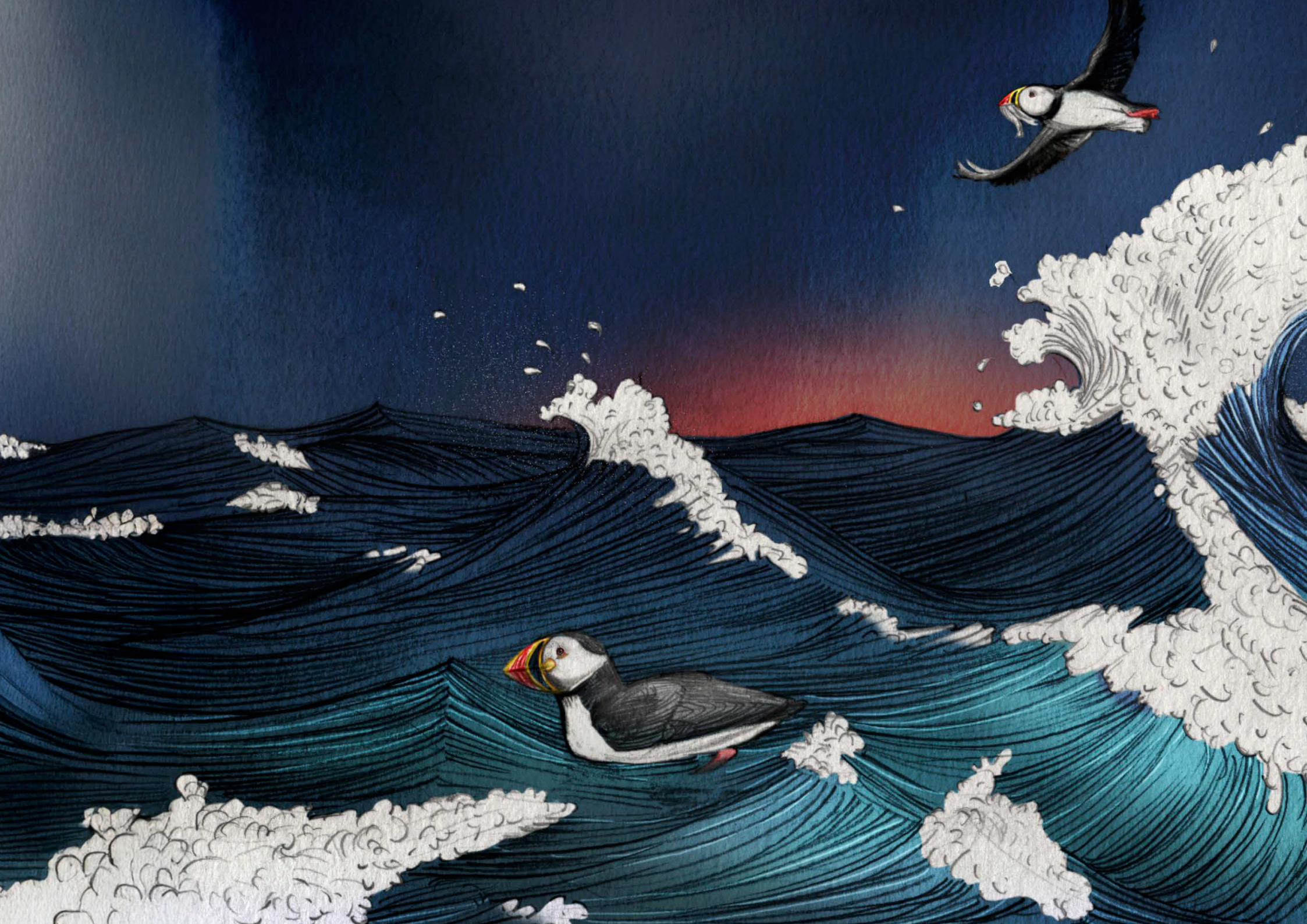


I AM THE SPELL

PAUL HARFLEET







I was invited to become a featured artist for Remember Nature, which led me into a world of reflection, memory, dreams and coincidence. Alongside other artists, I was asked by curators Jo Joelson and Andrea Gregson to respond to the work, words and legacy of Gustav Metzger.

