

WHAT DESIGN CAN DO

PRESS RELEASE

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What Design Can Do reveals the 50 nominees shortlisted for the Make it Circular Challenge.

The selected projects include game-changing materials, products, services and systems showcasing the potential of design to create a more sustainable society.

Amsterdam, 30 March 2023 – What Design Can Do (WDCD) has announced its shortlist for the Make it Circular Challenge. From 650 entries worldwide, 50 projects will move on to the final round of the competition. The Challenge, launched in partnership with the IKEA Foundation in October 2022, asked designers and innovators for solutions to create a more circular society and tackle the negative impacts of climate change. The nominated projects include a range of ideas and start-ups, from unconventional new materials and crafts to innovative services and campaigns that challenge the linear economy. Among the selected projects are circular materials, products, systems and services that prevent waste by rethinking how we build, eat, wear, package and buy.

Applicants from 81 countries showed their determination to address the climate crisis with creative innovation. All applications were reviewed by a Selection Committee of 40 designers and circularity experts worldwide, including **Adebayo Oke-Lawal (founder, Orange Culture)**, **Finn Harries (environmental designer and co-founder, Earthrise)**, and **Minnie Moll (Chief Executive, Design Council)**. The short-listed projects won over the Selection Committee by exceeding expectations across the competition's five criteria: impact, creativity & design, feasibility, scalability, and teamwork.

*"I'm astounded by the sheer ingenuity exhibited by the Make it Circular Challenge nominees," says **Richard van der Laken, co-founder of WDCD**. "Today, we celebrate not just the creativity of the shortlisted projects but also the collective effort worldwide to shift towards a more sustainable future. The nominees show us how shifting to a more circular society can help us move away from the extractive and exploitative practices and towards a regenerative and restorative model that prioritises the well-being of people and the planet."*

*"The IKEA Foundation is committed to working on a healthy future for our children on a liveable planet," says **Liz McKeon, Director of Programme – Planet at IKEA Foundation**. "As societies, we generate untenable amounts of waste through production and consumption. One of the goals of the Make it Circular Challenge was to see how design and creative communities could rethink their design practices to eliminate waste at the start and close the loop. These wonderful nominees did not disappoint! Their submissions are inspiring, powerful examples of why we should encourage designers to incorporate more circular practices in their work."*

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Over the next few weeks, an international jury will evaluate the shortlist to decide on 13 winners worldwide, to be announced on 3 May 2023.

CLOSING LOOPS AND CREATING CIRCULAR WAYS OF LIVING

Some of the most notable nominated projects found value in unexpected places – for example, by developing unconventional materials out of overlooked materials or waste streams. **Agropelo (Chile)** developed a new kind of mulch (a material to enrich soil, which is typically made of extractive resources such as sawdust or plastic) using human hair – an innovation that saves up to 48% in water for irrigation and regenerates the soil. Similarly, **EggBricks (Mexico)** seeks to take advantage of eggshell waste to create a new material suitable for use in construction.

Other projects focus less on delivering new products and more on developing technologies that enable systems to support the circular economy. For example, **Veridis (the Netherlands)** has developed the first scalable plastic analysis method to allow large-scale, high-quality, reliable recycling. With this technology, recyclers can precisely measure what's in a large pile of plastics, allowing them to process them more effectively. Likewise, **AKI (United Kingdom)**, a digital platform, enables London-based students to trade second-hand objects to minimise the disposal of usable goods and initiate networks around practices like renting and sharing.

Besides reimagining new uses for what others consider as waste, this year's nominees also found creative ways to rethink how everyday goods are made and sold. For instance, a handful focus on mitigating the climate impacts of packaging through utilising innovative materials. Plastic packaging is a significant factor in harmful effects on the earth and people. Nominees addressing this issue include projects like **mūjo (Germany)**, a biomaterial innovation company developing biodegradable seaweed-based packaging materials, and **Craste (India)**, a project creating packaging from crop waste.

Lastly, learning to work with nature has always been a critical aspect of circular design. Nominees such as **Regenerating Brazil's Farms (Brazil)** and **Apidae (Mexico)** focused on redesigning food systems and building more resilient communities. The Selection Committee were impressed at how designers collaborated with farmers and found new ways to feed people while regenerating the soil and giving something back to the community.

WHAT'S NEXT FOR THE NOMINEES?

All 50 nominated projects can now be viewed online via the Challenge platform. Over the next month, an international jury will review their projects and announce 13 winning projects across all categories on 3 May. Winners will receive €10.000 in funding and launch into a full-steam-ahead development programme co-created by experts from the Impact Hub network.

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This press release contains a non-exhaustive list of nominated projects. To view all the nominees, visit: <https://makeitcircular.whatdesigncando.com/nominees>

FOR THE EDITORS

For photos and the shortlist animation, view our press kit. More information about past Challenges and What Design Can Do is available on our [press webpage](#). For any press enquiries or more information regarding the Make it Circular Challenge, please contact louise@whatdesigncando.com

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. WDCD has hosted 15 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 well-being of refugees and climate change.

To see previous Challenge winners, visit <https://www.whatdesigncando.com/projects/>

For more information, visit www.whatdesigncando.com

ABOUT THE IKEA FOUNDATION

The IKEA Foundation is a strategic philanthropy that focuses its grant-making efforts on tackling the two biggest threats to children's futures: poverty and climate change. It currently grants more than €200 million per year to help improve family incomes and protect the planet from climate change. Since 2009, the IKEA Foundation has granted more than €1.5 billion to create a better future for children and their families. In 2021 the Foundation decided to make an additional €1 billion over the next five years to accelerate the reduction of Greenhouse Gas emissions. Learn more at: www.ikeafoundation.org