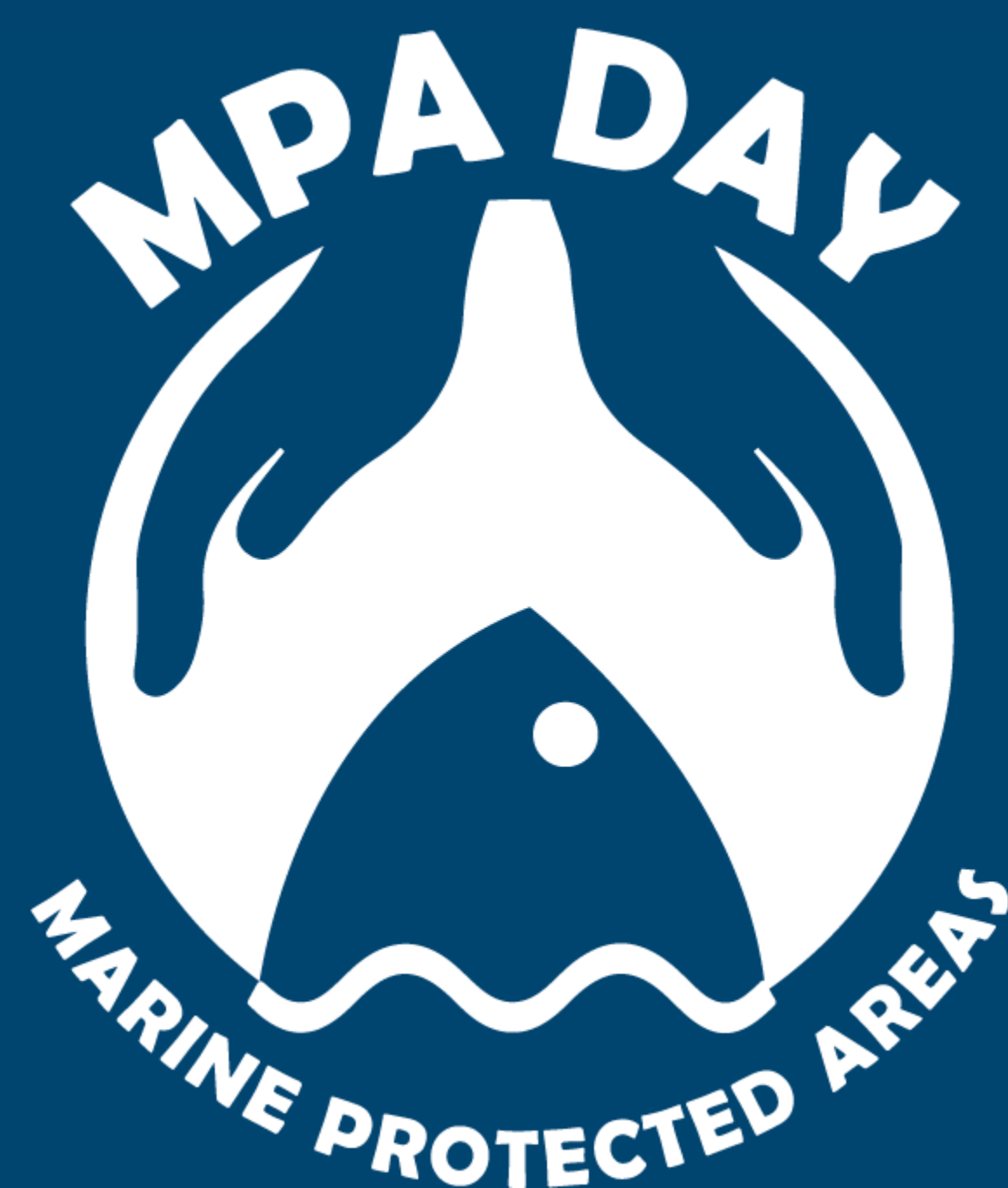




Creative Waves 2023

#MPACreativeWaves





THE OCEAN SPEAKS TO ALL OF US, THOUGH NOT ALWAYS IN THE SAME WAY.

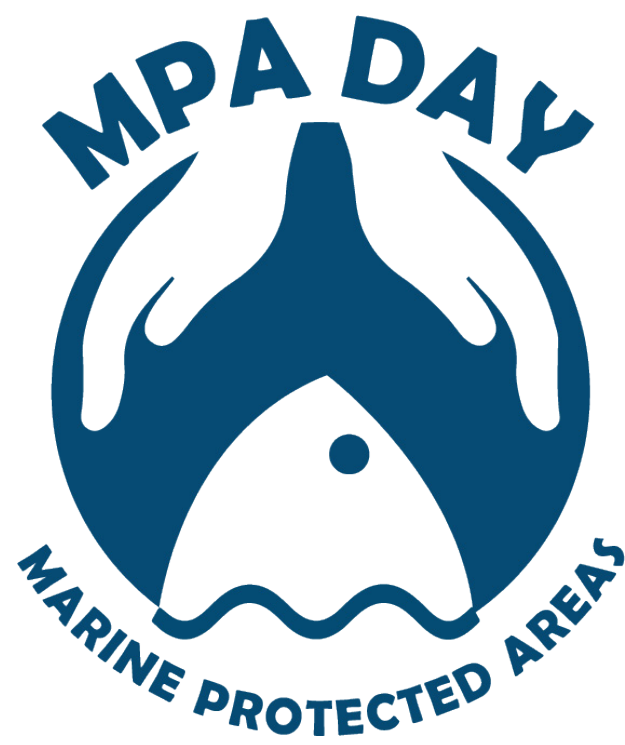
For some, it's a childhood memory: salt in the hair, waves lapping at the edge of joy. For others, it's a reminder of fragility, of beauty vanishing beneath rising tides.

For MPA Day 2025, under the theme
"Ocean protection needs human connection," we turn to **15 multidisciplinary artists**: illustrators, photographers, curators, graffiti artists, fine artists, painters, creative designers, authors, graphic designers, and animators, each exploring the emotional terrain that the ocean stirs within them and their work.

Through these varied creative lenses, we're reminded that marine protection is not just a scientific or political issue.

It's an expression of care, of memory, and of belonging—a deeply human call to defend what we cannot bear to lose.

#MPACreativeWaves



RACHEL BROOKS

Rachel Brooks is an internationally acclaimed Wildlife Artist and Scientific Illustrator based in the Scottish Highland town of Oban. She specialises in marine wildlife, capturing high levels of intricate detail using ink. Drawing from her extensive background in Zoology, Marine Biology, and the Scuba Industry, she has immersed herself in the field, spending years amidst her fascinating subjects.

Living in world renowned marine environments such as the Great Barrier Reef, Ningaloo Reef, the Lembeh Straits and the Coral Triangle. Rachel has gathered inspiration from across the globe which is reflected in the diversity of wildlife found within her work.

Rachel now resides in the Scottish Highlands and has spent three years working in the Sea of the Hebrides Marine Protected Area with basking sharks. She is an advocate for celebrating the often overlooked marine life found in the UK, and for shark conservation.

As a story teller, art is her main media, but she is also a photographer, speaker and science communicator.

Rachel has been shortlisted for her wildlife photography as well as being shortlisted for her wildlife art in the Wildlife 100 Artist of the Year Award. She has exhibited at London's Royal Geographical Society, the OXO Tower as well as nationally and virtually at the New York Explorers Club. She has been featured by Discovery Channels Shark Week and collaborated with a number of charity partners such as the RSPB and the Shark Trust.

Check out more of Rachel's stunning art and illustrations:

<https://www.rachelbrooksart.com>

Instagram: [@rachelbrooksart](https://www.instagram.com/rachelbrooksart)

Unless stated otherwise, all artwork and photos in this article: © Rachel Brooks



HOW DOES THE OCEAN INSPIRE YOUR ART?

As a marine wildlife artist, the ocean is at the heart of what I do. There is more to be seen and discovered in the ocean than I could draw in a lifetime.

I am captivated by all the creatures that make the ocean their home. It feels otherworldly and I am endlessly inspired by the biodiversity, lives, colours and mysteries of our ocean.

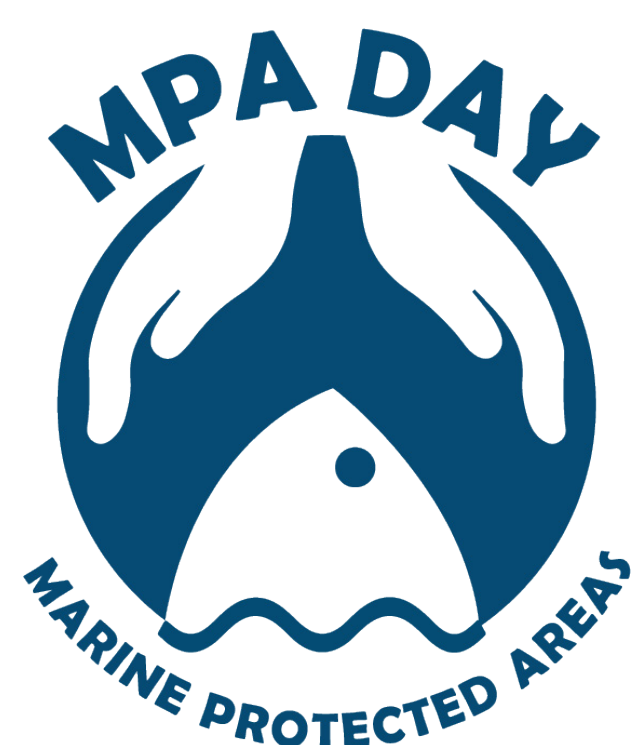
DO YOU HAVE A PERSONAL OR FIRST EXPERIENCE WITH THE OCEAN THAT SHAPED YOUR ART?

I don't have a single experience that shaped my art, it is more of an accumulation of years spent on the water.

My background is in Zoology and after graduating I began working in the dive industry in Australia, which led me to working in some of the world's most renowned marine environments.

The Great Barrier Reef, Ningaloo Reef and the Coral Triangle became my office, before heading back to the UK and finding a job working in the Sea of the Inner Hebrides MPA.

Over 8 years, my full time job allowed me to scuba dive most days, meeting charismatic megafauna such as basking sharks, whale sharks and manta rays, and fascinating critters like the blue-ringed octopus, flamboyant cuttlefish and hairy frogfish! It was the years I spent studying these animals up close, seeing their movement, textures and behaviours that inspired me to start drawing them. I have always wanted to show the diversity of life that can be found in our oceans, and celebrate the connections within ecosystems that are so important for their future.



TELL US ABOUT ART YOU CREATED THAT IS INSPIRED BY THE OCEAN

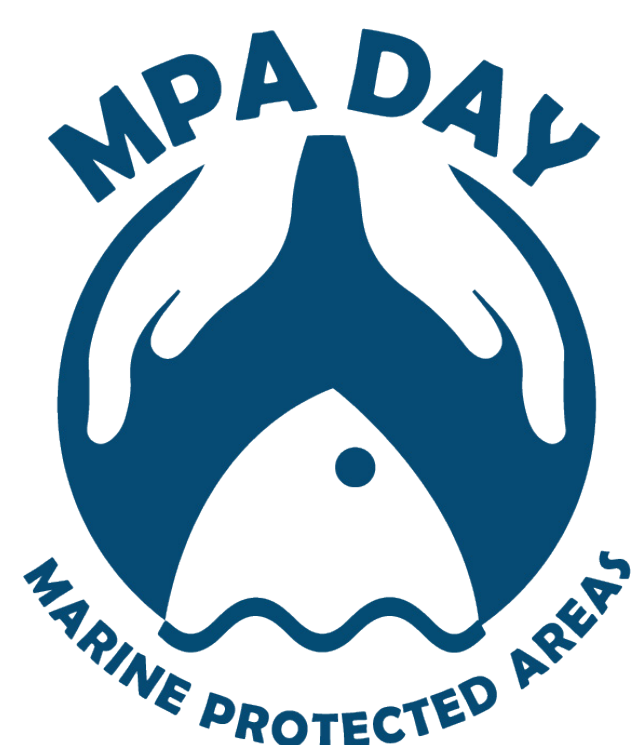
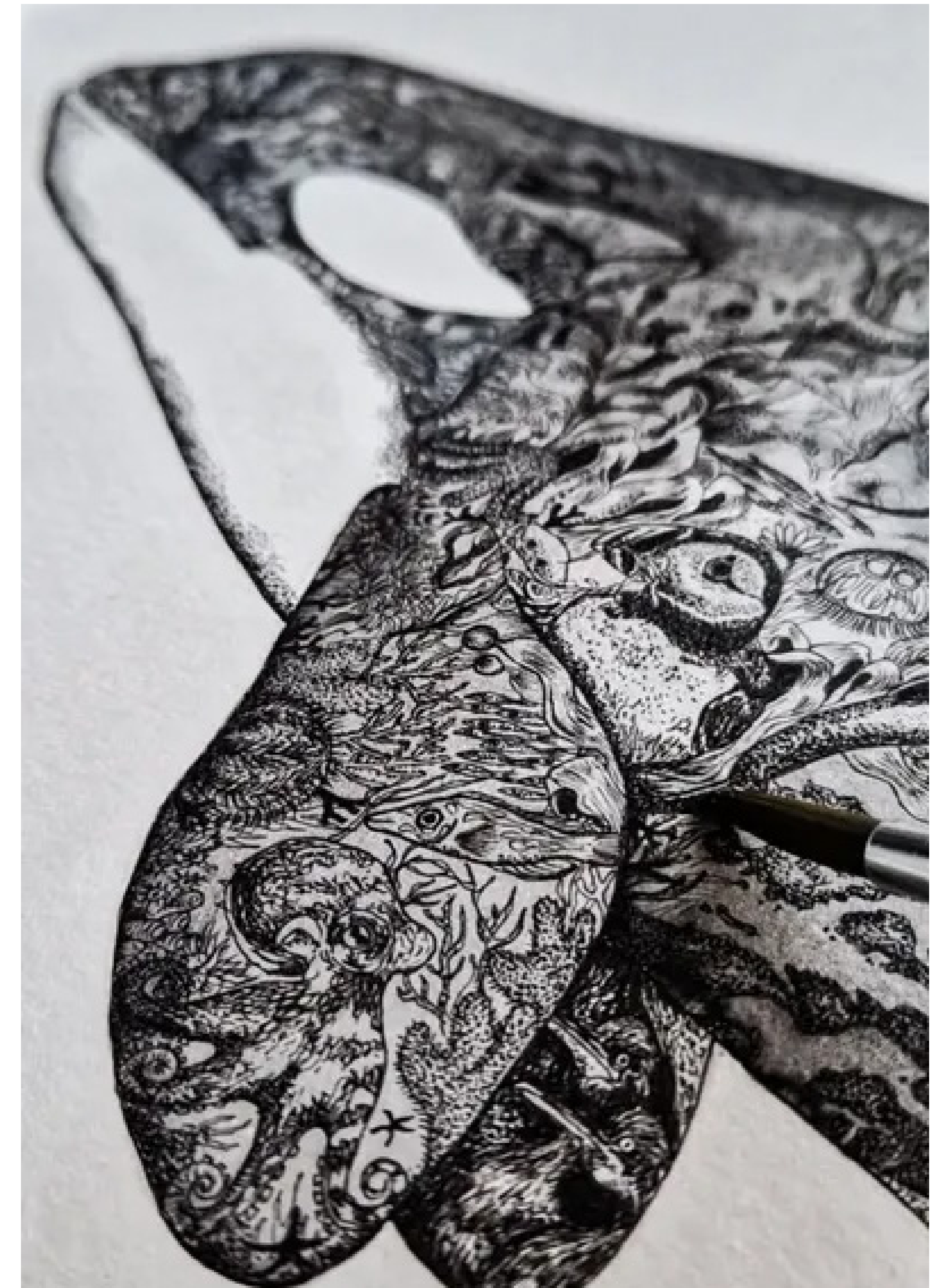
Although I do draw terrestrial species, almost all of my art is focused on the ocean.

One of the stories that has always stuck with me is that of the 'West Coast Community' of orca in Scotland. The iconic pod are mostly seen around the Hebrides, but sadly over the years they have been unsuccessful in breeding due to pollutants causing infertility, and now only 2 males remain.

I have been fortunate to see them on a few occasions, and although incredibly exciting to see these elusive orca, I've always felt a great sadness knowing they are the last of their kind.

I drew '**John Coe**' and filled his silhouette with marine life from the Hebrides, showing how synonymous these apex predators are with the landscape. The piece was exhibited as a finalist in the 'Sketch For Survival, Wildlife 100 of the Year' in galleries across the UK, and virtually in New York.

It was such a privilege to be able to share this story with so many people.

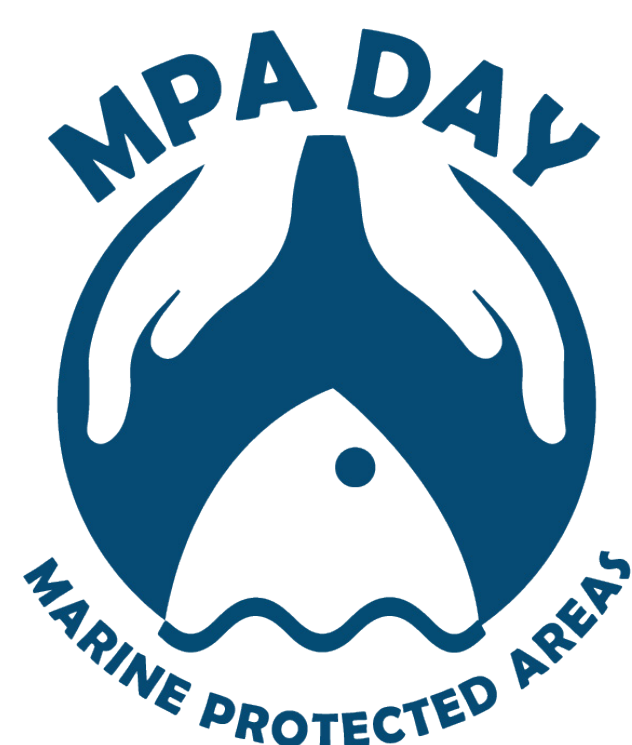


IN YOUR OPINION, WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO PROTECT MARINE SPACES?

It is essential to protect marine species. I can't think of any argument for not protecting the wildlife we are sharing the planet with.

We have become far too disassociated with nature, not realising how incredibly intertwined we are within the ecosystems in the world for the basics of food, clean air and water.

The ocean plays such an important part in regulating the climate, as do the species found there. We need to stop looking at the ocean as an endless resource we can continually take from and dump in, but an environment that is essential for our health and future on earth which needs better protection.



WHAT CAN ART BRING TO THE CONVERSATION IN MARINE PROTECTION?

Art is a really powerful communication tool. It is emotive, encourages thought, and speaks to people in different ways. Sometimes images can be hard to look at, and can make people want to look the other way. Art can approach the same issues, but with an entirely different visual.

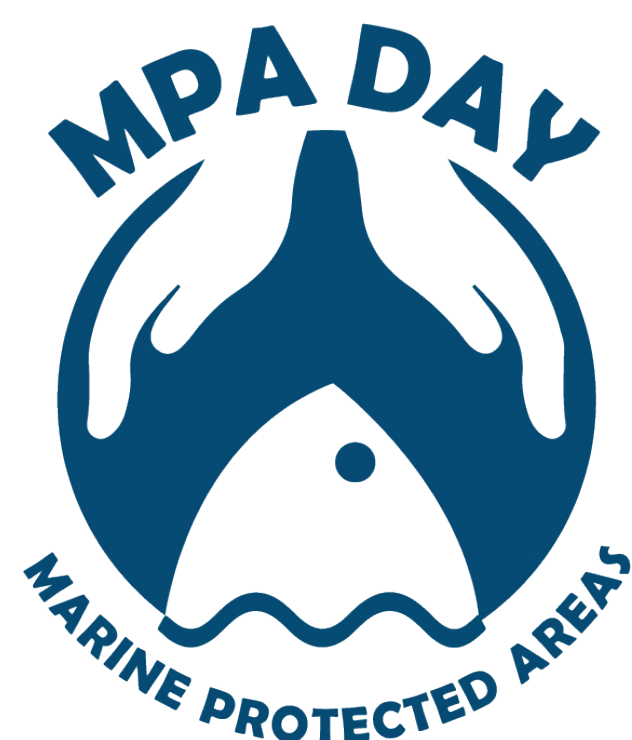
Telling a story of what is happening with creative imagery, and telling stories that you couldn't capture in a single image.

Photojournalism is so important to see the harsh realities our world is facing, but everyone communicates differently, so it's essential to have as many creative voices on board speaking in their own way to reach as many people as possible.

“

"I have always wanted to show the diversity of life that can be found in our oceans, and celebrate the connections within ecosystems that are so important for their future."

— Rachel Brooks





FLORENT NICOLAS

Florent Nicolas has been drawn to marine wildlife since childhood, with a particular fascination for marine mammals. During his academic years, he devoted much of his free time to fieldwork in Normandy—his home region—as well as in Canada and the French West Indies. These journeys introduced him to diverse ecosystems, remarkable species, and the people working to protect them.

Photography became a natural extension of his conservation work—a way to capture and share the majesty of the natural world. Through his lens, he aims to raise awareness about the importance of protecting habitats and species, using visual storytelling to inspire deeper connection and responsibility toward the environment.

Now based in Finland, Florent continues to explore remote and wild places, bringing back images and narratives that advocate for nature conservation. One of his most personal commitments is supporting the protection of Canada's Great Bear Rainforest and the communities that depend on it.

Check out more of Florent's amazing work:
<https://www.florent-nicolas.com>

Instagram: [@florent_nicolas_](https://www.instagram.com/florent_nicolas_)

Images © Florent Nicolas unless stated. Used with permission exclusively for MPA Day 2025. Not to be reproduced, archived, or redistributed.



© Cristina Mittermeier - SeaLegacy

HOW DOES THE OCEAN INSPIRE YOUR ART?

Even though we know a lot about the ocean, ecosystems and marine biodiversity, they are still full of mysteries. The constantly moving ocean provides an endless opportunity to capture specific moments which our memory will forget because they simply happen too rapidly.

The inspiration comes as a combination of capturing the scene happening in front of me with the story to be shared. When I capture a moment, I immediately think about which message should be shared with the final result to create an emotional impact.

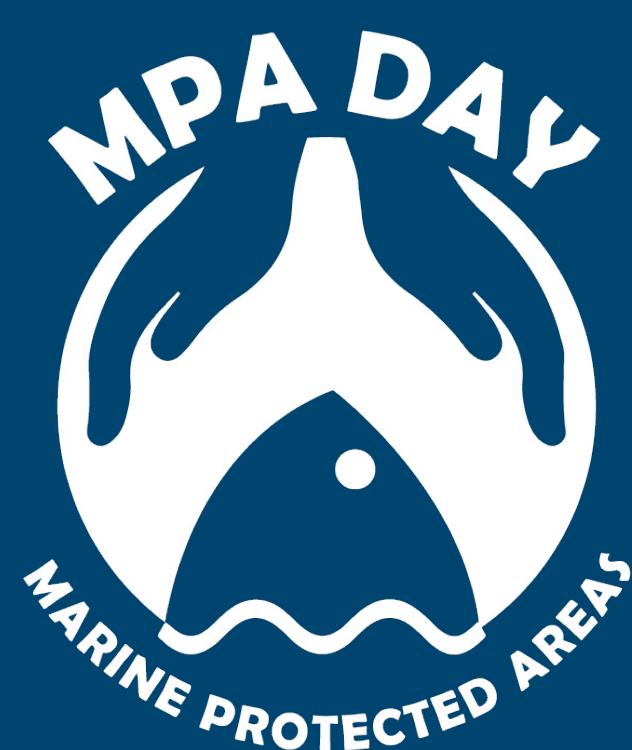
Catching the perfect moment means for me to have the perfect view of the subject(s) in its environment, with all elements in balance. It goes from the position of the waves, potential reflection in the water to small details such as the position of drops! Such challenges are always boosting my inspiration.

DO YOU HAVE A PERSONAL OR FIRST EXPERIENCE WITH THE OCEAN THAT SHAPED YOUR ART?

Wildlife photography comes from my passion for the ocean. It all began with a first sighting of common dolphins during my early childhood and being from a family spending a lot of time surrounded by the ocean.

In the early stage, my art developed through the years of exploring how my camera gear could capture specific moments I was witnessing. This means a lot of failure in terms of the quality of the photographs but also in terms of sightings: patience is the key!

Each encounter with marine life and people living by the ocean is continuously shaping my art: it is a long and endless process to capture specific moments of life with the aim of sharing powerful stories, messages and raising awareness.

