



*Oxford Tire Pile #1, Westley, California, USA, 1999 photo © Edward Burtynsky, courtesy Flowers Gallery, London / Nicholas Metivier Gallery, Toronto.*

## Waste Age: What Can Design Do?

Opens 23 October 2021  
the Design Museum

#EndTheWasteAge  
@DesignMuseum

[IMAGE LINK](#)

To coincide with the UN Climate Change Conference (COP26), the Design Museum will host an exhibition showing what design can do to tackle the critical problem of waste and its environmental consequences across the globe

The exhibition showcases the visionary designers that are reinventing our relationship with waste, including contributions from Formafantasma, Stella McCartney, The Ellen MacArthur Foundation, Fernando Laposse, Bethany Williams, Phoebe English, Natsai Audrey Chieza and more

For the first time, exhibition visitors will be able to see new commissions that confront the waste problem including, a large-scale art installation by Ibrahim Mahama made from e-waste in Ghana and *Aurora* by Arthur Mamou Mani and Dassault Systèmes Design Studio, an interactive installation inviting visitors to explore how we might achieve a sustainable future

The Design Museum presents a new vision for the near future with *Waste Age: What Can Design Do?* Opening on 23 October 2021, the museum invites visitors to explore how designers are redefining fashion, construction, food, electronics, packaging and more through over 300 objects, by designing out waste and creating a more circular economy.

The first section of the exhibition 'Peak Waste' confronts visitors with the epic scale of global waste – making the case for urgent change. Shining a light on how mass production and our consumption habits contribute to growing landfills, visitors will be able to follow their rubbish across the globe through a large-scale waste tracker. The exhibition examines how we arrived at today's throwaway culture, one in which 80% of products are thrown away in their first six months of life.

From then on, the exhibition focusses on solutions and new thinking. Moving into 'Precious Waste', visitors will learn more about the raw materials used in everyday products through object deconstructions by Studio Drift as well as the designers leading the way in recycling waste into new resources. These include sustainable materials in fashion by Stella McCartney, Adidas and Bethany Williams; to construction materials such as the K Briq by Kenoteq, which uses almost 90% less carbon than a regular brick, and new lives for plastic like the S-1500 chair by Snøhetta, made from discarded fishing nets.



*Stella McCartney SU19 ECONYL® Jacket and Trousers made using regenerated nylon from fishing nets and factory waste*



*A discarded bale of jeans, waiting to be recycled into Circulose — a new material made by recovering cotton from worn-out clothes for new garments. Image by Alexander Donka/Renewcell.*

In 'Post Waste' discover proposals for new circular methods of production, with a focus on grown rather than extracted materials. Visitors will see experimental designs that introduce a whole new world of clothing, products and packaging made from natural materials such as coconut, algae, and corn husks. Fernando Laposse's The Dogs bench uses raw fibres from the leaves of the Agave plant and The Blast Studio's 3D printed column, made with waste and the fungus Mycelum, promotes a no-waste architecture.

This section also delves into how we can change our systems and behaviours to consume less. It examines models of sharing, labelling, and design-for-disassembly, which can help objects last for longer, be repaired and significantly reduce how much is manufactured and discarded. From local solutions like Kamikatsu, a Zero Waste Town in Japan to a display of tool sharing libraries across the world, the exhibition will promote living without waste and imagines a more resourceful world for future generations.

**Gemma Curtin, Waste Age Curator said:**

*“We must face the problem of waste – we can no longer ignore what happens to things when we get rid of them. Instead of thinking of objects as things that have an end life, this exhibition proposes that they can have many lives. This is not just an exhibition it is a campaign #EndTheWasteAge, and we all have an active part in our future. The exhibition will show design is at the forefront of sustainable solutions.”*

**Justin McGuirk, Chief Curator and Waste Age Co-Curator, said:**

*“Design has helped create our wasteful society, and it will be crucial in building a cleaner future. That means rethinking the lifestyles and materials that do so much damage. This optimistic exhibition demonstrates the energy and ingenuity being applied to the challenge – and we want it to mark a turning point. There is so much we can do, but it begins with understanding our waste.”*

Alongside the exhibition is the *Aurora* installation, on display in the museum’s Atrium from 18 October to 14 November. *Aurora* is an interactive experimentation of how we can achieve a new, sustainable approach to life in the future. Conceived and created by Mamou-Mani Architects and the Dassault Systèmes Design Studio, *Aurora* signals the end of the take-make-waste era and the dawn of built environments conceived for regeneration. Alongside the exhibit, visitors will see how modules are crushed, melted and reformed, demonstrating the continuous process of regeneration inherent in the concept of *Aurora*.

