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MAGIC in a BOTTLE

Back in the 17th century, a lot of people were panicking about witches. As far as they were concerned, a witch could curse you, curse your family or even your cow! And that was a very scary prospect indeed. To protect themselves from witchcraft, people created witch bottles.

The bottles that people used didn't begin their lives as witch bottles. They were often stoneware bottles from Germany, where they were mass-produced and shipped overseas for any number of uses. Ordinary people would buy these bottles for their contents, much in the same way we buy a bottle of Coke in the shop today! Once whatever was in the bottle had been used, the bottle would be empty. And what does one do with an empty bottle, especially a sturdy one? *If you're anything like me, you keep them because they may come in handy one day. Ed.* That's exactly what people did.

Witch bottles are some of the only physical evidence we have of witch belief in the early modern period (1500–c.1750). In fact, we've found witch bottles from lots of different points in history – some were even made as recently as the 1980s! They have contained anything from twigs and rusty nails to sometimes even URINE!

Hold up. WHAT? Ed.

FUN FACT PUMPKIN
Some scholars believe that witch bottles may have represented the witch's bladder. By inserting the 'victim's' urine into the 'bladder' along with rusty nails and pins, it was thought that the witch would feel intense pain and retract their malevolent spell!

WE'LLY PUSHING IT
To really seal the deal, the person making the witch bottle would have to wee into the bottle. Making a connection between the person

FUN FACT PUMPKIN
Scientists and historians can now look inside witch bottles using computerised tomography (CT) scans.

creating the bottle and the bottle itself was what tied everything together! Instructions on how to create a witch bottle would be provided by the local cunning person – someone who performed magic but was not a witch, and specialised in 'unbewitching' – curing or preventing curses. The afflicted individual would visit the local cunning person and tell them all about their problems, and the cunning person would prescribe the witch bottle, a bit like a doctor prescribing medicine.

Disclaimer: AQUILA magazine does not endorse the use of urine or sharp, rusty nails in pretend magical potions.

COULD IT BE MAGIC?
The concept of magic in a bottle still exists in the modern day. A witch bottle was found in the River Thames dating back to 1982. It used a small plastic medicine bottle and contained pieces of metal, coins, spices, and even human teeth! It is thought that the creator of this particular bottle wanted to get rid of a nasty case of toothache *(and... all been there, all done that... as they say they added to the mixture were cloves, which are known for their toothache-relieving power. If you rub them carefully on your gum, we don't think sticking them in a magic bottle works).*

Nowadays, most witch bottles are usually much nicer, and they don't tend to be called 'witch bottles'. Instead, some

FUN FACT PUMPKIN
Most witch bottles discovered in houses are buried in the chimney, fireplace or in the walls. However, the most common 'magical' object found concealed in the walls of houses is a worn shoe! It is believed that they were used as a magical charm to ward off bad spirits from the home, and sometimes to help the woman who lived there get pregnant.

PUZZLE ALERT!

BADGER BE GONE!

Oh no! You've irritated a local wizard and now you're being followed wherever you go by a curmudgeonly badger who hisses at you night and day, and will not let you sleep. Bad luck! **Can you design a witch bottle to get rid of the aggressive beast (and the badger) once and for all?**



IDEAS: Cotton bud • Elderberries • Guitar pick
• Rusty paperclips • Toenail clippings • Ink
• Rosemary • Wizard's phone charger

people make 'spell jars', which can be for protection, good luck, great fortune, or even love. Rather than rusty nails and wee they usually contain pretty crystals and flower petals. You can even buy pre-made ones online, and they are often decorated with coloured wax, ribbons, and sometimes have charms attached.

The idea of magic in a bottle has carried on for centuries, and it's unlikely that it will stop any time soon!

Would you like to make your own spell jar? Positive vibes only! Then follow the link to this Awesome Activity!

AWESOME ACTIVITY ALERT!

