

Open Call for Artists: Rethinking Scientific Histories

A Commission by Edinburgh Science Festival, Edinburgh Art Festival, and Scottish International Storytelling Festival

Application Deadline: 11.59pm on Sunday 6 July 2025



Introduction

We invite expressions of interest from Scotland-based or Scotland-born artists to participate in a major new cross-disciplinary commission that interrogates the historic, social and cultural dynamics of science.

This opportunity culminates in a major installation at the **National Museum of Scotland's Grand Gallery** during the **Edinburgh Science Festival 2026**, with further activity across **EAF (Edinburgh Art Festival)**, **Scottish International Storytelling Festival**, and the **Mexico Science Festival**.

We welcome proposals from artists working in any medium, with an interest in interdisciplinary collaboration.

About the Commission

This project repositions science as a culturally embedded process shaped by social history, power, and omission. Through creative engagement with historical objects and narratives, the selected artist will engage with the history of scientific canon and explore alternative voices and contributions through an artistic response.

This commission invites an artist to create a large-scale installation for the Grand Gallery at the National Museum of Scotland as part of the Edinburgh Science Festival 2026, reaching up to 60,000 visitors. The artist will have further opportunities to talk about their work at the Wellcome Collection (London), the El Aleph Festival (Mexico City) and the Scottish International Storytelling Festival.

The artist will receive research support, curatorial mentorship, and production funding to realise new works for public display during Edinburgh Science Festival 2026. The artist will have support to spend up to 10 days undertaking research at Wellcome Collection, with support from the Research & Enquiry team, and sharing their work with an invited internal audience.

Selected artworks must be conceptually and physically suitable for installation in this space and should meaningfully engage with the project's key themes.



Project key themes

Rethinking Scientific Histories is an artistic commission that brings together contemporary sculpture with critical reflections on science's cultural legacy. This project invites artists to explore how science has been communicated, preserved and politicised—and to give physical form to the stories that shape our understanding of knowledge and discovery.

By engaging with scientific artefacts such as historical instruments and archival documents, the selected artist will reinterpret and respond to how science has been shaped by power, exclusion, innovation, and culture. This is a call to rethink science's stories and reframe who gets to be remembered.

Additionally, artists will be invited to contribute to the wider programme during Edinburgh Science Festival 2026, building visibility and dialogue around their practice.

Budget and Support Provided

The total fee for this work is £10,000 inclusive of VAT and expenses. A separate £20,000 production budget will be available for creating the artwork and activities and will be managed by the artist and Edinburgh Science Festival team.



On invitation the selected artist will develop a full Concept Installation Proposal to be agreed with all of the Festivals. Following the sign-off of this installation plan, the public programme will be developed with Edinburgh Science Festival and a more detailed plan will be developed and discussed with the project team and relevant stakeholders.

- **Artist Fee: £10,000 (inclusive of VAT and expenses)**
 - Submission of a full installation Proposal
 - Submission of an Engagement & Public Programme plan
 - Attendance at meetings and travel
 - All other costs associated with the work / any subsidiary commissions
- **Production Budget: £20,000 (managed in collaboration with producing partners)**
 - Materials
 - Installation of any temporary interventions and events
 - Any associated fabrication costs, printing, etc.
 - Costs of any additional sub-contractors

If selected you will be required to submit a full Concept Installation Proposal which will include:

- Description of engagement concept/statement and approach to include research & development stages
- Detailed budgets for Artist Fee & Production Costs
- Drawings / visualisations of temporary interventions
- Materials, dimensions and installation methods for any temporary events
- Health & Safety and Risk assessment (installation / in-situ – outline indication)
- Access Statement (outline indication)
- Other Artists and any identified sub-contractors

Support from Wellcome Collection:

- The artist will have reasonable expenses (travel, accommodation, and/or subsistence) paid for up to 10 days (FTE) over a six-month period between September 2025 and February 2026 to undertake research at Wellcome Collection in London. This can be across multiple visits.
- Support and (where required) training in collections-based research, including archival material, rare books and manuscripts, film and photography, and visual media.
- The opportunity to co-host a Collections-Research Showcase in our Viewing Room, where the artist can share and discuss the preliminary findings of their research with an invited audience of internal and (where appropriate) external participants

Practical Considerations

We have included a floorplan of the Grand Gallery at the end of the document, and photographs of the space with various examples of different works installed throughout the document. The photographs are meant to demonstrate the space and are not meant as a guide to the sorts of pieces we are expecting.

Other practical considerations are below:

- The Grand Gallery of the National Museum of Scotland is a large, loud and bright space filled with natural light during the daytime. There is no dark or quiet space available.
- Your work can be located on the main floor or suspended. However, suspending is subject to significant planning and costs. Please reach out to discuss prior to submission if you are considering suspending your work.
- Your work must be able to fit through a standard double door, either as a whole or in sections, to be able to be moved into and out of the museum. All whole works or sections should be easily moveable by 1-2 people using non-powered equipment.
- The Grand Gallery is used for evening events, so all components must be easily relocated and restored in 30 mins or less.
- Standard domestic (13A) power is readily available.
- No liquid mediums or sticky substances unless fully contained and sealed.
- Use of organic materials is subject to approval in advance and may need to be frozen prior to installation.
- Use of common allergens is not permitted.



Timeline & Key Activities

Initial Review	July 7 – July 18, 2025	EAF and Edinburgh Science Festival teams assess submissions individually
Shortlisting	July 21 – August 1, 2025	A shortlist of artists selected to prepare a more detailed proposal
Selection panel interviews	August 4 - 9, 2025	Interviews with shortlisted artists
Public Announcement	w/c August 18, 2025	Announcement of selection
R&D / Development Phase	August 2025 – December 2025	Prototyping, community engagement, collaborative research, research at Wellcome Collection
Pre-production / Planning	January– March 2026	Installation planning and logistics
Presentation	April 2026	Public event/performance/installation as part of Edinburgh Science Festival 2026

Selection panel

- **Kim McAleese**,
Director Edinburgh Art Festival
- **Hassun El Zafar**,
Director Edinburgh Science Festival
- **Third panellist TBC**



Who Should Apply

We are looking for artists who:

- Are Scotland-born or Scotland-based (at least 2 years)
- Work in any visual, digital, or interdisciplinary medium
- Have an interest in science, cultural histories, or storytelling
- Can propose work suitable for a high-footfall museum environment with specific installation requirements (see above, and Grand Gallery floor plans)
- Can create a physical display suitable for the museum space
- Are excited about cross-cultural, cross-sector collaboration
- Can collaborate with Edinburgh Science on the creation of wrap-around content that will help family audiences engage with the work
- Are excited to talk about their work at public festival events both in Edinburgh and internationally

We particularly encourage applications from artists from backgrounds underrepresented in the sciences, museum collections, and the visual arts, and those who bring lived experience to the themes of the project. This is also available to collaborative groups applying together.



How to Apply

Please submit **one PDF document** (max 10MB) to jennifer.casebow@scifest.co.uk by **11.59pm on Sunday 6 July 2025** including:

1. A statement (max 1 page) outlining your interest in this commission and how your practice aligns with the themes
2. Up to 3 examples of previous work (up to 12 images total or 3 media links)
3. A CV (max 2 pages) and link to your website or portfolio

Alternative formats (e.g. audio or video statements) are welcome.

Shortlisted artists will be notified by **21 July 2025** and invited to develop a more detailed concept proposal in collaboration with the project team and present back to the panel.

Access & Queries

We are committed to ensuring accessibility throughout this process. If you have any questions or access requirements, please contact:

Jennifer Rodger-Casebow

Edinburgh Science

Email: jennifer.casebow@scifest.co.uk