As part of the curatorial process, the Design Museum have engaged creative consultancy, Urge Collective's Sophie Thomas and Alexie Sommer with data analyst Ralf Waterfield to conduct an environmental audit of the exhibition. This will enable the museum to communicate the environmental impact of the exhibition clearly, engaging designers, museum staff, partners and visitors in discussions to find the solutions in reducing waste and associated impacts.

Waste Age features cutting-edge research funded by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI). This exhibition is part of Future Observatory, a new national programme from the Design Museum and the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), part of UKRI, of research, debate and training that will show how design can drive Britain's future prosperity.

*Waste Age: What Can Design Do?* opens on Saturday 23 October 2021 at the Design Museum. More ticket information is available on the Design Museum website, [HERE](#).

**-Ends-**

### **Notes to Editor**

#### **PRESS ENQUIRIES:**

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#### **Curated by**

Gemma Curtin, Curator and Justin McGuirk, Chief Curator  
Lara Chapman, Assistant Curator

#### **Exhibition 3D Design**

Material Cultures

#### **Exhibition 2D Design**

SPIN

#### **Exhibition Consultant**

Urge Collective

#### **Dassault Systèmes, Associate Sponsor**

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#### **method – Waste Age Programme Sponsor**

Founded in 2000, method is the pioneer of premium planet-friendly and design-driven home, fabric, dish and personal care products. Formulated with naturally derived + biodegradable ingredients, method is delightfully designed with the planet in mind. Today method can be found in more than 40,000 retail locations throughout North America, Europe and Asia.



Glass for Good is method's first ever deluxe and limited edition, glass hand wash bottle. Is it made from 100% post-consumer recycled glass. With the launch of Glass for Good, method are supporting the learning programme for Waste Age

**Supported by Cockayne Grants for the Arts, a donor advised fund at London Community Foundation**

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### **Public Programme in Collaboration with Project Etopia**

The Design Museum is working in collaboration with Project Etopia to develop a number of talks as part of the Waste Age public programme. These talks, to be hosted in the Museum's Bakala Auditorium and available online, will demonstrate the ways in which the built environment can address some of the world's most pressing environmental challenges, as well as inspire meaningful change within the design industry and among the Museum's audiences.

Project Etopia are a partnership of six innovative low carbon businesses. Together, they seek long-term solutions for today's global housing, social and environmental crises.

### **About the Design Museum:**

The Design Museum is the world's leading museum devoted to contemporary architecture and design. Its work encompasses all elements of design, including fashion, product and graphic design. Since it opened its doors in 1989 the museum has displayed everything from an AK-47 to high heels designed by Christian Louboutin. It has staged over 100 exhibitions, welcomed over seven million visitors and showcased the work of some of the world's most celebrated designers and architects including Paul Smith, Zaha Hadid, Jonathan Ive, Frank Gehry, Eileen Gray and Dieter Rams. On 24 November 2016, The Design Museum relocated to Kensington, west London. John Pawson has converted the interior of a 1960s modernist building to create a new home for the Design Museum giving it three times more space in which to show a wider range of exhibitions and significantly extend its learning programme.

In April 2021, the Design Museum was awarded £5 million through the Government's Culture Recovery Fund: Repayable Finance programme.

In October 2020, the Design Museum was awarded £2,968,634 by Arts Council England from the Culture Recovery Fund announced by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport.

In July 2020, the Design Museum was awarded nearly £1 million National Lottery funding through the Arts Council's Emergency Response Fund.



[designmuseum.org](https://designmuseum.org)