


the milligan studio

PLOUGH/SKY

A CELEBRATION OF THE WORKERS OF WEST MADISON



Shown here with shatter-resistant architectural art glass, blue patinated bronze and stainless steel. Five birds ranging in height from 24ft to 16ft.



PLOUGH/SKY AT NIGHT
ALUMINUM LIT WITH DARK SKY DIRECTIONAL LIGHTING



DESIGN INFLUENCE IS THE GESTURE OF BIRDS SKIMMING THE WATER AND HOW THE BEAUTY OF THEIR MOVEMENT IS LIKE THE PLOUGHS CUTTING THROUGH THE BANKS OF SNOW.



BACKGROUND

In Spring 2025, The Milligan Studio surveyed the West Madison community who prioritized an art fence, sculpture, and benches for Public Art. Due to budget limits which impacted building redesigns, available space for art was reconfigured. By January 2026, a public area next to the building—with walking paths and bike lanes—was designated for Public Art.

PLOUGH/SKY

Responding to the evolved design, The Milligan Studio created “Plough/Sky,” an installation that spans the entire site. This series of sculptures celebrates community, honoring the snowplow fleet maintained in the Far West Operations building. Each winter before sunrise, their plows clear the roads, helping the community move forward with their day, together.

Plough/Sky is a unique public art installation featuring numerous bird/plough sculptures intended for visitors to walk among. The arrangement represents the concept of community; the scale and quantity of the figures serve to energize the site and recognize the collective efforts of individuals striving for a better future.

The composition’s scale matches the building, guiding the gaze upward and across to highlight the harmony between landscape and architecture.

Drawing inspiration from Wisconsin's Driftless region, the installation is a series of stylized ancient bird forms crafted from art glass with aluminum or blue patinated bronze surfaces. The integration of industrial elements, such as rivets, references the aesthetic of plows, while the use of shatter-resistant glass alludes to the presence of water. The iridescent glass components are designed to be self-illuminating in natural daylight and, when backlit inside, emit a soothing light during nighttime hours.



PLOUGH/SKY AT NIGHT

THE WORK CAN BE ILLUMINATED IN ONE OF THREE OPTIONS

- 1) DIRECTIONAL WARM LIGHT PROJECTED ONTO ALUMINIUM SKIN (L)
- 2) INTERIOR LIGHTS WITH ART GLASS INSERTS IN WATER SHADES WITH ALUMINIUM SKIN (CENTER)
- 3) THE STUDIO PREFERENCE: BLUE PATINATED BRONZE. INTERIOR LIGHTS WITH ART GLASS INSERTS IN WATER SHADES (R)