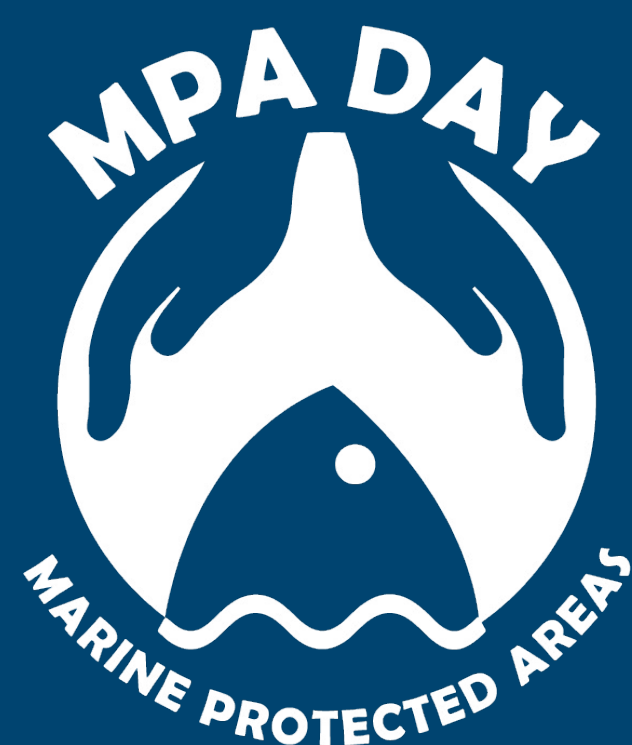


TELL US ABOUT A PIECE OF ART YOU HAVE CREATED THAT HAS BEEN INSPIRED BY THE OCEAN

This picture of a spirit bear holding a salmon is one I captured while being inspired by the ocean. A large part of my wildlife photography work is about the marine environment in the Great Bear Rainforest of British Columbia, on the territory of the Gitga'at First Nation.

With the help of my friends from this First Nation, I have spent countless hours with a living legend: the spirit bear. First Nations of this region have a deep cultural connection with this bear. It is a black bear with a white fur which only occurs in this part of the world, and only a few dozen specimen of this rare bear are known to exist! Every year, when salmon come back from the Pacific Ocean to spawn in the rivers, it is possible to sight the rare spirit bear.

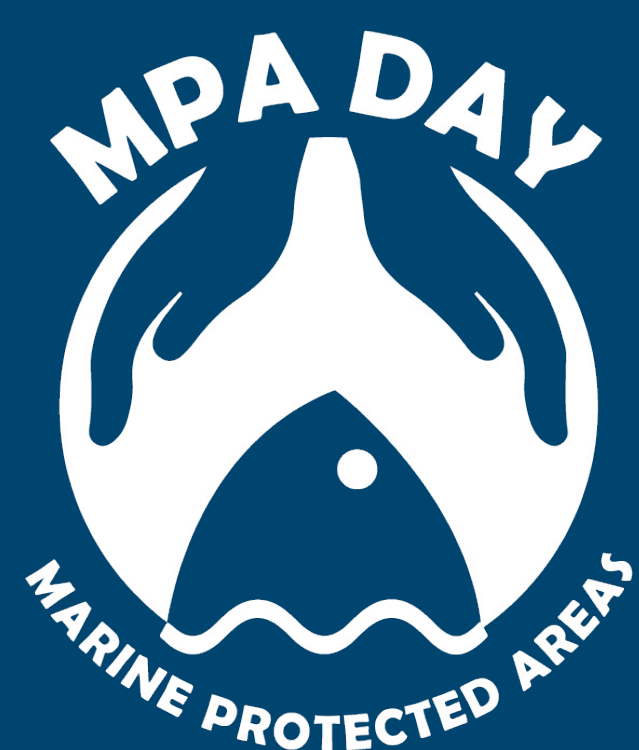
The salmon run (i.e. when the salmon are coming back to the rivers to spawn) provides a massive source of nutrients for the terrestrial ecosystems. This picture shows the incredible links between the ocean and the coastal rainforest and highlights how species are deeply connected. It also shows the key aspect of the cultural importance and the respect of nature in First Nations' culture.



IN YOUR OPINION, WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO PROTECT MARINE SPACES?

It is well known that we, humans, have deeply impacted the planet and we still do! It is our responsibility to restore what we have broken. Unfortunately we tend to forget that the marine environment produces all sorts of elements which are vital for our survival but also for our societies, for example cultural aspects.

I truly believe that changing our mind towards protecting the environment is the key. The ocean is a perfect example to highlight to the society why we should protect species, ecosystems and habitats. We strongly depend on the health of our environment, and marine spaces are part of it.



WHAT CAN ART BRING TO THE CONVERSATION IN MARINE PROTECTION?

Unfortunately, art is sometimes forgotten in terms of marine protection. I strongly believe that if we want to fully protect the marine biodiversity and ecosystems, we do need the understanding and support of everyone.

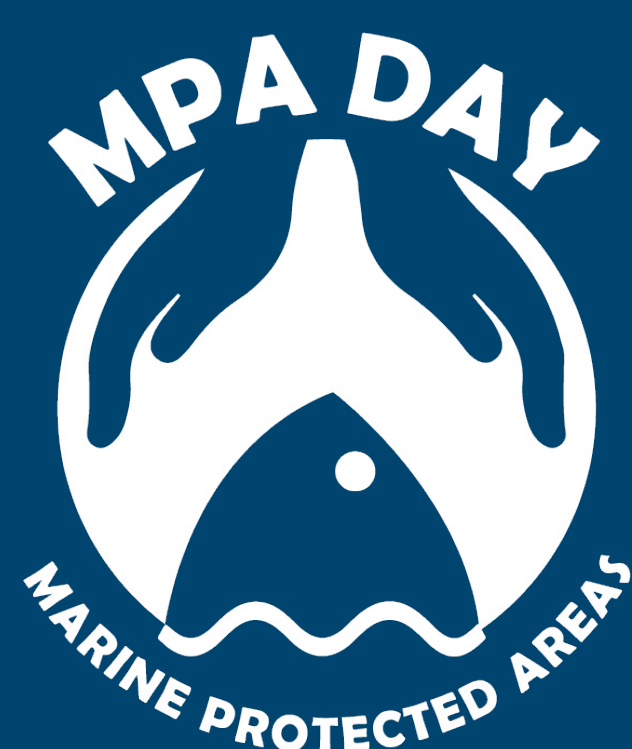
Art is a powerful tool to create an emotional connection: to generate a reason in people's willingness and hearts to change practices and attitudes.

I use wildlife photography to raise awareness by sharing powerful stories, with the belief that such initiatives can support marine protection on the field.

“

"Art is a powerful tool to create an emotional connection: to generate a reason in people's willingness and hearts to change practices and attitudes."

— Florent Nicolas





TARU ELFVING

Taru Elfving is a Helsinki-based curator and writer focused on nurturing interdisciplinary and site-sensitive enquiries at the intersections of ecological, feminist and decolonial practices.

As artistic director of CAA Contemporary Art Archipelago she currently leads a research residency programme on the island of Seili in the Baltic Sea in collaboration with the Archipelago Research Institute, University of Turku (FI).

She is also affiliated as a curatorial researcher in the transdisciplinary Centre for Sustainable Ocean Science (SOS) at Åbo Akademi University (FI).

She has published internationally and co-edited publications such as Contemporary Artist Residencies (Valiz 2019).

Check out more of Taru's curatorial work:
<https://contemporaryartarchipelago.org/>



Photo by Jussi Virkkumaa

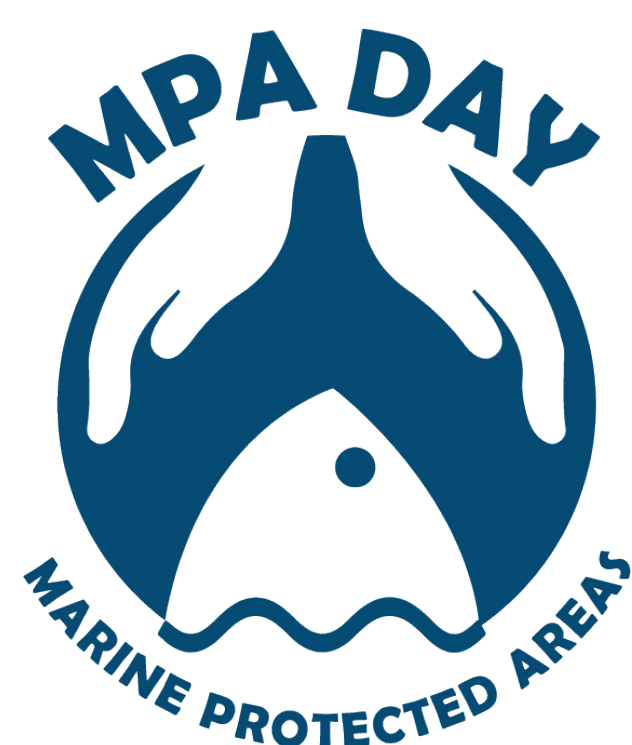
HOW DOES THE OCEAN INSPIRE YOUR ART?

As a contemporary art curator, I have focused on nurturing site-sensitive collaborations between artists, scientists and local communities in Turku Archipelago and across the Baltic Sea for 20 years now.

The Archipelago Sea has been an invaluable teacher for me in my attempts to address the urgencies of the escalating ecological crisis in dialogue with diverse fields and practices of knowledge.

The sea has taught me to critically reflect on the limits of my understanding and agency, while also gifting me with a deepening awareness of my embodied entanglement with the marine ecology.

I am, after all, just a small body of water, in fluid connection to the global currents, and able to breathe thanks to the minute plankton and underwater meadows tirelessly oxygenating the Earth's atmosphere.



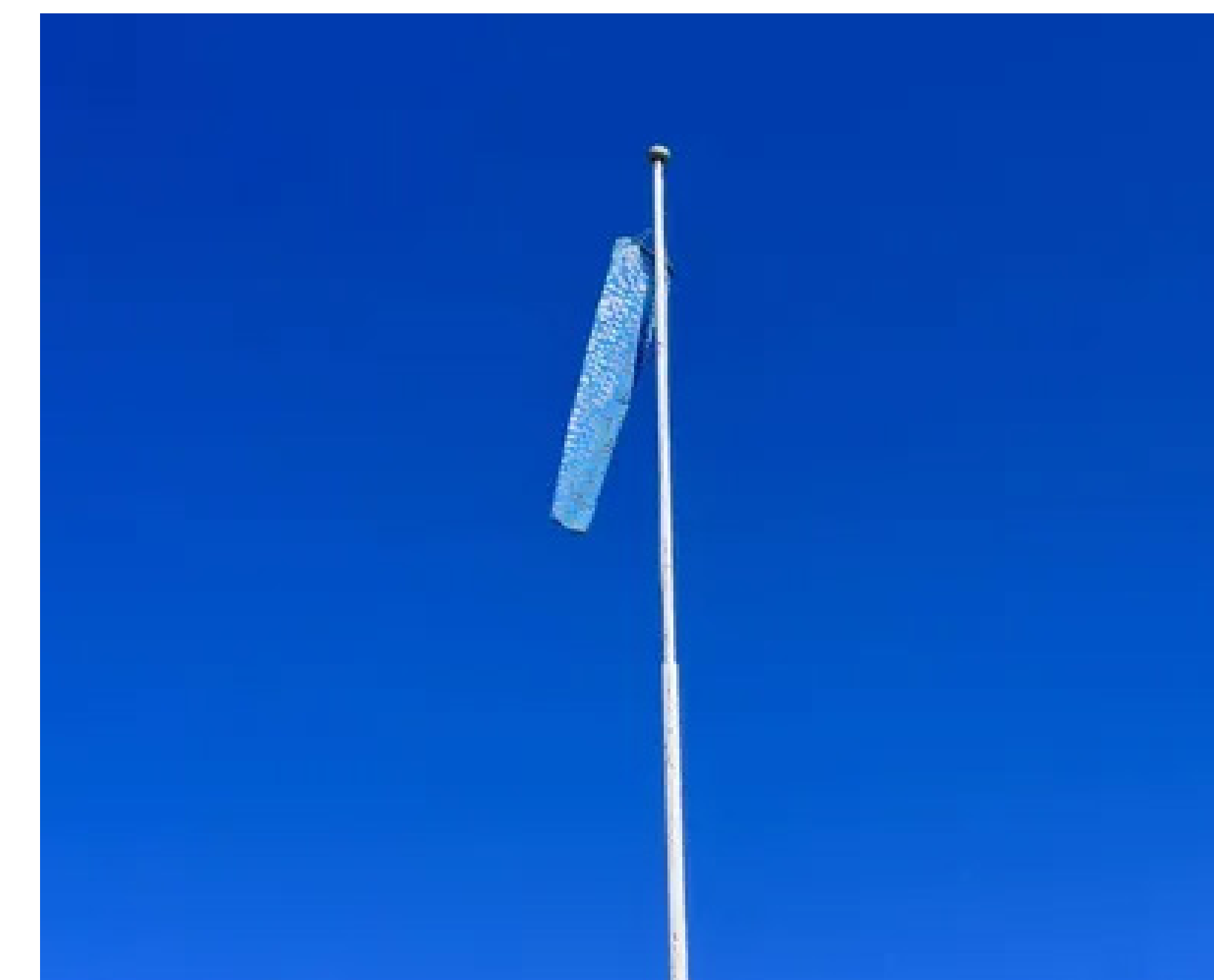
DO YOU HAVE A PERSONAL OR FIRST EXPERIENCE WITH THE OCEAN THAT INSPIRES YOUR ART?

As I returned to Finland and the shores of the Baltic Sea after 15 years of living in the heart of the urban sprawl in London, I came to realise how the sea had shaped me and how profoundly I had missed it.

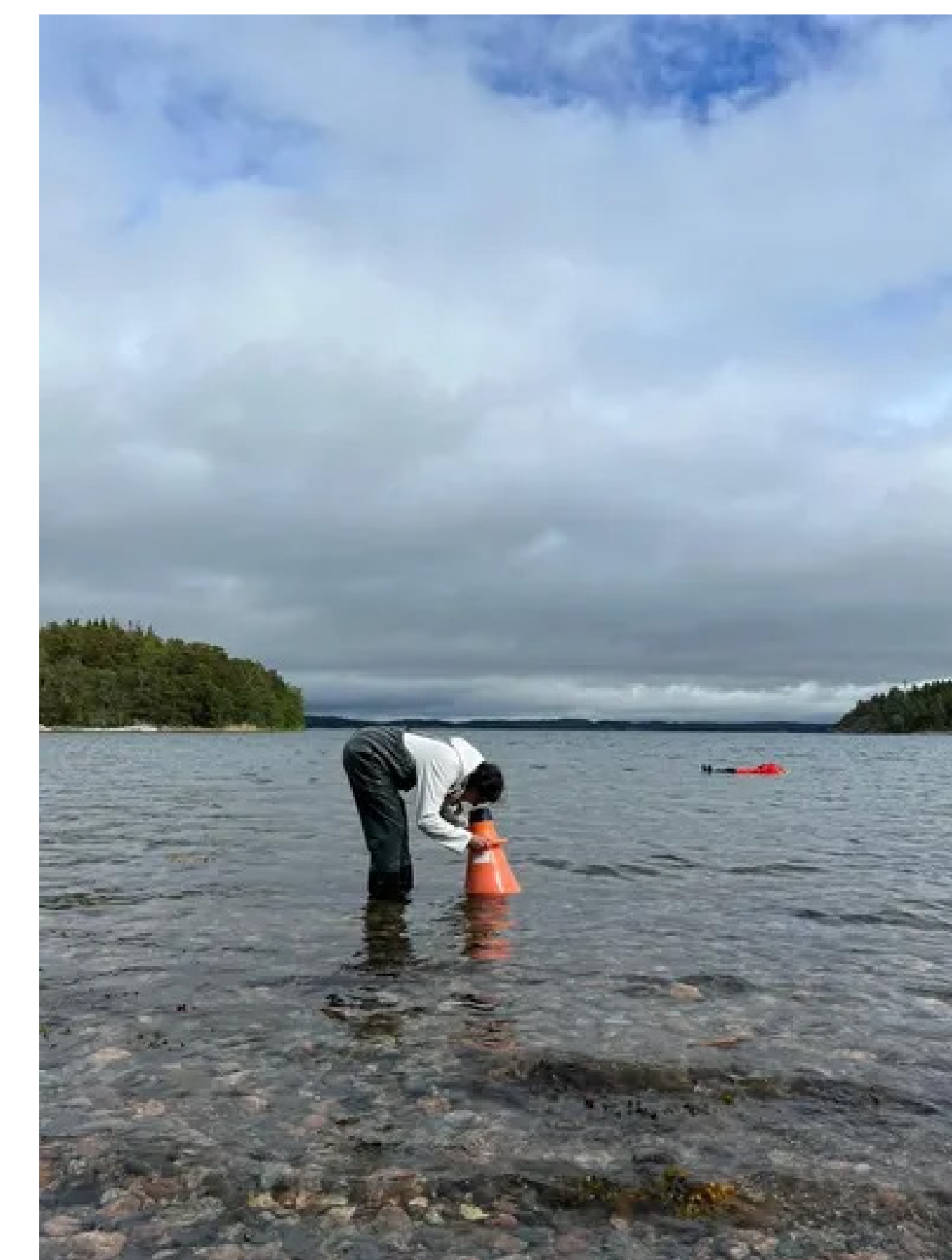
What brought me back to my old hometown of Turku was the opportunity to co-curate an extensive exhibition of new, site-specific contemporary artworks across the Turku Archipelago. I worked on this together with artist and filmmaker Lotta Petronella, as part of the Contemporary Art Archipelago (CAA) project for the Turku 2011 European Capital of Culture programme.

This turned into an ongoing deep dive into the sea that I had grown alongside yet hardly paid attention to earlier. The Archipelago Sea reflected with such clarity and complexity the intricate intertwinement and inseparability of environmental and societal concerns.

The sea made it tangible how the ecological crisis is a cultural crisis.



Fields of May (herring windsock) by FRAUD, *Seili* 2022. (Photo by FRAUD).



Herring Day by Arja Renell 2022. (Photo by Lotta Petronella).

TELL US ABOUT ART YOU HAVE CURATED THAT IS INSPIRED BY THE OCEAN

Contemporary Art Archipelago (CAA) grew into a curatorial collective which I co-founded and lead with Lotta Petronella, who initiated our collaboration in the archipelago.

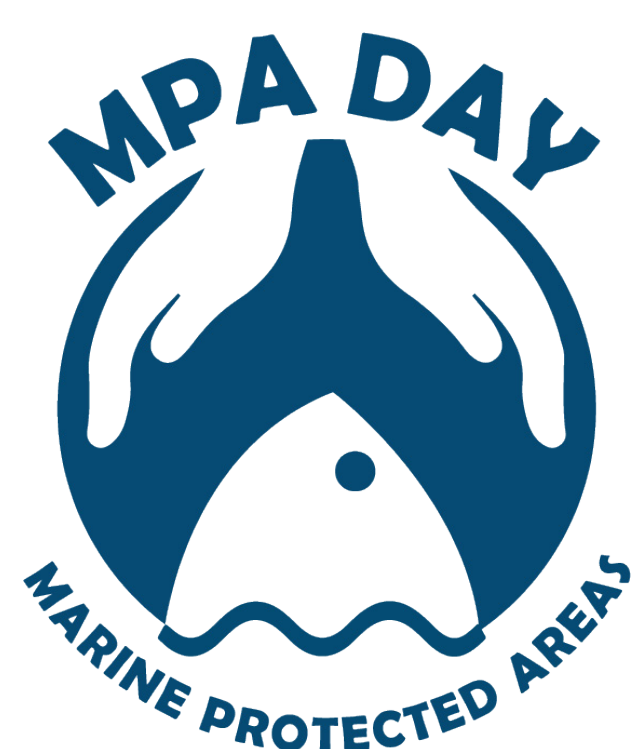
CAA has worked on the island of Seili in close collaboration with the Archipelago Research Institute (University of Turku) since 2017. The island offers a rich context for artistic inquiries as a microcosm that reflects the acute planetary challenges of the present against complex historical trajectories.

Long-term scientific study of changes in the local marine ecosystem entwines here with centuries of institutional biopolitics of care and control. Guided by the question of How Do You Know What You Know? we have realised artist residencies at the research institute, annual collective retreats for artists and researchers, new commissioned art works, performances and exhibitions, publications, workshops and symposia.

For example, in a number of events and exhibitions we have been guided by scientists and artists to follow the distressed Baltic herring - attempting to sense and make sense of the transformations of its underwater habitat by listening to and floating in the brackish waters, and by attending to the tiny herring otoliths (ear bones) that record environmental changes in the Baltic Sea like a black box.



Otolith reading workshop by Matterlurgy
and Katja Mäkinen, Seili 2022.
(Photo by Jussi Virkkumaa).

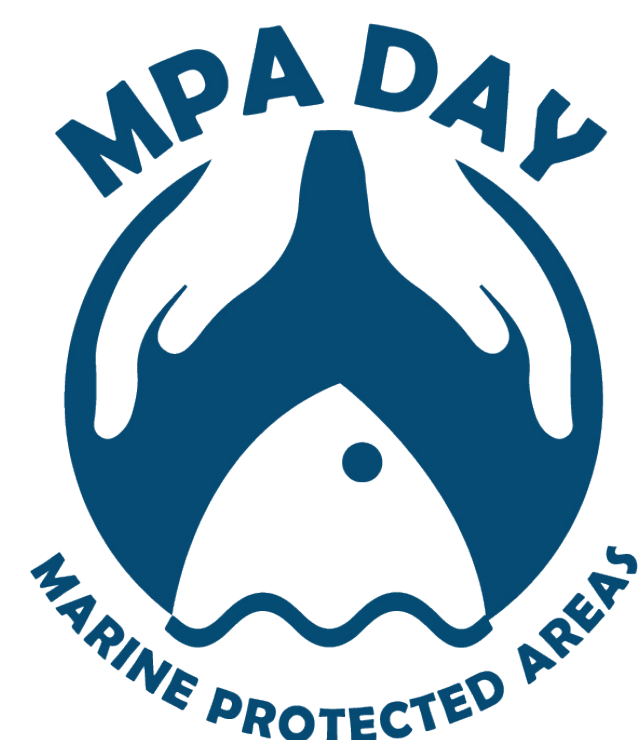


WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO PROTECT MARINE SPACES?

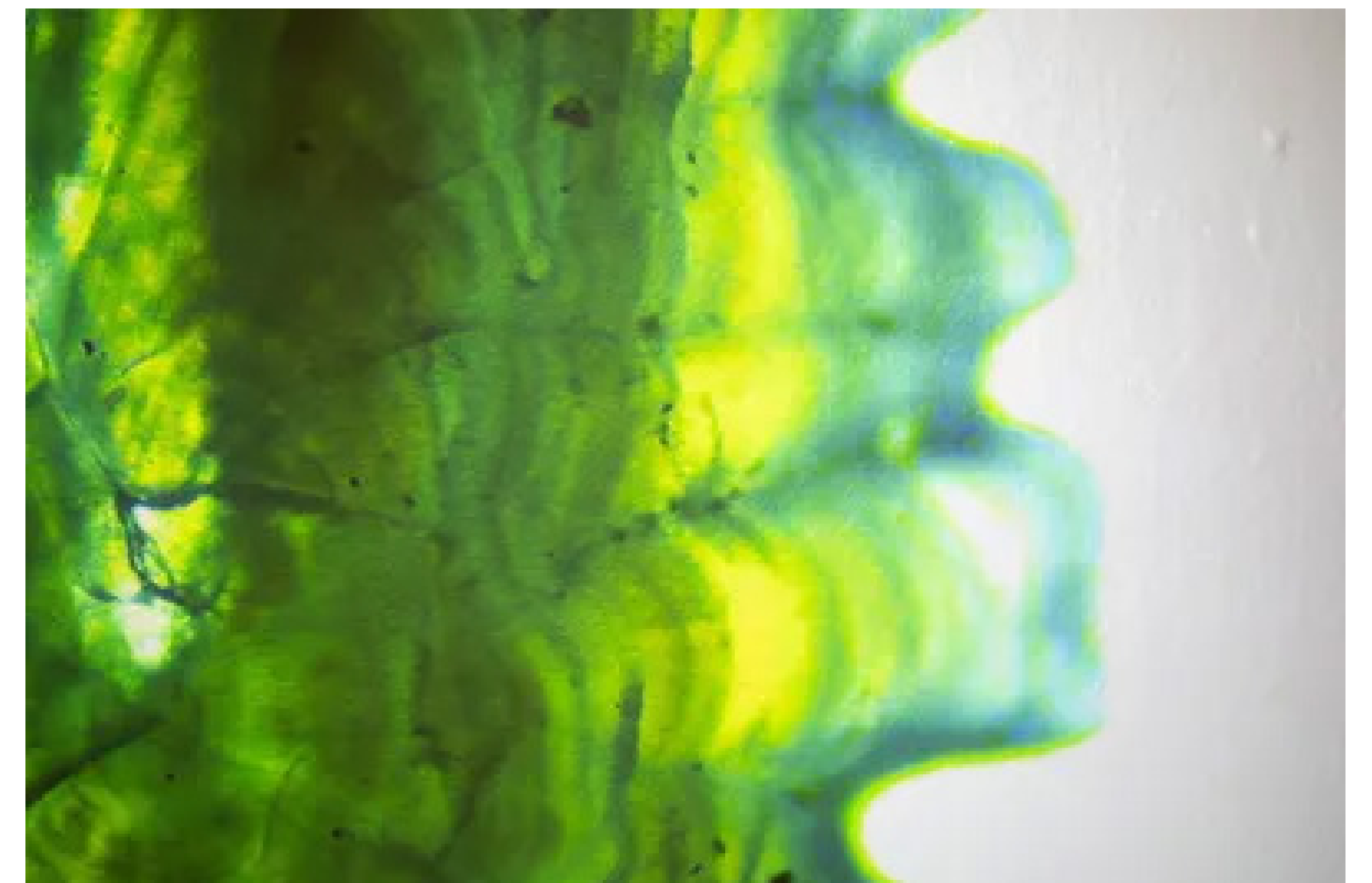
Marine ecologies and the many threatened marine species have their intrinsic value, of course, and for me it is an ethical imperative to protect the life of the oceans.

