

# Nico Cathcart's Mural: Illuminating the Space Between Life and Light

There's a shimmer in the honeycomb.

If the sun hits just right, you'll catch a flash of iridescent blue tucked into a mural that quietly commands your attention. That shimmer is intentional. It's part of the experience of Nico Cathcart's mural in downtown Sun Prairie, where florals and bones coexist, and everything is touched by light.

The mural, located on the Washington Mills wall, blends vibrant botanicals with the geometry of honeycomb and the delicacy of skeletal forms. It is both grounded and ethereal, realistic in detail yet dreamlike in atmosphere. Its placement on the wall feels rooted, like it has always belonged.

Nico is known for painting about dualities of life and death, beauty and decay and for inviting viewers to examine their place within those cycles. This mural does exactly that.

## Honoring O'Keeffe with Complexity

"I think my work naturally follows in the footsteps of the artist," Nico says.

O'Keeffe often painted flowers, bones, and light. Nico brings those same subjects into sharper relief, layering in personal symbolism and a bolder, more literal realism.

"While my work is more complicated and detailed than Georgia's semi-abstract style, I think it works in the context of her influence. I'm exploring florals and bones too, but I'm emphasizing the light that surrounds them."

## From Oil Paint to Public Walls

Nico's path to mural work began with traditional painting. She learned oils as a teenager and earned her BFA in Painting from SUNY Oswego and Cortland. Her career shifted dramatically in 2013 when she participated in the Richmond Street Art Festival in Virginia.

"I fell in love with the artform and never looked back," she says.

Now a nationally recognized muralist and advocate, Nico balances large-scale public art with a rich studio practice that includes painting, mixed media, and installation work. Her style blends realism with illumination. She's not afraid to challenge viewers.

## Community and Coolers

During her time painting in Sun Prairie, Nico formed fast bonds with the local community.

"The people here were so supportive," she recalls. "Little girls brought me a cooler full of popsicles. Another local artist brought cold cloths and ice to help us stay cool in the heat. It meant a lot."

These small gestures helped shape her experience, and they're part of what makes mural work so rewarding. It's public. It's communal. People feel invested.

## Look Closer at the Honeycomb

Nico added a subtle yet special detail to this mural, one that can't be appreciated in a photo.

"I used a new paint called interference blue in the honeycomb," she explains. "It has mica flakes in it, so it's iridescent. You can only really see the effect when you're standing in front of it."

The paint choice reflects her love for light and the unseen elements that bring a piece to life.

## A Soundtrack as Bold as the Work

Painting for hours on a lift under the summer sun isn't easy. Nico keeps herself focused with a mix of music, audiobooks, and podcasts. This time, she listened to Laurie Riple's biography of Georgia O'Keeffe and a podcast called "Artholes," which covered the dramatic life of Caravaggio.

Her playlist included everything from Massive Attack and Portishead to Slayer, Nina Simone, Beastie Boys, and Patti Smith. "I'm all over the place musically," she laughs.

## Words for the Next Generation

"Keep working," Nico tells young artists. "Art is hard sometimes, but it's the most rewarding if you put the hours in."

There's nothing glamorous about sweating on a lift for 12 hours in a ventilator mask. But the resulting mural, the community connection, the chance to contribute something lasting makes it worth it.

## What Would Georgia Think?

"If O'Keeffe walked by, I think she'd find my work too complicated," Nico says with a smile. "Her work was all about simplification. But I'd love to hear her honest critique."

Different eras, different styles, same desire to say something meaningful through art.

## Final Invitation

If you're exploring the murals of Sun Prairie, make sure to pause at Nico Cathcart's piece. Shift your angle. Let the sunlight find the shimmer. Notice the tension and harmony between the flowers and the bones.

This mural, like much of Nico's work, invites more than just a glance. It asks for reflection. And in return, it offers light.