

# MERMAY 2023

This year I decided to take part in MerMay more seriously than I had done in the past.

My challenge to myself was to create as many illustrations as I could but also to try my hand at different styles and interpretations.

Whilst the event itself comes with a list of prompts, I found it hard to adhere to the list as my ideas were bigger than what I could complete in a single day.

Instead, I took the prompts that inspired me most and otherwise let myself draw mermaids and make them into illustrations after the fact.

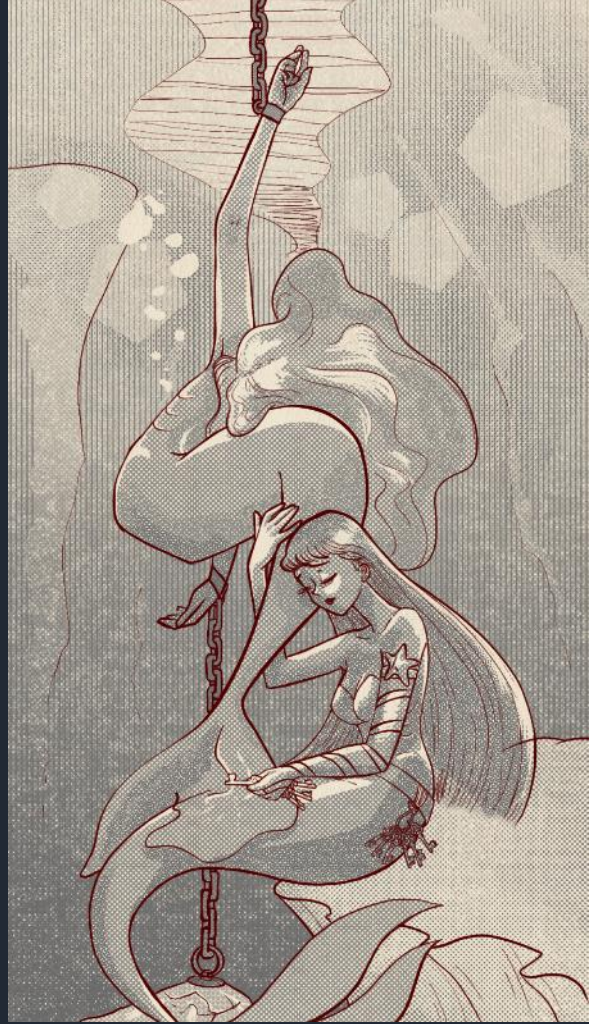


This image was initially a layout sketch for a research project looking into communicating UK energy research through fairy tales. The brief was that renewable energy through wind turbines alone are a kind of siren, luring and enticing, but ultimately more needs to be done and they need to be seen as part of a whole rather than a blissful distraction from what else is happening in the energy sector.



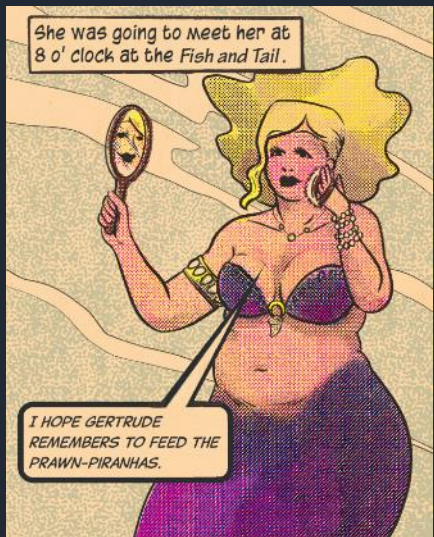


The pose references are from John William Waterhouse's *The Mermaid* and *The Siren*. This particular image was rejected but I liked the set-up and developed the illustration during MerMay.



May 4<sup>th</sup>'s prompt is always *Star Wars* and I wanted to do something a little bit different. Most people seem to take a character and make that character a mermaid, but I liked the idea of a blind mermaid-shaped monster roaming the galaxies and consuming asteroid belts.









Coral bleaching happens when the water temperature rises, and the coral let go of the algae that gives them their distinct colours. This is not fatal for the coral but does put stress on them and the surrounding ecosystem.



The inspiration comes from Art Nouveau posters by Alphonse Mucha but also Henry Toulouse-Lautrec.

I also consider it one of my strengths to let my images change, the more I learn about a reference or resource.



I made a fully coloured version of this design first but then I learned that in recent years a phenomenon called 'coral bleaching' was taking place at increased rates and wanted to include it in my image.





