

# MURAL PROPOSAL NATIONAL ACADEMY MUSEUM

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*The enjoyment of scenery employs the mind without fatigue and yet exercises it; tranquilizes it and yet enlivens it; and thus, through the influence of the mind over the body gives the effect of refreshing rest and reinvigoration to the whole system.*

- Frederick Law Olmstead (1865)

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**SITE DESCRIPTION** The following proposal describes the intended mural “intervention” for the barren, northern brick wall of the National Academy Museum at 1089 Fifth Avenue, NYC.

This site encompasses what is arguably the most dramatic intersection of Culture and Nature in the City: namely, the crossroads of “Museum Mile” and Olmstead’s celebrated Central Park. The complex beauty of this site is contextualized by the striking juxtaposition of the built-environment (buildings, infrastructure, etc) with an organic landscape (gardens, flowers, trees, etc). Culture and Nature can indeed find harmony, as attested to in the work of Olmstead, and this monumental painting seeks to celebrate this very confluence. Essentially, the mural channels the muses of Central Park’s native flora and fauna, symbolically transplanting Nature onto a wall of Culture.

**INSPIRATION FROM CONTEXT** I researched both the history and modern day environment of the Park near the Academy, taking a plethora of photographs and notes on specific plants and flowers. While researching the botanical species grown throughout the seasons, I simultaneously probed the Academy’s history, finding inspiration in the whimsical imagery of Edwin Austin Abbey’s “Midsummer’s Night Dream”. The following statement outlines the concepts and subsequent imagery that grew from this process.

**IMAGERY & SYMBOLISM** Common to both Central Park and mythology, the yellow *Flag Iris* (pictured with subterranean roots growing from the sidewalk) climbs the corner of the north wall, serving as a radiant symbol of the arts. Iris the Greek Goddess, after all, personifies the chromatic spectrum. The arching botanical form unites both earth and sky in keeping with the goddess’ rainbow mythology and the cycle of day and night—a subtle allusion to the National Academy’s balance between academia and practice. The uppermost skies transition into a starry night and spiraling galaxy, the latter paying homage to the helical form of Frank Lloyd Wright’s adjacent Guggenheim Museum. This cyclical motif is further mirrored by the progress of the seasons: heavens merge with *Daisies* and the little white flowers of *Baby’s Breath*, which morph into snow, that falls upon a *coniferous bow* in winter, which hangs above autumnal *Maple* leaves, etc. The imagery must have relevance all year round. And even a colorful avian native, the regal Cardinal, sits attentively surveying the scene as it is wont to do throughout the year. Lights will also be installed at the base of the wall to theatrically illuminate the mural at night, increasing the Academy’s prominence as a beacon.

In short, this fantastical scene visually unites Museum Mile with one of the world’s most magnificent parks, therefore attempting to expose the magic of a unique crossroads—a gesture toward a much-needed sense of “place”.