

**OCCIDENTAL PROMENADE PROJECT:
MURAL PROPOSAL**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The mural component of the **Occidental Promenade Project** — a public realm initiative led by SDOT in partnership with the Alliance for Pioneer Square, the Seattle Parks Foundation, and Forest for the Trees, funded through the 2024 Seattle Transportation Levy. The commission will be the largest permanent mural in Pioneer Square's history, an original, site-specific work by Cristina Martinez, a Seattle-based painter and 2026 Neddy Artist Award Finalist.

Installation is timed to the most concentrated cultural convergence Pioneer Square has seen in a generation: the Washington State Creative District designation, First Thursday Art Walk's 45th anniversary, FIFA World Cup 2026, Seattle Art Fair, and the Neddy Artist Award's 30th anniversary, all landing within a three-month window from May through July 2026.

Project:

- Site: North exterior wall American Life, 1016 1st Ave S
- Dimensions: , contained to concrete, brick borders preserved
- Artist: Cristina Martinez, 2026 Neddy Finalist in Painting
- Regulatory: Pioneer Square Historic Preservation Board Certificate PSB 8126, unanimously approved April 2, 2026 for both the mural and the artist, previously being considered at the Silver Cloud hotel location. **NOTE: the location at 1016 1st Ave S will need to be reviewed and approved by PSPB**

Coalition: Ten institutional endorsements accompany this proposal — Seattle Art Museum, Seattle City Council, Alliance for Pioneer Square, Seattle Parks Foundation, DSA/MID, Urban Villages, the Neddy Artist Award, Populus Seattle, Pioneer Square Residents' Council, and the Pioneer Square Historic Preservation Board. Every vantage point with standing to evaluate this commission has reached the same conclusion.

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PROJECT BACKGROUND | OCCIDENTAL PROMENADE



Pioneer Square: A Neighborhood in Active Revitalization

Pioneer Square is in the middle of the most significant period of civic, cultural, and commercial renewal in its recent history. Coordinated public realm investment, active adaptive reuse of historic buildings, and a wave of new hospitality and dining have reshaped the neighborhood over the past two years — the Alliance for Pioneer Square reports more businesses opened in the first quarter of 2025 than in all of 2024, and the pace has continued through 2026. The renewal is most visible in the completion of Seattle's new Waterfront Park in September 2025, a 20-acre, \$806 million civic project described by the City as the largest collection of civic projects since the 1962 World's Fair, stretching from Belltown to Pioneer Square and reconnecting downtown to Elliott Bay, with 15 million visitors anticipated annually. That momentum now converges with several independent forces in 2026: the neighborhood's Washington State Creative District designation, the 45th anniversary of First Thursday Art Walk, FIFA World Cup 2026, the Waterfront Park's first full year of operation, and Phase 3 of the Occidental Promenade Project — the most significant public realm investment the neighborhood's southern corridor has seen in decades. The Occidental Promenade is the coordinating civic response to this moment.

PROJECT BACKGROUND | OCCIDENTAL PROMENADE



The Occidental Promenade

The Occidental Promenade is a public realm initiative led by SDOT, the Alliance for Pioneer Square, the Seattle Parks Foundation, the Pioneer Square Historic Preservation Board, and the Downtown Seattle Association / MID to transform Occidental Avenue South between S King Street and S Royal Brougham Way into a year-round corridor connecting Pioneer Square, the new Waterfront Park, and the Stadium District. It is the first major project to move forward under SDOT's new People Streets and Public Spaces Program, funded through the 2024 Seattle Transportation Levy.