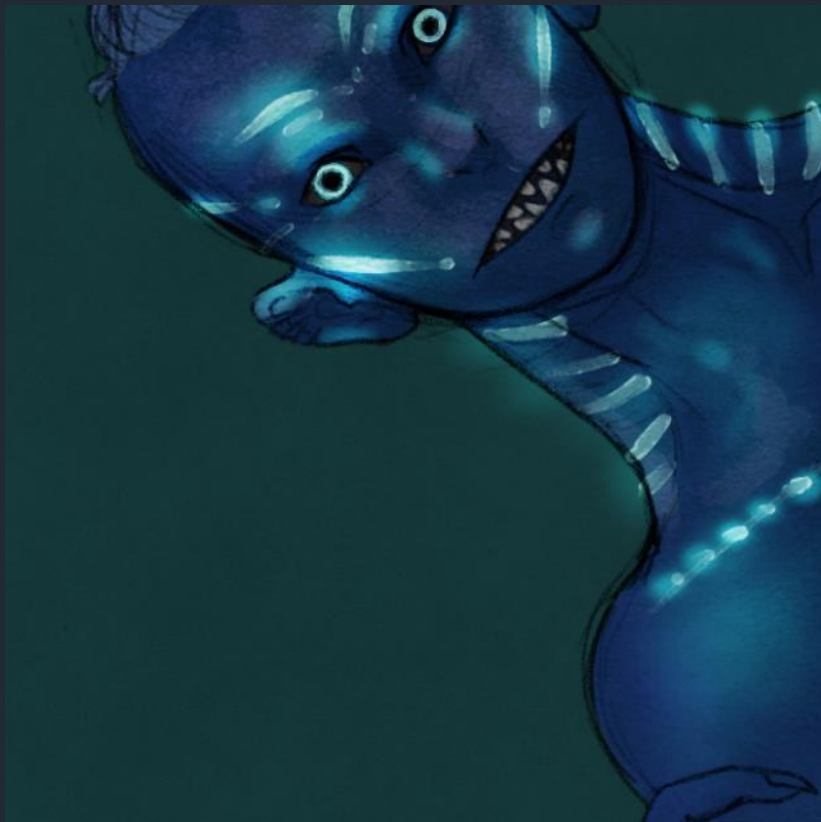




This vector design is intended for a pin. The prompt for this was body-positivity and, whilst I like the concept, I was a little bored by most artists showing overweight mermaids. I thought I'd flip it and make it something more flippant by pointing out that we will never all adhere to all beauty standards – by design.

You could be a different species and be considered more desirable than the person you are.

So, f\*ck it!



As evident here, some these images ended up somewhere between a finished product and a work-in-progress. There comes a point when more time needs to be put in than there is time remaining. However, the chance to flex my creative muscles and to include all these different styles appealed to me immensely.



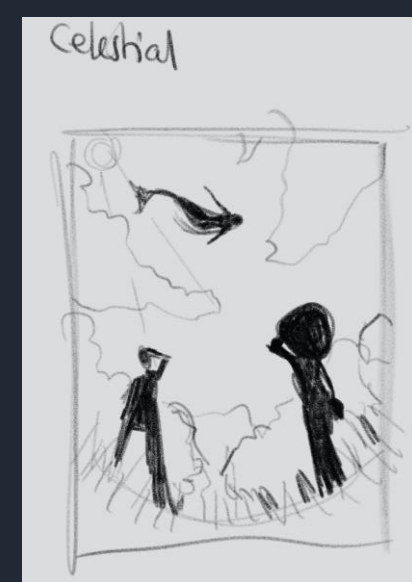
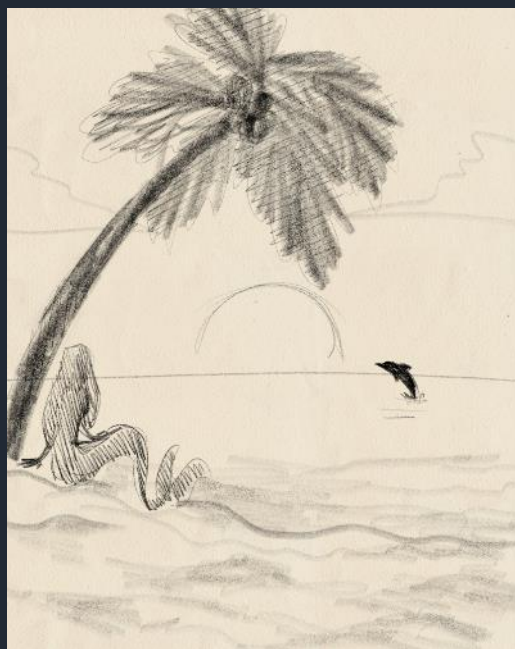
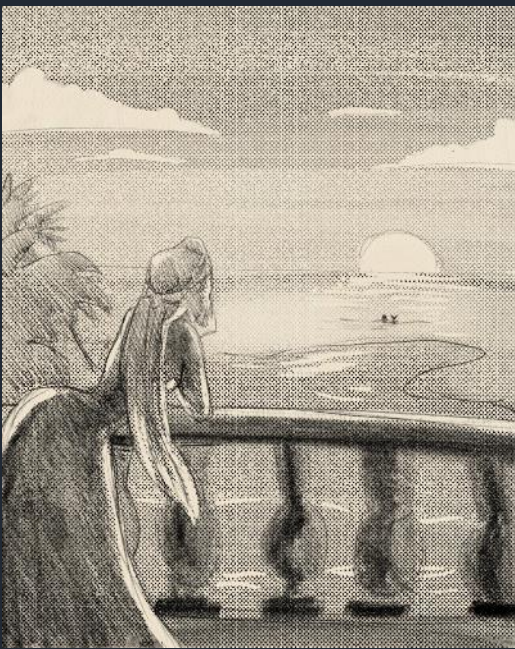


And of course, a classic theme is Disney's *Little Mermaid*, particularly with the live action remake having aired during the 2023 MerMay.

I liked the idea that one character could be a guide of sorts to the other and mixing both a more realistic depiction with the original Disney's *Little Mermaid*. The hourglass is referring to the passage of time and the remaking of a story rather than a re-invention.

The thing I found uncomfortable about this theme was that I enjoy Disney's animations, but I am also acutely aware of their monopoly on story-telling and their place in our corporate structures. Their moralities were exclusively guided by men in a strong (racist) patriarchy and their views on what was desirable and good continues to influence beyond their lifetime and target geographical audience.





Not every drawing makes it and not every sketch gets finished. Sometimes I look for different lighting situations, sometimes I want to experiment with colours, perspectives, and/or composition.

Sometimes I misinterpret the prompt, such as 'mother' which was the prompt for the American Mother's Day, which I only realised retrospectively. This is not a problem but aside from time constraints it was a reason for not completing the drawing.