The night before our first meeting, after hours of research, I dreamt. Over the years I've learned to use dreams to answer creative questions, and I've come to trust the solutions my subconscious offers. In that half-awake state, words, rhymes, puffins and swirling seas appeared together. As I woke, I scribbled down a line:

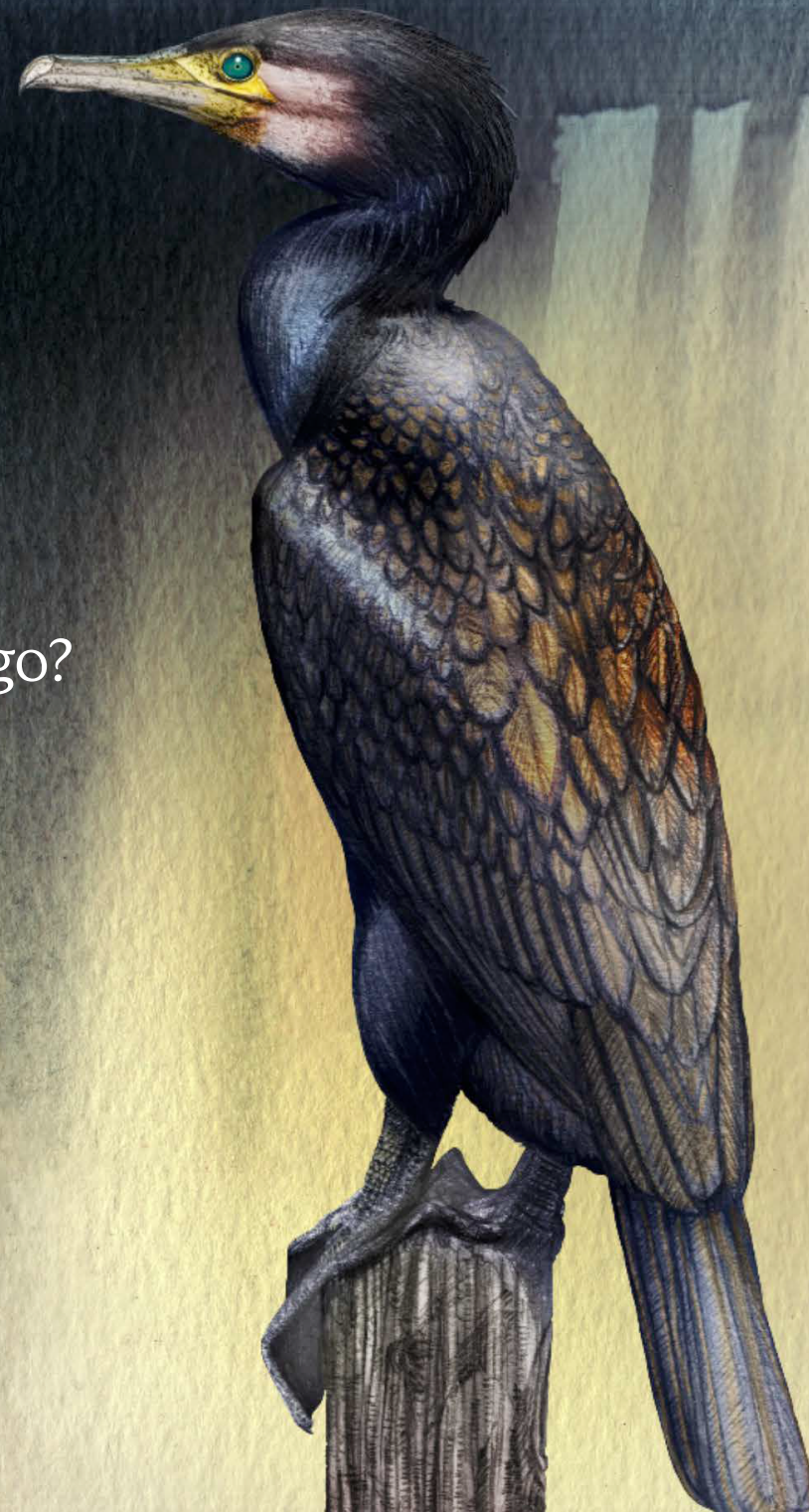
“Who'll be the guardian to the ocean clown?”

