

For Immediate Release

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Art Responds to Environmental Issues in Baltimore Local artists initiate environmental conversation through JHU Exhibit and Earth Day Event

Exhibition Run Dates: April 6 – May 22, 2015 | Reception April 22 5-7 PM

Baltimore, MD – *Synergy* is an exhibition and Earth Day event at Johns Hopkins University’s Homewood campus. The exhibition, which runs from April 6 – May 22 at Gallery Q in the Milton S. Eisenhower Library, includes four Baltimore artists—Brent Crothers, Leonard Streckfus, Max Shuster, and Bridget Parlato—and aims to initiate conversations about environmental issues. The exhibit will be punctuated by an Earth Day event on April 22nd that will transform Hopkins’ grand lawn (“the Beach”) into a *River of Recyclables*.

The work of the four artists presented in the exhibition will spark discussion about local environmental issues and current challenges related to consumer waste and fresh water in Baltimore. The artworks will be paired with essays written by Johns Hopkins students who have researched current environmental conservation efforts in Baltimore.

“*Synergy* investigates the ways Baltimore is engaging environmental sustainability, introduced through the exciting artists and inquisitive students that have participated in the exhibition,” says curator Christopher Beer, a Curatorial Practice Master of Fine Arts Candidate at Maryland Institute College of Art. “It is my hope that *Synergy* catalyzes a larger conversation about not only the many facets and issues relating to environmental conservation and sustainability but also how different communities can come together to respond.”

Earth Day Festival – In partnership with Johns Hopkins University’s Sustainability Network, Baltimore Trash Talk, Baltimore LAB School, and the Waterfront Partnership, *Synergy* will include an Earth Day celebration, featuring activities and displays that focus on environmental sustainability. On Earth Day, Christopher Beer and Bridget Parlato of Baltimore Trash Talk will hold a 5¢ bottle-and-can exchange that will use beverage-related bottles and cans collected from the surrounding neighborhoods and schools to create a metaphorical river of one-time-use consumables called *The River of Recyclables*. The temporary sculpture will stretch across “the Beach,” located between the Eisenhower Library and North Charles Street. The event will run from 8 AM -1 PM on April 22nd, 2015.

As a lead up to the Earth Day event, the exhibition staff is asking participants to take pictures of themselves, their friends and families sorting recyclables for the event. They can then post them to their favorite social media site with the hashtag **#RecycleRun**. The *Synergy* team will then collect these photos to feature at the exhibition and on the exhibition’s website. Then, of course, participants can bring the recyclable, beverage-related bottles and cans to contribute to our community built sculpture on April 22nd!

Artists included in *Synergy*:

Brent Crothers uses reclaimed copper pipes, garden hoses and rubber tires to build his sculptures featured in *Synergy*. These materials are slow to biodegrade after they have been thrown away, giving the products a long second life after their intended use has run its course. The forms are egg-shaped, alluding to birth and the future. The eggs are each the size of a person; serving as monuments that question the impact materials like these will have on future generations.

Max Shuster uses photography to bring fantastic fictions to reality. His *Generator* series creates and presents oddities that explore the impact toxic e-waste has on marine life. Shuster sources fish from local markets and makes them components of constructions that depict the interplay between the natural world and the physical components of technology. Like science fiction, Shuster has developed an alternate reality in his art that relates science, technology, and the natural world. One can only guess what strange new innovations will further entwine man and nature in the future.

Leonard Streckfus was trained as a painter, and then became a master tinkerer and collage artist, primarily making sculptural forms. He uses elements from a variety of retired consumer goods including toasters, bicycle frames, soda cans and old tires, all found in Maryland, to replicate a zoo of animals, fish, birds, and reptiles. He is in constant search for new uses for old things. In this search, he finds lines, hues, and gestalt, transforming the waste, allowing each animal to come to life. *Synergy* features a series of fish he created specifically for the show.

Bridget Parlato is a designer and activist in search of a cleaner Baltimore. Her *Baltimore Trash Talk* events and poster campaigns have given residents of her community in Patterson Park the opportunity to come together and learn ways to help cleanup their neighborhood. Her 5¢ bottle-and-can exchange assembled community members to collectively visualize the volume of waste they created through everyday consumption. *Baltimore Trash Talk* creates educational campaigns and experiences reinforcing values of proactive environmental conservation through the extinction of litter.