

Belgian startup to print 3D recycled sunglasses

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A Belgium-based start-up is on its way to making the world a bit sunnier, by printing the first 3D sunglasses out of recycled plastic.



"The idea ... (is) also to make sure that the materials eventually come back to us in a closed loop system," de Neubourg said. - Photo: Reuters

The Antwerp-based company w.r.yuma - pronounced "We are Yuma" and named after one of the sunniest places on earth - began a month-long online crowd-sourcing campaign on Kickstarter on Wednesday.

After two years of prototyping and testing different materials, it promises to transform old car dashboards, soda bottles, fridges and other plastic waste into different colored shades.

“It’s the icon of cool, really, and when you wear [them], literally you are looking to the world through a different set of lenses, and that’s exactly the message that I want to bring,” Founder Sebastiaan de Neubourg said of the company, named after Yuma, Arizona.

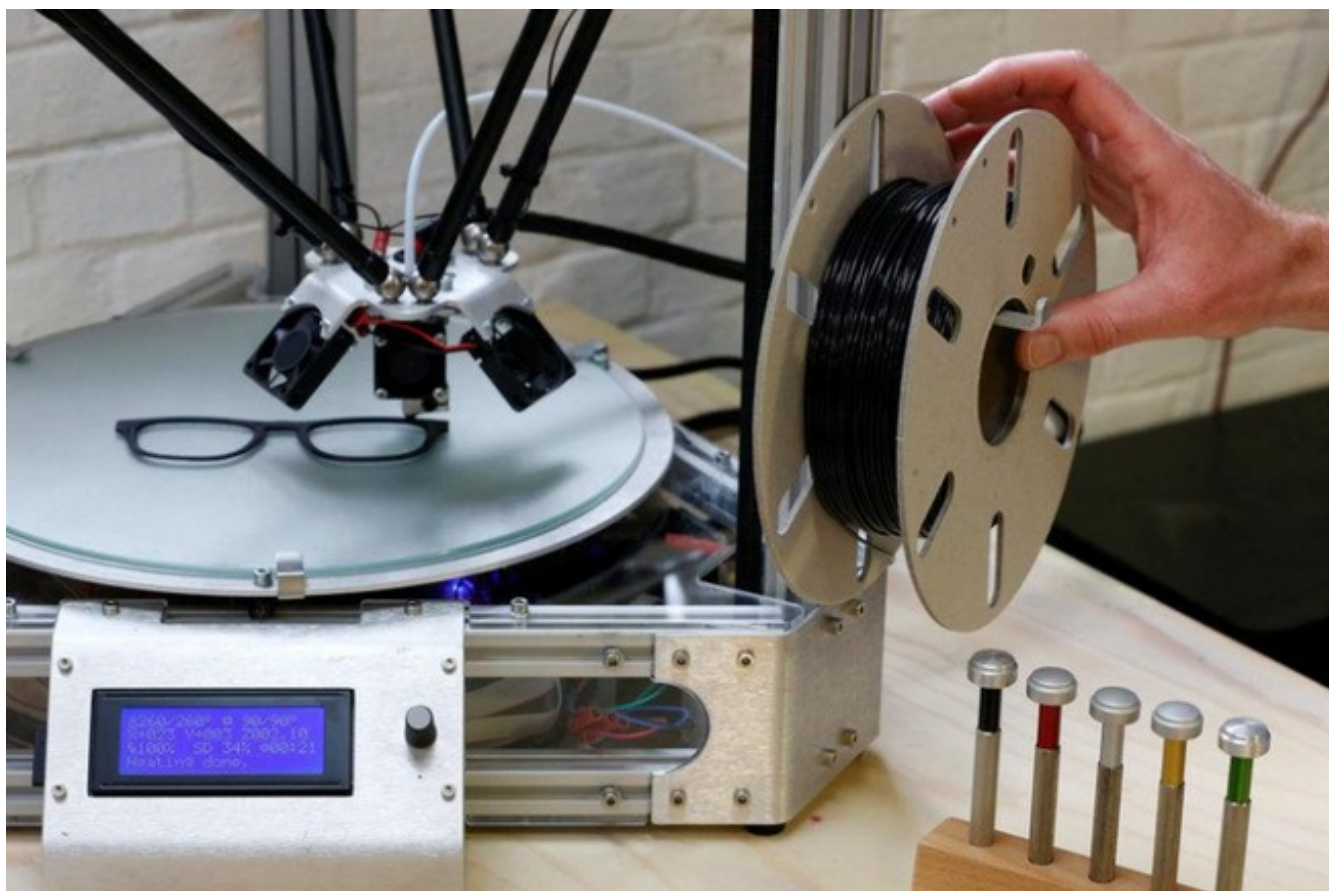
“I want to inspire people to have, quite literally, another look at waste.”

The plastic waste is sourced from the Netherlands and Belgium’s Flemish region. The waste is fed into the 3D printer, melted to form thin strands of plastic wire and layered together to construct the frames.

These are then assembled by hand and fitted with Italian made Mazzuchelli lenses.

Marketing schemes include setting up stands at music festivals to transform plastic drinking cups into sunglasses on the spot.

The company is also making a limited number of soda white sunglasses made from 90 percent recycled PET plastic from soda bottles.



The glasses are fitted with Italian-made Mazzuchelli lenses. - Photo: Reuters

It is also inviting would-be clients to return the glasses once they are done with them to be turned into a new pair of glasses.

“The idea ... (is) also to make sure that the materials eventually come back to us in a closed loop system,” de Neubourg said.

With five unique designs and three colors of lenses to choose from, de Neubourg is trying to make sustainable recycling fashionable and useful. The sunglasses will be shipped to customers in January 2018.

“I think that sustainability should become mainstream,” said de Neubourg, a former mechanical engineer for a sustainability consultancy.

“We’re not going to solve the plastic waste problem by just taking this plastic and putting it in sunglasses, but it’s a first step. ... I want to touch a lot of people with that message.”

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