

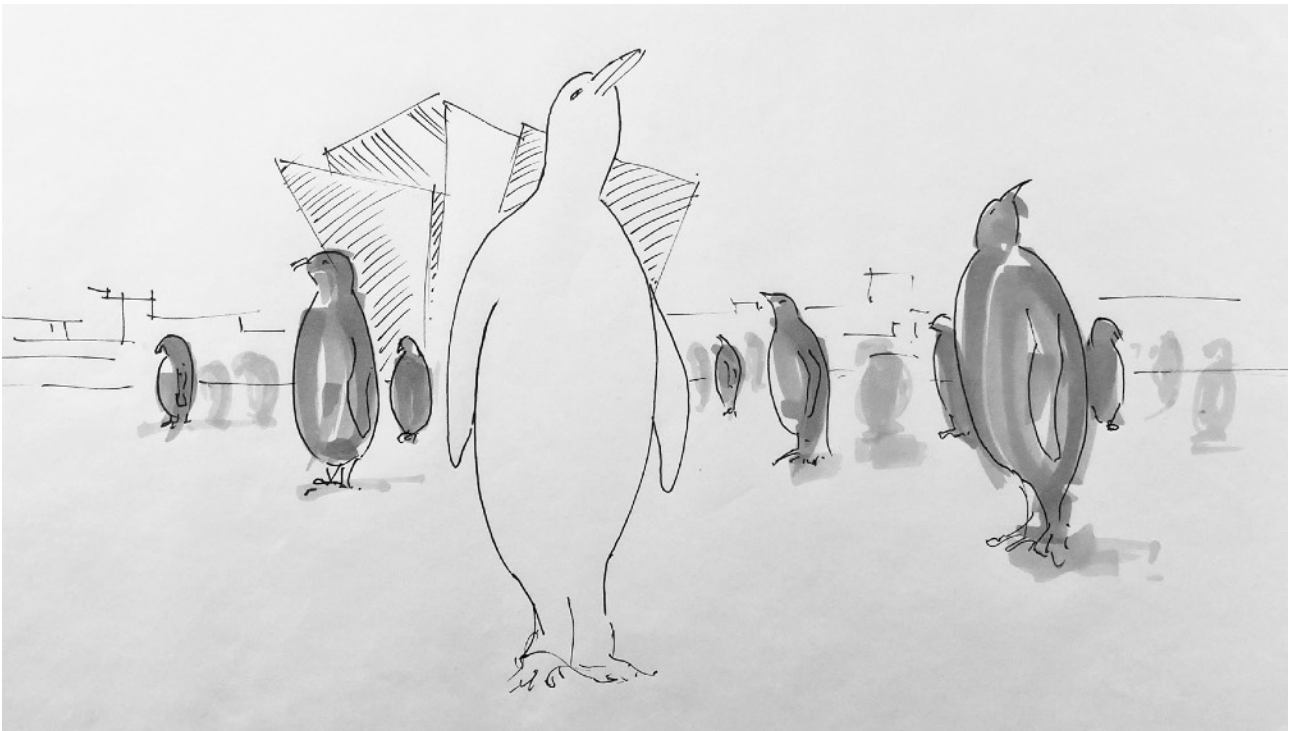
Andy Bullock

23 Observatory Street
Oxford
OX2 6EW

www.bullockstudio.com
+44 (0)7582 5326957

Art installation proposal for Belfast Harbour**Title of work: 'REQUIEM'**

Sculptural installation, dimensions variable. Location to be decided, quayside, Titanic quarter.



The idea: To create a memorable and dramatic large-scale artwork to coincide with the United Nations' COP26 climate change conference November 2021 for *permanent display* at the Belfast Harbour Titanic Quarter.

The work: To site a significant number of life-sized (representational) penguin sculptures arranged loosely as a group with enough space around them to allow people to wander amongst them; to experience and *relate* to them. The penguins I would use as reference for the models would be *king penguins* which stand around three and half feet tall, the size of a six year old child. There will be a main group of some number and then one solitary figure will be separate from the flock on the edge of the quay looking out to the horizon. The significance of the number is open to discussion - it could be 26, for the Cop26 event this year or it could be 193, which is the number of United Nations members. It cannot be stressed strongly enough that the final physical image of the sculptures will not be life-accurate natural history models but artistic, *impressionistic forms* indicative but yet instantly recognisable as penguins (yet to be designed and developed).

Materials: My initial thoughts were that the group should be made in cast bronze (still my preferred option for longevity) however I feel that issues of sustainability may be better addressed by using a more politically sympathetic material such as low carbon concrete or similar, or maybe smelting down waste metal from the shipyard would be a viable option; this needs considerable thought and research.

The Meaning: The reading of this work is intentionally open and manifold; the health of penguin colonies has long been seen as a reliable indicator of the state of their habitat, the Antarctic. They are often considered to be the metaphorical 'canary in the coal mine' when it comes to climate change warnings. Their habitat is under constant threat from global warming, melting the pack ice environment on which the penguins exist and so the species' future is inextricably connected to the effects of climate change.

The work can therefore be read as a simple ecological warning, highlighting the plight of one particular species of animal under threat from global warming. *However* I think it fair to say that there is another deeper and potentially darker reading here. To see the penguins as human beings; their use here as anthropomorphic totems is no accident, *penguin as human* metaphor is a well-used technique in storytelling, witness 'The March of the Penguins' cinema hit a few years

ago and as such it is but a short step of thought to see this nomadic, wandering group of lost penguins, searching for a new home as symbolic of the plight of the human race itself considering options to colonise our moon and nearest planets.

In recent discussions with colleagues in Belfast it has also become apparent that there is also a third and powerful *local* reading by association with history and that is the notion that the penguins could be seen as migrants; a people searching for a life in the *new world* as was witnessed in the mass migration to the United States by Irish citizens in the mid 19th century.

And so we can then read this whole scenario as a metaphor for the plight faced right now by *us*, by humans dealing with the consequences of global warming and formulating strategies to mitigate the potential dangers we face from our own self-inflicted situation.

From a visitor perspective I hope the experience of walking around the work, and *within* the work, with the penguins standing around 3ft tall in their familiar hunched human-like forms, will encourage a profound reflection on these issues and the problems we all face with the task of looking after the planet for all our children's futures.