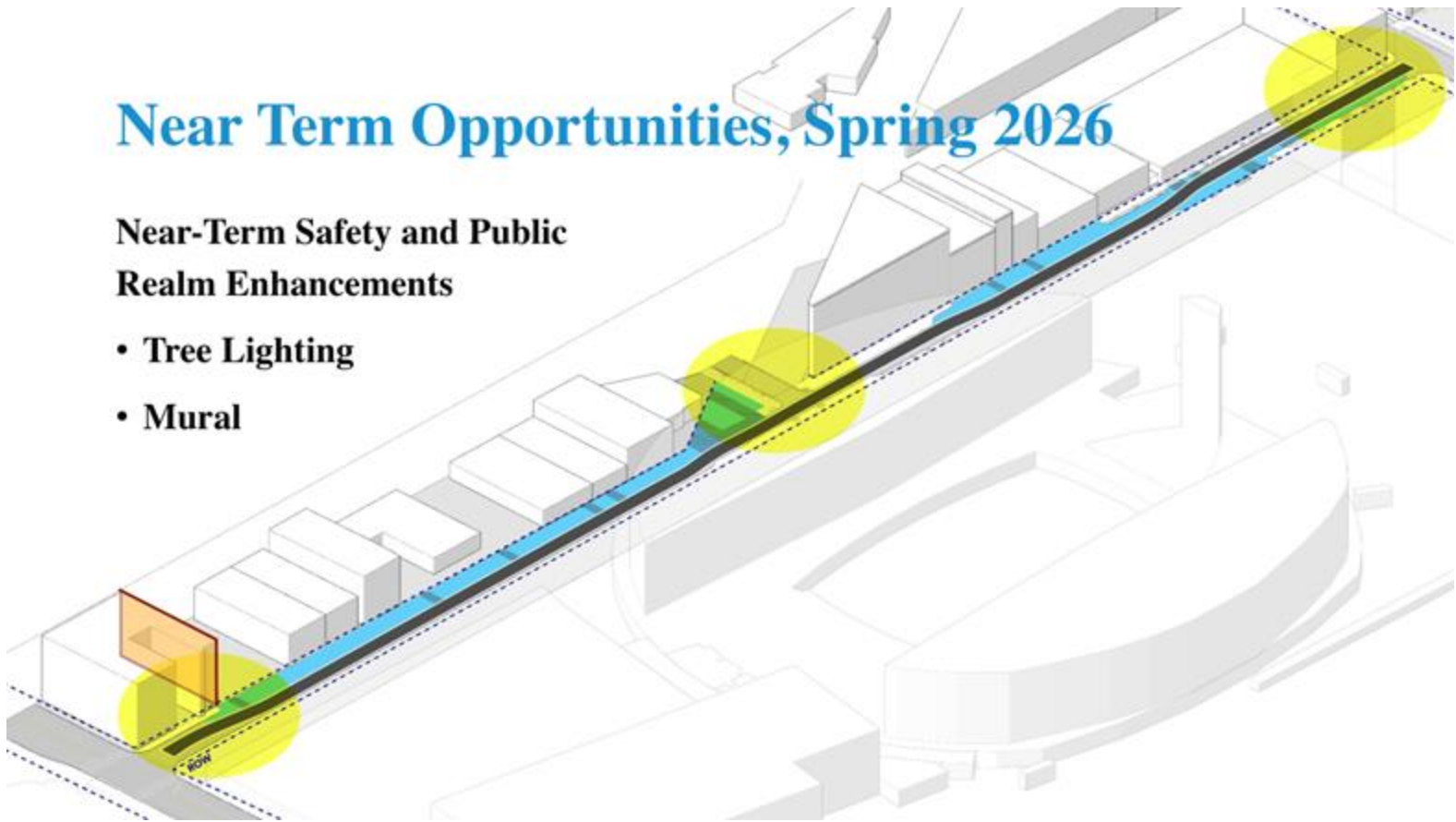
The initiative delivers a coordinated package of improvements: a painted mural at the southern gateway of the corridor, string lighting and tree lighting, surface treatments and edge delineation that calm traffic and widen pedestrian space, waste management improvements coordinated with Seattle Public Utilities, vendor improvements, and organized gathering spaces with planters and seating. Together these elements convert an event-dependent street into a continuous year-round corridor — one that holds its identity on non-event days with lighting, seating, and activation, and supports the full scale of stadium and World Cup crowds on event days. The corridor becomes a walkable connection between two of the city's most significant civic assets: Pioneer Square's historic district to the north and the new Waterfront Park to the west.