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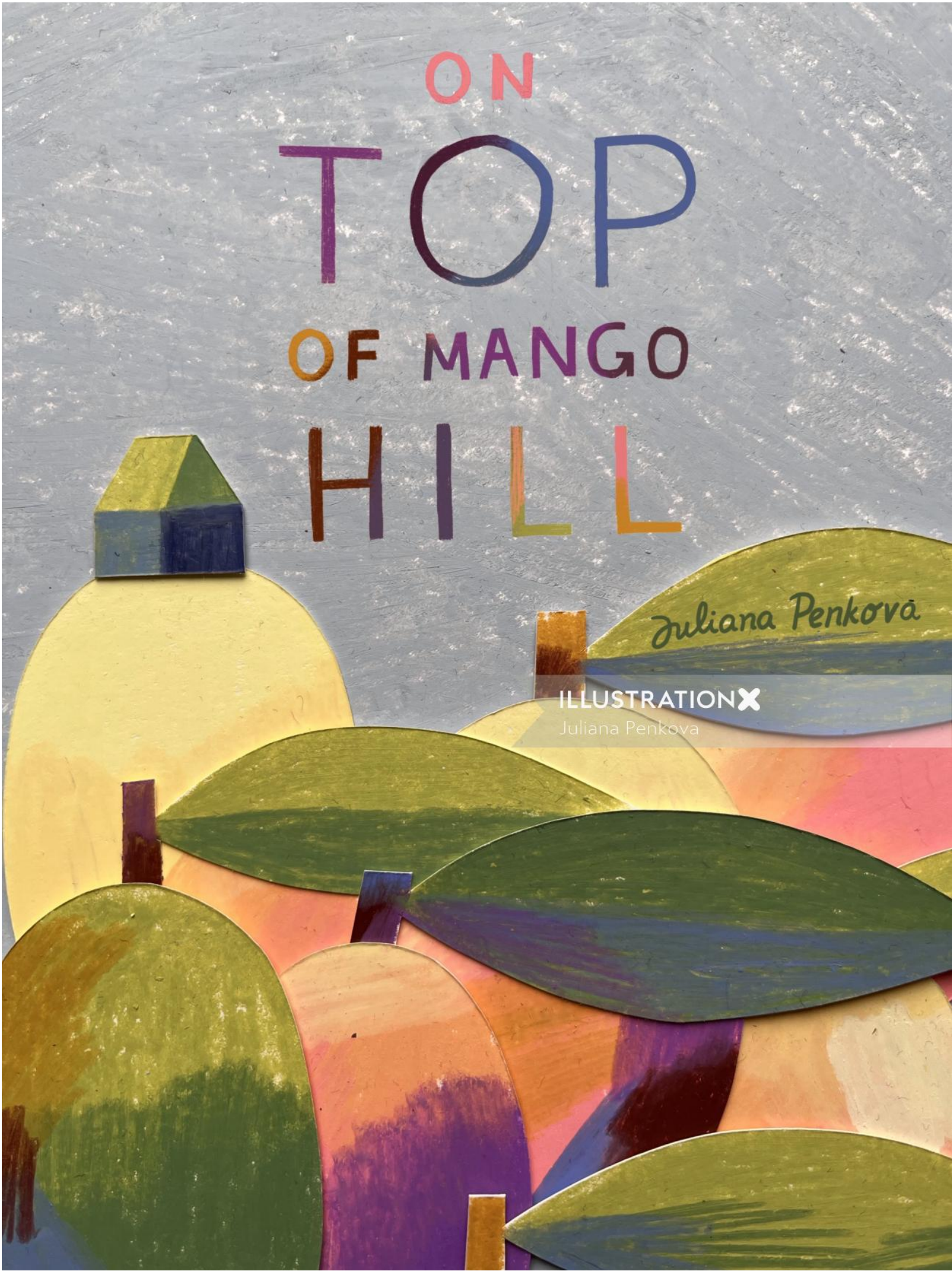
