



After the Single Use
Rethinking Plastics in Healthcare



BALTIMORE, USA
ARTIST IN RESIDENCE
OPEN CALL

OPEN CALL: Artist in Residence**BALTIMORE**
From the Archive to the Incinerator

We invite a Baltimore-based artist to join a team of researchers at the Johns Hopkins University to explore the intersection of medical history, environmental justice, and the politics of disposability.

LOCATION

Baltimore, MD

INSTITUTION

Center for Medical Humanities and Social Medicine,
Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine

RESEARCH LEAD

Jeremy Greene, Professor of Medicine and History of Medicine,
Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine

RESIDENCY PERIOD

Full-Time May 2027 OR Part-Time March-May 2027 (2-3 days/week).

Exact schedule will be developed based on artist preference in dialogue with Research Unit.

NOTE: No accommodation is provided as part of this residency

FEE

Artist fee: \$6,750 USD

Materials: \$1,000 USD

APPLICATION DEADLINE

23 October, 2026

RESPONSE TIMEFRAME

You will receive a response to your application before 20 December, 2026

CONTACT FOR QUESTIONS ABOUT RESIDENCY

Info.noba@vitenparken.no

ABOUT: AFTER THE SINGLE USE

If the world's healthcare sector were a country, it would rank 5th in global carbon emissions. A significant portion of these emissions come from single-use plastic medical products like syringes, surgical drapes, and diagnostic devices, all designed for disposal. These materials emit toxins and greenhouse gases when burned, leak microplastics and chemicals when landfilled, and pollute marine environments, with direct and indirect effects on human health. After the Single Use (ATSU) is a five-year research project asking: how did we get here, and what would it take to move healthcare towards a circular economy of reuse?

Led by the University of Edinburgh, UK and funded by the Wellcome Trust, the project brings together historians, anthropologists, and public health researchers across eight countries (India, Norway, Papua New Guinea, Scotland, Senegal, Switzerland, Tanzania and USA) to examine the history, present, and future of single-use medical plastics.

Driven by the belief that understanding this crisis requires perspectives beyond research alone, each research unit will host an artist in residence. The eight residencies are independent but connected: selected artists will have the opportunity to meet online and exchange with other artists in residence at the other seven sites, and all eight residencies will contribute to a shared international online exhibition.

The artist in residence program is coordinated by NOBA (Norwegian Bio-Art Arena), Vitenparken, Norway on behalf of the After the Single Use collective. If you have questions about the open call reach out to info.noba@vitenparken.no

THE RESEARCH IN BALTIMORE

The Baltimore research unit consists of one historian and one ethnographer working collaboratively on two research strands. The historical strand builds a database of advertisements and marketing materials from the 1950s to the 1980s, tracing how medicine became a leading consumer of single-use plastics. The ethnographic strand documents the long-term ecological and health consequences of disposal, in collaboration with residents living near the largest medical waste incinerator in North America.

ABOUT THE ATSU ARTIST RESIDENCY

As part of ATSU, eight artists will be selected (one per research location) to join the local research team for a residency period between March-May 2027. This is a research-embedded residency: the focus is on curiosity, exchange, and process. Artists will have the time and space to engage with the research, bring their own perspective and practice to bear, and explore what emerges.

Artists are not expected to illustrate or communicate the research. They are invited to work alongside it — to observe, question, and respond in whatever way feels true to their practice. The aim is a genuine exchange, in which both the artist and the researchers come away with new ways of thinking.

Artistic works in progress will be presented locally at or near the end of the residency period, and the artist will contribute work to the ATSU online exhibition after completion of the residency. The results will be featured alongside 7 other artists in residence projects working with 7 other research groups worldwide. The artist fee covers the residency, the local presentation of work and the production of work for the online exhibition.

WHAT THE ARTIST IN BALTIMORE WOULD ENGAGE WITH

As the artist, you will be embedded in the team, participating in its activities and developing work that emerges from that encounter. This includes access to:

- A substantial collection of visual materials at the Welch Medical Library: advertisements and marketing materials from the 1950s to the 1990s documenting how single-use plastics were sold as an essential basis of modern clinical care
- Active sites of disposal of single-use plastics in Baltimore healthcare facilities today (access currently being negotiated)
- The community-led environmental justice work in South Baltimore, where the South Baltimore Community Land Trust (SBCLT) and local residents are documenting the health and ecological consequences of the Curtis Bay Energy medical waste incinerator
- Access to the other ATSU artists and researchers in the network for exchange of ideas

WHAT THE ATSU RESIDENCY OFFERS

The residency is based at the Center for Medical Humanities and Social Medicine, within the Welch Medical Library at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, where the artist will have a desk and working space. The research team also works directly with the South Baltimore Community Land Trust (SBCLT), who are documenting the ongoing emissions from the Curtis Bay Energy medical waste incinerator. The artist will have the opportunity to engage with this community-led work.

The Baltimore ATSU research unit can help facilitate connections to a broader network of relevant organisations, including the Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA), where workspace may be available through the Ecosocial Design Collaborative; the Baltimore Office of Promotion & The Arts; and the Climate & Health Initiative of the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine in Washington DC, which focuses on the ecological consequences of medical wastefulness.

WHO WE ARE LOOKING FOR

We welcome artists from any creative background, for example, visual art, performance, film, photography, installation, design, socially engaged practice, etc. We are looking for artists who are curious, self-directed, and comfortable working in an unfamiliar environment.

You do not need prior experience working with researchers. What matters is that you can articulate why this residency interests you, and that you are genuinely open to engaging with the research, not just its themes, but its specific questions and methods.

You might be a good fit if you:

- are drawn to questions of health, waste, material culture, and environmental justice
- can work independently and take initiative with your time
- are interested in how knowledge is made; in archives, in fieldwork, in communities
- are open to process-led work without a pre-determined outcome
- are comfortable with ambiguity and willing to learn

APPLICATION CRITERIA AND TERMS & CONDITIONS

There are general criteria for the artist in residence across all 8 locations worldwide. Before applying please read the terms and conditions document for the ATSU Artist Residency for more details on the residency. You can download both of these on the open call webpage.

<https://aftersingleuse.net/news-events/2026/open-call-artist-residence>

In addition, the Baltimore team wants to emphasize that the successful candidate would be able to present a portfolio and proposal which speaks to the historical, ethnographic, and community-led research basis of the Baltimore ATSU unit, and also is able to share a vision of art engagement that is in keeping with South Baltimore Community Land Trust's (SBCLT) approach to engaged community-directed environmental justice work.

HOW TO APPLY

To apply for the ATSU Artist Residency, fill in [this form](#).

The QR code below also takes you to the application form.