These ecologies cannot be reduced to, for example, human-centric ecosystem services. Yet it seems necessary these days to emphasise our complex dependency on the health of the seas and oceans, from the local level of everyday food production and other livelihoods all the way to the planetary scale of the oceans' role in the changing climate and weather patterns, etc.

Our fate is inseparable from the future of the oceans.



Field Casting by Matterlurgy, Titanik gallery, Turku 2023
(Photo by Johanna Naukkarinen).



Field Casting by Matterlurgy, Titanik gallery, Turku 2023
(Photo by Johanna Naukkarinen).

WHAT CAN ART BRING TO THE CONVERSATION IN MARINE PROTECTION?

Art can have a crucial role in the restoration of relations between humans and the rest of nature in numerous ways, for example by re-storying these interdependent relations, engaging people in embodied and emotional ways with the urgent challenges marine ecologies face, and envisioning sustainable futures that motivate communities in taking part in marine protection.

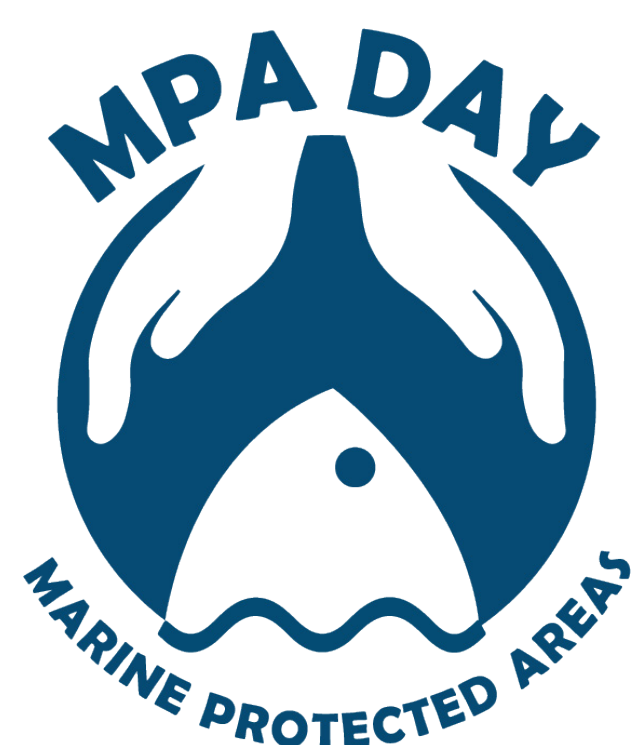
“

"I am, after all, just a small body of water, in fluid connection to the global currents, and able to breathe thanks to the minute plankton and underwater meadows tirelessly oxygenating the Earth's atmosphere."

— Taru Elfving



Photo by Jussi Virkkumaa





SERGE ONE

SERGE One (Sergio Rinquist), also known as Sergical, is a Cape Town-based graffiti artist whose work blends bold visual storytelling with deep cultural roots. A founding member of the Handcontrol360 Graffiti Crew, Serge One uses aerosol art as a tool for transformation—bridging **urban expression, indigenous identity, and collective memory**.

With a career spanning over two decades, his murals reflect a dynamic fusion of **Hip Hop philosophy, Khoe - San heritage**, and futuristic cityscapes, often layered with environmental and social symbolism. Serge One's art is not just aesthetic; it's a **dialogue between past, present, and possible futures**, created to uplift communities and challenge perceptions.

His work has been featured in public art projects, educational workshops, and cultural ex-changes locally and internationally. SERGE continues to push the boundaries of graffiti as a socially conscious, visionary art form rooted in South African soil but connected to a global Hip Hop movement.

Check out more of SERGE One's visionary work:
<https://handcontrol360crew.com>

Instagram: [@sergicalone](https://www.instagram.com/sergicalone)

Unless stated otherwise, all artwork and photos in this article: © SERGE One



HOW DOES THE OCEAN INSPIRE YOUR ART?

The ocean is both a canvas and a teacher in my life.

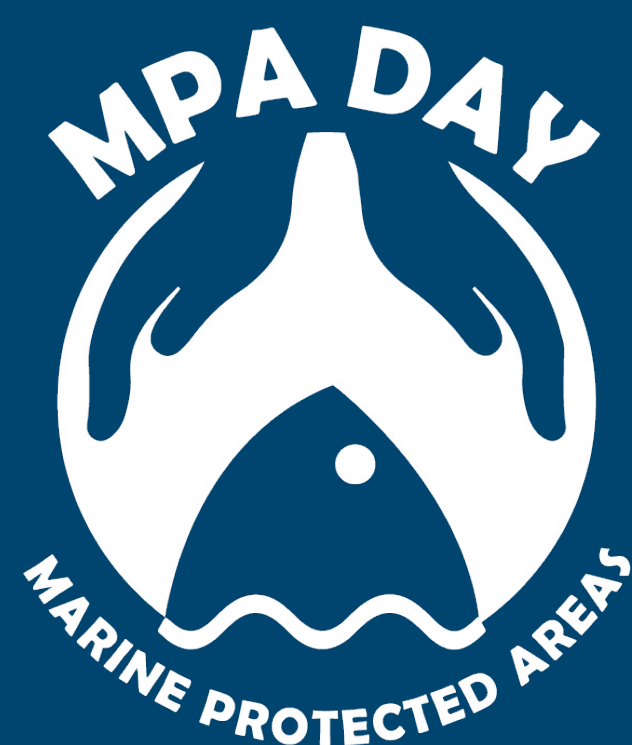
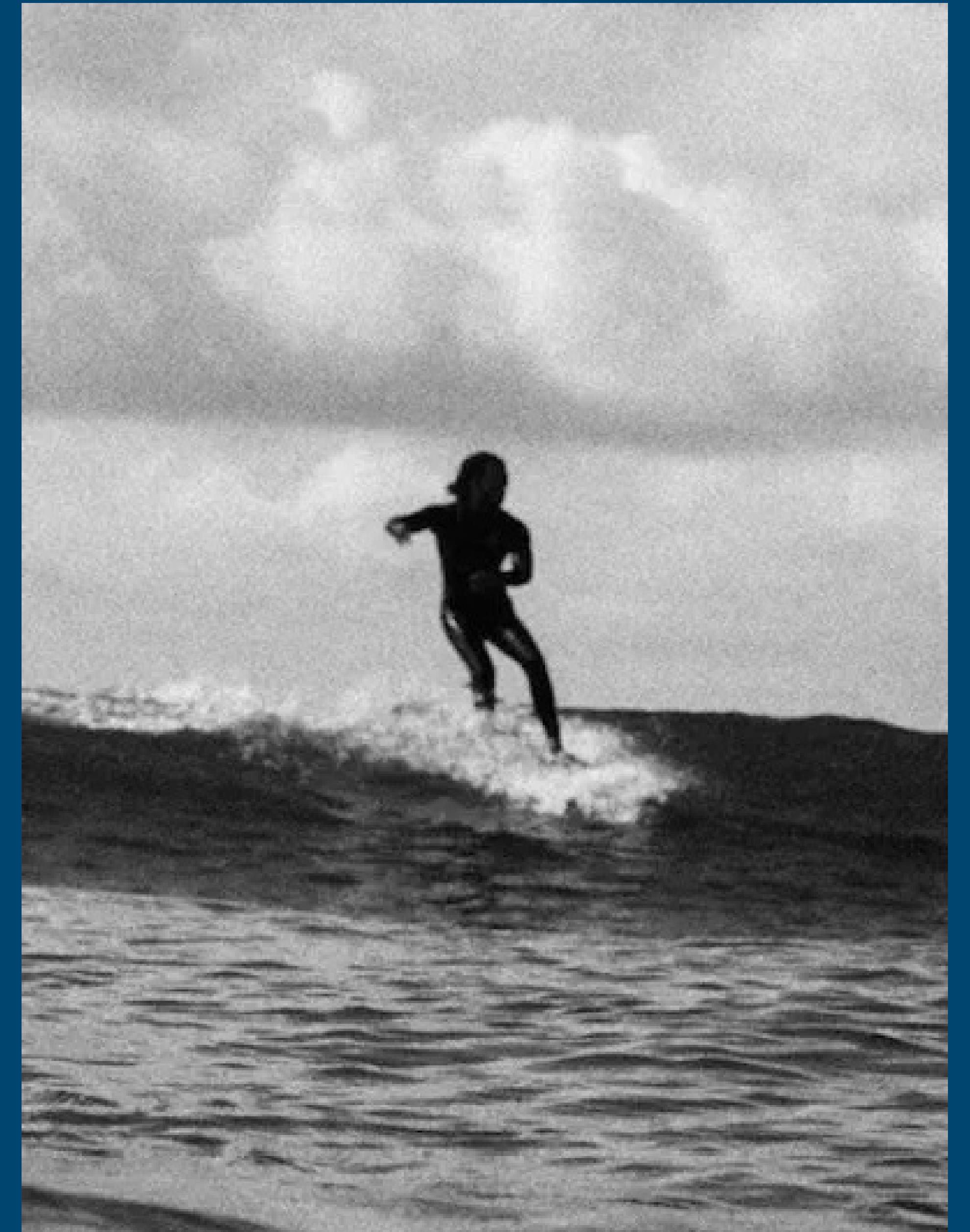
As a Graffiti Artist, Surfer, and someone grounded in Hip Hop culture, the ocean's rhythm mirrors the freestyle flow that inspires my work. It represents movement, memory, and power — constantly shifting, just like Graffiti Art and sound.

Whether I'm paddling out for a surf or sketching a mural near the coast, the ocean reminds me to stay fluid, adaptable, and connected to something much bigger than myself.

DO YOU HAVE A PERSONAL OR FIRST EXPERIENCE WITH THE OCEAN THAT SHAPED YOUR ART?

Growing up, I spent hours exploring the coastline around False Bay. I would draw in the sand, watch the tide wash it away, then do it again — unknowingly learning the essence of Graffiti: impermanence, expression, and flow.

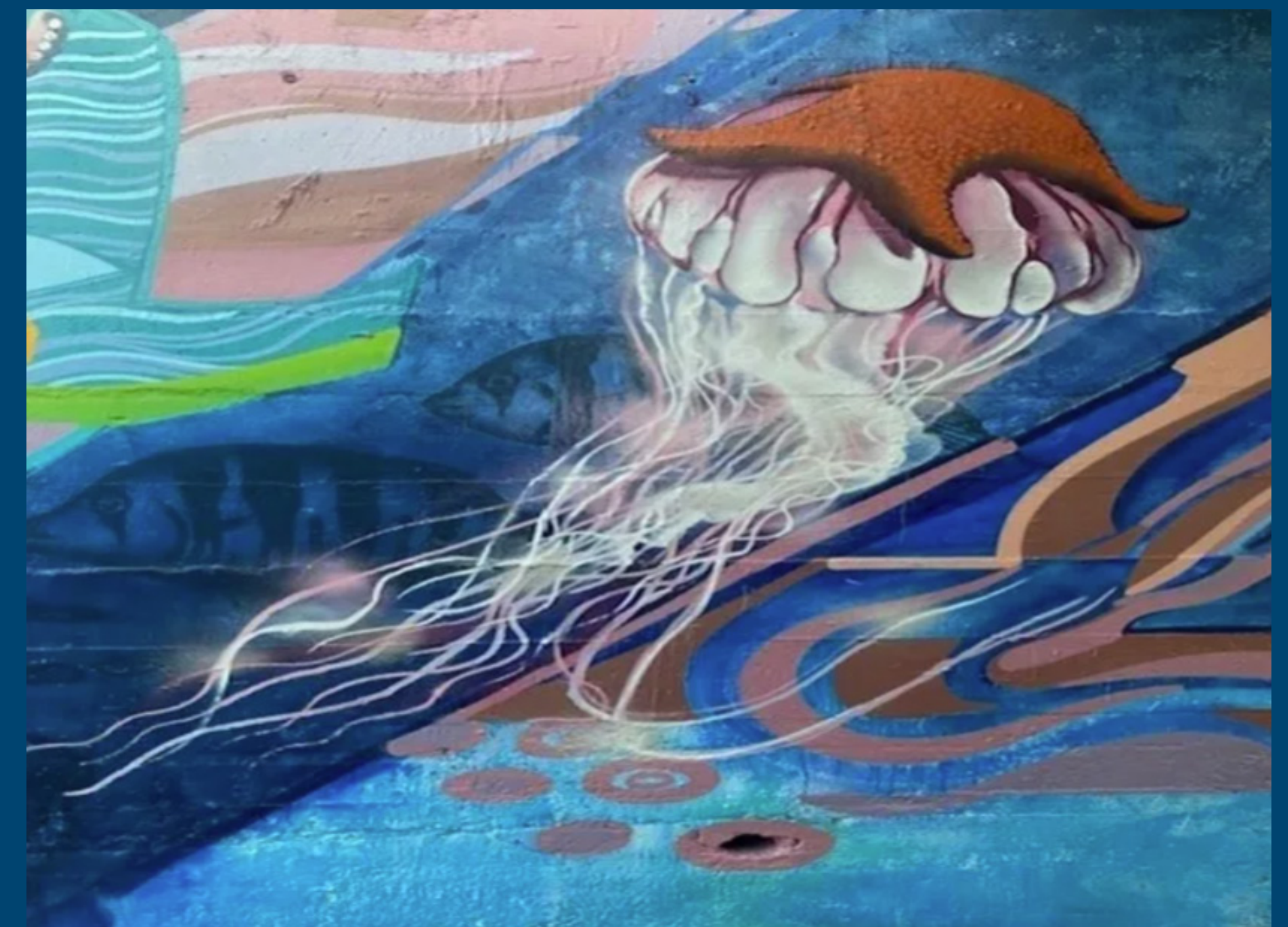
Later, as a surfer, I found a new kind of rhythm — one that shaped how I paint and how I listen. That connection continues today in my murals, sketchbooks, and the music that surrounds my creative process.



TELL US ABOUT ART YOU CREATED THAT IS INSPIRED BY THE OCEAN

One piece that stands out is a custom surfboard I painted with a tribute to Bob Marley. It fused Afro-Caribbean musical influence, the coastal colour palette of my surroundings, and ancient Khoe symbols that speak to my roots. It wasn't just a visual piece — it was a vessel that moves over water, guided by rhythm and wave energy. That project brought together all the elements I love: art, music, heritage, and surfing.

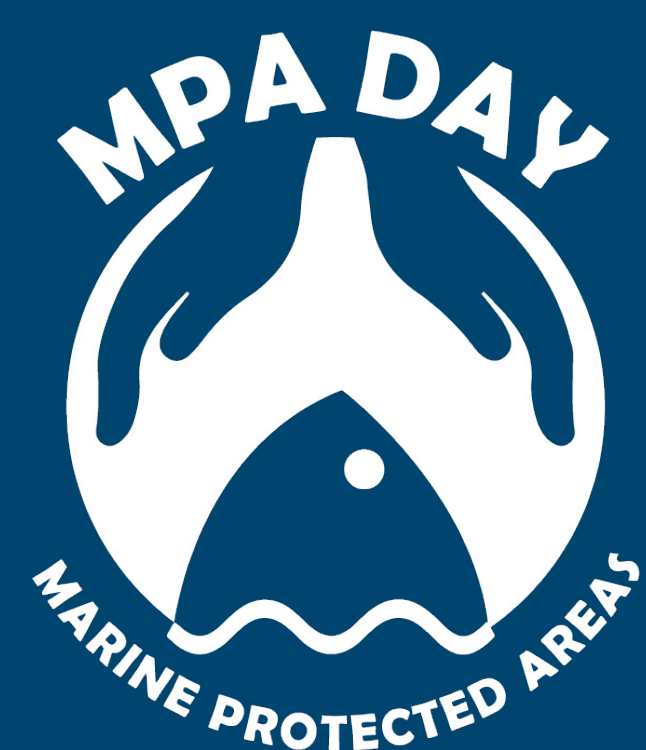
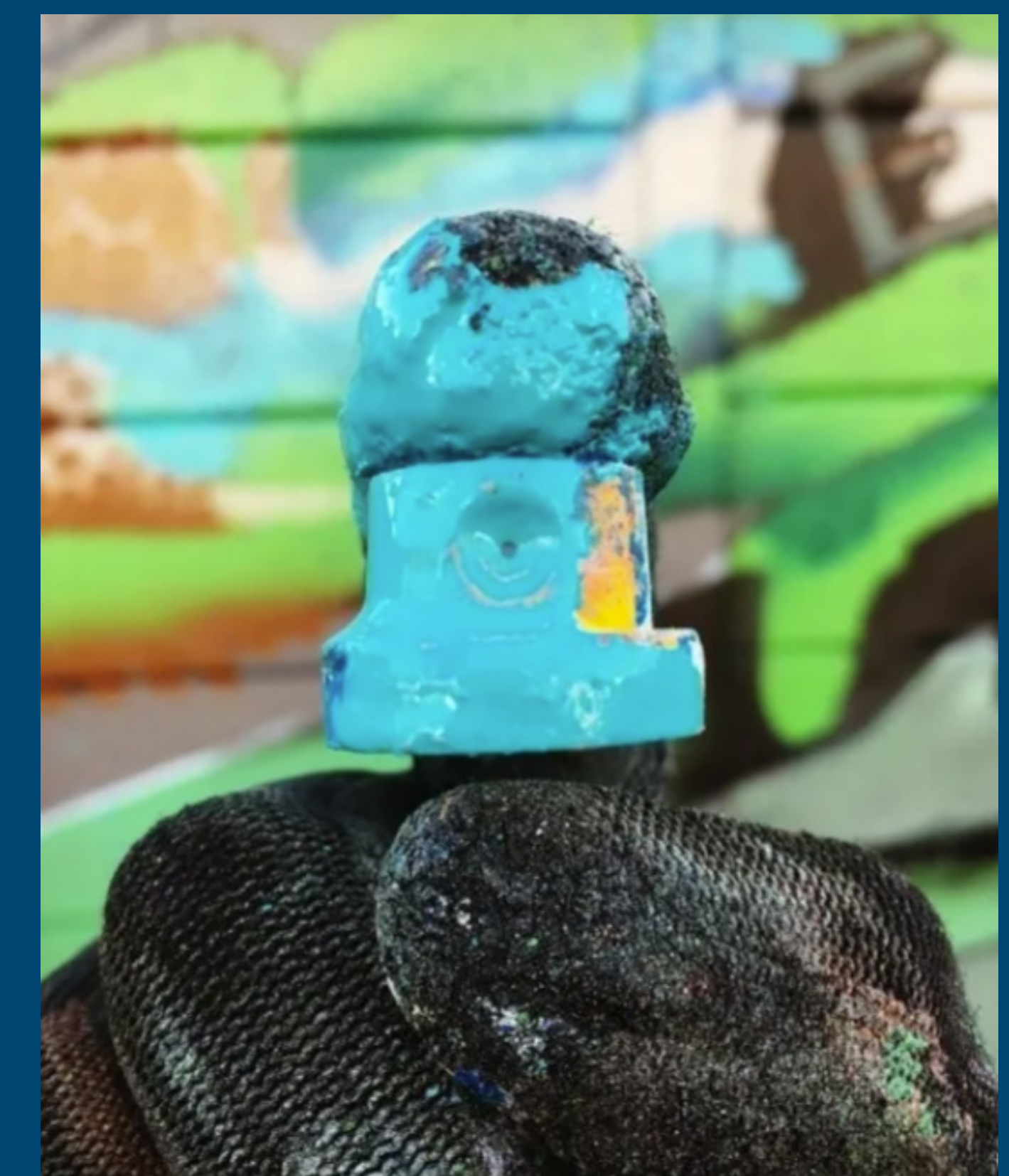
Another painting I did was for Cape Town Free Diving, I painted a massive octopus triggering a spray can, a Khoe mermaid and some under water sea life. During this project I also had the privilege of exploring the great African Kelp forests and it was such an amazing experience.



IN YOUR OPINION, WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO PROTECT MARINE SPACES?

Marine spaces are sacred. As someone who surfs and paints in coastal communities, I see how the ocean nurtures physical health, mental balance, and creative inspiration. For indigenous peoples like the Khoe and San and all descendants thereof, the ocean has always been a place of healing and spiritual knowledge.

Protecting these spaces means protecting culture, food systems, and a future where we still have waves to ride and shores to gather on. It's not just about the environment — it's about identity and continuity.



WHAT CAN ART BRING TO THE CONVERSATION IN MARINE PROTECTION?

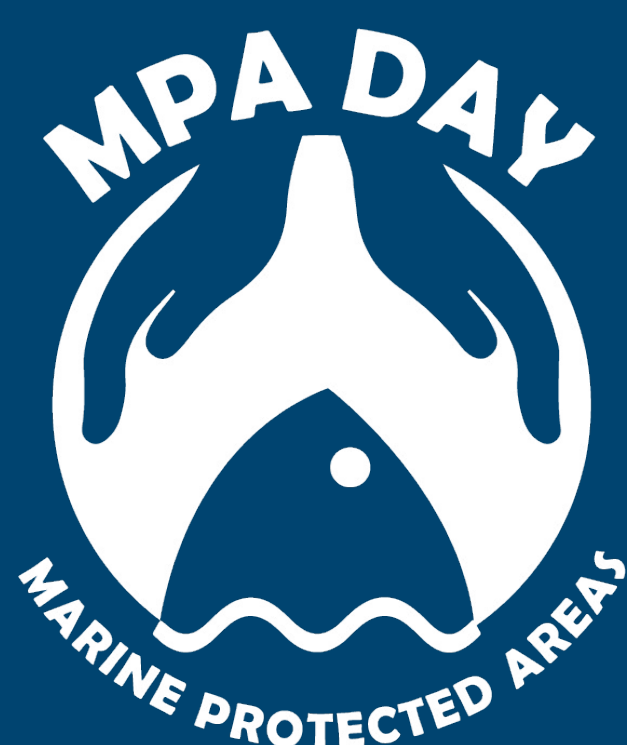
Art brings soul to the science. Through Graffiti Art, we take messages to the street — bold, loud, and impossible to ignore. In Hip Hop, we remix and reframe reality, and that same power can reshape how people think about the ocean.

Art invites people into the story emotionally. It turns policy into poetry, data into colour, and ideas into movements. When we create from the heart, we build a bridge — between the sea and the people who must protect it.

“

"Art invites people into the story emotionally. It turns policy into poetry, data into colour, and ideas into movements. When we create from the heart, we build a bridge — between the sea and the people who must protect it."

— SERGE One





CAROLINE HALDIN

Caroline Haldin is a contemporary visual artist based in Finland.

A dedicated fine arts student at the Turku Academy of Fine Arts, she explores an expressive and thoughtful approach to painting.

Her work is grounded in emotion and intuition, often drawing inspiration from her environment and personal experiences. Among her work are many evocative seascapes and figures that reflect environmental consciousness. For Caroline, the sea is more than a subject — it's a source of calm, and a reminder of nature's fragility.

Check out more of Caroline's incredible paintings and illustrations:
<https://carolinehaldin.wixsite.com>

Instagram: [@carolinehaldinart](https://www.instagram.com/carolinehaldinart)

Unless stated otherwise, all artwork and photos in this article:
© Caroline Haldin



HOW DOES THE OCEAN INSPIRE YOUR ART?