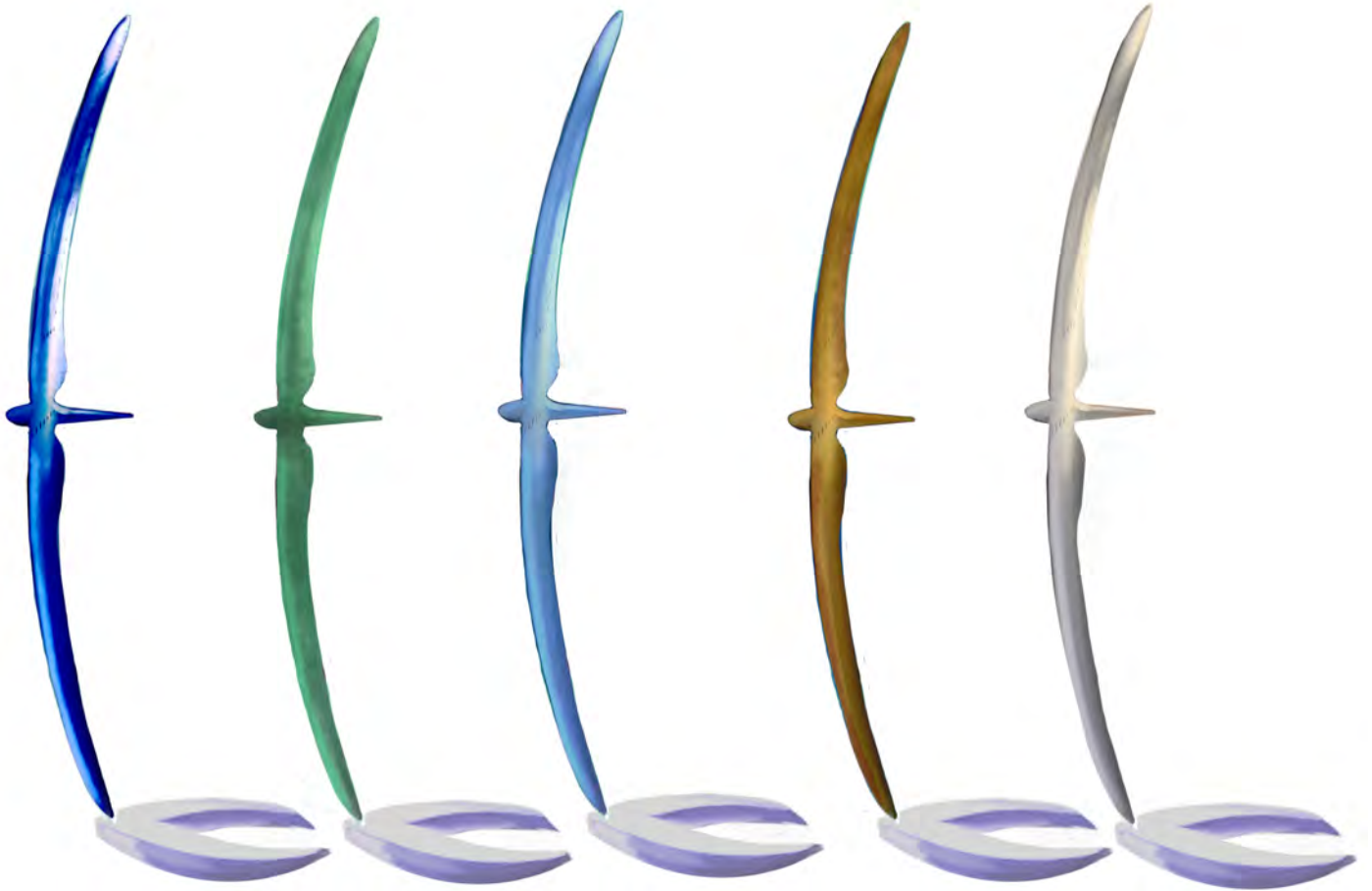


OPTIONS FOR BODY

Although our primary fabrication materials are patinated bronze and glass, which will create a long-lasting, low-maintenance installation for the community (Option 1), the piece can also be produced in bronze or aluminum. This flexibility allows *PLOUGH/SKY* to be offered in a range of colors.

LEFT TO RIGHT:

- 1) DEPTH BLUE BRONZE WITH INTERIOR LIGHTS WITH ART GLASS INSERTS IN WATER SHADES.
- 2) VERDIGRIS (GREEN) BRONZE INTERIOR LIGHTS WITH ART GLASS INSERTS IN WATER SHADES.
- 3) ALUMINIUM WITH INTERIOR LIGHTS WITH ART GLASS INSERTS IN WATER SHADES.
- 4) CLEAR-COATED NATURAL BRONZE.
- 5) NATURAL ALUMINIUM.