PROJECT BACKGROUND | OCCIDENTAL PROMENADE

Near Term Opportunities, Spring 2026

Near-Term Safety and Public Realm Enhancements

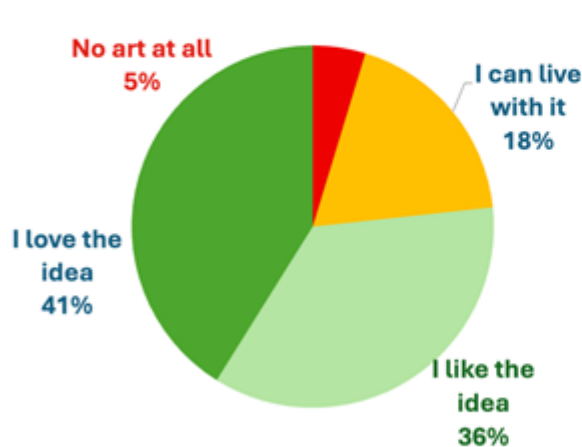
- Tree Lighting
- Mural



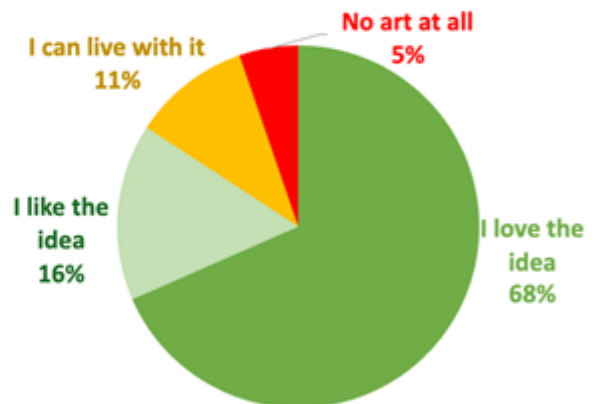
Community input confirms the direction. SDOT's Winter 2025 engagement reached 706 survey respondents, 52 open house attendees, and approximately 3,200 businesses and residents through direct mail, with decisive support for the elements being delivered: 94% support lighting on the corridor, 77% support art on the corridor, 82% named improved lighting a top priority, 79% named wider walking space a top priority, and 89% strong alignment with the project's top two goals — a welcoming, safe environment and a livable, active public space.

Public Input – Art

Do you want art on Occidental?



Survey Responses (n=382)



Open House Responses (n=19)

MURAL PROPOSAL



Why American Life

The property's north façade is one of the highest-visibility walls in downtown Seattle, viewed by stadium-goers, First Thursday Art Walk attendees, waterfront visitors, and international tourists moving through the corridor year-round.

The American Life building's north façade sits within the Pioneer Square Preservation District and is governed by the Pioneer Square Historic Preservation Board. Under the Board's guidelines, the wall is not eligible for advertising, branding, logos, or commercial graphics of any kind. Original, site-specific artwork is the only permitted use for a surface of this scale within the district.



60' H x 140' W
Mural contained to concrete.
Brick Boarder Preserved

MURAL PROPOSAL



**FOREST
FOR THE
TREES**

Forest for the Trees is a Pacific Northwest public art nonprofit that since 2013 has activated neighborhoods through artist-led programming. In Pioneer Square specifically, the organization has developed a sustained body of work including the Pioneer Square Frames program, the original on-site art collection at Populus Hotel, and an annual multi-level exhibition and programming platform during Seattle Art Fair week, now in its fourth year and one of Seattle's most anticipated independent cultural events. Forest for the Trees is the production partner for the Occidental Promenade mural and will deliver the project end-to-end.

- **No financial obligation to American Life** — the project is fully funded by SDOT
- **Two-year minimum term**, after which American Life may retain the artwork indefinitely, replace it, or remove it
- **Forest for the Trees maintains the artwork** for the duration of the term, including repair of vandalism and weathering, with a 10-day response window
- **\$1M / \$5M Commercial General Liability Insurance** carried by Forest for the Trees, with American Life named as Additional Insured
- **Full indemnification** of American Life by Forest for the Trees for claims arising from the work
- **American Life's only obligation** is reasonable site access coordinated with hotel operations
- **Either party may terminate** with 30 days' written notice

PR & MARKETING STRATEGY



Over a three-month window from May through July 2026, four of Seattle's most significant cultural moments converge in Pioneer Square. Cristina Martinez's practice intersects with each.

Pioneer Square Creative District Designation (May). The designation formalizes Pioneer Square as a state-recognized cultural district.

First Thursday Art Walk 45th Anniversary (May). The country's longest-running art walk marks its 45th anniversary on the first day of the install. Cristina painting the largest mural in Pioneer Square's history is the commission the anniversary points to.

FIFA World Cup 2026 (June–July). International coverage of a host city requires a recognizable image. A Neddy finalist's commission at the threshold between Pioneer Square and the stadiums is that image.

Seattle Art Fair (July). Cristina activates at a neighboring property during Art Fair week. Every Art Fair story about her points back to the American Life façade.

The Neddy Throughline. Cristina's 2026 Neddy Artist Award finalist recognition runs parallel, with the Finalist Exhibition opening June 3. Every Neddy placement references the Silver Cloud commission as the defining civic work of her year.