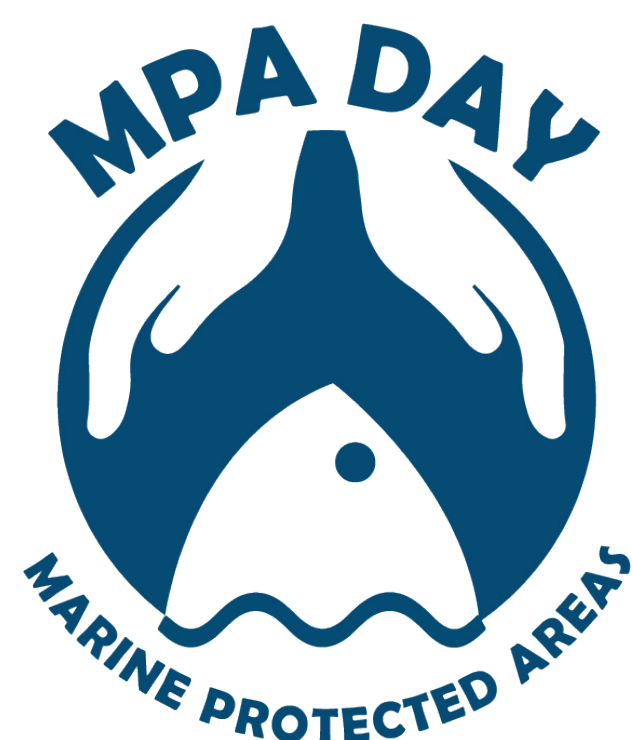
For me, the ocean is a source of inspiration, tranquility and innate power. Sometimes, the inspiration will be quite literal, and at other times, I keep the feeling of the ocean close to heart when I paint.

DO YOU HAVE A PERSONAL OR FIRST EXPERIENCE WITH THE OCEAN THAT INSPIRES YOUR ART?

Growing up, I spent most of my summers by the sea, either in a boat or at a summer cottage. The ocean gives me instant peace of mind. I also remember watching nature documentaries about our oceans, fascinated by the hidden world beneath the surface.

TELL US ABOUT A PARTICULAR PIECE OF ART YOU CREATED THAT IS INSPIRED BY THE OCEAN

My piece “Striped swimsuit” depicts my daughter, about to swim in the ocean. I wanted to convey the feeling of the ocean breeze on your skin, quite warm in the summer, a fresh salty hint of seaweed and fish in your nostrils, as you climb into the water, letting it carry you, hoping a fish won’t nibble on your toes too much.



IN YOUR OPINION, WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO PROTECT MARINE SPACES?

If we want to keep being able to experience the ocean, we need to take care of it and protect it. I am worried about the state of the Baltic Sea today, and the ecosystems within it. We need to respect the unique environments around us, and I hope enough pressure can be put on governments and the EU to make a change.

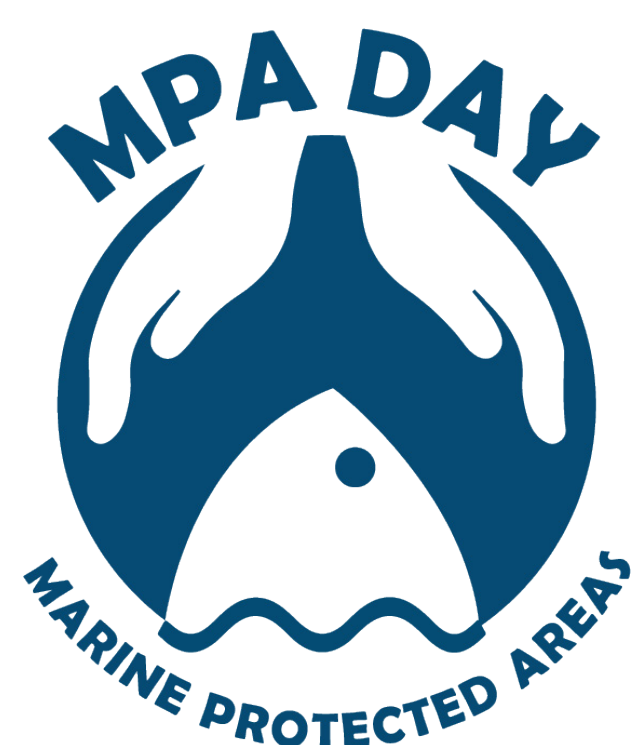
WHAT CAN ART BRING TO THE CONVERSATION ABOUT MARINE PROTECTION?

In my opinion, art is a brilliant means of communication. A visual message can be very effective and evoke instant emotion in people, even encouraging action for a cause. Art can help communicate science in a way that is more approachable and more emotional than numbers and facts.



"For me, the ocean is a source of inspiration, tranquility and innate power. Sometimes, the inspiration will be quite literal, and at other times, I keep the feeling of the ocean close to heart when I paint."

— Caroline Haldin





GAVIN LARKIN

Gavin Larkin is a contemporary fine artist whose work explores a wide variety of styles, techniques and mediums.

Born in Port Elizabeth, South Africa, he had a keen visual interest in the world around him, encouraged by a strong artistic flair that run through his family.

Following studies in art, photography and graphic design at the Nelson Mandela University, he pursued a career in advertising. The variation and creativity of visual material and conceptual ideas required significantly influenced his fine art.

In addition to solo exhibitions, Gavin has also participated in numerous group exhibitions with various art galleries in Cape Town and recently at Galeria Azur in Berlin, Germany.

Check out more of Gavin's unique and multidisciplinary approach to art:
<https://gavinlarkin.com>

Instagram: [@gavinlarkinart](https://www.instagram.com/gavinlarkinart)

Unless stated otherwise, all artwork and photos in this article:
© Gavin Larkin



HOW DOES THE OCEAN INSPIRE YOUR ART?

There are so many different ways that the ocean inspires my art - but just to take one of them. The ocean is an extremely visual entity, and because it consists of water, which is moving the whole time due to the tides, 24/7, the look and appearance of the ocean is always changing - every second. When we combine this continual fluid movement with wind, light, sound and smell, we get the most fascinating scenes and experiences.

TELL US ABOUT A PARTICULAR PIECE OF ART YOU CREATED THAT IS INSPIRED BY THE OCEAN

Every painting I do of the ocean, is inspired by the ocean and my different experiences with it over 60 years. However, one painting in particular I did was based on the most incredible scene I experienced first hand which I photographed. From the photograph and a bit of memory I did the painting.

DO YOU HAVE A PERSONAL OR FIRST EXPERIENCE WITH THE OCEAN THAT INSPIRES YOUR ART?

I have had many personal experiences with the ocean. From sea fishing with my father as a very young boy, to exploring the seashores, to surfing, these activities have shaped my art.



IN YOUR OPINION, WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO PROTECT MARINE SPACES?

It is these protected marine spaces which are the reserves and breeding grounds of all sea life which will hopefully stem the deterioration of our ocean.

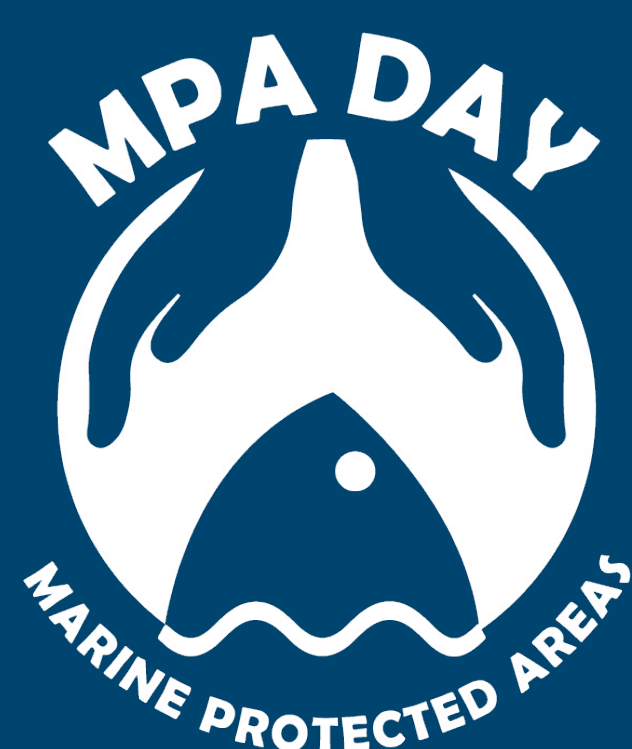
WHAT CAN ART BRING TO THE CONVERSATION ABOUT MARINE PROTECTION?

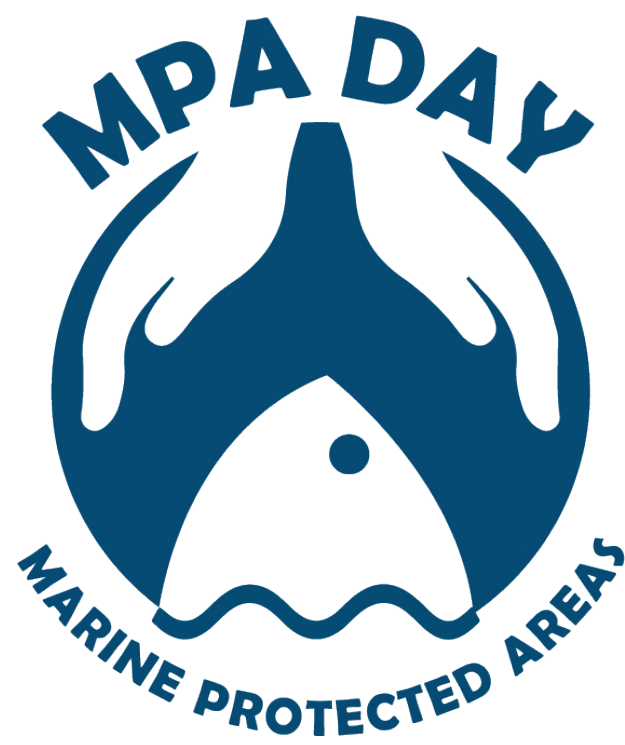
A picture (art) is worth a thousand words.

“

"I have had many personal experiences with the ocean. From sea fishing with my father as a very young boy, to exploring the seashores, to surfing, these activities have shaped my art."

— Gavin Larkin





SHANNON BALL

Shannon Ball is a writer, creative, and ocean advocate who explores the interdependence between ocean and mountain ecosystems. Raised in the Rocky Mountains of Colorado, Shannon developed an early bond with the alpine environment through snowboarding and mountain life. But over time, her connection to the sea deepened—leading her beneath the surface as a diver and toward the coastline as both muse and medium. Today, she exists in the liminal space between mountain and tide, using art to illustrate the vital conversation between them.

Known for her striking cyanotype prints, Shannon uses kelp and sunlight to create luminous blue compositions that showcase the beauty of the underwater world. These hand-crafted pieces feel like a conversation with the ocean and are an invitation to viewers to experience the magic of the sea.

In 2025, Shannon was awarded an **Ocean Culture Life (OCL) Grant**, recognizing her innovative vision and commitment to ecological storytelling. Her grant project explores the symbiosis between ocean and mountain ecosystems, and the way they mirror and support each other across distance and climate.

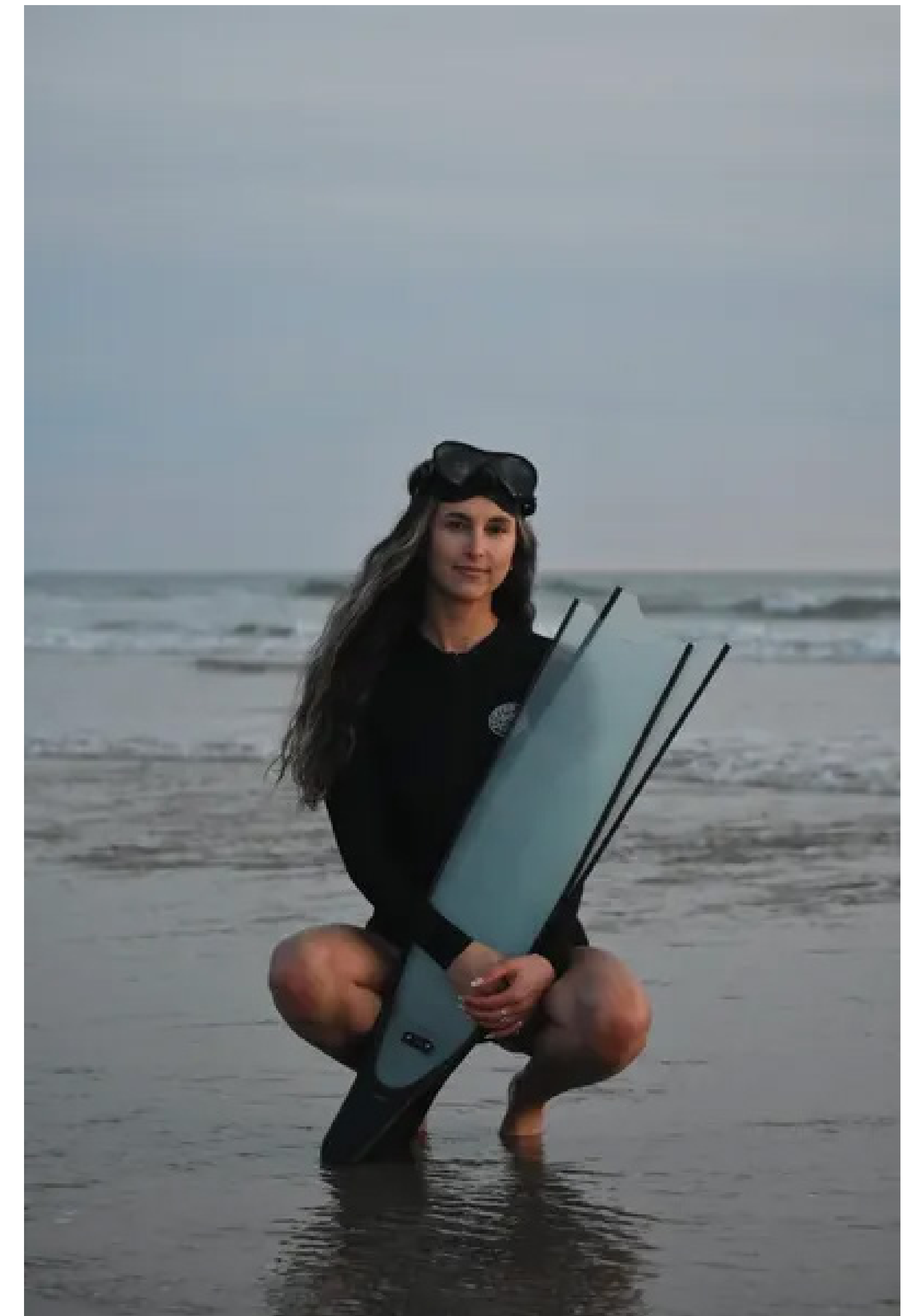
Through artistic collaborations with independent ski, snowboard, and surfboard shapers, Shannon creates designs that weave together the visual and energetic languages of both worlds. The result is a body of work that doesn't just celebrate outdoor culture—it reminds us that these environments are more interconnected than we often acknowledge.

Her approach is both grounded and poetic—balancing craft with message, intimacy with scale. Whether she's diving in coastal waters or printing cyanotypes in salt air, Shannon's work invites us to reconsider how we relate to wild spaces—not as separate destinations, but as a single living system.

Check out more of Shannon's creative designs:

Instagram: [@shannon_meredith](https://www.instagram.com/shannon_meredith)

Unless stated otherwise, all artwork and photos: © Shannon Ball



HOW DOES THE OCEAN INSPIRE YOUR ART?

Nature has always been my muse. I'm very fortunate to have lived on the coast for many years, and the ocean has just naturally become a part of my life, and ultimately, my art.

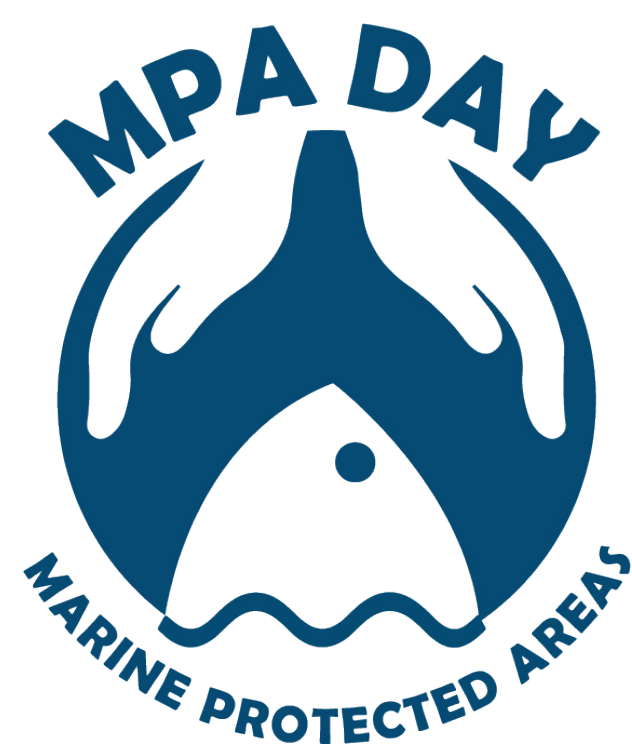
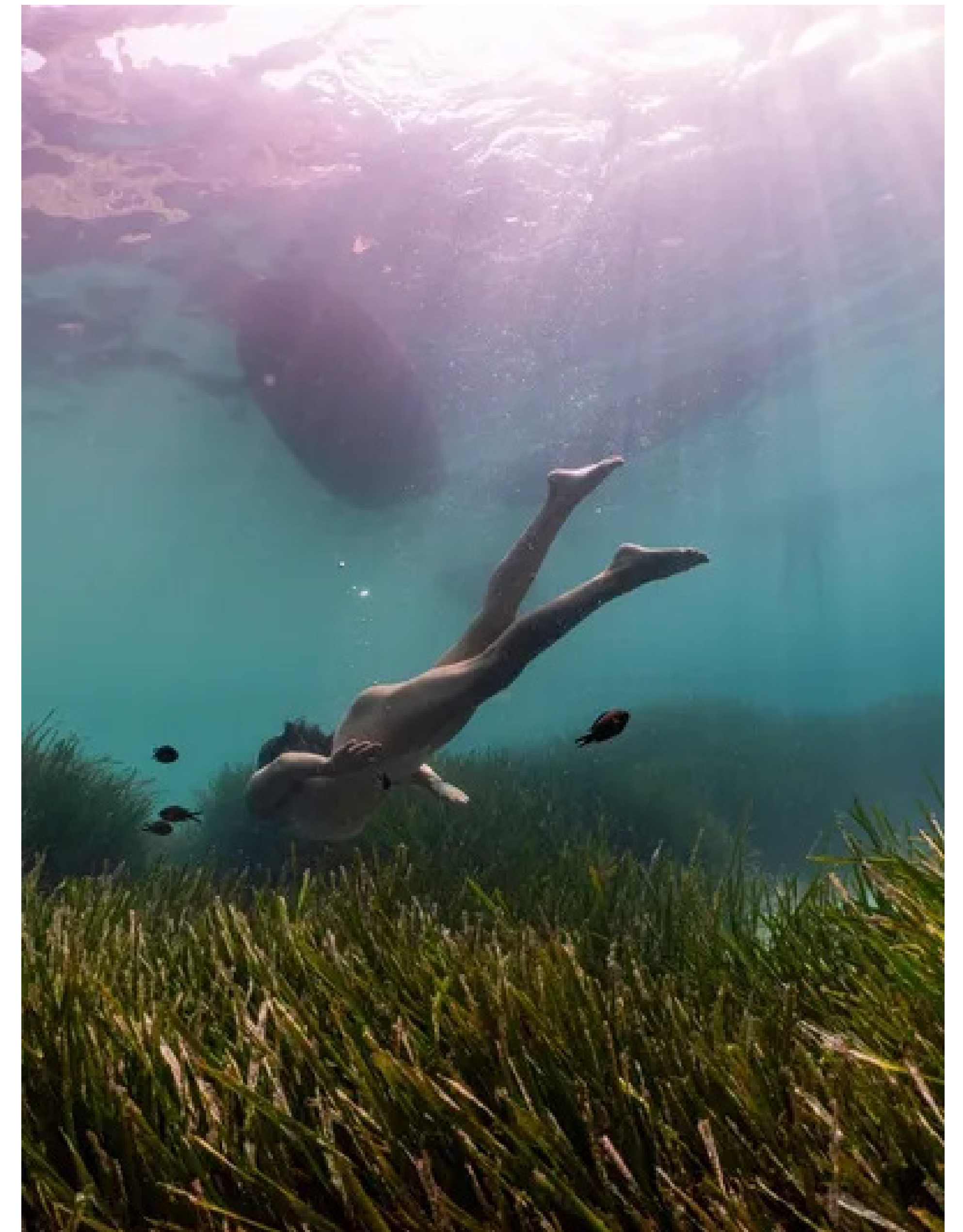
Whether it's a surfer dancing on a wave, the intricate details of a piece of coral, or a magnificent sunset over the sea, I am constantly inspired by the beauty of the ocean, and I hope to bring the peace the ocean gives me to anyone looking at one of my pieces.

Above all, I want my art to awaken stewardship. My art is an invitation to both experience the natural beauty of the underwater world as well as ignite a desire to protect it.

DO YOU HAVE A PERSONAL OR FIRST EXPERIENCE WITH THE OCEAN THAT SHAPED YOUR ART?

I had the incredible opportunity to dive the Great African Sea Forest in South Africa. I have lived in California for many years, so I had been diving in many kelp forests, but this experience awakened something different in me. The brightness of the purple and orange urchins, the slickness of the kelp against my skin, the coolness of the Atlantic Ocean on my cheeks – it was an ethereal experience.

I stepped out of the water, fins in hand, an insane mask indentation on face, and cold water dripping down my nose, and knew that this was an ecosystem I needed to dedicate my time to. While the ocean was a huge source of inspiration long before this experience, it only became clear years later that these magical kelp forests would become a large part of what I was known for as an artist.



TELL US ABOUT ART YOU CREATED THAT IS INSPIRED BY THE OCEAN

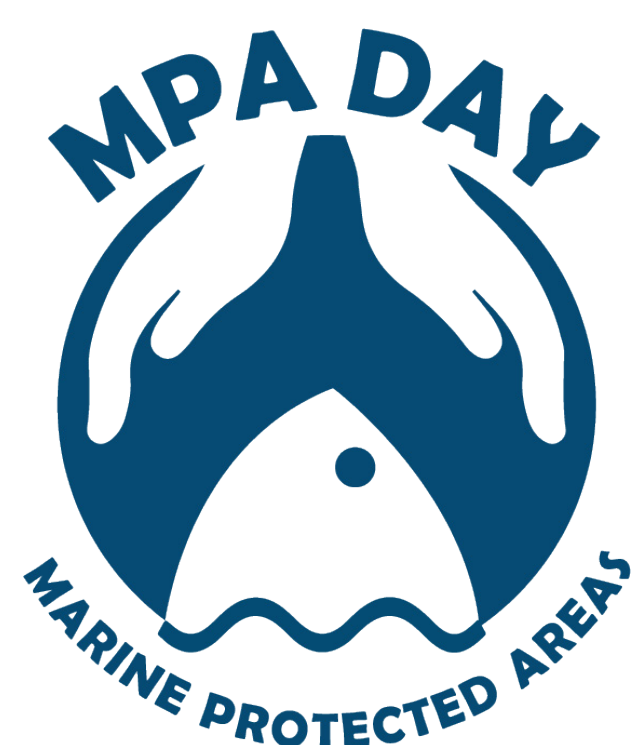
While most of my art has some surf, dive, or coastal influence, my kelp cyanotype pieces are directly inspired by the ocean. Firstly, because I start by diving in the kelp forests to collect kelp fronds to use in the piece.

From there, I try to keep the energy of the ocean throughout the entire process – from the blue monochrome to the shape I arrange the kelp in, I want my kelp pieces to feel like being underwater – organic, flowy, and whimsical.

IN YOUR OPINION, WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO PROTECT MARINE SPACES?

As Captain Paul Watson says so poignantly: “If the oceans die, we die.”

Every second breath we breathe comes from the ocean. The health of the oceans is inextricably linked to the health of the planet and of all life that inhabits it. It’s important to protect the ocean because our life truly depends on it.



WHAT CAN ART BRING TO THE CONVERSATION IN MARINE PROTECTION?

Art is a beautiful way to bring the story of the ocean (and of the land) to life. Everyone is moved to action through different mediums – it could be through a research paper, article, photograph, song, painting, documentary, or something else entirely. My belief is that art has the power to engage people who may not have otherwise been included in the conversation.

