



UNDER EMBARGO UNTIL 9 A.M. EST ON MARCH 29, 2022

TOM FORD Plastic Innovation Prize Announces Finalists for Thin-Film Plastic Alternatives Competition

March 29, 2022 – American fashion designer and film director Mr. [Tom Ford](#) and Dr. Dune Ives, CEO of [Lonely Whale](#), today revealed the finalists for the [TOM FORD Plastic Innovation Prize](#), the only global competition focused exclusively on creating scalable and biologically degradable alternatives to thin-film plastic polybags.

“What we accomplish together through this competition will catalyze global change across continents, countries and industries, which is urgently needed to address plastic pollution,” said Ford. “If the ocean is polluted and in danger, then so is the planet and so are we. The impact these brilliant minds and their creations will have on our planet is monumental, bringing us their innovative solutions to making the environment a safer place for generations to come. I am pleased to announce the following finalists, whom we celebrate today for their exceptional alternatives to thin-film plastic polybags.”

- [Genecis](#), a Canadian biotechnology company that reprograms bacteria to make premium materials from low-value organic waste;
- [Kelpi](#), a sustainable biotech company from Bath, UK harnessing the properties of seaweed to create compostable, marine-safe, low-carbon bioplastic packaging;
- [Lwanda Biotech](#), a Kenyan-based social enterprise addressing both community-level plastic pollution and agricultural waste through development of alternatives to thin-film plastic packaging;
- [Marea](#), an Icelandic start-up leveraging sustainable local algae streams to create a replicable model for thin-film alternatives that fully biodegrade;
- [Notpla](#), a London-based start-up inspired by the way nature encapsulates liquids and is on a mission to make plastic waste disappear by pioneering natural-membrane packaging that uses seaweed as an alternative to single-use plastic;
- [Sway](#), an American company offering seaweed-based, home-compostable replacements for thin-film plastic packaging, aiming to offer a carbon-negative material at scale;
- [Xampla](#), a University of Cambridge spinout inspired by the strength of spider silk, turning proteins, from common plant sources like peas, into high-performance plastic-alternative materials;

- [Zerocircle](#), an India-based company making wildlife and ocean-safe packaging materials from locally cultivated seaweed that will dissolve harmlessly in the ocean after use.

The Finalists' submissions underwent rigorous review by the Scientific & Technical Advisory Board and Prize Judging Panel. Finalists were selected from amongst 64 applications from 26 countries and 6 continents, demonstrating the extent of the interest and innovation on this issue.

“The ambition of this Prize is unparalleled, and is poised to claim the largest commercial shift away from non-recyclable thin-film plastic,” said Dr. Ives. “We’ve long believed that the solutions to the plastic waste crisis exist, and by working together we can ensure a future free from plastic in the ocean.”

Every year, an estimated 180 billion thin-film plastic polybags are used by the fashion industry. Thin-film plastic pollutes the ocean, making up an estimated 46% of the nearly 14 million metric tons of new plastic that enters the ocean annually.

The Finalists now enter a year-long material testing phase that is sponsored by Nike, to ensure their materials are biologically degradable, minimize negative social and environmental impacts, meet industry performance standards, and are also cost-competitive, scalable and market-ready by 2025.

“When it comes to protecting the future of sport and the future of our planet, Nike is about innovating, creating and scaling solutions,” said Liz Rodgers, VP of Sustainable Product for Nike. “By joining the TOM FORD Plastic Innovation Prize as the sponsor of the material testing track and part of the early adopter coalition, we are committing to accelerating the creation and adoption of material solutions that solve the issue of thin-film plastic waste. We are proud to work alongside this group of incredible innovators, brands and organizations that share in our ambition to raise the bar for sustainability.”

The testing program includes field testing in Caribbean waters and in-lab testing led by the [New Materials Institute at the University of Georgia](#). In situ field testing in Pacific Northwest waters will be led by the [Seattle Aquarium](#). The Aquarium will also lead bespoke, first-of-its-kind laboratory-based tests designed to model what would happen in a marine mammal gut if the materials were eaten.

“Over 900 species of marine animals are known to have ingested plastic, and this number continues to grow. Ingestion is fatal nearly 25% of the time for whales,” said Dr. Erin Meyer of the Seattle Aquarium. “By modeling what might happen if these alternative materials were to be ingested by a gray whale, we can begin to understand whether these mammals will face the same fate if they ingest these new materials.”