It felt like a chant, a question, a spell. I became fixated on the repeating question: “Who will?” Inspired by Metzger's call for artists to “take a stand against the ongoing erasure of species,” I felt an urgent need to use my own creative practice to respond to the climate emergency. A poem began to emerge, part plea, part spell, with each question came a richly detailed illustration.

A detailed illustration of a forest floor. In the foreground, a large, textured pine cone lies on the ground, surrounded by pine needles and twigs. The background is filled with tall, thin, vertical tree trunks that create a sense of depth and perspective. The lighting is soft and diffused, with a bright area on the left side of the image, suggesting a light source like the sun filtering through the trees. The overall color palette is dominated by earthy browns, greens, and yellows.

Who'll tell the seed that
it's safe to grow?

Who'll take note of
where the storm clouds go?

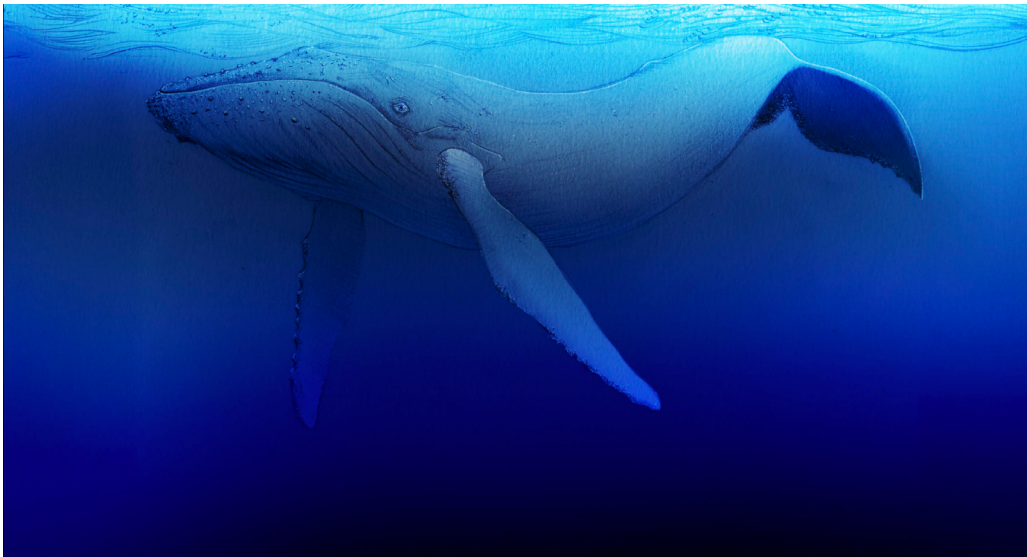




Who'll sow the flower for the hoverfly?



Who will marvel at the pangolin's scale?



Who'll learn the languages of the whale?



Who'll paint the hue of the tropical frog?

Who'll tell the seed that it's safe to grow?
Who'll take note of where the storm clouds go?

Who'll be the guardian of the ocean clown?
Who'll replenish colour to the coral's crown?

Who'll coax the forest into the sky?
Who'll sow the flower for the hoverfly?

Who will marvel at the pangolin's scale?
Who'll learn the languages of the whale?

Who'll paint the hue of the tropical frog?
Who'll explain the fungus to a fallen log?

Who'll guard the riverbank for the goose?
Who'll tend the wilderness for the moose?

Who'll wrap the poles in snow and ice?
Who'll give the birds their paradise?

Who'll break the slumber of planet Earth?
Who'll wake us all to nature's worth?

Sorcerer, sorcerer hear our plea,
To protect all fauna, from rhino to flea

Who'll be the warlock and the witch?
Who'll sing enchantment in perfect pitch?

I'll cool the coral and soothe the shell.
I'll be the magic, I am the spell.

Here are just some of the sample of spreads, I became obsessed with completing. I brought together the illustrations and edited them into a short video, reciting my words against a sound scape from the natural world. I sent it to the curators, almost apologetically, not quite understanding what I'd created.

Their response was generous, and we agreed it would be performed at the close of the Day of Action at FACT Liverpool, as a hopeful counterpoint to a day confronting the climate emergency. Performing it felt magical as though I were channelling a shaman or a witch. ***I Am The Spell*** now exists as both poem and performance, with the possibility of becoming something else, circling.



Who'll wrap the poles in snow and ice?