I firmly believe that everyone needs to utilize their individual skill sets in ocean conservation – not everyone is meant to be a politician or scientist!

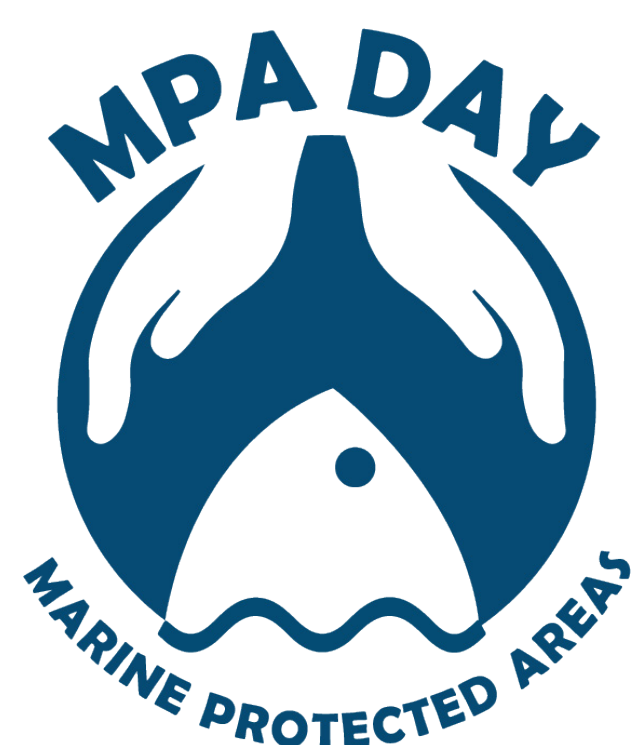
What do you have a unique level of passion for? How can you tap into your talents and expertise to make change in that area?

It was through these questions that I realized art as a means for activism, and ultimately my role as an artist to enact change in the ecosystems I care most about.

“

"My art is an invitation to both experience the natural beauty of the underwater world as well as ignite a desire to protect it."

— Shannon Ball





DEE BARRAGRY

DeeBarragry is an author, artist, and photographer with a rich multicultural background. Following a childhood spent in Ireland, Saudi Arabia, and Mexico, she brings a unique global perspective to her work. Now residing in Dublin, Dee blends her passions for art and narrative into enchanting children's literature and expressive imagery.

In 2023, she won the inaugural **Staróg Prize**, a prestigious honour for Irish writers of children's fiction, and secured a publishing deal with Walker Books.

Her debut middle-grade novel, **The Moon Seeker**, released in July 2025, is set in a whimsical world perched at the edge of the ocean. The story follows lighthouse keeper Lampwick and his loyal sheepdog, Humphrey, on a voyage across sea and sky to find the moon.

When she's not weaving stories, Dee can be found with a paintbrush, book or camera in hand capturing moments through her lens. With a fondness for creatures both real and fantastical, her work reflects her deep appreciation for nature and the wonders of exploration.

Want to find out more about Dee's writing:

<https://www.walker.co.uk/author/dee-barragry/>

Instagram: [@deebarragry](https://www.instagram.com/deebarragry)

Portrait image © Dee Barragry

Cover illustration © 2025 Paula Zorite. All Rights Reserved.



HOW DOES THE OCEAN INSPIRE YOUR ART?

The ocean inspires my art both directly and indirectly. I appreciate it in tangible, visceral ways, by connecting with it through all the five senses, as well as through means less defined.

Its rhythms are a reminder that we too ebb and flow, and I love how its moods and intensities shift and change. It can be both striking and subtle. All these qualities make the ocean a companion and teacher, in addition to being a subject and muse.

TELL US ABOUT A PARTICULAR PIECE OF ART YOU CREATED THAT IS INSPIRED BY THE OCEAN

My new children's book **"The Moon Seeker"** is a comic fantasy caper set in a world full of mystery and magic. The story was heavily influenced by my love of the sea, something which I hope is palpable throughout.

Lampwick is the keeper of the lighthouse at the top of the world. When the moon disappears, he and his faithful sheepdog Humphrey must embark on a wild adventure to find it. A fearsome storm is brewing and lives are at stake. Journeying under the sea and across the skies, it will take wits, magic and the help of unexpected friends to return the moon to its home. And all in time for breakfast!

DO YOU HAVE A PERSONAL OR FIRST EXPERIENCE WITH THE OCEAN THAT INSPIRES YOUR ART?

My earliest memory of the ocean is from very early childhood in Kenmare, off the southwest coast of Ireland. I remember standing in cold wintry sunshine at the edge of the harbour and being fascinated by the wavelets nibbling at my boots, and noticing the saltiness of the air coming in off the Atlantic. It was a moment of enchantment, and that feeling for the ocean has remained with me ever since.



Cover illustration @ 2025 Paula Zorite. All Rights Reserved.

IN YOUR OPINION, WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO PROTECT MARINE SPACES?

The well-being of humans and of marine spaces are deeply, inextricably interconnected. Ultimately, we all belong to one system and what wounds one part of it, will wound another. As custodians we also have a duty of care, beyond our own needs, to protect and preserve ecosystems in all their complex, biodiverse majesty.

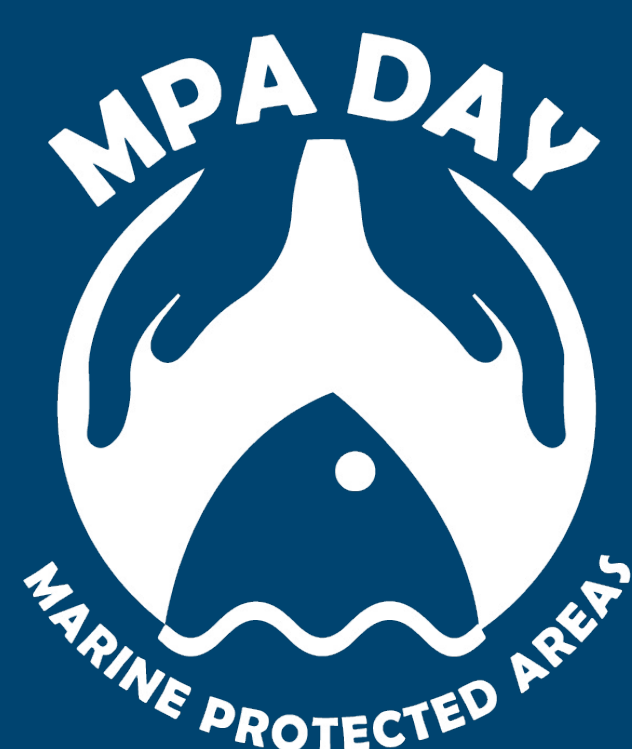
“

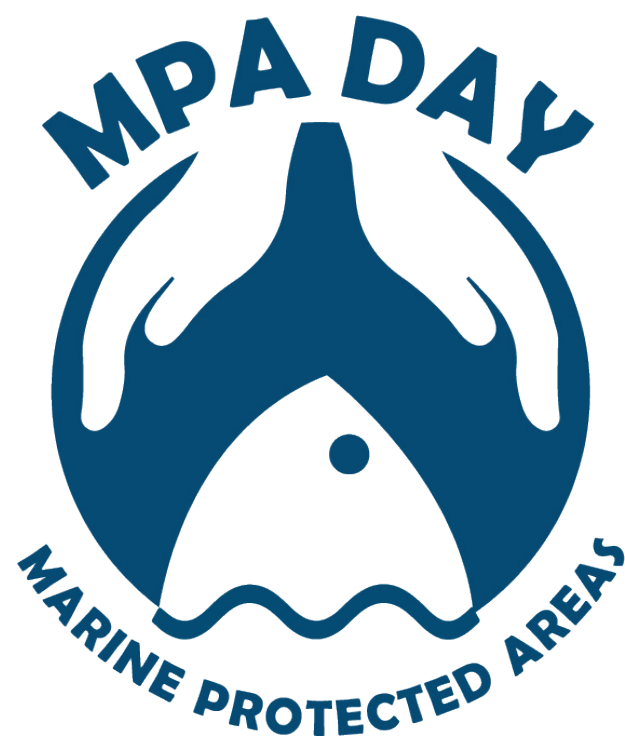
"I believe there is a need to engage both the heart and the mind in the conversation on marine protection. As a point of intersection between makers and audiences, art is a vast space in which to creatively consider, transmit and conjure emotions as well as ideas."

— Dee Barragry

WHAT CAN ART BRING TO THE CONVERSATION IN MARINE PROTECTION?

I believe there is a need to engage both the heart and the mind in the conversation on marine protection. As a point of intersection between makers and audiences, art is a vast space in which to creatively consider, transmit and conjure emotions as well as ideas. When it comes to inspiring and sustaining climate action, I think empathy is a particularly powerful motivator. We tend to care best for who, and what, we care most about.





IAN MACKIE

Ian Mackie is a multidisciplinary artist, graphic designer, surfer, and freediver, whose creative journey has been shaped by a life spent between land and sea. Born in New Zealand, Ian has lived in Fiji, Scotland, East London, and now calls Cape Town home.

He studied graphic design at East London Technical College and built a successful career working with top advertising agencies and design studios in London and Cape Town.

Ian's art is deeply influenced by his passion for travel, nature, and adventure. For the past seventeen years, he has honed his figure drawing practice at the Artists Co-Op in Observatory, and previously at Brights Studio in Woodstock.

A growing fascination with the ocean has led Ian to explore underwater photography through freediving. This exploration gave rise to his SeaLife Drawing series— a unique fusion of underwater photography and figure drawing. Blending mythological themes with visual storytelling, the series evokes Greek sea gods, nymphs, and elements of mystery, fantasia, and fatal attraction.

Ian's work reflects a deep connection to the natural world, seamlessly merging technical skill with dreamlike narrative and emotional depth.

Check out more from Ian's SeaLife drawing series:
<https://designology.co.za/art>

Instagram: [@ian.mackie](https://www.instagram.com/ian.mackie)

Unless stated otherwise, all artwork and photos: © Ian Mackie

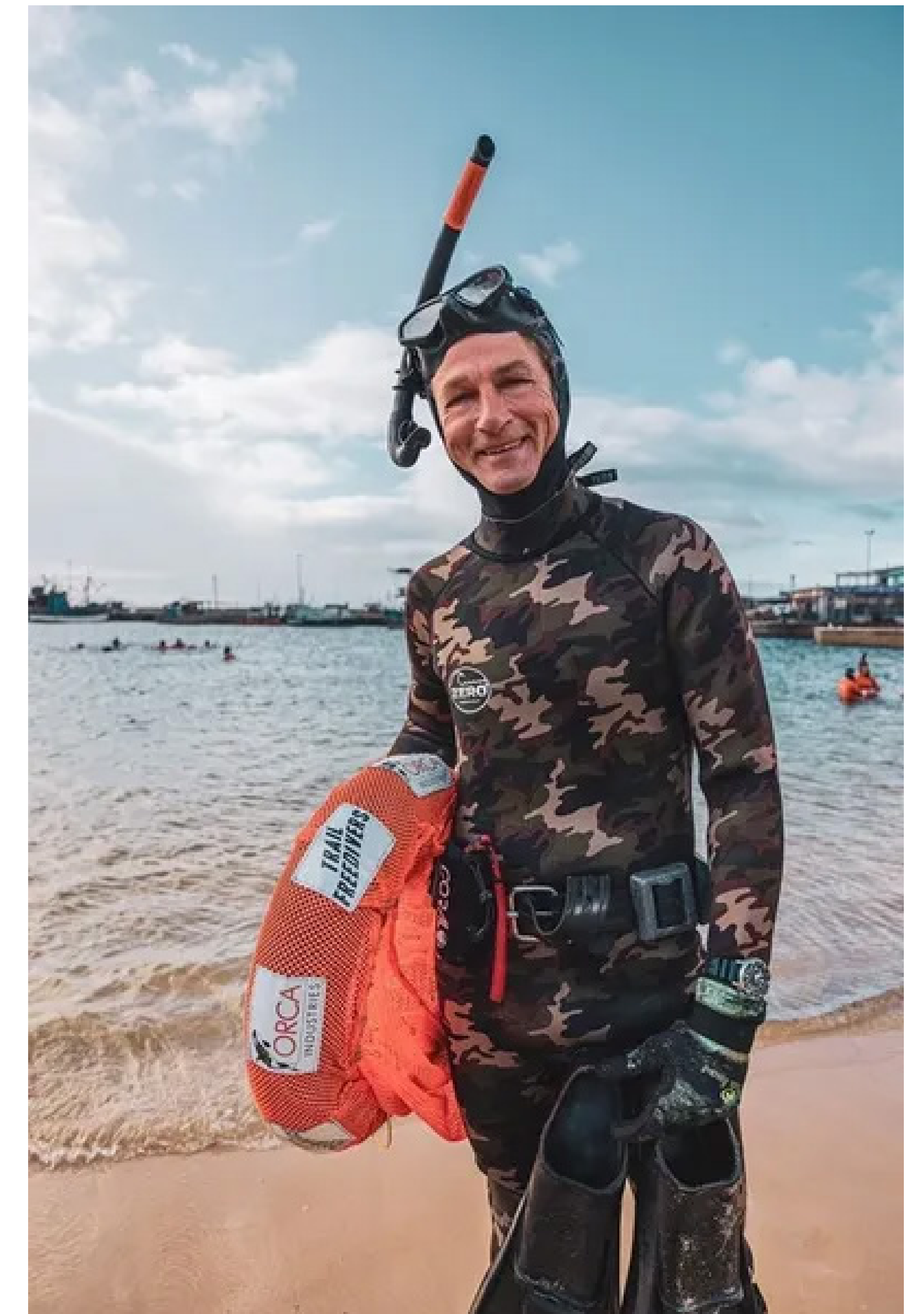


Photo by Gunnar Oberholser

HOW DOES THE OCEAN INSPIRE YOUR ART?

The ocean is like a big pot of blue paint with many tones and moods. I free dive in the majestic kelp forests and use photography, figure drawing and video to capture the moments of underwater exploration and imagination.

DO YOU HAVE A PERSONAL OR FIRST EXPERIENCE WITH THE OCEAN THAT SHAPED YOUR ART?

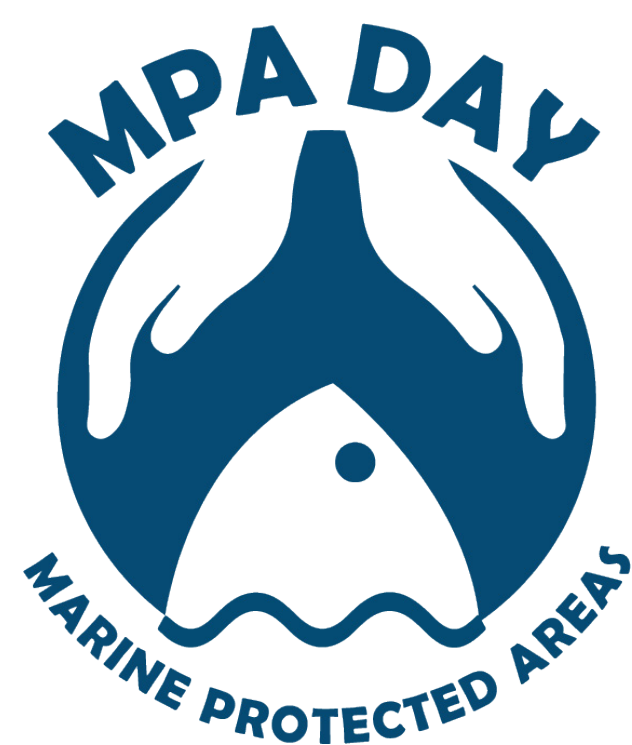
In 2016 I was gifted a freediving wetsuit; changing my world forever. Upon contact with water, especially diving down into the kelp forests, there is a sense of peace and wellbeing, a stillness that brought on a flood of ideas and ignited my imagination.

This sparked imagery of Greek sea gods, nymphs and fantasia and hence the "SeaLife Drawing Series" started.



TELL US ABOUT A PARTICULAR PIECE OF ART YOU CREATED THAT IS INSPIRED BY THE OCEAN

My favourite piece is "Melancholy". I dived down to about 6 meters and held onto the base of a kelp stem. The scene was eerie, dreamy but yet light shone through the top of the kelp forest. This was the first image of the "SeaLife Drawing Series" that in essence defines the human connection ... by combining the two life drawing figures into the scene.



IN YOUR OPINION, WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO PROTECT MARINE SPACES?

We can all learn so much from marine spaces; from the impact of human activities to personal growth and interrelationships. We have a duty to protect them because they can't protect themselves.

When these spaces are protected and well managed, they flourish and there is an abundance of marine life. I feel that we, as divers, are custodians of the sea and it is our duty to document and protect marine life.

To this end, I am an active participant and advocate for initiatives like plastic clean-ups with Trail Freedivers and our partners.



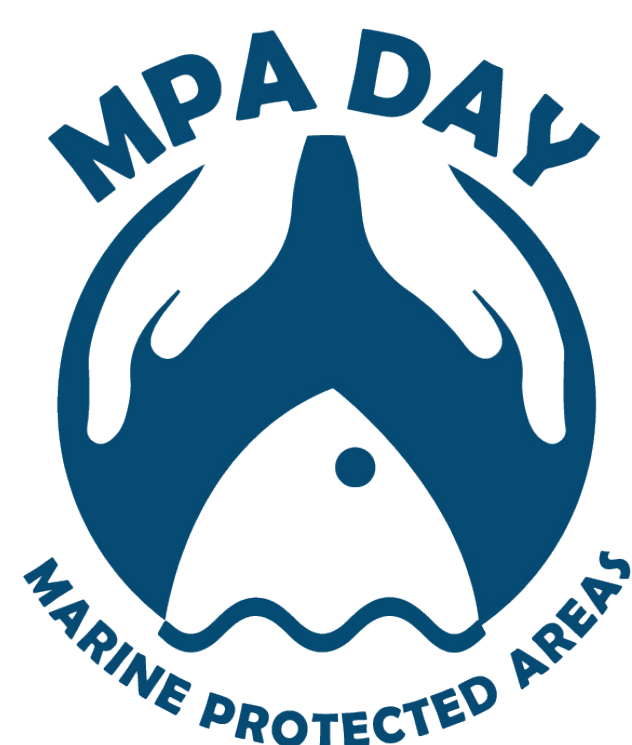
WHAT CAN ART BRING TO THE CONVERSATION IN MARINE PROTECTION?

A strong symbolic message is needed to communicate the importance of marine protection. Art touches the soul and the ocean (water) is deeply symbolic. Using art to reach people in a meaningful way is an important tool in awareness and education.

“

"A strong symbolic message is needed to communicate the importance of marine protection. Art touches the soul and the ocean (water) is deeply symbolic. Using art to reach people in a meaningful way is an important tool in awareness and education."

— Ian Mackie





DAY MOODLEY

Day Moodley is a 22-year-old animator and illustrator merging ecology with visual storytelling. Diagnosed autistic in 2024, she harnesses her neurodivergent bond with water to transform scientific urgency into visceral animations. Using tools like Procreate Dreams, her signature style blends hand-painted textures with immersive perspectives, turning data into emotional journeys.

Day's art is advocacy in motion. This whale shark project, starring 'Rin'—created for Justice 4 Jaws, where she serves as Social Media Manager—exemplifies this mission. Inspired by a real juvenile whale shark in Camps Bay, the film centres nature as narrator to humanise marine protection.

Through accessible narratives crafted during her 3-year journey with J4J (from Secretary to Graphic Designer to her current role), Day proves animation isn't just art—it's a catalyst for action. To her, MPAs are lifelines: "Ecosystem Emergency Rooms."

Rooted in coastal South Africa and now based in London, she champions a truth forged by childhood voyages with her sailor father and her mother's marine education work at uShaka Marine World: people protect what they feel.

As an emerging conservation storyteller aiming to become a National Geographic Explorer, Day bridges scientific complexity and public empathy—one frame at a time. Every piece is a love letter to our blue planet.

Check out more of Day's stunning animations and artwork:
<https://selkiescove.carrd.co/>

Instagram: [@selkies.cove](https://www.instagram.com/selkies.cove)

Unless stated otherwise, all artwork and photos: © Day Moodley



HOW DOES THE OCEAN INSPIRE YOUR ART?

I grew up in a sunny beach town on South Africa's East Coast. My art began on voyages with my sailor dad and deepened through my mom's work as an educational guide at uShaka Marine World. The sea has always informed my art like a bloodline.

After my autism diagnosis last year, I understood that rhythmic pull I've always felt toward the tides. Today, that connection fuels everything: my illustrations, my stories, and a style now recognised from Cape Town to London.

DO YOU HAVE A PERSONAL OR FIRST EXPERIENCE WITH THE OCEAN THAT INSPIRES YOUR ART?

A few years ago, I transitioned from snorkelling to diving deeper through a Nature, Environment and Wildlife Filmmakers Fellowship. Where I had once sketched from the surface, I now chase stories beyond where the light refracts at 10 metres.

My art today is moved by my love of freediving Kelp Forest labyrinths and my experiences scuba diving tropical coral reefs. Diving broadened my references, forging my signature style in immersive ecological storytelling.

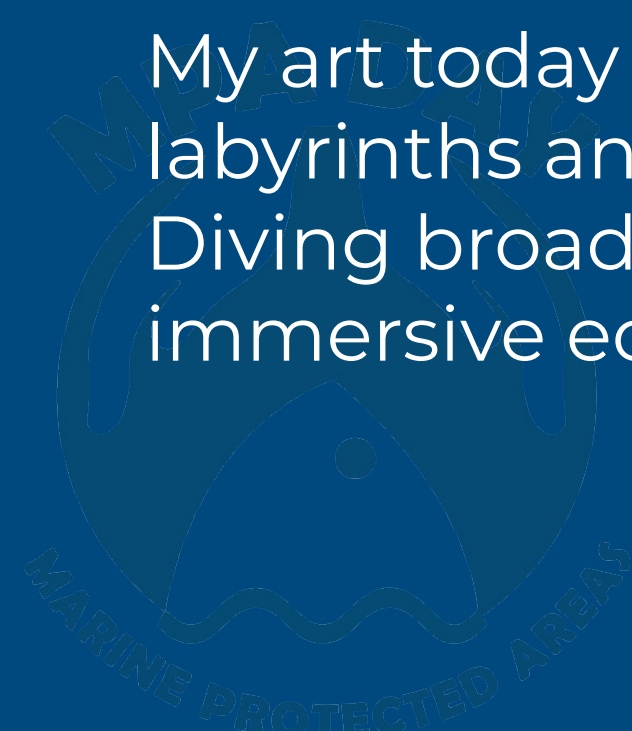


Watch at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fQQBJrHZZ8c>

TELL US ABOUT A PARTICULAR PIECE OF ART YOU CREATED THAT IS INSPIRED BY THE OCEAN

For MPA Day, I created '**Rin**'—a 2D animated whale shark inspired by a juvenile who swam into Camps Bay in January 2024. In my Procreate Dreams short film, Rin narrates her own journey: how MPAs protect sharks like her.

Through hand-painted textures and her unique perspective, I translate science into emotional storytelling. This animation aims to communicate science in a meaningful way to an engaged audience supported by **Justice 4 Jaw's** platform.



IN YOUR OPINION, WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO PROTECT MARINE SPACES?

It's hard to answer this sort of question without sounding alarmist, but it's hard not to sound alarmist when the answer is MPAs are not "nice-to-haves".

MPAs are Emergency Rooms (ERs) for collapsing ecosystems. Without them, human interference will keep driving extinctions. Biodiversity is the key to our survival. It mitigates climate change and is the only path to a future where humans thrive with nature, not against it.