ARTIST SELECTION



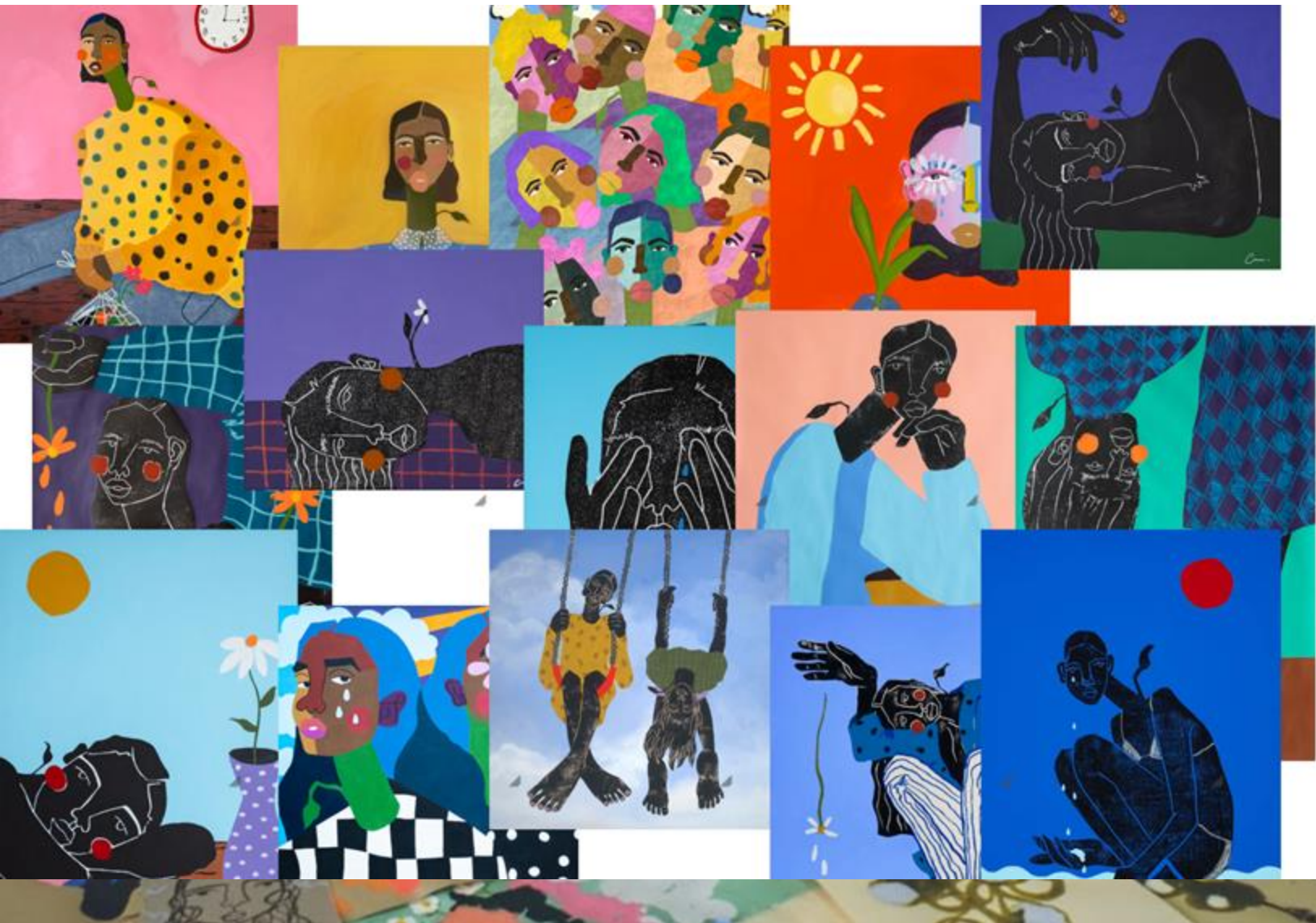
Cristina Martinez

Cristina Martinez is a Seattle-based painter whose work explores identity, storytelling, and the relationship between the human figure and the Pacific Northwest landscape. Originally from Tacoma, her practice is shaped by her lived experience as a Black and Mexican woman and her upbringing in the region, grounding her work in both personal narrative and a clear connection to place.

Her practice began in fashion illustration and evolved into a figurative, narrative-driven fine art discipline. Her compositions center women whose forms merge with flowers, vines, and organic life, positioning identity as something rooted, evolving, and shaped by environment. Her work reads as figurative storytelling and as landscape at once, using bold color and symbolic connection to the natural world to develop visual stories that carry both personal and collective meaning.

