



PRESS RELEASE

Seven creative thought-leaders speak out on design's responsibility to radically change wasteful consumption

What Design Can Do launches new video campaign for the No Waste Challenge

Amsterdam, 9 March 2021 – “I’ve designed trash – we’ve all designed trash,” admits visionary designer **Bruce Mau**. And if you’ve ever pitched a product or sold a campaign, then chances are you’ve designed trash too. That’s what seven brilliant design thinkers are speaking out about, in **What Design Can Do’s** bold new video campaign for the **No Waste Challenge**.

Around the world, landfills are growing by some 3.5 million tonnes of garbage every day. Considering that waste is no accident, that’s a lot of bad design. We need to face our waste problem head-on, which is why **What Design Can Do (WDCD)** launched the global **No Waste Challenge** earlier this year, inviting innovators everywhere to radically redesign our relationship with waste. In a series of videos published this week, seven renowned design thinkers — **Alice Rawsthorn, Bruce Mau, Fernando Laposse, Fred Gelli, Nelly Ben Hayoun, Selly Raby Kane and Yoshiharu Tsukamoto** — weigh in on where design went wrong and what we can do to fix it.

“This video campaign comes at a crucial time. As the public (very rightfully) becomes more critical over profit-over-planet practices, we still see creatives holding onto their image as do-gooders,” comments Richard van der Laken, creative director of WDCD, also featuring in the video campaign. “This campaign is meant to spark an honest dialogue in our creative community. It’s ok to be critical of design’s failures. In fact, I think we’d be better off for it.”

‘WE’RE BEHAVING LIKE IT’S AN ENDLESS PARTY’

All seven thinkers agreed: by making things both desirable and disposable, the creative industries have become a big part of the problem.

It wasn’t always this way, **Mau** reminds us: “We used to build things that last. Then we introduced short-term design, planned obsolescence, that things would break and fall apart.” Of course, this cycle of consumerism is terrible for the environment. “We’re behaving like it’s an endless party—but we’re passing the check to our children.” Mexican material designer **Fernando Laposse** doubles down on how ingrained our throwaway culture has become: “When I was in university, I was taught to design objects that didn’t have a lifespan of more than 3 or 4 years.” In an effort to minimize his impact, the craftsman now works chiefly with biodegradable materials like crop waste.

For Senegalese fashion designer **Selly Raby Kane**, the breakneck speed of her industry had become unsustainable in more ways than one. Two years ago she made the decision to scale down her eponymous clothing label, frustrated by the “senseless” expectations of the market. “The thirst for newness has a high cost: in human resources, in natural resources, in energy. It costs a lot,” she explains. “For me, good design is design that will be a testimony of a time – a piece of documentation that creates a community around it, and that doesn’t cost us that much.”

Even within a critical campaign, the videos feature designers’ bursts of optimism and moments of levity. “Designers don’t know much – and this is good,” smiles Brazilian powerhouse **Fred Gelli**.



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“Because when you don't have to be an expert in something, we can ask the questions that children usually do. And this opens up space for innovation.” On this, acclaimed author **Alice Rawsthorn** agrees. In fact, there's never been a better time for the creative industries to make a contribution. She remarks: “This is a rare moment in history where design is empowered to tackle complex systemic challenges.”

JOIN THE NO WASTE CHALLENGE

The No Waste Challenge is What Design Can Do's third Climate Action Challenge in partnership with the IKEA Foundation. This global design competition calls on all creatives and innovators to address the enormous impact of waste and consumerism on climate change. The newly extended deadline to apply is 20 April. In May, a jury of leading experts in design, social impact and climate action will select a minimum of 10 winners. Next to a prize fund of €10.000 each, the centrepiece of the award package is a global development programme which includes online training, mentoring sessions and a bootcamp. Co-created by Impact Hub, this programme will support the winning teams in further strengthening their projects, and propelling them into 2022.

For more information, visit the No Waste Challenge platform: <http://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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