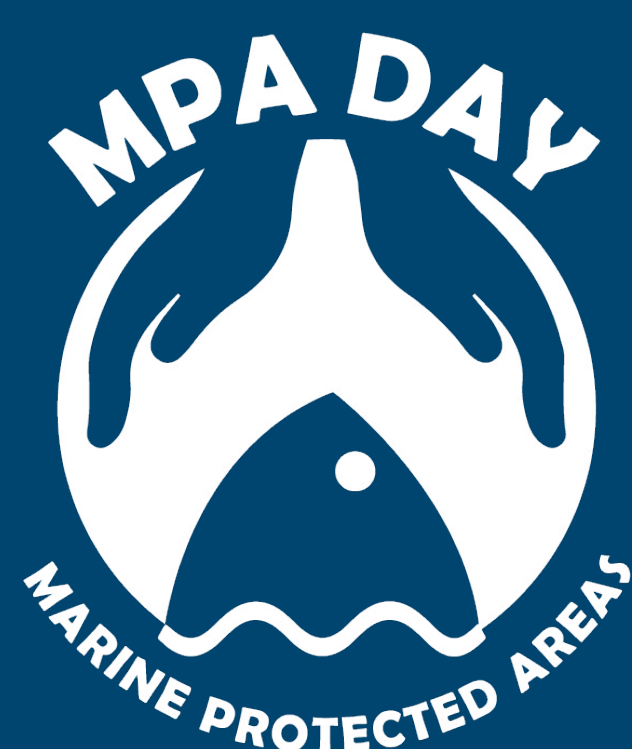
“

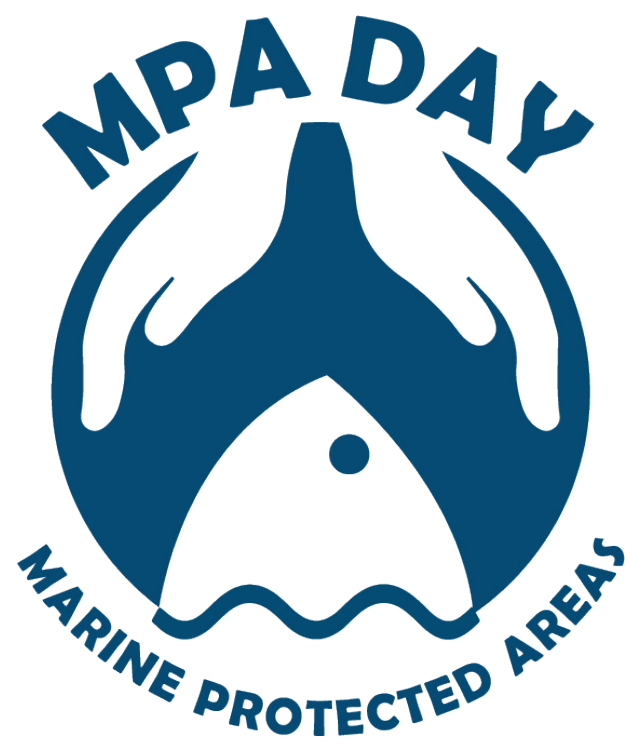
"Art is the bridge to translate science into human stories. Those connections are relatable to the general public. Art is a universal translator that has the power to move people into change."

— Day Moodley

WHAT CAN ART BRING TO THE CONVERSATION IN MARINE PROTECTION?

As someone with a special interest in environmental science, I devour papers and lectures. Not everyone does or has the time to, but art is the bridge to translate science into human stories. Those connections are relatable to the general public. Art is a universal translator that has the power to move people into change.





CHRIS FALLOWS

Chris Fallows is a Wildlife Fine Art photographer with a renowned collection of Limited Edition art works that artistically celebrates the greatest icons of our Planet.

Using his art work as a conjugate, both visually and through meaningful narrative, his purpose is from the coal face to tell an incredibly important and authentic story pertaining to our Planet at a relevant time in its history.

Chris's objective is to highlight the threats facing our planet, but also inspire individuals, corporates and the next generation to celebrate our planet's iconic wildlife and adopt new ways to sustainably co-exist and protect biodiversity.

Check out more of Chris' breathtaking photography:
<https://chrisfallows.com>

Instagram: [@chrisfallowsphotography](https://www.instagram.com/chrisfallowsphotography)

Images © Chris Fallows. Used with permission exclusively for MPA Day 2025. Not to be reproduced, archived, or redistributed.



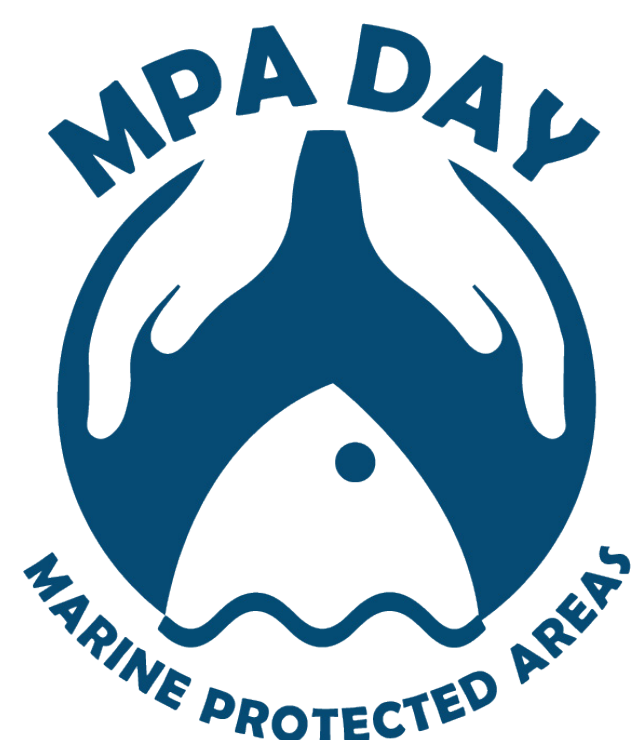
HOW DOES THE OCEAN INSPIRE YOUR ART?

The ocean's ever-changing mood inspires my work, particularly the extremes of these moods. I love to shoot in either very calm or very tempestuous conditions, especially the latter, that really allows you to bring powerful emotions into the look and feel of what I try to capture.

DO YOU HAVE A PERSONAL OR FIRST EXPERIENCE WITH THE OCEAN THAT SHAPED YOUR ART?

I was incredibly fortunate to have one of the planet's most iconic species, the great white shark, engaged in spectacular hunting behavior as my primary subject for over thirty years. During this time, my wife Monique and I saw so many incredible things, but to see an adult great white shark flying ten feet clear of the ocean surely must rank as one of the most awe-inspiring sights in all of nature. When you see such a spectacular burst of flight, and it is coupled with artistic elements like clouds, a ruffled sea state, and dramatic shafts of light, it was hard not to be inspired to do such a sight justice.

Likewise, to see and be surrounded by a super pod of a hundred and fifty to two hundred humpback whales is simply an astonishing engagement of all your senses that makes you do your best to do justice to the sentence of the moment.

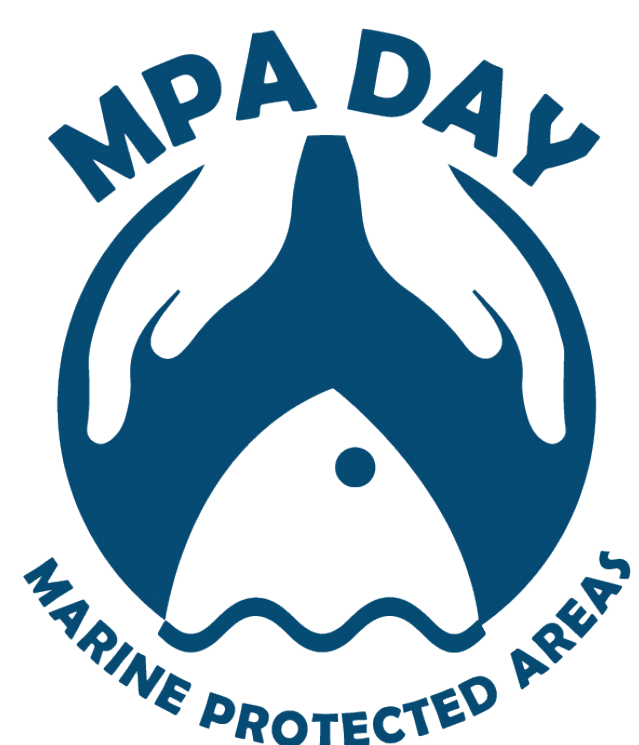


TELL US ABOUT A PARTICULAR PIECE OF YOUR ART THAT HAS BEEN INSPIRED BY THE OCEAN?

Whilst the power of a breaching great white is spectacular, I believe the true symbol of the sea is a whale's tail being hoisted above it. As such, I tried for years to capture an image that took my work's viewers on a journey into that moment of serenity when the huge ebony-colored fluke is lifted above the sea's surface and water careens off the great foil. **Leviathan** is one of my works that I like to believe comes close to achieving this objective, as it has both a strong sense of artistry and emotion that takes the viewer into the water at eye level with the symbol of the sea.

Another of my favorite works is **The Sword of Santiago**, which essentially is a moment captured in time when nature simply performed in front of me in an artistic way.

Finally, a very meaningful work for me is **The Final Act**. This was the last ever significant breaching great white shark photograph taken at Seal Island, False Bay, and signaled the end of an era that had seen these sharks become a world-famous phenomenon. It was particularly poignant, as together with a friend we had discovered this behavior twenty-two years before — and in less than a quarter of a century, it was over. Archaic shark nets and catastrophic shark longlining had taken their toll.

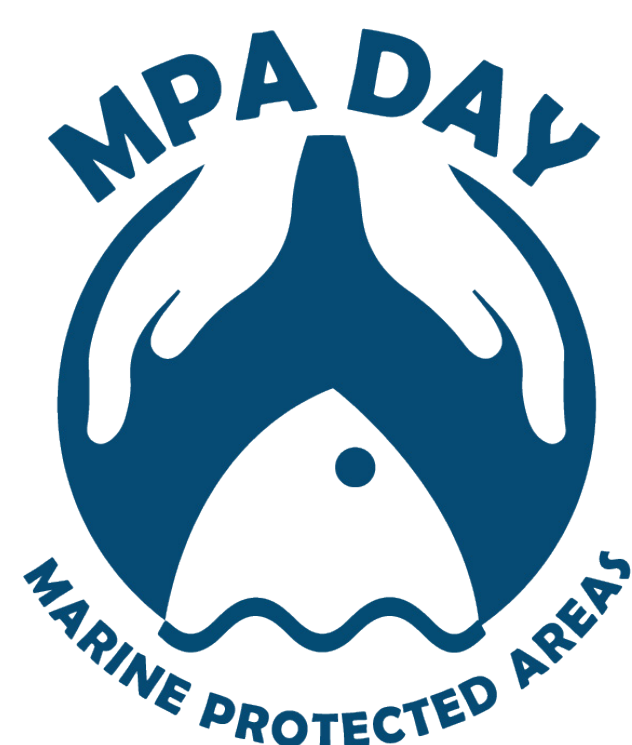


IN YOUR OPINION, WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO PROTECT MARINE SPACES?

There are so many reasons. I personally believe that every creature has as much reason to be on this planet as I do, but even if people do not have this emotional connection, the processes that take place in the ocean are fundamental to keeping all life on Earth going.

So even if you do not have the depth to appreciate and respect another creature's right to life, your very own well-being is ultimately dependent upon the complex processes that each creature is a part of.

As such, we need to protect habitat — and this we do by, amongst other things, creating Marine Protected Areas. By doing this, we keep intact ecosystems rather than single-species protection, and in so doing, secure the biological integrity and life-sustaining processes of an area.



WHAT CAN ART BRING TO THE CONVERSATION IN MARINE PROTECTION?

Art lets you imagine, it takes you into a moment and allows you to be inspired. They say a picture is worth a thousand words, and for me, there is no greater artist than nature herself. Every morning, as a fine art photographer, I see a new canvas welcome the day and another unique one bid it farewell.

During the period between the orange, an endless suite of possibility is afforded to me to capture the mood, behavior, and ever-changing tapestry of life that crosses my lens path. It is through capturing these moments that we can transport those less fortunate — who may never see the ocean or its spectacular inhabitants — to be there with them. In so doing, we open the door for our artwork's viewers to be inspired and ultimately become understanding ambassadors of the importance each creature plays and the need to conserve them.

“

"For me, there is no greater artist than nature herself. Every morning, as a fine art photographer, I see a new canvas welcome the day and another unique one bid it farewell."

— Chris Fallows





ISABELLA MARTIN

Isabella Martin is a visual artist who works with people and places to explore how humans fit into the world, and how they shape—and are shaped by—their surroundings.

The practice draws on both embodied and scientific knowledge to challenge established perceptions of time and space, offering new perspectives on biology, the environment, and the weather.

Recent and current projects focus on the body's internal clock, urban climate futures, and oceanic temporalities.

Isabella's work is context-specific, shaped by interdisciplinary collaboration, experimental play, and in-depth research.

Collaborations include geologists, physicists, biologists, sailors, and schoolchildren. These diverse perspectives inform a methodology that blends the playful and the serious, logic and speculation.

Works move across mediums—sculpture, drawing, performance, participation, film, and sound—seeking to reconcile different knowledge systems and explore the nature of entanglement with the surrounding world.

Isabella is a co-founder of the research and curatorial collective Camp Little Hope, and a member of the art and game design collective Kosmologym.

Isabella's academic background includes a BA (Hons) in Fine Art Sculpture from Brighton University and an MFA from The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, with a Minor in Art, Writing and Research.

Check out more of Isabella's visual art:

<https://isabellarosemartin.com>

Instagram: [@isabella.r.martin](https://www.instagram.com/isabella.r.martin)



Unless stated otherwise, all artwork and photos in this article: © Isabella Martin

HOW DOES THE OCEAN INSPIRE YOUR ART?

Generally I would say its slipperiness, oceans feel impossible to grasp, in both their magnitude and their workings. The notion of something in constant motion is incredibly influential on how I try and see my surroundings.

The extreme dissonance between our view of the surface and the complexity of its depths and the life they contain motivates me to make work that probes at and plays with these gaps in our perspectives and knowledge about the world.

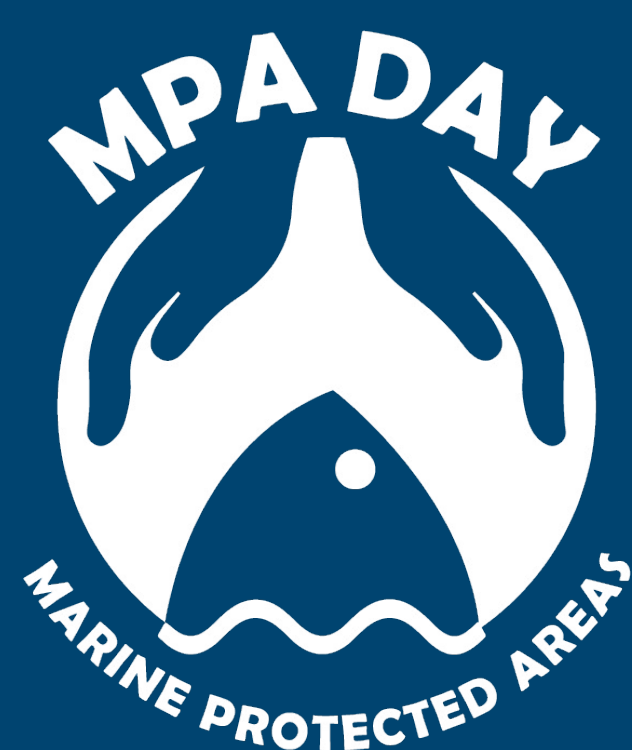
DO YOU HAVE A PERSONAL OR FIRST EXPERIENCE WITH THE OCEAN THAT SHAPED YOUR ART?

I grew up by the North Sea on the Norfolk coast, my first experience of the sea is of contrasts, vast expanses of sand and sky and huge tides flooding in. Exhilaration and intrigue, paddling in muddy shallows full of crabs under the surface and sailing over deep blue depths.

This experience of a landscape in flux is central to how I try and see the world, as mutable and fluid. I still swim, sail and surf in the sea regularly. Immersion in another substance, the ability to let your feet leave the ground and still be connected to and a part of the world. The chance to see things from a watery perspective, to leave land and look back, to look out and see nothing but sea. These are experiences that continually shape my ways of thinking and working and seeing.



Wells-next-the-Sea Signal Flags.



TELL US ABOUT ART YOU CREATED THAT IS INSPIRED BY THE OCEAN

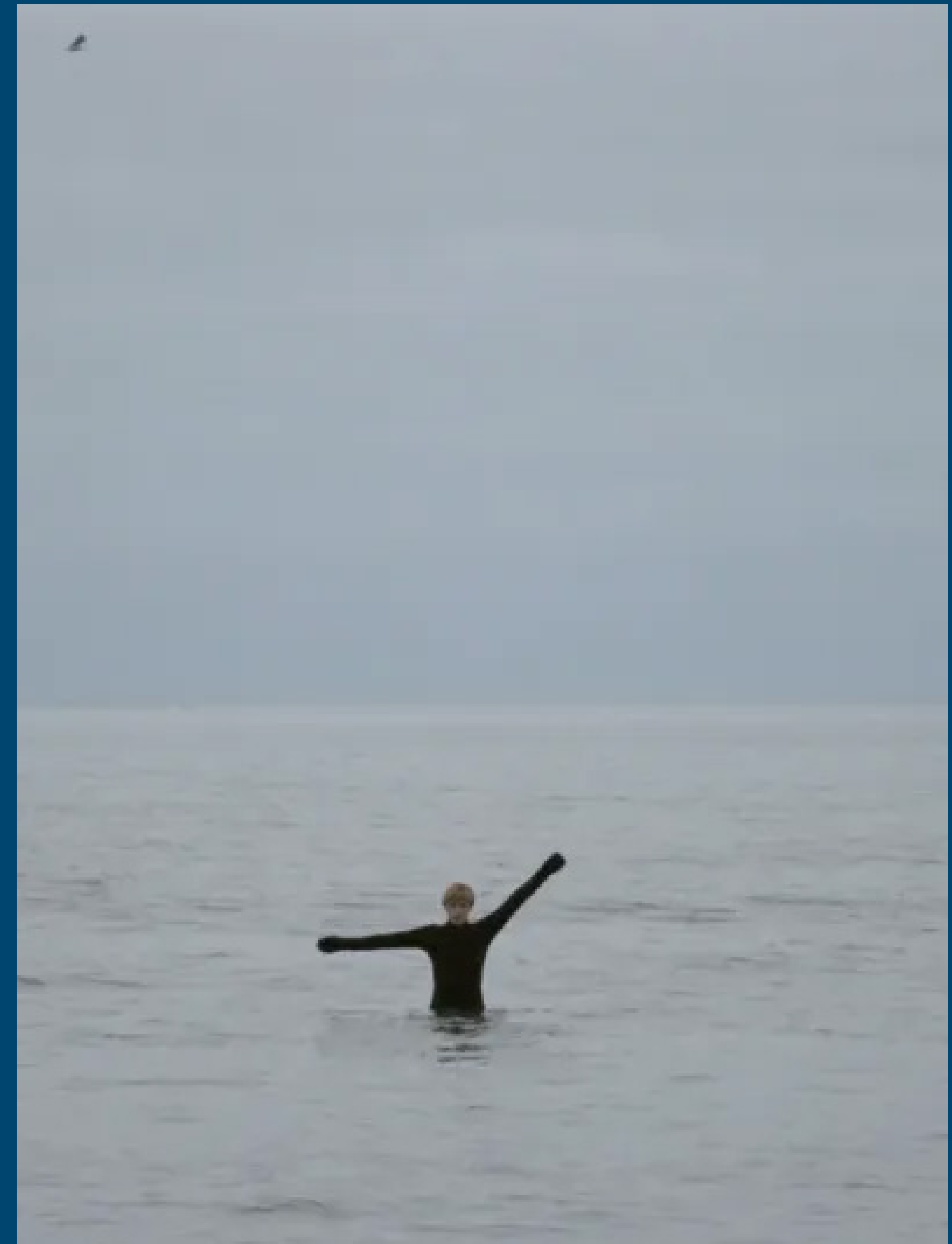
Different bodies of water have been the focus of various projects over the last few years, often explored in collaboration with scientists and coastal communities. It's hard to pick just one but perhaps I can give a little overview...

North Sea Semaphore is a series of filmed performances exploring the notion of the sea as a site of both communication and breakdown, a surface that connects and separates us.

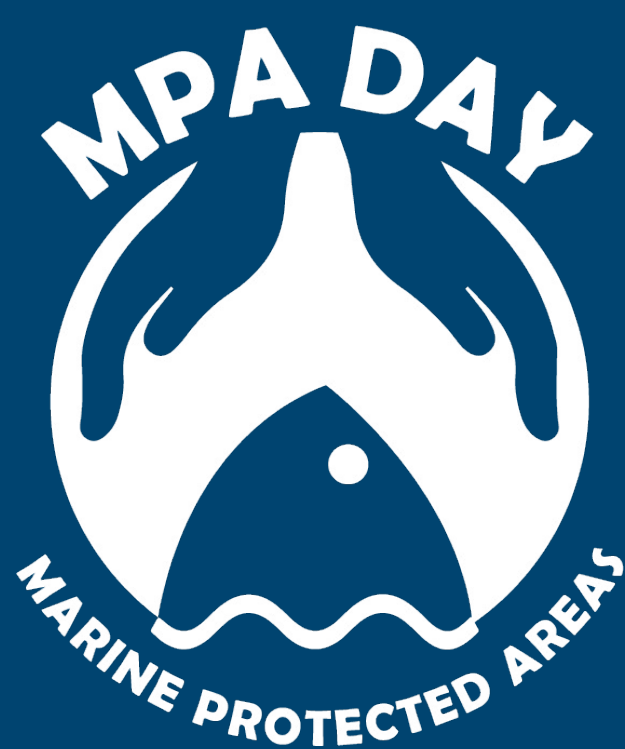
Wells-next-the-Sea Signal Flags also explores the North Sea but from a land-based perspective, collaborating with local schoolchildren to imagine a new language for naval communication based on the specificities of place.

Through film, radio-work, sculpture and installation the project Wave Machines followed the journey of an ocean wave. Switching between the ocean and the laboratory it focused on the attempt to grasp something in constant motion, and the approximate nature of our knowledge about the world.

More recently I made the film Algae Blooms exploring how phytoplankton algae are affected by the warming Arctic Ocean. I'm currently working on the project Baltic Bodies, which explores the state of the Baltic through combining embodied experience and marine data.



North Sea Semaphore. Photo by DK2.



IN YOUR OPINION, WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO PROTECT MARINE SPACES?

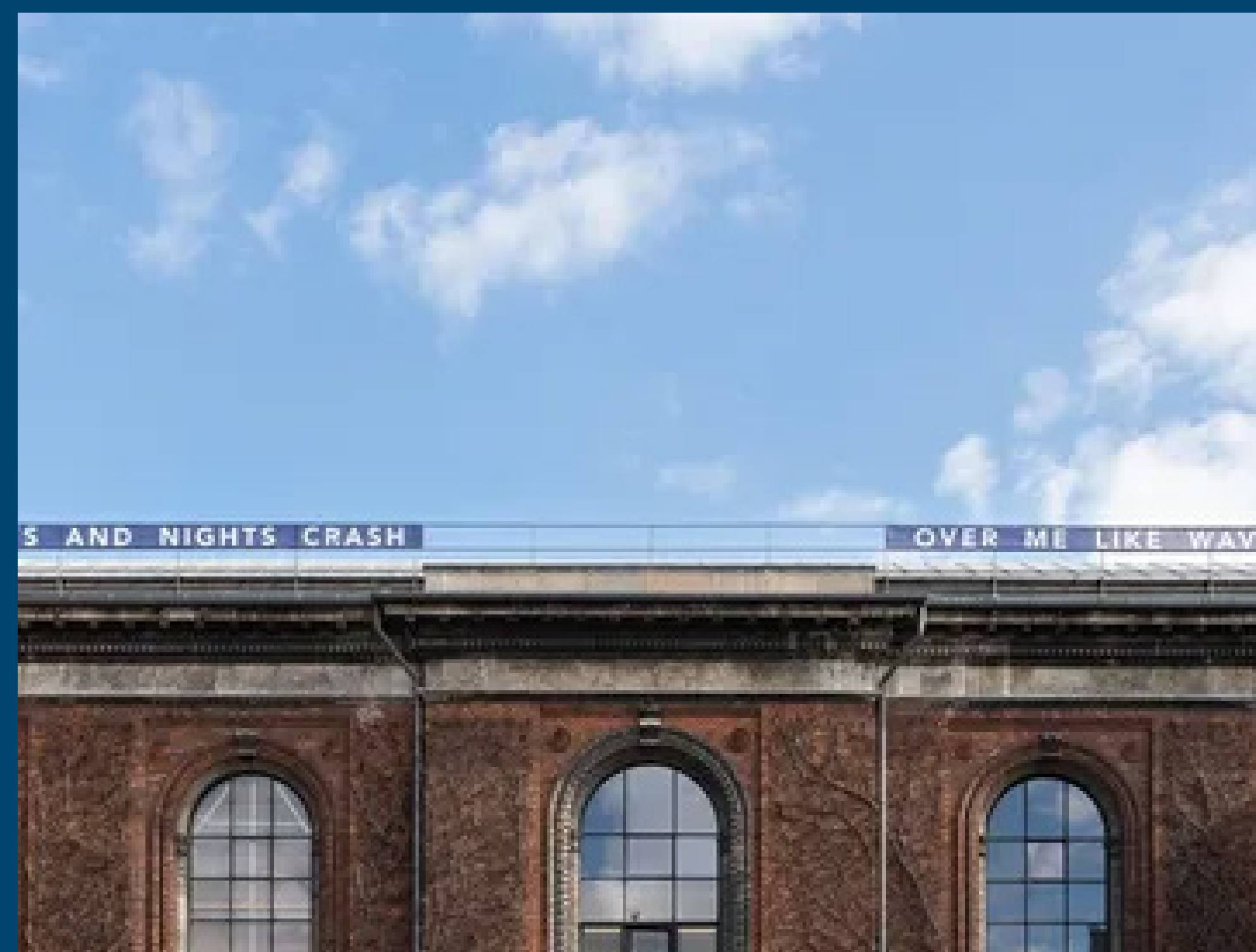
This makes me want to give an incredibly simple answer, which is because they're part of the world, as we are.

