

Melissa L Hillmer

Owner, Administrator, Art Teacher,

Otto's Fine Art Academy

1/18/2026

## Friedman Alley Mural Proposal, City of Waukesha

### Section 1: Proposed Design Concept, Dimensions & Location

This mural is titled *Love Where You Live* and is designed based on the dimensions for **mural area two** in Friedman Alley.

This mural will be three panels:

- Panel 1 will be 7 feet x 2 feet
- Panel 2 will be 7 feet by 6 feet
- Panel 3 will be 7 feet by 2 feet





## Section 2: Narrative

I have dreamed of painting a mural in Friedman Alley for around ten years now. I walk through that alley every day to get to my business and have cooked up many ideas over all that time. I am so excited to make my community and hometown more beautiful.

*Love Where You Live* is a collaborative, community mural that invites the community to participate in its creation. The design above is how the mural **will start off**; a simple line drawing, much like a coloring book. The scene depicts homey, familiar images from Downtown Waukesha, as well as a variety of animals that can be found in the greater Southeastern Wisconsin area.

The mural is designed in three panels. Three (or more) times over the course of the next year, **members of the community will be invited to events hosted by Otto's Art Academy in Waukesha to come "fill in" each separate panel of the mural before it is installed.** For this reason, the proposed timeline is stretched out over the next year (see Section 4: Timeline). These mural painting events will be widely advertised through social media, my network of artists, art teachers and my students, as well as my connections with the Freeman Newspaper and TMJ4 news station. Once the word is out, community members, young and old, will come downtown during various local events (i.e. Art Crawl, Friday Night Live, Farmers Market, etc.) and will help fill in the "coloring book" style mural with help and guidance from myself.

We would start off with three mural painting events spread throughout the next year (see Section 4: Proposed Timeline) and add more if needed to complete the panels. The mural is broken into three sections to make it more manageable for painting and ultimately, installation.

When the mural is finished being "filled in" by the public, I will review the panels and make any touch-ups that are needed and apply a waterproof top-coat so that it is ready to be installed. I have also left an empty space on the bottom panel, a rock between the plein air artist and the sleeping fox, where participants can sign their names.

Having a community mural installed in the alley will give everyone a reason to want to come through this once rather grungy place; to view the artwork they helped create, and to point at it and say, "I remember when I painted that!" Many will stop to pose and take photos of the areas they helped paint. This participatory art project, coupled with the theme and title of the piece will bring much joy and sense of belonging to those who call Waukesha "home" for generations to come.

## Section 3: Materials

Each mural panel will be painted on primed, *Parkland Plastics* Embossed plastic wall paneling (or similar). The panels come in large, 4'x8' sheets and can be cut to size with a table saw, much like wood. The thickness of the paneling by itself is 1/8".

There will be a frame built behind each mural panel to give it sturdiness, as well as to help with the installation process. The frame will use both 2"x2" White PVC Trim Board and Pressure Treated 2"x4" wood.

The trim will have approximately 16 brackets screwed into it prior to wall installation. The brackets will be used to install the mural onto the brick wall using screws.

The panels will be primed with acrylic gesso. The mural will be painted with acrylic paints and sealed with polyurethane matte finish to weatherproof it for the outside.

#### Section 4: Project Costs

| Item   | Qty.       | Price        | Total   |
|--|------------|--------------|---------|
| Paneling for mural surface, 4'x8' sheets                       | 4          | \$26         | \$104   |
| Panel Connectors (8' each)                                     | 2          | \$6          | \$12    |
| PVC trim for frame, 84' total needed (2"x2"x12' each)          | 6          | \$24         | \$144   |
| Pressure Treated wood 2"x4"x10' for added frame structure      | 2          | \$9          | \$18    |
| Brackets and screws  | ~ 16       | \$8          | \$128   |
| Screws to attach panels to frame (#8 x 1-5/8" box at 100 each) | 2          | \$9          | \$18    |
| Acrylic gesso (primer), 1 gallon                               | 1          | \$40         | \$40    |
| Liquitex acrylic paints  | ~ 20       | \$8          | \$160   |
| UV Protection Polyurethane (sealant), 1 gallon                 | 1          | \$60         | \$60    |
| Utility Brush  | 2          | \$10         | \$20    |
| Artist fee   | ~120 hours | \$14.00/hour | \$1,680 |

**Total: \$2,384.00**

## Section 4: Proposed Timeline for Completion & Installation

This timeline assumes that this mural proposal is chosen and green-lit by the end of Spring 2026.

