

## Adrift Lab



### Introduction

#### Scientists

Dr. Jennifer Lavers

Born 1979 in Edmonton, Canada

Dr. Alexander Bond

Born 1983 in Halifax, Canada

Dr. Ian Hutton

Born 1950 in Sydney, Australia

DETACHED, Hobart

Penny Clive, Michael Bugelli,

Matthew Lamb, Sergei Nester, Mark

Young and Dean Ware

Artwork Location: Cockatoo Island, Industrial Precinct

Adrift Lab is a dedicated group of researchers studying all things adrift in the ocean, including plastic, chemicals, and wildlife. The diverse and supportive lab includes university students from all over the globe, who offer specialist skills in ecotoxicology, statistical analysis and marine ecology.

Adrift Lab analyses data gathered at sea and on beaches to identify long-term trends and quantify the impact of plastic pollution in the ocean. The Lab uses this data to engage the broader community and inform policy-making, with an aim to drive positive change for the ecology of the world's oceans.

For the 22nd Biennale of Sydney, Adrift Lab have arranged an assortment of wooden tables, reclaimed from various rubbish dumps, that display a number of specimens, thousands of images, hours of video, and years of research. Each table references the kitchen table in Adrift Lab's home base on Lord Howe Island, the backstage of science: a site of conversation, intellectual discussion and debate, driven by curiosity and detached inquiry, a place to debrief after each day in the field, to console, to laugh, and to prepare oneself for the following day's reckoning with the arc of human indifference. Together, the tables display what has been gathered from these endless discussions and fieldwork.

This exhibit is an invitation for each of us to shed complacency and to continue the conversation in our everyday lives, at our own tables.

Image: Adrift Lab (Detached), 2020, reclaimed tables, 18-channel video, installation dimensions variable, 9 hours. Installation view for the 22nd Biennale of Sydney (2020), Cockatoo Island.

Commissioned by the Biennale of Sydney with generous support from Detached Cultural Organisation, Hobart. Courtesy Detached Cultural Organisation, Hobart. Photograph: Jessica Maurer

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### Inquiry questions

- Have you collaborated on an art project before? How did you find the process of working with others?
- Lord Howe Island is the focus of Adrift Lab because it exposes environmental trends and the effects of climate change. Think about a place where you like to spend time outdoors like your local park, a hiking trail or the beach. How has climate change and plastic pollution had an impact on this area?
- How would you be able to tell if a natural area was being affected negatively by plastic pollution?

### Creative learning activity

Around the globe, seabird populations are declining faster than any other bird group. Once consumed, plastic contributes to starvation, dehydration and exposes the birds and other wildlife to an array of toxic chemicals. Demand for plastic products is increasing exponentially in our cities and, with that, in our oceans.

1. Research some of the different seabirds that exist in Australia.
2. Go through your recycling bin and list how many items are made of plastic. Which items appear most frequently?
3. Select a seabird from your research and see if you can create a version of it using the plastic items you found in your recycling bin

### Reflection

- What types of things do you discuss at your kitchen table?
- Can you imagine a world without plastic? What might that look like?

### Extension

Take an empty milk carton from your recycling bin and think about how you could reuse it. Make a list of what might be possible and experiment making some of your ideas.

- Were your ideas successful? What were your findings?
- Would you make it again?