Finalists' materials will also be tested by major brands to ensure immediate replacement of existing non-recyclable polybags. Today, leading brands [J. Crew](#), [Nike](#), [Florence Marine X](#), [Veronica Beard](#), [Version Tomorrow](#), [Vuori](#), [Rhone](#), [Noah New](#)

[York](#), [Le Club](#), [Princess Polly](#) and [TOM FORD Beauty](#) are joining the early adopter coalition among [Stella McCartney](#), [TOM FORD International](#), [HP Inc.](#), [MillerKnoll](#), [GoSili](#), [Imperial Dade](#) and [ROQ.US](#). These brands have committed to testing the materials from Prize Finalists and/or Prize Winners in their packaging solutions and supply chains.

“J.Crew is honored to join the TOM FORD Plastic Innovation Prize early adopter coalition,” says Liz Hershfield, SVP Sustainability at J.Crew Group. “As J.Crew continues to realize its people and planet goals, we are thrilled to be part of this innovative group advancing solutions to one of the biggest threats facing our oceans. We’re excited for what’s to come and the continued cutting-edge thinking.”

In 2020, Tom Ford partnered with Lonely Whale to launch the TOM FORD Plastic Innovation Prize, the only global competition focused on creating scalable and biologically degradable alternatives to thin-film plastic polybags. To coincide with the launch and to further the commitment to ocean health, in November 2020, TOM FORD TIMEPIECES debuted its first Ocean Plastic timepiece, the first luxury timepiece made from 100% ocean plastic.

The TOM FORD Plastic Innovation Prize offers a purse totaling more than \$1.2 million. Winners will be announced in Spring 2023, and Prize winners will receive significant support from Lonely Whale and other partners in the following years to achieve market adoption.

Learn more about the Prize at www.plasticprize.org or follow @TomFord @LonelyWhale and #UnwrapTheFuture on Instagram.

About TOM FORD

Tom Ford was born in Austin, Texas prior to moving to New York City and Paris to study design. In 1990, Ford joined Gucci as the company’s chief womenswear designer before becoming Creative Director in 1994, ultimately becoming vice chairman. Under Ford’s leadership, Gucci became one of the largest and most profitable luxury brands in the world, with sales increasing from 230 million dollars in 1994 to 3 billion dollars in 2003. Ford resigned from his post in 2004 and announced the creation of TOM FORD in April 2005. Today, the brand offers a complete collection of Menswear, Womenswear, Accessories, Eyewear, Beauty and most recently Underwear and Timepieces. Presently there are over 100 freestanding TOM FORD stores and shop-in-shops in locations around the world. In addition to his achievements within the fashion industry, Ford is also an award-winning screenwriter, producer, and film director. Tom Ford has redefined luxury. He is a visionary and his success has been recognized by a number of international awards, highlighted by winning seven Council of Fashion Designers of America (CFDA) Awards, including their prestigious Geoffrey Beene Lifetime Achievement Award in 2014 and The Menswear Designer of the Year in 2015. In 2019, Mr. Ford took over as Chairman of the CFDA. Ford currently lives in Los Angeles.

About Lonely Whale

[Lonely Whale](#) is an award-winning non-profit whose mission ensures plastic waste

does not find its way into the ocean. Founded in 2015 by Adrian Grenier and Lucy Sumner, Lonely Whale is powered by a mass community of people working together to create a healthy planet - our definition of a utopian future.

Lonely Whale has spearheaded impactful global movements resulting in: the elimination of more than 20 billion single-use plastics, including straws and water bottles; more than 330 products launched that are made with ocean-bound plastics through the only global network of ocean-bound plastic suppliers; and youth from 90 countries accelerating a dawn of new leadership - youth leadership - on ocean health. Lonely Whale's latest venture is their partnership with TOM FORD International for the launch of the TOM FORD Plastic Innovation Prize, addressing the 180 billion single-use, thin-film polybags used by the fashion industry every year.

Lonely Whale's work has been recognized by Fast Company's World Changing Ideas and Most Innovative Companies, Cannes Lion Awards, The Shorty Awards, The ADDY Awards, The Webby's Anthem Awards, SEAL Awards, the inaugural P4G Circular Economy Award sponsored by the Danish Government, HALO Awards and the prestigious 2021 UN SDG Action Award. In 2021, Lonely Whale joined the Global Plastic Action Partnership (GPAP), the World Economic Forum's platform for advancing progress in the fight against plastic waste and pollution, as well as transitioning governments, businesses and society towards a sustainable, circular economy for plastics. Lonely Whale is a proud supporter of the UN Environment's #CleanSeas campaign.

To learn more and support, visit www.lonelywhale.org or follow @LonelyWhale. For PR inquiries please contact:

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