Martinez is a **2026 Neddy Artist Award Finalist in Painting**, one of eight selected in the program's 30th anniversary year. She recently presented a sold-out exhibition at **Avery Barnes Gallery**, where she is currently on view alongside Barbara Earl Thomas and Tariqa Waters, was included in the **2025 Seattle Art Fair Select VIP Program**, profiled in **Seattle Magazine**, and developed a collaboration with the **Consulate of Mexico in Seattle**. She is an original resident artist in the **Populus Seattle art collection**. Her Neddy recognition and her selection for this commission

ARTIST SELECTION



Why Cristina Was Selected

The commission called for a Seattle-based artist with a deep connection to place. Cristina's practice is shaped by her Tacoma upbringing and her Seattle-based studio, and her body of work reflects the region back to itself with specificity. As a Black and Mexican woman raised in the Pacific Northwest, she paints the region from a perspective that has not historically held space at civic scale in Seattle's public art landscape.

It also called for a practice ready for civic scale. Cristina has developed through large-scale public murals, gallery exhibitions, and institutional partnerships, and her figurative, narrative-driven practice introduces a visual language that is new to the corridor and specific to it. Her compositions center women whose forms extend into flowers, vines, and organic life, treating identity as something rooted, evolving, and shaped by environment. The result is work that inspires on two levels at once: as figurative storytelling that invites personal recognition, and as a larger statement about growth, resilience, and belonging in the Pacific Northwest.

And it called for an artist at the defining moment of her practice. The 2026 Neddy Finalist recognition, the Avery Barnes exhibition, the Seattle Art Fair VIP Program inclusion, and the Consulate of Mexico collaboration all arrived within the same window. This commission becomes the civic-scale expression of a practice at its inflection point.

DESIGN CONCEPT & PROPOSAL

The Reclining Figure

Few subjects in the history of painting carry more weight than the reclining figure. From classical antiquity forward, each generation of painters has returned to it. Each has used it to make a defining statement of its moment about the body, about presence, about who is painted and on whose terms.

Cristina Martinez's body of work is built within this lineage. For this commission, she has spent the past month developing the composition through a deep study of the reclining figure across five centuries of painting and sculpture, cataloging the specific formal devices each precedent contributes to the work she is building for this wall

The Precedents

Hellenistic Antiquity — *Sleeping Ariadne* (2nd century BCE, Vatican). The ancient prototype of the reclining female figure. Her image fixed the reclining pose as a subject worthy of monumental sculpture and placed the female body at rest at the center of classical art, shaping how Western art has approached the subject for over two thousand years



DESIGN CONCEPT & PROPOSAL



Classical Antiquity — Tiber River God (1st–2nd century CE, Vatican). The reclining figure as civic allegory. The Romans gave the pose to their gods of rivers and territories, establishing the reclining form as an image of place itself — a body that belongs to the land it represents.



Renoir — *Odalisque* (1870). A work of its moment in the Orientalist tradition that dominated nineteenth-century French painting. Renoir brought the reclining figure into the Impressionists' register of color and light, positioning the pose within the period's central artistic argument about how paint could depict a sensuous world.

DESIGN CONCEPT & PROPOSAL



Matisse — *Blue Nudes* (1952). Modernism's reduction of the figure to essential form. Created near the end of Matisse's life when he could no longer paint at the easel, the Blue Nudes distilled half a century of work with the figure into cut paper, resolving the reclining pose into pure shape and proving the subject could survive total abstraction.



Picasso — *Reclining Nude* (1960s). Cubism applied to the reclining figure. Picasso's late reclining nudes (1960–1969) insisted the pose could be broken open and reassembled without losing its weight, demonstrating that the tradition's most enduring subject could carry the twentieth century's most radical visual language.

DESIGN CONCEPT & PROPOSAL



Henry Moore — *Reclining Figure* (1929–1983). The twentieth century's most sustained sculptural engagement with the subject. Moore returned to the reclining figure for over fifty years, treating it as the form through which modern sculpture would define itself, and through which landscape and body would be understood as one continuous form.