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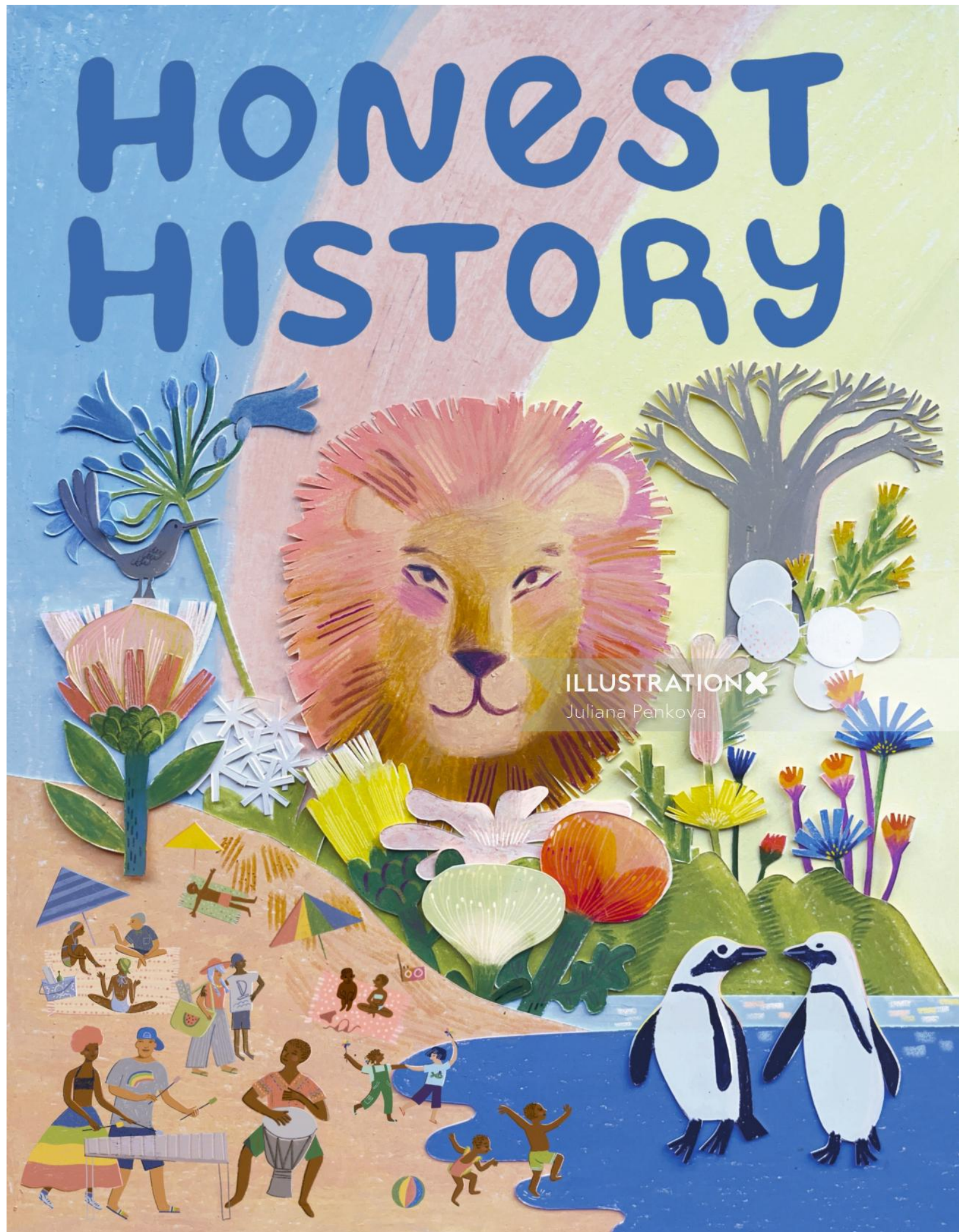