- March 2026: Purchase supplies and begin assembling panels for mural
- April 2026: Finish assembling panels for mural, begin prepping surface with acrylic gesso
- May 2026: Begin sketching out mural scenes using black paint for outlines (coloring book style)
- May & June 2026: Advertise mural painting events for the Summer of 2026
- July 2026: Host FIRST community mural painting event during Friday Night Live
- August: 2026: Host SECOND community mural painting event during Waukesha Farmers market
- September 2026: Adjust and complete panels so far, advertise last painting event
- October 2026: Artist gets married!
- November 2026: Adjust and complete panels so far; advertise mural painting event
- December: Host THIRD community mural painting event during the December 2026 Art Crawl/ WDBA Jolly Days
- January 2027: Complete mural painting, making any finishing clean-ups or adjustments needed
- Mural sealed with polyurethane and ready for outdoor installation

\*Additional options/ ideas for community mural painting events if needed: Riverside Rhythms, Fourth of July parade

## Section 5: Artist Biography

Melissa L Hillmer

Melissa is an artist, entrepreneur and educator in Waukesha County. In 2017, Melissa received her Bachelor of Fine Arts degree with an emphasis in drawing, painting and art education from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.

Melissa is passionate about art education. In 2018, Melissa purchased her childhood art school, Otto's Fine Art Academy. Located in Waukesha, Otto's is a K-12, supplementary-education art school which she has expanded to include classes for adults, homeschool programming, and, in 2022, Melissa opened a second location in Mukwonago. Through Otto's, Melissa offers scholarships to graduating seniors who plan to pursue art after high school. Melissa also prioritizes mentoring future art teachers by hiring college art students from local universities such as UW-Milwaukee, Carroll University, and UW-Whitewater.

