaches each project with the same overarching philosophy—to understand the needs of the user, the history of the brand, and the social context, and then to create a design narrative that reshapes all of those things. What interests him is the relationship between people and objects, and his goal when creating products is to alter user perceptions. For Thomas, a new product is not an end, but a beginning—an opportunity for someone to experience some part of the world in an entirely new way.

His iconic and futuristic work has been featured in museums, books and been widely recognized around the world. His Surfboards were part of the National Design Triennial at the Cooper Hewitt and the California Biennial and he has been featured in articles from The New York Times to the The Surfers journal.