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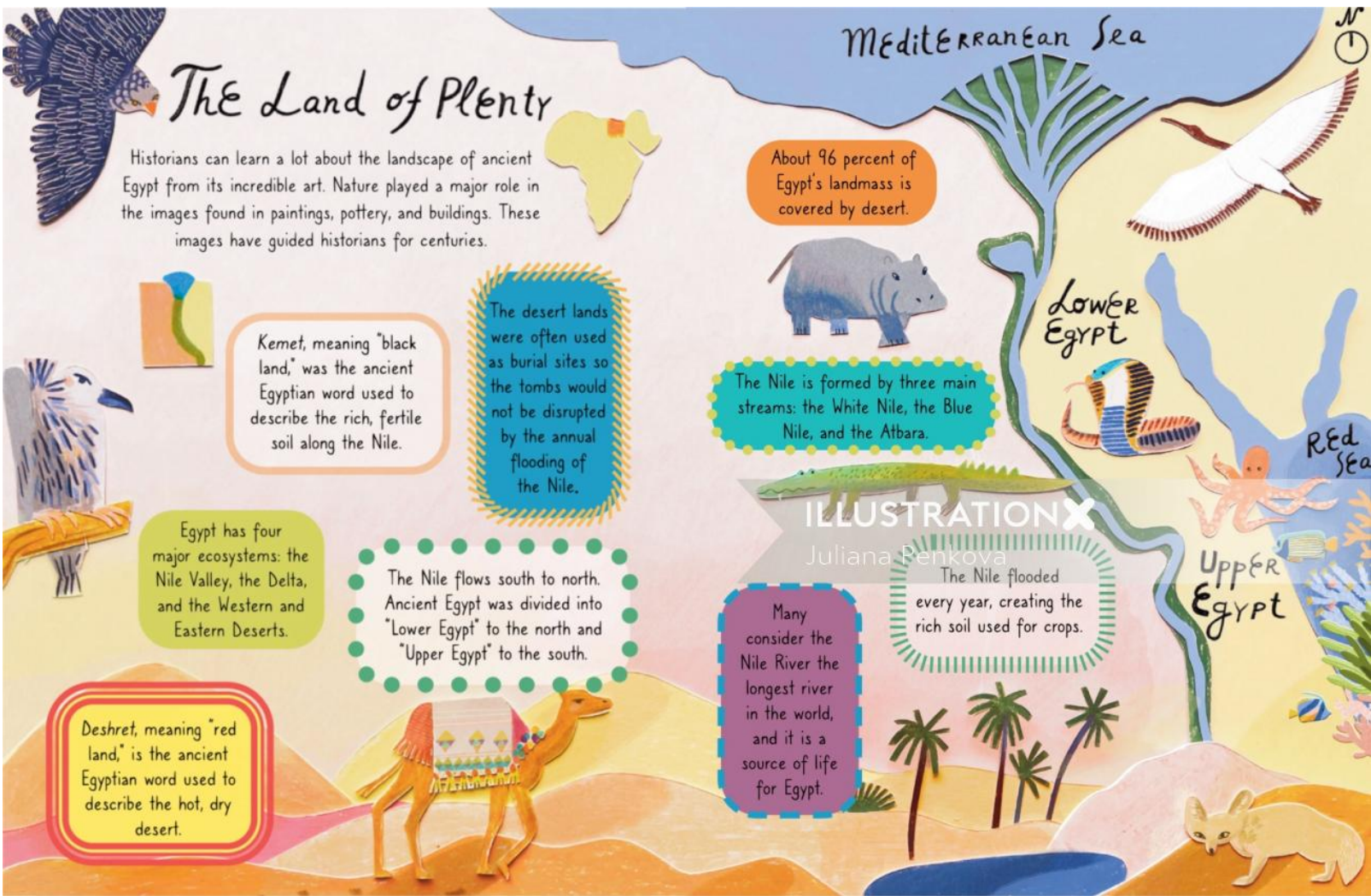


