

Artist Biography – James Barany
Murals | Animation | Community Engagement



James Barany is a visual artist, muralist, and professor of interdisciplinary arts based in Waukesha, Wisconsin. His practice spans painting, animation, performance, and public art, weaving themes of memory, identity, and collective history into layered visual narratives that foster empathy and connection.

Since completing a pivotal mural in 2017, Barany has focused on large-scale public artworks that integrate historical research, local storytelling, and Indigenous recognition. His murals often incorporate archival imagery and symbolic motifs designed to engage both mind and heart. A hallmark of his work is the use of anamorphic perspective—hidden portraits and images that reveal themselves from specific vantage points—encouraging reflection, discovery, and multiple interpretations.

Barany's mural process is thoughtful and collaborative, beginning with site research and community dialogue before progressing through scaled renderings and final application. His murals are painted directly on prepared surfaces or on ACM (Aluminum Composite Material) or MDO (Medium Density Overlay) panels. He emphasizes environmental durability, contextual integration, and cultural relevance.

His ongoing project *Beautiful Insignificance*, an experimental animation exploring his Czech and Hungarian ancestry, reflects his broader artistic mission: to elevate overlooked histories and reveal the poetic in the everyday.

Barany has completed murals throughout southeastern Wisconsin—including De Pere, Chilton, Stockbridge, Hartford, Hustisford, and Port Washington—often in partnership with arts councils, municipalities, and educational institutions. As a professor at the Milwaukee Institute of Art & Design (MIAD), he mentors emerging artists and frequently integrates student contributions into his public work.

All murals are digitally designed using historic references, transferred via Renaissance-era grid techniques, and hand-painted in layered acrylic for depth and permanence. A high-grade sealant is applied to ensure weather resistance and long-term maintenance.

www.jamesbarany.com

Mural Proposal – Friedman Alley, Downtown Waukesha

Artist: James Barany

This proposal presents three concept options for a unified mural installation across Sections 1 and 2 of Friedman Alley in downtown Waukesha. Each design celebrates the city's historical and cultural roots while fostering personal reflection and civic pride.

At the heart of the mural is a dual visual experience: when viewed from within the alley, scenes from Waukesha's Victorian-era history are visible in rich detail. From across Madison Street, anamorphic portraits of Indigenous women—from the Potawatomi and Ho-Chunk (Winnebago) Nations—emerge subtly, visible only from specific vantage points. As viewers shift positions, the portraits dissolve into abstract forms, revealing again the historical imagery. This interplay underscores the layered nature of memory, place, and presence.



Concept 1



Concept 2



Concept 3

Historical Themes (Visible from the Alley):

- Whimsical advertisements for Waukesha's healing springs and competing bottling companies
 - Col. Dunbar and iconic female mascots from local springwater brands
 - A young Les Paul in naval uniform, honoring Waukesha's musical legacy
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Concept Summaries

- **Concept 1**

A vibrant color palette with playful nods to Arcadian, White Rock, and Fox Head Brewery ads. Anamorphic portrait: a young Potawatomi woman.



- **Concept 2**

A muted, historic palette centered around Col. Dunbar and the Bethesda Spring House. Features Clysmic and White Rock motifs, and Les Paul performing for a Victorian audience. Anamorphic portrait: another young Potawatomi woman.



- **Concept 3**

A synthesis of Concepts 1 and 2, combining bold color and elegant composition. The final anamorphic portrait: an elderly Ho-Chunk woman, completing the generational narrative arc.



Installation Options

Murals may be painted directly onto the wall or installed on float-mounted ACM or MDO panels, depending on committee preference. This proposal assumes direct wall painting as the preferred and most cost-effective method. Please request additional information for ACM or MDO bids (Using these substrates will add another 2k-3k to the total cost).

Mural Bid – Direct Wall Painting

- **Surface: Cleaned and primed stucco façade**
- **Paint: High-grade acrylic, hand-applied**
- **Finish: UV- and weather-resistant sealant**
- **Timeline: 2.5–3.5 weeks (weather and schedule dependent)**
- **Dimensions:**
 - **Section 1: 14' x 14' = 196 sq. ft.**
 - **Section 2: 10' x 20' = 200 sq. ft.**
 - **Total: 396 sq. ft.**
- **Artist Fee (\$17/sq. ft.):**

Includes all research, design, surface prep, painting, sealing, and installation. James Barany Studios LLC carries \$1M liability insurance and offers a 10-year guarantee against natural wear and UV damage (excludes lift rental, vandalism, or structural issues).

\$17 × 396 = \$6,732
- **Lift Rental:**

Estimated for a towable hydraulic lift (500 lb. capacity) for one month: \$2,050

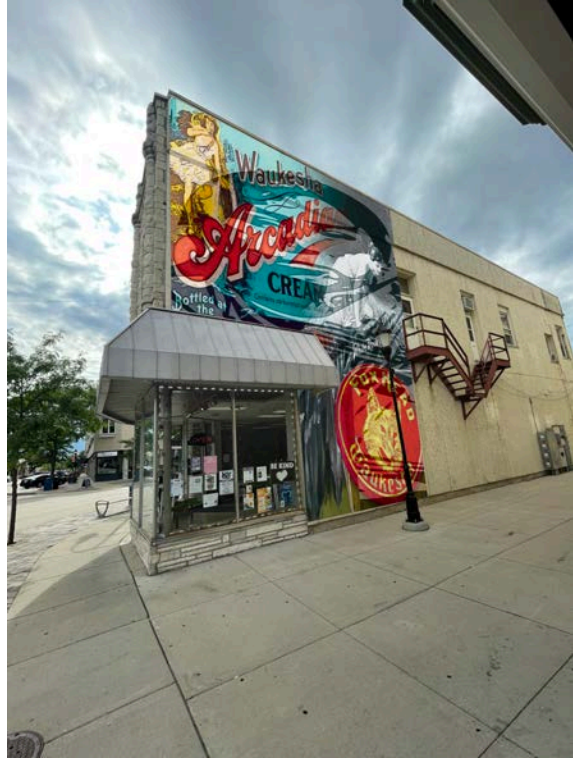
If the city or committee can provide a comparable lift at a reduced rate, or if a nearby storage area allows for a driveable unit, this cost may be lowered accordingly.

Total Commission Estimate: \$8,782

Concept 1:



Concept 1 in context:



Concept 2:

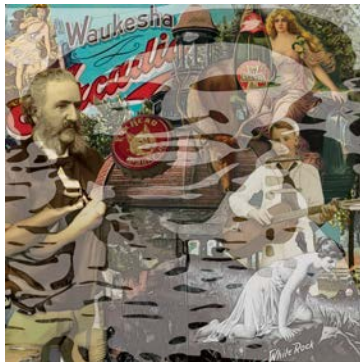


Concept 2 in context:





Concept 3:



Concept 3 in context:



Recent Murals:



De Pere 2017



Chilton 2018



Stockbridge 2018-19



Hartford 2024



Hustisford 2025

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2N0E3b9zpEY>



Port Washington 2025