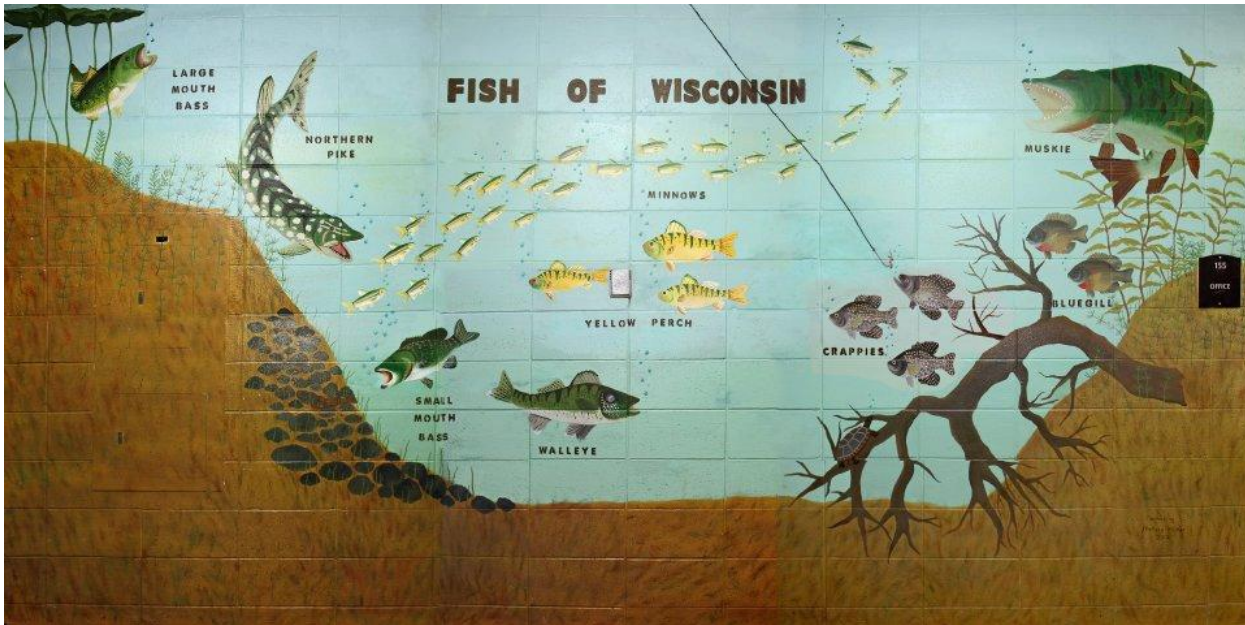


Melissa keeps an active studio practice and exhibits locally. Her paintings and fibers works have been displayed and sold in a variety of locations, including Waukesha City Hall, The Waukesha County Courthouse, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and The Jazz Gallery in Milwaukee. She has also painted several murals and contributed to public art displays for her hometown, the City of Waukesha. In 2021, Melissa's educational children's book *Tabby is a Cat Who Likes to Paint* was published and can be purchased online through Amazon, Barnes & Noble and at both Otto's Art Academy locations.