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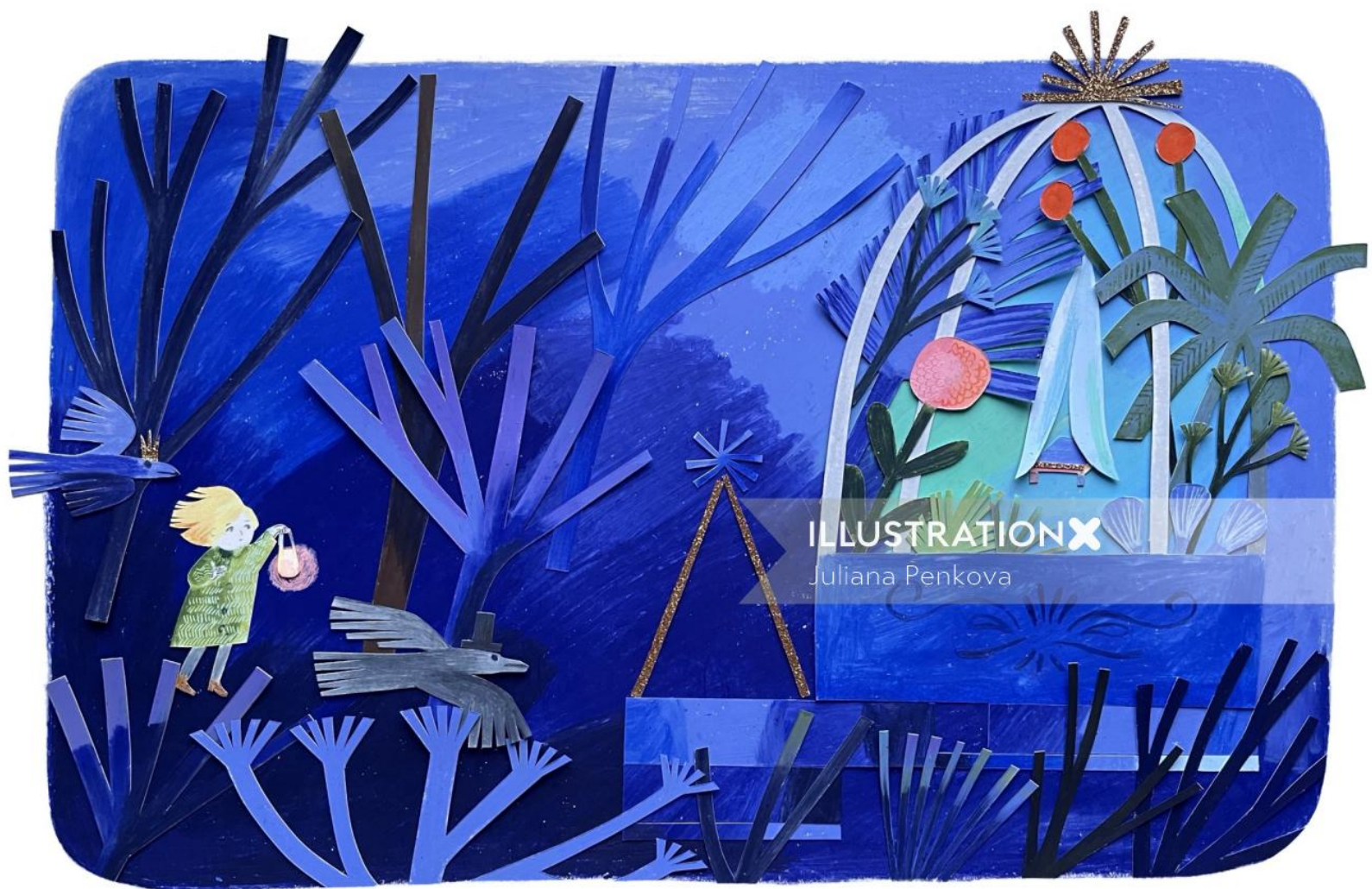
