



PRESS RELEASE

What Design Can Do announces winners of the No Waste Challenge

Carbon-negative tiles and microbial fashion among sixteen ground-breaking ideas for a circular future

Amsterdam, 15 July 2021 — **The wait is over. Earlier today, the winners of the global No Waste Challenge were unveiled in a video ceremony attended by nominees and jury members. A total of sixteen winning projects were named across all categories, representing innovative strategies for reducing waste and its enormous impact on climate change. Initiated in partnership with the IKEA Foundation, the competition now enters an exciting new phase as finalists gain access to an award package designed to launch their ideas into action.**

“The quality and range of entries we’ve seen in this Challenge is remarkable,” comments Richard van der Laken, co-founder and creative director of What Design Can Do. “In a turbulent year, this shows that the creative community is willing and able to break away from centuries of linear thinking and bad design. And through redefining our relationship with waste, these ideas also help us to recalibrate our relationship with design: looking at ways it can be restorative and regenerative, instead of merely productive or destructive.”

Tasked with selecting the winners was an international jury comprising twelve leading experts in design, entrepreneurship and climate action. Working remotely over multiple sessions, the panel selected sixteen winners from a list of 85 high-potential nominees. In the end, the jury based their decision on the official Challenge criteria of impact, creativity & design, feasibility, and scalability.

Among the winners are solutions that focus on the production process – aiming to revolutionise the taking and making of all the things we use and eat. [Sustrato](#) (Mexico), for example, combines traditional craft, contemporary design and waste from the pineapple industry to develop a range of sustainable bioplastics. [Modern Synthesis](#) (UK) makes use of a similar waste stream — this time from apple farms — to feed microbes that grow fully circular fibers for the fashion industry. Meanwhile, working to clean up the construction sector are [Carbon Tile](#) (India) and [Packing Up PFAS](#) (Netherlands), two projects which offer innovative building materials that actually remove toxic pollutants and carbon dioxide from the environment.

Moving away from the factory floor, other winners are unified by their desire to uproot entire value systems. These projects are looking to prevent waste by addressing the underlying problem of consumerism. [Reparar.org](#) (Argentina) for example, is a service which connects individuals to local cobblers and repair shops, working to promote a culture of care and the right-to-repair. Similarly, [Project R](#) (Japan), is a community centre that empowers citizens to learn about circular techniques and lifestyles. Another disruption to throwaway culture is [Nyungu Afrika](#) (Kenya), a social enterprise hoping to make low-cost and biodegradable menstrual products the norm across Africa.

Together, these ideas suggest inventive ways for us to reconcile what we want with what the planet needs. Liz McKeon, Head of Climate Action portfolio at the IKEA Foundation, says: “A pillar of the IKEA Foundation’s mission is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. One way is to find solutions for waste by tapping the creative power of design. As part of the jury, I was thoroughly impressed by the many great young entrepreneurs and creatives from around the world who submitted designs to tackle the root causes responsible for waste, and their determination to find solutions. I can assure you that even those who were not selected as winners will contribute just as much to creating a liveable planet for the many.”

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Work now begins on strengthening each winning idea, and deepening their potential impact. Teams will receive €10,000 in funding, and access to a development programme co-created with Impact Hub Amsterdam. This programme begins with a week-long bootcamp, and is tailor-made for the special blend of change-makers present among participants. Winners can expect mentorship on a range of skills they need to make their projects a success — from developing a viable business model, to impact-assessment and networking. Combined with valuable exposure and publicity, the programme is set to provide unique support for the thinkers, doers and makers of the new economy.

ABOUT THE NO WASTE CHALLENGE

The No Waste Challenge is What Design Can Do's third Climate Action Challenge in partnership with the IKEA Foundation. Launched in January 2021, the design competition called for bold solutions to reduce waste and rethink our entire production and consumption cycle. It was open to creative entrepreneurs everywhere and offered three design briefs tackling different aspects of the 'take-make-waste' economy. Additional tracks were also provided for participants in our partner cities: Amsterdam, Delhi, Mexico City, Nairobi, São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, and Tokyo. The open call ended in April with an exceptional 1409 submissions from innovators in more than 100 countries. All projects can now be viewed on the Challenge platform at: nowaste.whatdesigncando.com

FOR THE EDITORS

The No Waste Challenge joins a powerful movement of no-waste innovators. For photos, graphics, and additional materials on the global issue of waste, view our [press kit](#). More information about past challenges and What Design Can Do is available at our [press webpage](#).

With any further press enquiries, please contact our Communications Manager Daphne Schmidt. For more information regarding the challenge, please contact our Programme Manager Rosa Kieft.

ABOUT WHAT DESIGN CAN DO

What Design Can Do (WDCD) is an international platform that advocates for design as a tool for social change. Since 2011, we have undertaken numerous activities to promote the role of designers in addressing the world's most pressing societal and environmental issues. To date, WDCD has hosted 13 successful conferences in Amsterdam, São Paulo, and México City. In 2016 WDCD launched an ambitious design challenge programme that engages the creative community with urgent societal issues such as the wellbeing of refugees and climate change.

For more information, visit www.whatdesigncando.com

ABOUT THE IKEA FOUNDATION

The IKEA Foundation works to create a better everyday life for people. To achieve that, they support innovative approaches to solving the root causes of inequality: poverty, the consequences of climate change, and lack of resources such as clean air, energy and fertile land. The IKEA Foundation is funded by INGKA Foundation, owner of the Ingka Group of companies. The IKEA Foundation is independent from the retail business with a sole focus on creating brighter lives on a liveable planet through philanthropy and grantmaking.

For more information, visit www.ikeafoundation.org



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