Mickalene Thomas (active 2000–present). The reclining figure reclaimed. Thomas placed Black women in a pose the Western tradition had reserved for others, making explicit what the tradition had always been about — who gets painted, who is observed, who returns the gaze

DESIGN CONCEPT & PROPOSAL



Cristina's preparatory sketch is the composition that will be painted on the wall. It carries two thousand years of the reclining figure into a single drawing: the diagonal of the body, the raised knee, the forward gaze, the figure held within her frame. What Cristina adds to the lineage — the butterfly, the open hand that does not reach, the figure who is not performing — is the concept of the work.

Artist Statement

Rest is a part of belonging, and while it should be a right for all, it is often a luxury or a privilege. In this piece, I wanted to draw a figure who isn't performing for anyone. She's just there, fully and unapologetically occupying her space, letting the flowers grow around her, resting and letting the butterfly come to her. Her hand is open, but she's not reaching — she is simply being.

I've always been drawn to the relationship between women and the natural world, and growing up in the Pacific Northwest, nature is a part of my everyday life. I find an indescribable wonder and peace when I think about the organic process that nature takes and how we allow Her to take her course — to be watered, bloom, and grow on her own terms.

The loose fabric, the way the figure's body lays easily across the ground — I wanted it to feel like she's always been there and nobody can move her. Like she belongs to that earth as much as the flowers do. For me, this image is a quiet kind of radical act: a woman at rest, whole, unhurried, at home in her own skin and in the world around her. The way nature doesn't ask permission to bloom — neither should we.

DESIGN CONCEPT & PROPOSAL



OPTION A



OPTION B

LETTERS OF SUPPORT

The letters that follow tell a single story from ten different vantage points. The city's leading art museum, elected government, the neighborhood's civic leadership, peer property owners and hotel operators, long-time residents, and the board charged with protecting the district's character have each written in support of this commission. What they share is a belief that this is the right artist, at the right moment for Pioneer Square, the clearest signal we can offer of what this project means to the people and institutions who will live with it.

Scott Stulen — CEO, Seattle Art Museum. Writes from the position of the region's leading cultural institution, evaluating the artistic merit and civic significance of the commission. Speaks to what a work at this scale can become when it is trusted to a singular voice, and affirms that Martinez holds the kind of presence that resonates at a civic level.

Councilmember Rob Saka — Seattle City Council. Writes as an elected member of city government, framing the commission as a statement of values rather than an aesthetic choice. Speaks to what this kind of investment signals about how Seattle treats artists as thinkers and contributors to the life of a city.

Lisa Howard — Executive Director, Alliance for Pioneer Square. Writes on behalf of the organization responsible for Pioneer Square's cultural and economic development. Focuses on the relationship between trusting an artist with space and scale and the long-term cultural character of a neighborhood.

Rebecca Bear — President & CEO, Seattle Parks Foundation. Writes as a co-lead on the Occidental Promenade initiative itself, grounding her endorsement in two years of community engagement conducted along the corridor. Confirms that public art emerged as one of the highest-ranked priorities in that process.

Seth Geiser — Manager of Urban Design, Downtown Seattle Association / Metropolitan Improvement District. Writes from a citywide urban planning perspective on how murals function as public infrastructure. Evaluates the Silver Cloud wall specifically in terms of viewshed, foot traffic, and its role within the broader downtown ecosystem.

Jon Buerge — CEO, Urban Villages. Writes as a peer property owner drawing on nearly two decades of development experience. Frames the mural within the coordinated investment underway across Pioneer Square and speaks to the returns ownership participation generates in tenant demand, civic recognition, and durable neighborhood value.

Sanoë Stevenson-Egeland — Neddy Artist Award Manager, Cornish College of the Arts at Seattle University. Writes from within the Pacific Northwest's longest-running artist recognition program, which named Martinez a 2026 Painting Finalist. Situates the commission within the program's mission to support artists as citizens who invigorate and sustain communities.

Juliana Spierenburg — Hotel Manager, Populus Seattle. Writes from direct operational experience running a neighboring hotel whose identity was built around an original on-site art collection. Speaks to the difference between commissioning original work and filling a wall, and to the relationship between that choice and a property's cultural standing over time.

Tija Petrovich — Chair, Pioneer Square Residents' Council. Writes on behalf of the residents who live with the corridor day-to-day, drawing on 33 years in the neighborhood. Frames the mural's impact in terms of social capital, organic visibility, and the emotional resonance that distinguishes public art from corporate design.

Henry Watson — Board Member, Pioneer Square Historic Preservation Board and Alliance for Pioneer Square. Writes in two capacities: as a member of the board that granted Certificate of Approval PSB 8126 for this project, and as a frequent visitor to the corridor.