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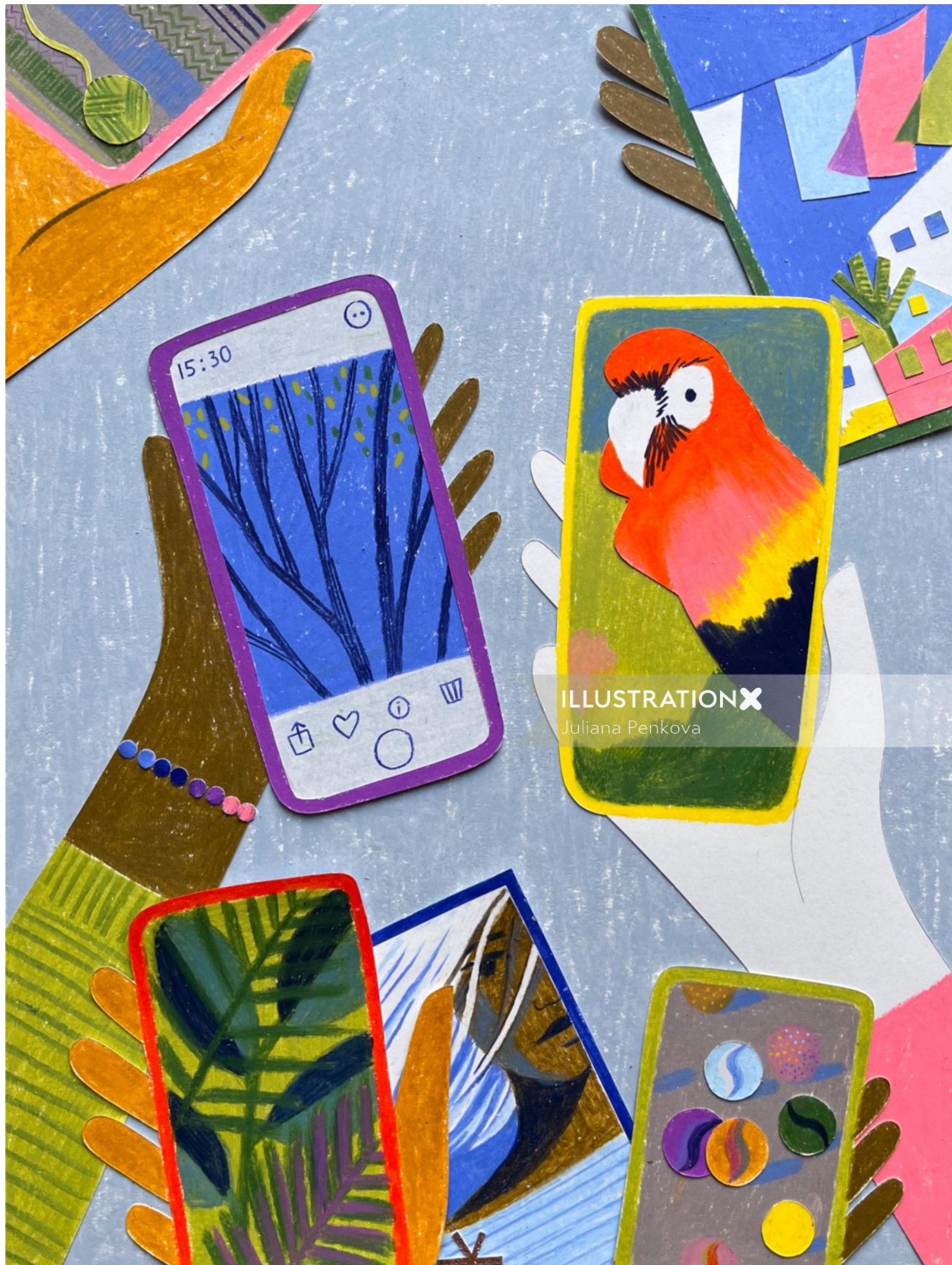
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