Saul Nash has won the 2022 International Woolmark Prize. Unveiled at an event in London, he was joined by the two designers behind South Africa’s Mmusomaxwell, who received the Karl Lagerfeld Award for Innovation.

London-based Nash was praised for his “modern use of Merino wool, bridging a gap between active solutions and more formal requirements”.

“Everyone did a great job and could have been a winner,” said judging panel member and Burberry creative chief Riccardo Tisci. “But what Saul did, coming from a ballet background to replace Lycra with wool was really incredible.”

The collection “exposed Nash to the benefits of Merino wool in activewear, allowing him to develop materials which have enhanced the quality of his designs without compromising their technical DNA”.

His modern interpretation of knitwear focused on minimising waste, and emphasising movement and performance.

Nash said winning the prize was “the cherry on top for everything Woolmark has done for me”.

Meanwhile, judge Carine Roitfeld said Karl Lagerfeld prize-winners Maxwell Boko and Mmuso Potsane of Mmusomaxwell had created designs of which the late designer would have approved.

The winners receive A$200,000 and A$100,000, respectively, along with “ongoing support from the industry and Woolmark Prize retail partners”.

Their winning collection was committed to reducing its environmental impact and upskilling traditional
Their winning collection was committed to reducing its environmental impact and upskilling traditional craftsmanship with an artisanal approach. The jury praised the design duo for “passion, courage and [being] committed to introducing a new skillset to South African manufacturers”.

Woolmark also presented the Supply Chain Award celebrating an outstanding contribution by a trade partner, with Netherlands-based Knitwear Lab winning. The research and knowledge hub for innovative, design-driven and sustainable knitwear solutions, was recognised for its “contribution to the International Woolmark Prize and for giving access to technology and R&D in flat-bed knitting to emerging brands in a way that is specific to their needs”.

It developed 100% Merino wool fabrics with Saul Nash, such as a compression wool hybrid jersey/airtex mesh knit and a double-faced jersey with integrated mesh holes — offering high stretch, strength and breathability.

As well as Tisci and Roitfled, the jury also included Edward Enninful, Naomi Campbell, Pieter Mulier, and Sinéad Burke.

“The International Woolmark Prize is the jewel in our crown,” said The Woolmark Company MD John Roberts. “It connects our Australian woolgrowers with the global fashion and textiles industry and in turn highlights the beauty, versatility, and modernity of Australian wool. We’re proud of the relationships fostered between our seven finalists, prestigious judging panel and supply chain network who have mentored these designers on their Woolmark Prize journey and hope these connections continue in the future.”

2022’s finalists also included France’s Egonlab, Australia’s Jordan Dalah, UK-based Ahluwalia, Peter Do of the USA, and China’s Rui.

By Sandra Halliday

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