Perhaps the fact that we can only see the surface makes marine spaces seem abstract and perhaps the need for protection less critical. It makes me wonder what it will take for us to understand on a deeper level how essential these spaces are to a functioning healthy planet.

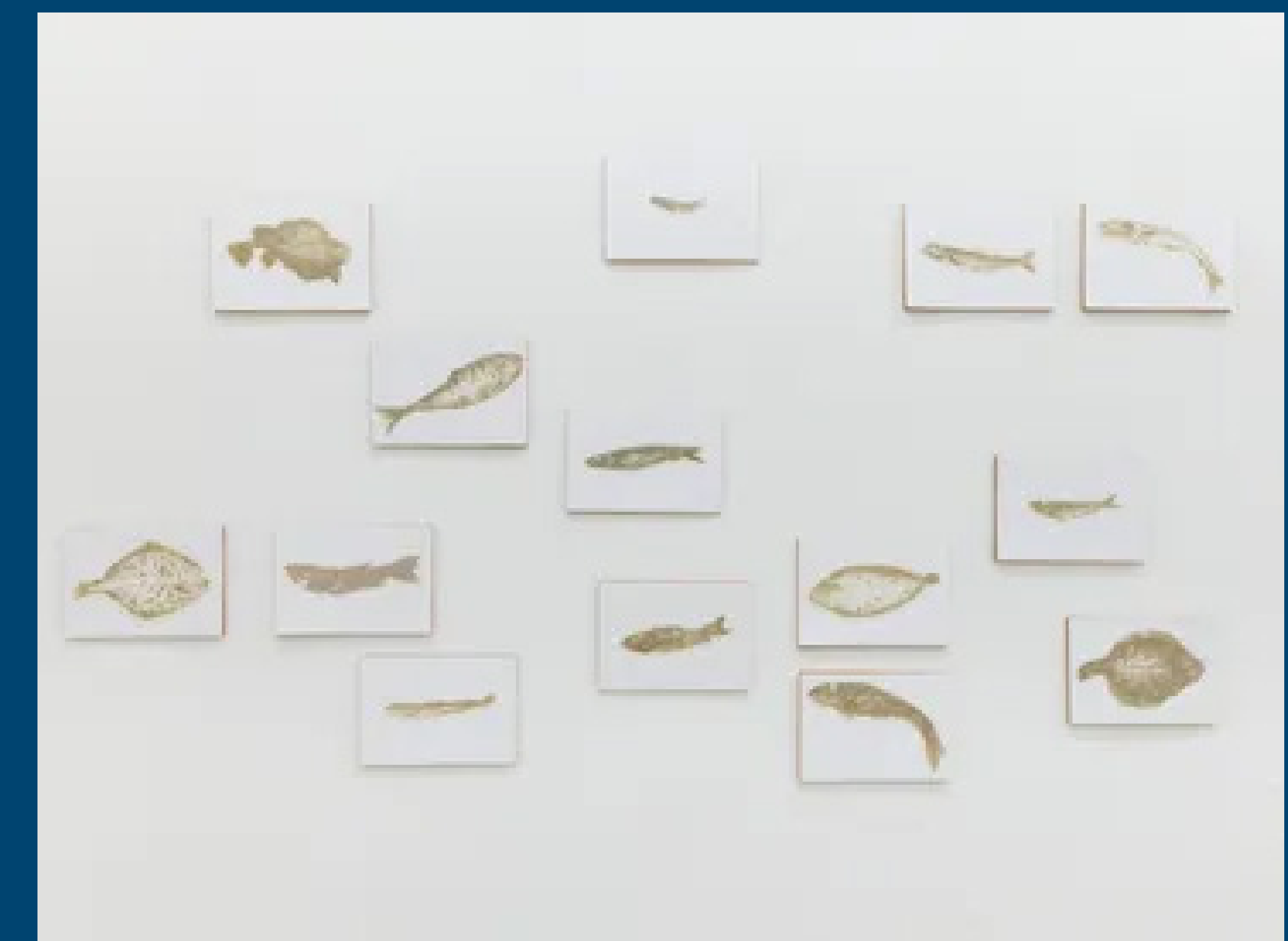
Our complete interconnectedness with the marine environment and reliance on its processes means looking after and caring for them is essential.



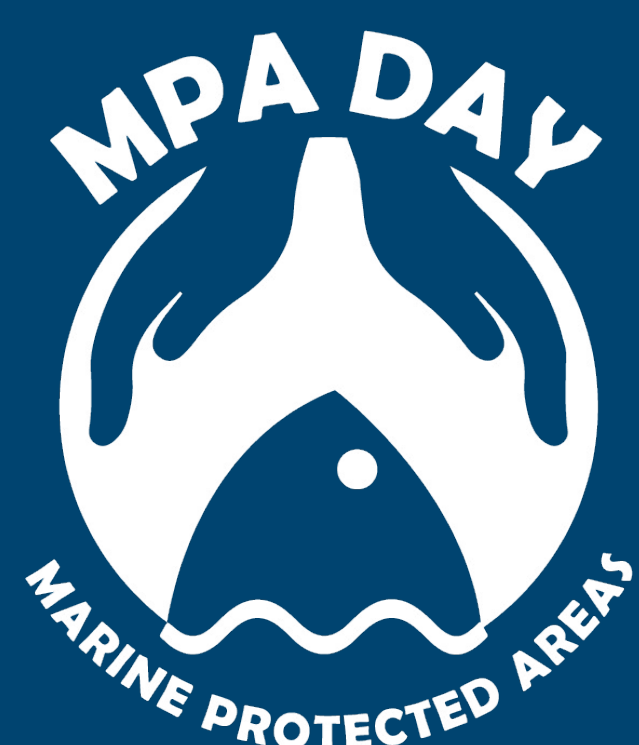
Algae Blooms.



Keeping Time. Photo by David Stjernholm.



Signs of Life. Photo by Anne Linke.



WHAT CAN ART BRING TO THE CONVERSATION IN MARINE PROTECTION?

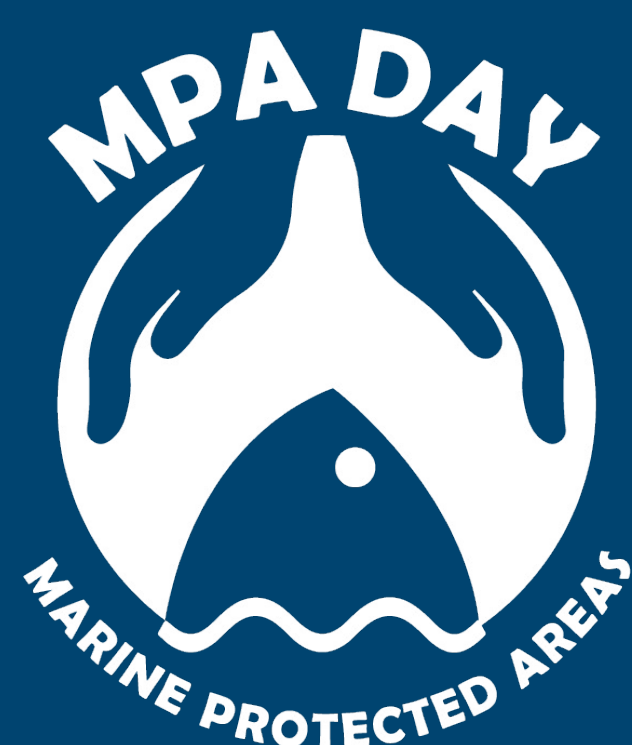
When art becomes a part of the conversation around protection of marine spaces it can bring embodied, personal, emotional and also abstract perspectives and experiences of marine spaces and the multitude of life they contain and support.

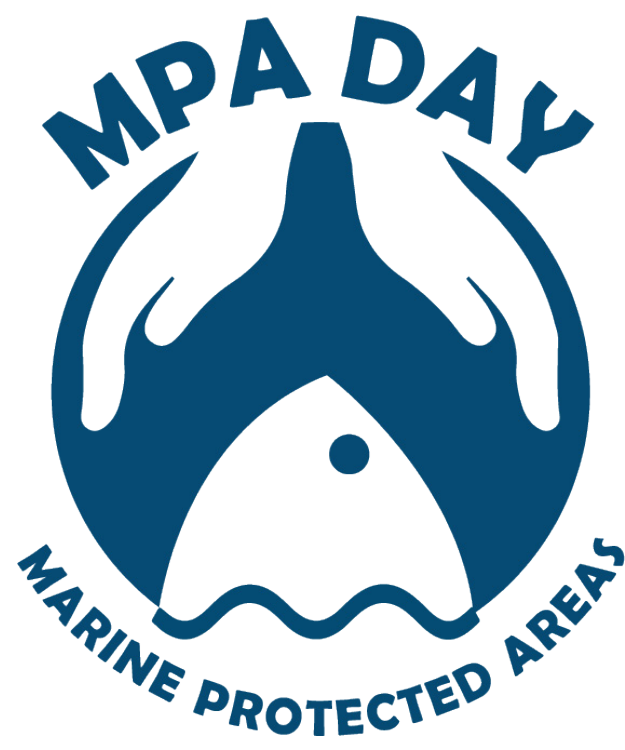
Art can introduce nuance to the conversation and make space for fear, hope, delight and uncertainty, complex emotions regarding the sea and its future which are difficult to share and talk about. It gives us a way of seeing and understanding marine spaces in all their complexity, and expands our capacity to connect to their realities.



"Art gives us a way of seeing and understanding marine spaces in all their complexity, and expands our capacity to connect to their realities."

— Isabella Martin





ULI & THOMAS WESTPHAL

Uli Westphal is a Berlin-based visual artist whose work examines how humans perceive and transform the natural world, especially through food systems. Blending photography, installation, and participatory projects, his practice combines scientific observation with poetic inquiry.

Grounded in long-term research, projects like The Cultivar Series and Transplantation explore the tension between biodiversity and industrial standardization, inviting reflection on our evolving relationship with nature.

Westphal studied in Berlin and the Netherlands, earning a Master's degree in Art in Context from the Universität der Künste Berlin and a BFA from the Academy for Fine Arts and Design in Enschede. His work has been shown internationally, including at the Victoria & Albert Museum, Museum Brot und Kunst, and the Stedelijk Museum Bureau Amsterdam.

Thomas Westphal is a German visual artist based in Helsinki whose work explores the dynamics of perception, memory, and spatial experience through installation, photography, and video. His practice often reflects on the interplay between architecture, urban space, and human presence, drawing attention to subtle shifts in atmosphere and form.

Westphal studied at the Academy for Art & Design in Enschede, the Netherlands, and holds an MFA from the Finnish Academy of Fine Arts. His work has been exhibited internationally and is included in the collections of Kiasma – Museum of Contemporary Art, EMMA – Espoo Museum of Modern Art, and the Finnish National Gallery.

Check out more of Uli and Thomas' creative work:

<https://www.uliwestphal.de/>

<https://www.thomaswestphal.net>



From left to right: Thomas & Uli Westphal

Unless stated otherwise, all artwork and photos: © Uli & Thomas Westphal

HOW DOES THE OCEAN INSPIRE YOUR ART?

Thomas: Creating a work of art is a fluid process, demanding flexibility and fueled by randomness. All this is a given property of water — a constant change, an unstoppable motion, unique in its persistence and never repeating.

I remember, in my childhood summers, sitting for hours on a Dutch beach, watching the waves come rolling in, trying to predict the next big one. In my artistic work, I have experienced big waves rolling in and others just flattening out, absorbed by unknown factors. It never stopped my expectation, though — I am bound to the rhythm.

Uli: As kids, our mother and grandmother used to read us stories of Homer's Odyssey, Thor Heyerdahl's Kon-Tiki, and Jacques Cousteau's Calypso. The ocean has always been a place of mystery, awe and wonder — something that triggers the imagination. Seafarer tales have always fascinated me.

I have collected hundreds of depictions of sea monsters found on maritime maps. I like them because they put humans in their place. Early on in my practice, I did quite a few works based on sea monsters. For example, I built a surfboard in the shape of a giant sepia, based on the possible existence of a giant inkfish inhabiting the deep sea.

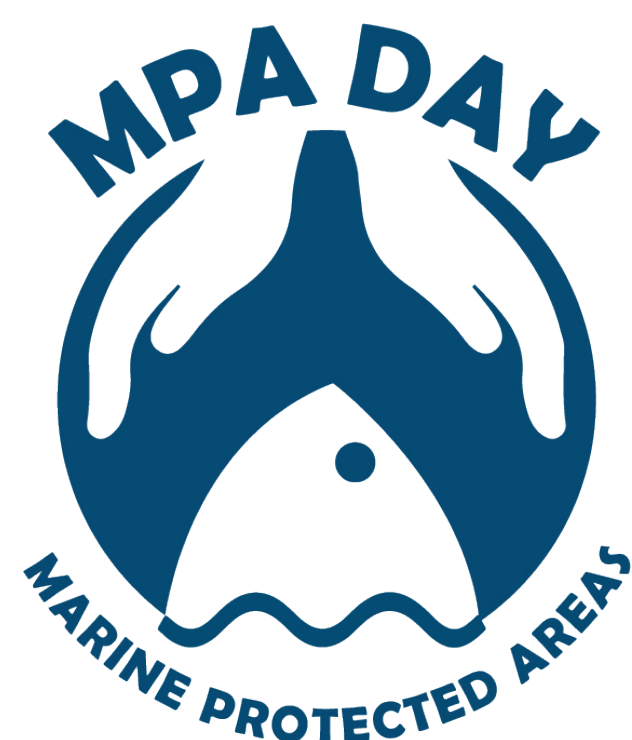
DO YOU HAVE A PERSONAL OR FIRST EXPERIENCE WITH THE OCEAN THAT SHAPED YOUR ART?

Uli: In 2004, I was given the rare chance to snorkel at the Galápagos Archipelago. I stayed in the water until the onset of hypothermia, hypnotized by the abundance of creatures still living there. It was a brief glimpse into a lost world. The experience of a pristine ecosystem — its biodiversity and evolution — was transformative for my practice. Since then, I've had this recurring dream: looking from above, usually a cliff, onto a water surface teeming with life.

I went on to document mainly plants and crop cultivars, but the ocean has always been in the back of my mind. During the Corona pandemic, I bought an old microscope and started sampling water from puddles around my studio in Berlin. There it was again — this view from above onto an ecosystem teeming with life in myriads of shapes and forms. It had been around me all along; I just wasn't able to see it before. A lot of my practice is about making things visible, and this put me on a new path.

Thomas: One day, I was sitting at the shore with my smartphone, playing with an augmented language app, and directed the phone's camera to the sea. The evening sun was shining, and the wind was rippling the surface of the water. There was an unusual contrast that day between the tops and valleys of the waves. Suddenly, the program was trying to read meaning into the random noise of the waves, and words popped up on the display. The oracle-like messages in the water mesmerized me for hours.

As I understood, the program ran the image through a filter to remove shadows. Text is sharp, so it removes whatever is not sharp and makes the image black and white to help figure out where letters are. The unpredictable game was on, and it kept on talking to me. I tried to recreate the event in several installations, but it never occurred again. To this day, I collect wave footage of water surfaces, trying to find this moment of magical connection.



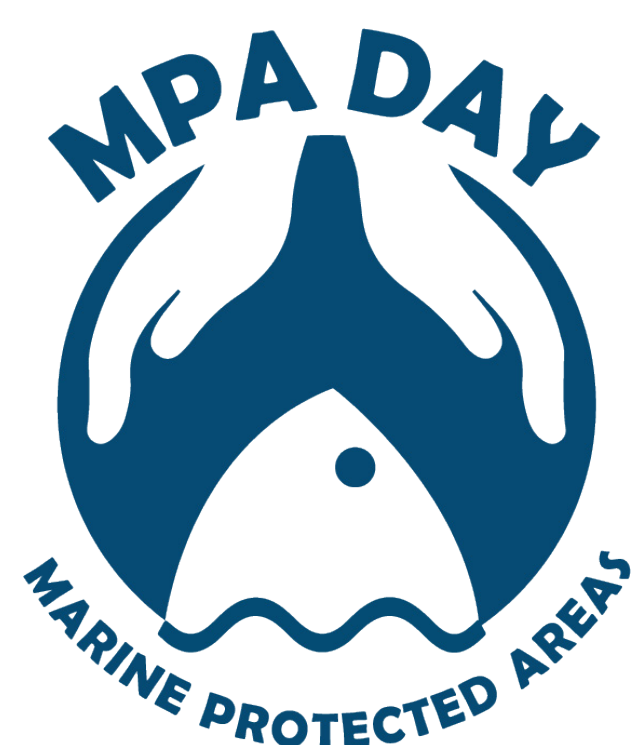
TELL US ABOUT A PIECE OF ART YOU CREATED INSPIRED BY THE OCEAN?

Thomas: During my study at the AKI, Academy of Fine Arts, I installed a public artwork in the town of Meppel in the western Netherlands. The artificial canals running through the town, called 'Grachten', were no longer shipable, and the city wanted artworks that referred to their former origin and to water as a moving element.

My chosen location had no name on the map, so I decided to install a 16-metre-long lettering reading 'Panta rhei' — ancient Greek for 'everything flows'. The size is related to the street name size on a city map and carries the idea that we exist in a field or continuum in which everything is constantly in flux or process.

Uli: I was always fascinated by scale drawings of small divers next to whales found in natural history books. So I extrapolated the size of the whale from one of these drawings — a blue whale — and created a life-sized model of its body volume.

The sculpture was made from plastic foil that I pulled out of a dumpster from a company that manufactured inlays for liquid storage tanks. I welded its individual segments together in a tiny room, and it was not until I inflated the volume with air in a large gym hall that I could grasp the full scale of it. The work gave me an understanding for the magnificence of these animals.



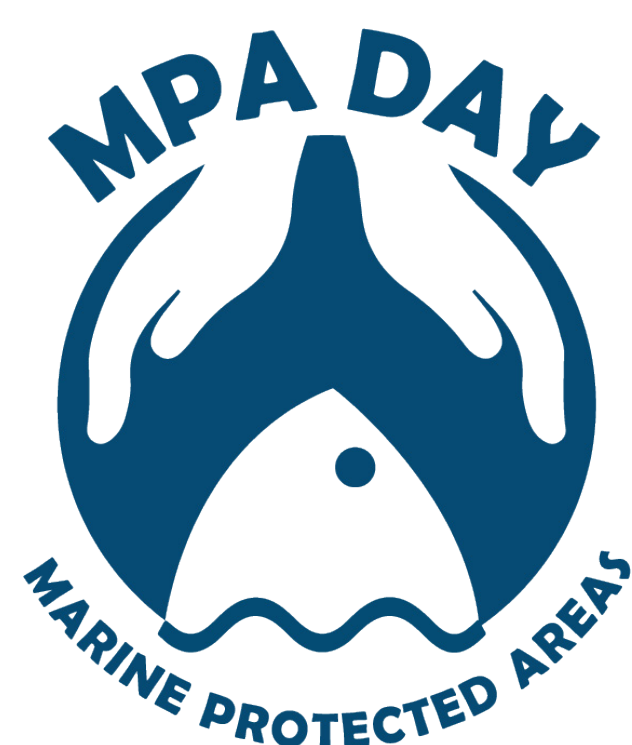
IN YOUR OPINION, WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO PROTECT MARINE SPACES?

Thomas: I am living in Vuosaari, Finland, next to a natural sand beach. I wake up and go to bed with a view of the sea and the horizon. I celebrate it during a swim on warm summer nights and in winter by dipping into an ice hole. The sea erodes, it carries along, it forces us to reflect on ourselves. The sea consumes, and it also nourishes. When its water is polluted, it terrifies us and reminds us of our own mortality.

Over the last 15 years living at the seashore, I have been a witness to the constant deterioration of water quality in the Baltic. It's not only the general pollution and occasional wastewater spills, but the constant rise of blue algae. And f*** those rentable jet-skis.

The peace I feel when staring at the horizon is coupled with the insight that there should be emptiness out there — a common commitment not to occupy every last corner within our periphery, but just the length of a healthy swim. Maybe that is a good approach: the golden rule. You can't own anything between a healthy swimming distance and what lies behind the horizon.

Uli: Despite almost half of humanity living near it, for many the sea is an unknown, inaccessible world. We can't breathe underwater, so we are seldom witness to what is happening here. That makes marine spaces especially vulnerable to environmental degradation. Yet the sea is essential for the well being of our planet. Projects like **Imagining Godzilla**, can help bring attention to sea.



WHAT CAN ART BRING TO THE CONVERSATION IN MARINE PROTECTION?

Thomas: In our last exhibition in Helsinki at the Muu Media Art Festival, we showed our collaborative work “City of Gods and Mad Men”, which combined the human, binary and microbiological realms. The city was a street map of Helsinki printed on microfilm and coated with samples of harbour water under a microscope. The activity of seawater microorganisms in the sample was observed and analyzed by an algorithm that activated a set of robotic machinery around a central pool, creating currents and adding oxygen to the water. Both worlds were unaware of their entanglement. The viewer was able to navigate the city by turning knobs on the microscope stage. By adding a street map to the microcosm, this alien world suddenly became relatable and familiar in human terms.

Uli: In September, we will present a new work at the “Offside Signal” exhibition in Vaasa. It consists of two tidal pools in acrylic incubation chambers, each with rubber glove openings that visitors can use to submerge their hands into the water. The aquariums are connected with a thin silicon hose that passes through a special microscope slide called a flow chamber. The microscopic view will be relayed as a giant projection onto the walls of the exhibition space.

Using the principle of communicating vessels, the viewer can control the flow of particles and creatures in the microscope slide by altering the water levels by submerging their hands. Minute and gentle control of hand movements will be necessary to create an equilibrium between the vessels and to keep the microscopic view still enough to observe. The work creates a portal between both worlds, enabling viewers to understand themselves as active agents in this environment. We believe that bridging the divide between human and “nature”, land and water, macro- and microcosm, is essential for marine conservation, because it creates awareness of these hidden worlds.



“

"We believe that bridging the divide between human and "nature", land and water, macro- and microcosm, is essential for marine conservation, because it creates awareness of these hidden worlds."