## Section 6: Previous Installations & Collaborations

“Fish of Wisconsin” Mural, 2012, Waukesha South High School

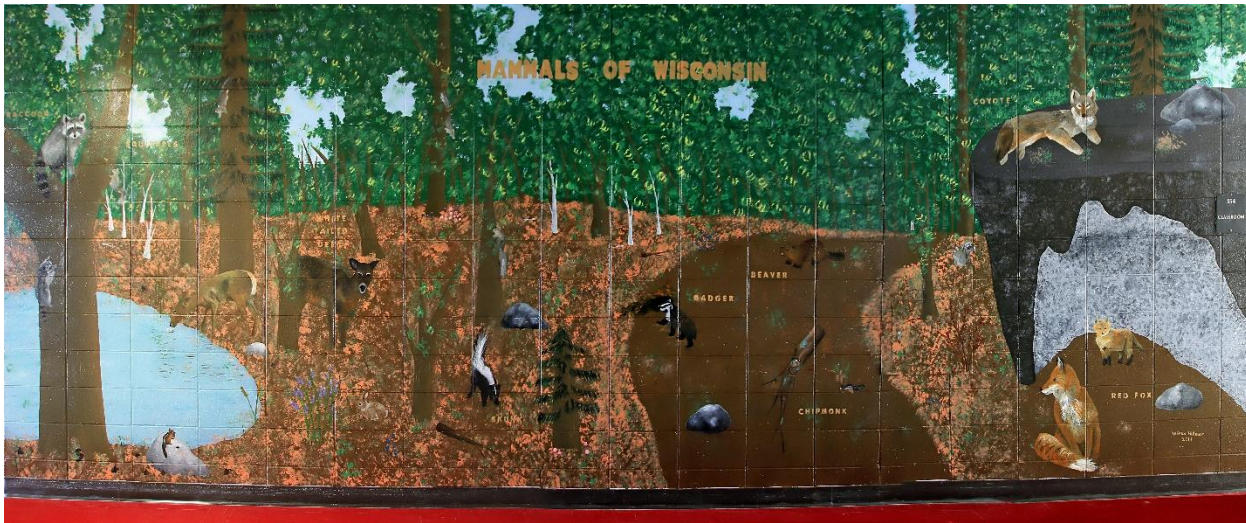


“Wildlife of Wisconsin” Fox Statue, 2014, Shops on the Fox Shopping Complex

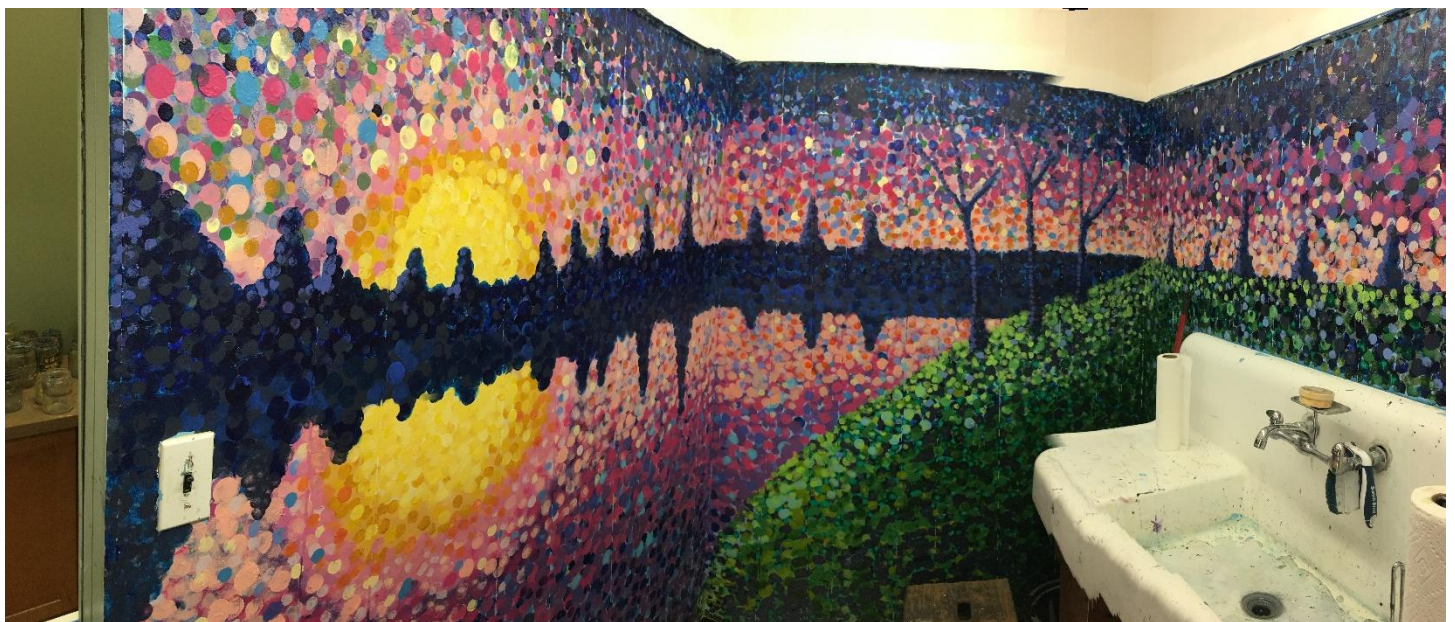
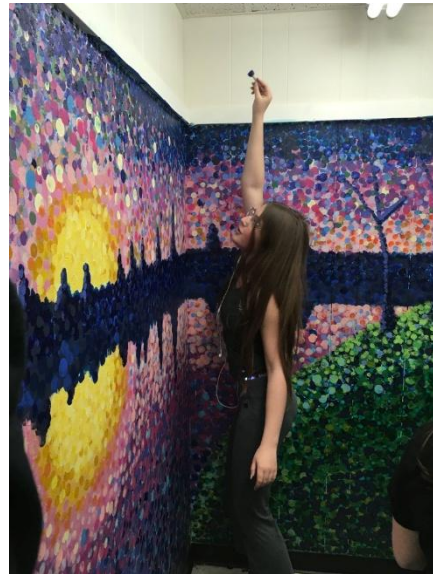




“Mammals of Wisconsin” Mural, 2014, Waukesha South High School



Collaborative Student Mural at Otto's Art Academy in Waukesha across multiple classes and age groups, 2018





Collaborative Student Mural with select group of students, onsite at Citizen Athlete in Muskego, 2019

