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R. Eric McMaster, Still from *Drift*, 2022.

R. Eric McMaster: *Drift*

Drift is a two-channel video installation featuring two musicians playing an original, reactive composition as they are set adrift in the ocean on separate, custom-built rafts. As the musicians physically drift away from one another, their ability to hear each other diminishes causing the duet to slowly fall apart.

To produce *Drift*, a scouted location was selected south of Miami at the start of the Keys. The Keys have a rich history of separation and loss and also serve as a geographical divide between the Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic Ocean. Vulnerable to sea rise and hurricanes, the Key's region is a perfect contextual backdrop for the recorded action, as a sense of serene, but inevitable loss looms over the area and is further emphasized by the dissipation of the duet participants.

The custom rafts the musicians float on were made out of the same curly maple as violins. The decorative 'flame' of this wood echoes that of the instruments used in the performance; the instrument a vessel of transporting sound, the boats a vessel for transporting musicians. The 'flame' of the wood also plays with the eye in a similar way that water reflects dancing light on the underside of floating objects.

Salt water was collected at the site of the shoot, boiled down until salinity saturation is achieved, and then the solution was allowed to crystallize on the rafts and instruments. Additionally, saltwater was applied in an

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aerosol fashion on the Project Space's walls, creating a sparkling luminesce to the space. The process of evaporating, of allowing the water to leave the salt behind, echoes again a sense of loss and separation.

Drift serves to highlight the poetics of separation and loss, the beauty of the inevitable, and the awe of nature in all of its complexity. At a glance, the project may seem like it was just shot with the site as a backdrop, but through the project, the site pushed back collaborating with the same resistance of a material when sanded; nature addressed in the same way as material and actions. Nature, like another collaborator, willing its influence on the project.

"We all contain water in about the same ratio as Earth does, and salt water in the same ratio that oceans do. We are poems about the hyperobject Earth." – Timothy Morton

Drift was commissioned by Locust Projects and supported, in part, by a Foundation for Contemporary Arts Emergency Grant. Composition by Danny Clay. Performed by Benita Dzhurkova and João Da Fraga. Cinematography by Alex Markow. Audio Mixing by John Howell. Fabrication Assistants: Rachael Starbuck and Andy Forbes. Special Thanks to Bill Haddad and Zen and Carrie Mayo.



ABOUT THE ARTIST

R. Eric McMaster's work aims to disrupt the familiar using materiality, context, or space as a means of highlighting absence, humor, and/or awe.

R. Eric McMaster has exhibited at the Hiroshima MOCA, Japan; the Blanton Museum of Art, University of Texas at Austin; The Contemporary Austin; Blue Star Contemporary, San Antonio; Vox Populi, Philadelphia; Antenna Gallery; New Orleans, the Lawndale Art Center, Houston; and Austin's Testsite, among others. R. Eric McMaster was born in Clarion, Pennsylvania in 1979. He received a BFA from Pennsylvania State University (2003) and an MFA from Arizona State University (2008). He currently lives and works in Austin,

where he teaches in the Department of Art and Art History at The University of Texas at Austin.

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ABOUT LOCUST PROJECTS

Founded by artists for artists in 1998, Locust Projects is Miami's longest running nonprofit alternative art space. We produce, present, and nurture ambitious and experimental new art and the exchange of ideas through commissioned exhibitions and projects, artist residencies, summer art intensives for teens, and public programs on contemporary art and curatorial practice. As a leading incubator of new art and ideas, Locust Projects emphasizes boundary-pushing creative endeavors, risk-taking and experimentation by local, national and international artists. We invest in South Florida's arts community by providing artists with project grants and empower creative careers by supporting the administrative work of being an artist through an onsite artist resource hub and access to pro bono legal services.



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