

## Altered Ocean Exhibition – Teacher Resource 1/3

These resources have been produced in support of Altered Ocean, an exhibition by award-winning photographer Mandy Barker, hosted at RPS House, Bristol from 4th April - 23rd June 2019. For further insights, activities and discussion points, visit [PhotoPedagogy.com/altered-oceans](http://PhotoPedagogy.com/altered-oceans)

### The work of Mandy Barker

“My sole aim is to form some sort of connection with the public through my work. To represent scientific research and give science a voice to people that may not be able to read in an accessible way about what is happening. [...] I feel compelled to pass on to others what I've seen on oceans and beaches around the world.” **Mandy Barker**



PENALTY - Europe'  
633 marine debris footballs (and  
pieces of) collected from 23  
countries  
& islands within Europe, from 104  
different beaches

Mandy Barker is an international award-winning photographer whose work involving marine plastic debris has received global recognition. Working with scientists she aims to raise awareness about plastic pollution in the world's oceans whilst highlighting the harmful effect on marine life, and ultimately ourselves.

### For discussion

- To what extent are you currently aware of the impact of plastic upon our oceans and environment? How conscious are you of your use (and disposal) of plastic – and how might you reduce your usage?
- What was the last piece of plastic you disposed of - why and how did you do this, and what do you think will become of it over the next few days, weeks, months or years?

### Activity

- Attempt to systematically photograph (or list down) all of your possessions. This might be impossible, but take time to notice what you own, and to reflect on to your personal impact on the environment. Everything we own has left, and will continue to leave, a mark on the planet.

For further information on the issue of plastic in our oceans visit [plasticoceans.uk](http://plasticoceans.uk)

## Altered Ocean Exhibition – Teacher Resource 2/3

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“I want people to be visually attracted to the images that I create, and then I want them to read the caption and be shocked by what they read, by what the image represents – by what the objects within the image represent...”

**Mandy Barker**



Beyond Drifting:  
Imperfectly known  
Animals – installation  
images (book, original  
antique specimens,  
microscope slides and  
test tubes with samples  
of plastic particles).

Mandy Barker plays with our expectations of photography and science. Beyond Drifting: Imperfectly Known Animals is a good example of this. The series is presented as an old science book from 1800s, subtly including the original writing, descriptions and figures recorded by naturalist JV Thompson. The photographs are of marine plastic debris, presented as microscopic samples that mimic Thompson's discoveries. This is a response to current scientific research which has found that plankton ingest micro plastic particles, mistaking them for food. Plankton is at the bottom of the food chain - a crucial source of food for many of the larger creatures - and so the potential impact on marine life, and ultimately us, is of vital concern.

Beyond Drifting has also been displayed as an installation, accompanied with associated specimens, microscope slides and test tube samples.

## Activity

Identify a specific location or route for your own practical investigations. This might be an area where you want to draw attention to an issue, or simply somewhere familiar to re-consider. Consider the different ways in which you might be able to safely investigate and document this area through photography, drawings, notes and wider research.

### You might want to consider:

- **Collecting** e.g. remnants, discarded materials, soil or surface samples; recording various types of data temperatures, measurements, sounds etc.
- **Documenting** using photography in a variety of ways, e.g. stylised or staged compositions; experimental abstractions; through sequences of images.
- **Categorising**, sorting, grouping, labelling – and how your findings might be curated – by yourself, or a fictional other (scientist, archaeologist, historian; alien, animal or politician). How might a different perspective be explored?
- **Displaying** your findings and responses in an imaginative way, perhaps within the original location or, alternatively, a contrasting space.

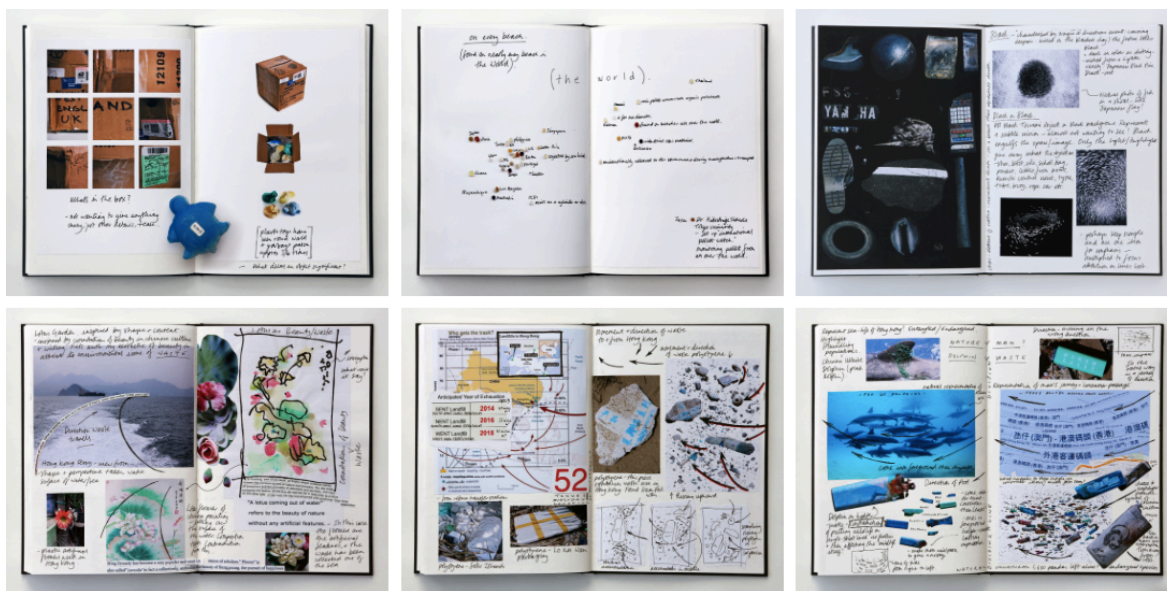
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## Altered Ocean Exhibition – Teacher Resource 3/3

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“Recording my ideas and research in sketchbooks is something I have always done, it connects me to the relationship between my practical work and the research that informs it.”

**Mandy Barker**



Example pages from the sketchbooks of Mandy Barker

The Altered Ocean Exhibition includes examples of Mandy Barker's supporting sketchbooks and notes. These books add context to the show by revealing the thoughts, connections and processes of the artist.

Sketchbooks are central to Mandy's work. They are valuable travelling companions for recording research and ideas, and for playing with words, imagery and design possibilities. These books might be considered as artworks in their own right, as well as visual diaries of her explorations and experiences.

### For discussion

- Compare and consider the visual differences between personal sketchbooks and a more formal text book (a science book, for example). How might a book's design - its composition, style of lettering, type of imagery (especially photographs) - influence our presumptions of expertise, truth, honesty, accuracy or authenticity?
- Art and Science are not the distinct subjects that a school curriculum might lead some to believe. What similar qualities - skills and characteristics - do you think successful artists and scientists might share?

### Activity

- Create your own recycled sketchbook using discarded paper, old envelopes etc. Use this to keep a visual diary of a week without plastic. Try not to buy any plastic and limit your use of it as a material. Record your experiences and draw attention to the issue for others.

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