— Thomas & Uli Westphal





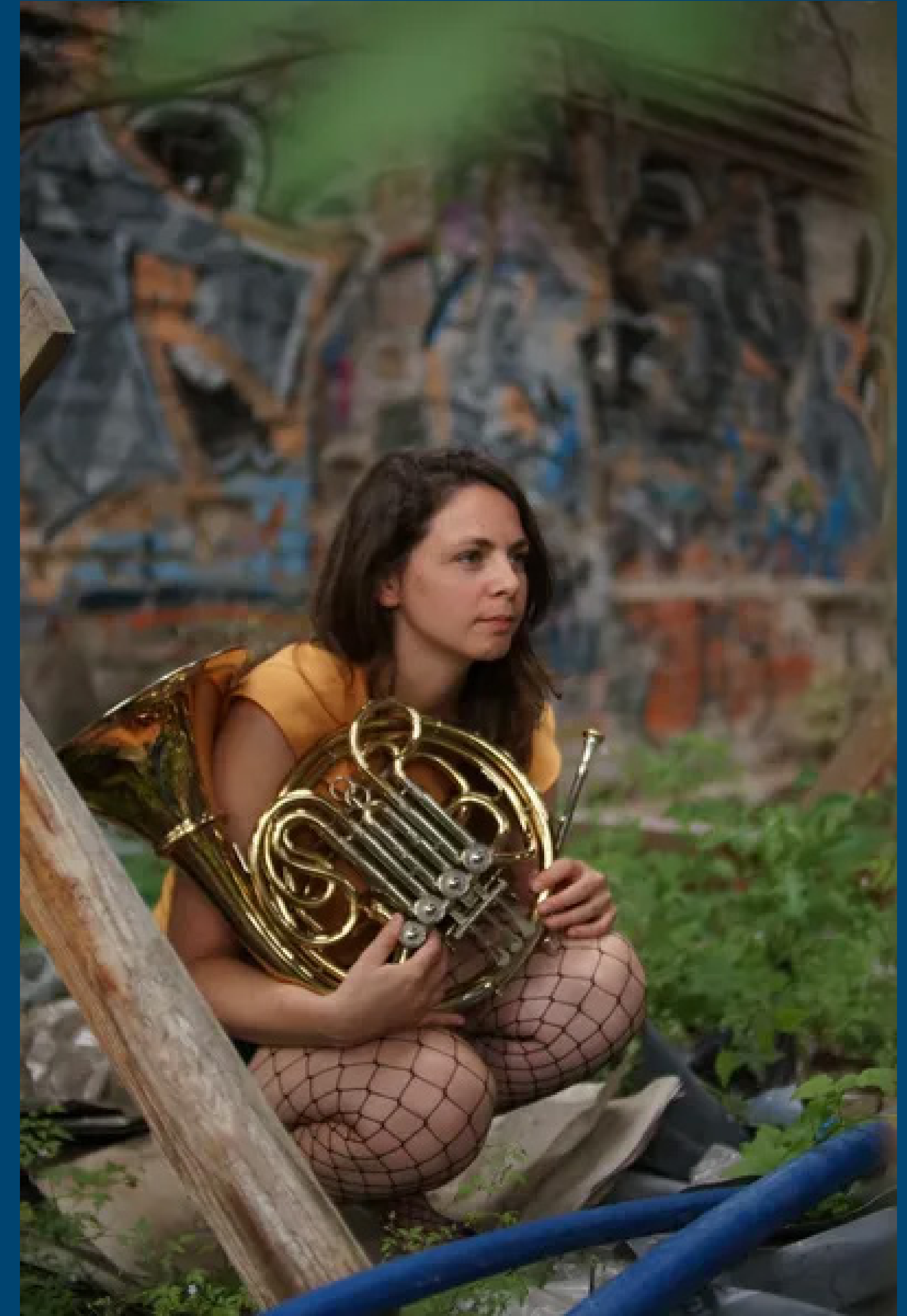
ABIGAIL SANDERS

Abigail Sanders is a musician from the UK, based in Berlin and studying for an MA at the Interdisciplinary Music Research Programme of Nuremberg University of Music, with a focus on Human-Animal Studies.

In her artistic research project “Sounding Whales”, Abigail learns to play humpback whale songs on the French horn by listening to hydrophone recordings, transcribing what she hears and performing them as accurately as she can.

Check out Abigail's Sounding Whales:
[**https://soundingwhales.bandcamp.com/**](https://soundingwhales.bandcamp.com/)

Unless stated otherwise, all artwork and photos: © Abigail Sanders



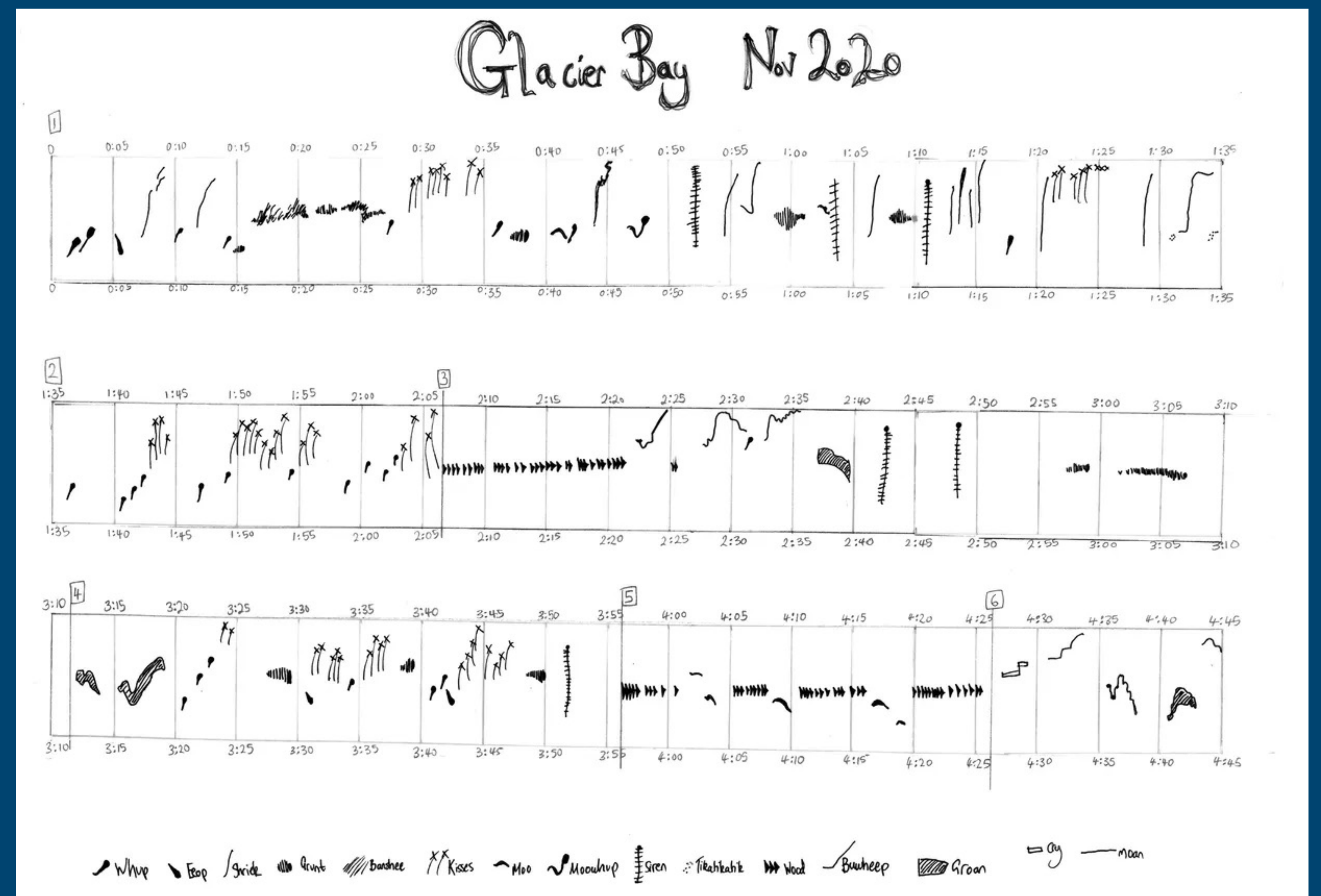
HOW DOES THE OCEAN INSPIRE YOUR ART?

I am fascinated with the importance of sound underneath the surface of the water – how it travels faster and further than on land, and how it is essential for ocean beings to navigate and communicate. It's like there is this other world where hearing or sending sound is more important than anything else and for me as a musician this is fascinating to imagine and feel into.

DO YOU HAVE A PERSONAL OR FIRST EXPERIENCE WITH THE OCEAN THAT SHAPED YOUR ART?

I grew up by in Hastings on the south coast of England where the ocean was continually a backdrop to everything – its inhabitants and marine culture have always greatly influenced me.

I also developed a huge passion for music from an early age, so I started to combine music and ocean research later on in my life. For me, the sea is almost mythological and has an overwhelming power and emotionality.



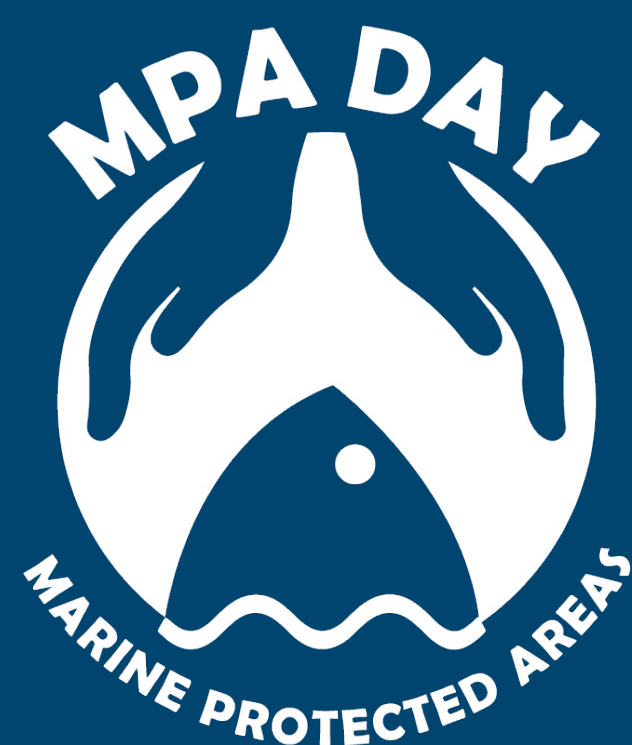
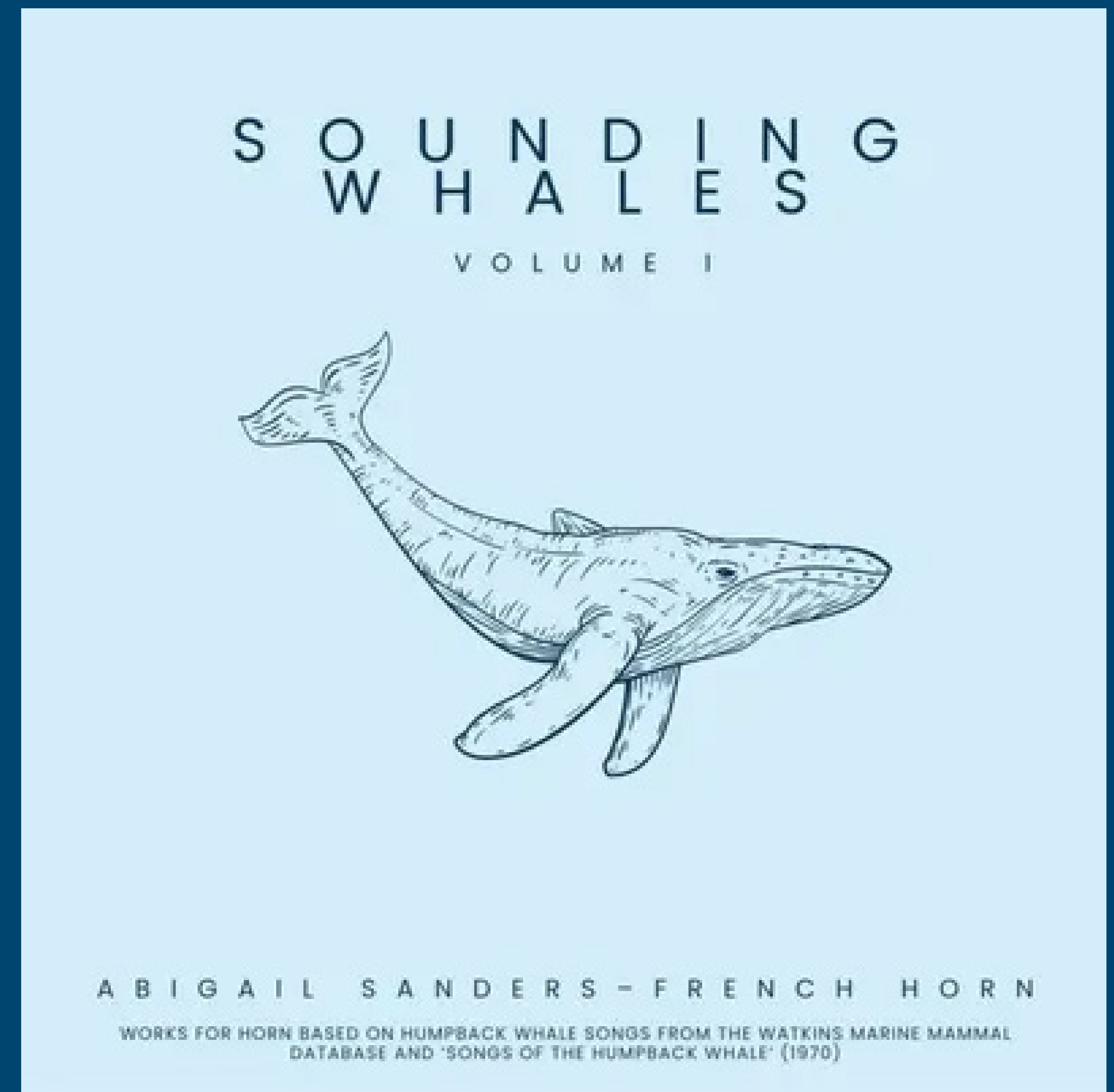
TELL US ABOUT ART YOU CREATED THAT IS INSPIRED BY THE OCEAN

The first whale song that I learned to play on the French horn is called 'Solo Humpback Whale', which is based on the first track of the L.P. Songs of the Humpback Whale released in 1970 and produced by bioacoustician Roger Payne.

Here, in a time where whales were nearly extinct from being commercially hunted, we hear one of the last humpback whales on earth crying out a haunting and ethereal melody. Ultimately this piece of music saved the species by showing people that whales were intelligent because they make beautiful, complex songs.

When I heard it I realised that I could imitate these sounds on the horn with special techniques from free improvisation. I spent a long time learning to play the piece and made many visual scores to help me. It took me about a year to be able to play the song so that it sounds like the original recording.

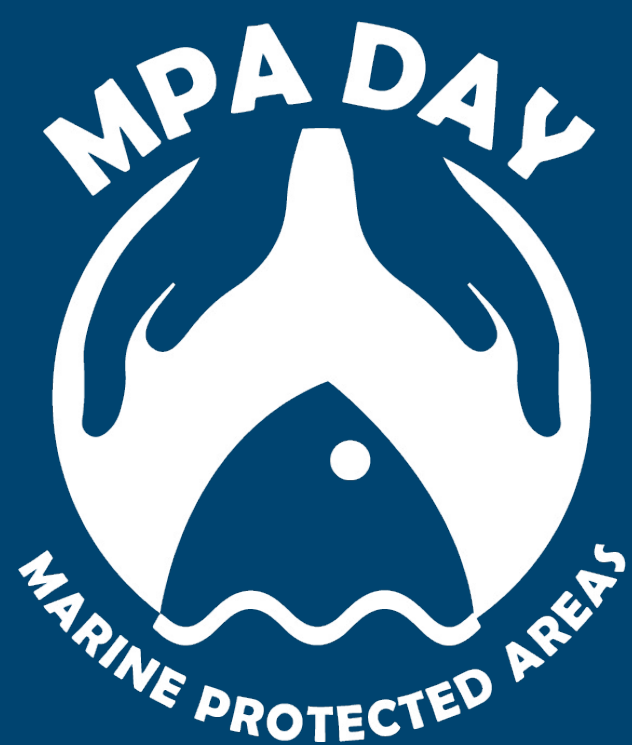
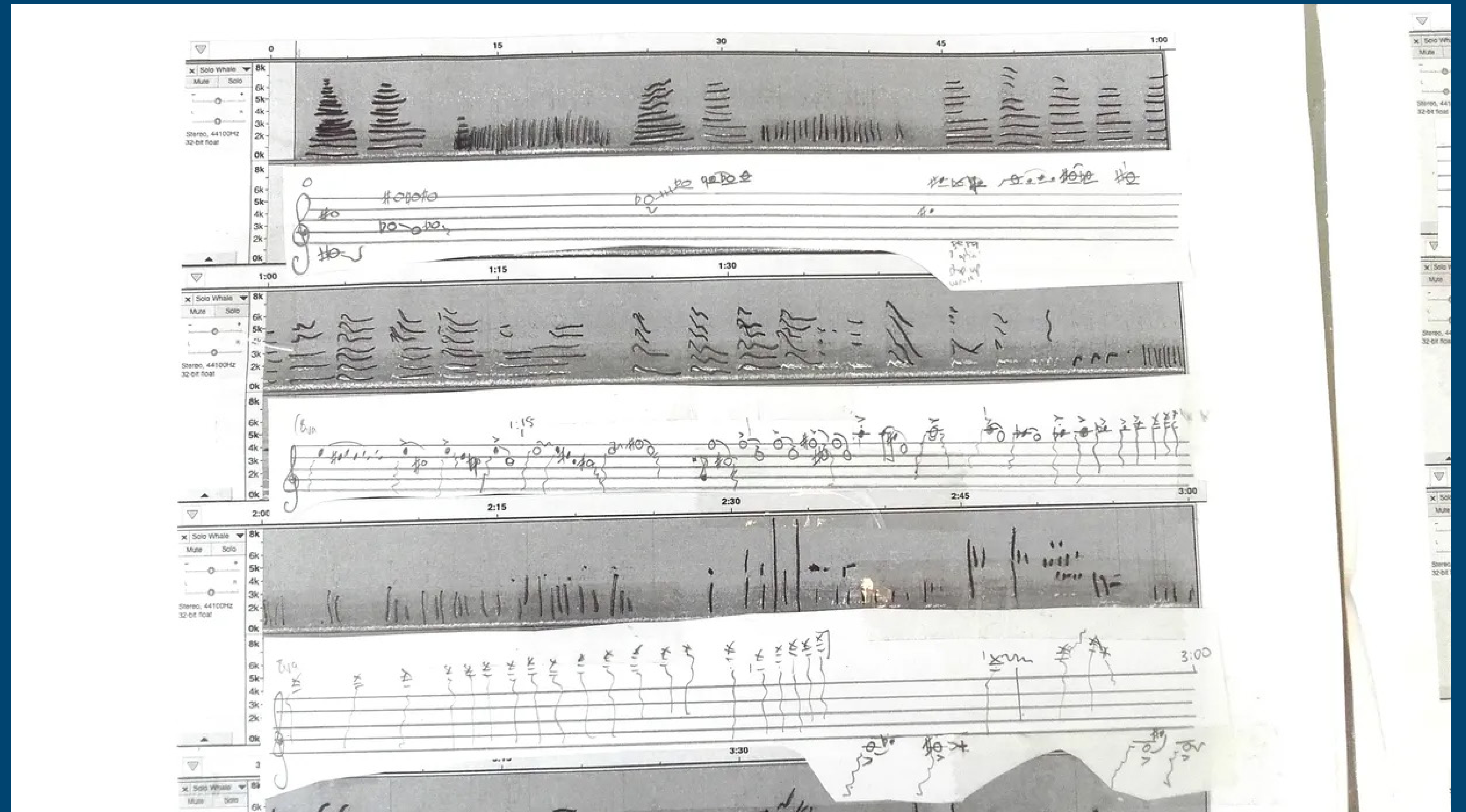
You can hear it here: <https://soundingwhales.bandcamp.com/>



IN YOUR OPINION, WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO PROTECT MARINE SPACES?

I always think of this quote by mycologist Paul Stamets:
"The war against nature is a war against our own
biology".

We are made of water and the earth is 80% ocean, it is part of us. It regulates the climate, provides us with an incredible biodiversity of wildlife to enjoy and gives us spaces to relax and to have adventures as well. Everything is connected.



WHAT CAN ART BRING TO THE CONVERSATION IN MARINE PROTECTION?

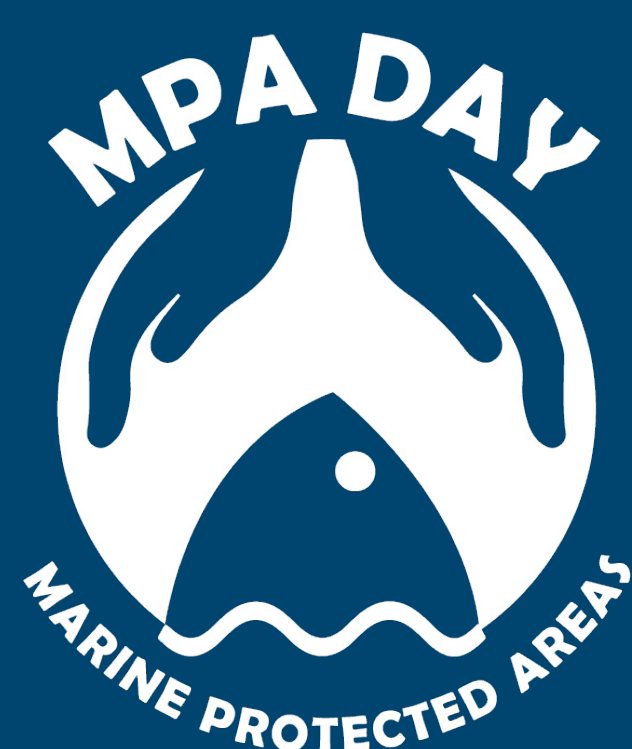
A lot of what the ocean is and does for us is not seen, it is far away from our everyday lives and difficult to access and study. Art provides us with not only innovative and novel ways to connect to and experience oceanic themes, but also helps us to imagine different worlds and scenarios – what is it like to live underwater, to be a whale, what if we restored the ocean to full health?

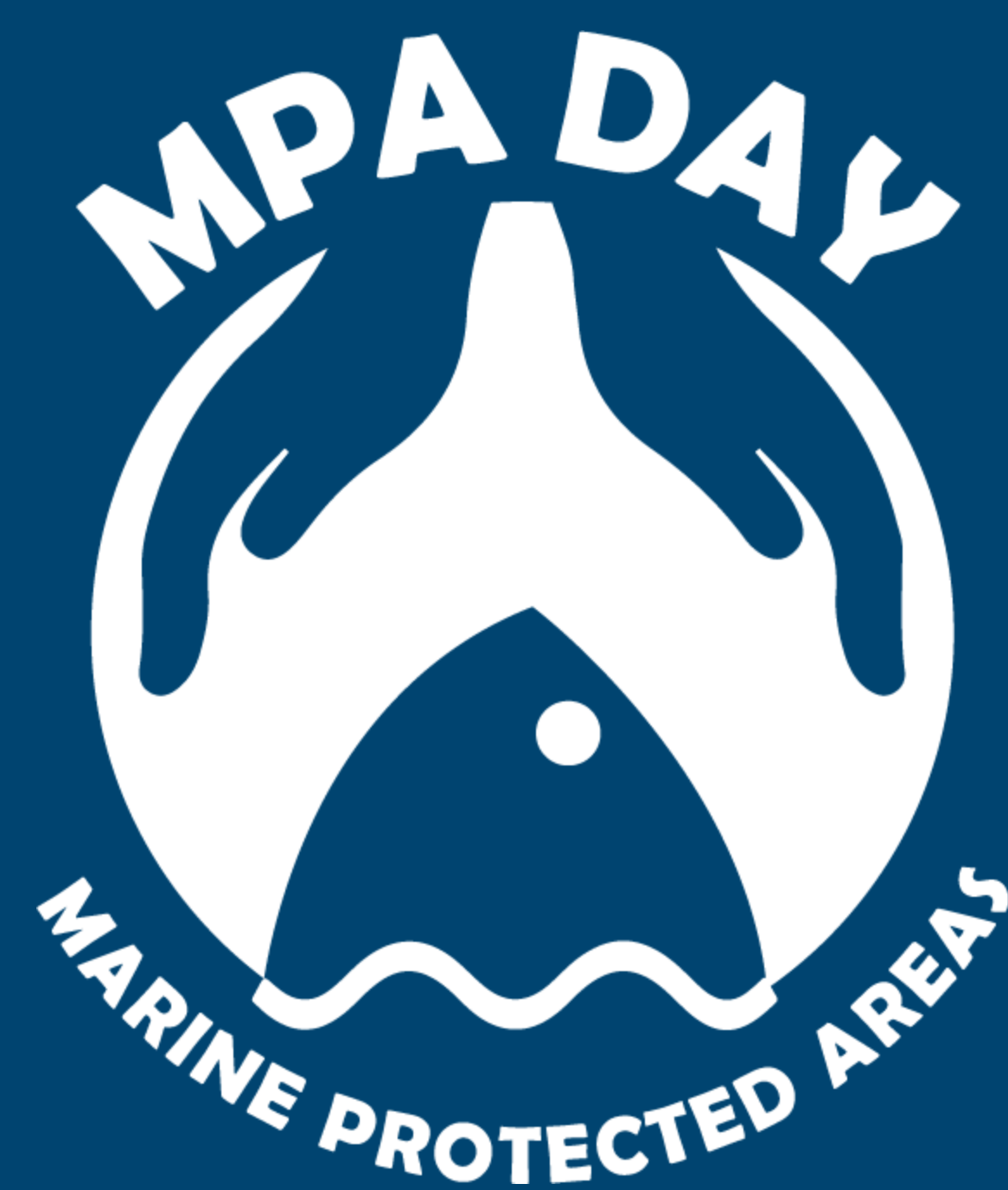
Through paying attention to art, we can imagine different perspectives and futures without even having to visit the ocean or make any impact on it at all.



"We are made of water and the earth is 80% ocean, it is part of us. It regulates the climate, provides us with an incredible biodiversity of wildlife to enjoy and gives us spaces to relax and to have adventures as well. Everything is connected."

— Abigail Sanders





#MPACreativeWaves