EXAMPLE OF DEPTH BLUE PATINATED BRONZE
(SAMPLE FROM MILLIGAN STUDIO'S GRAND RAPIDS' TRIPTYCH
"THE MEMORY OF WATER")



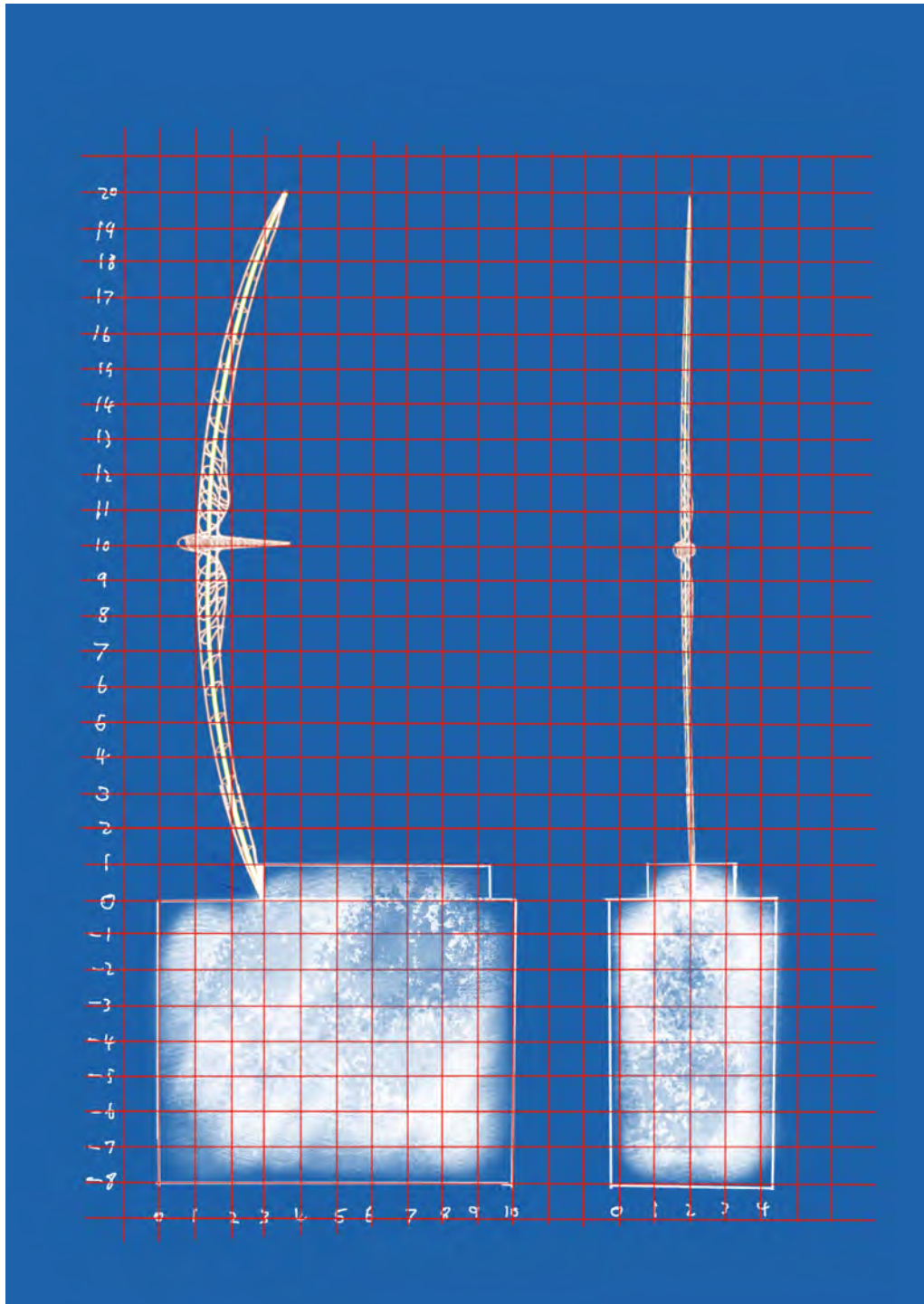
RENDERING OF *Plough/Sky* IN DEPTH BLUE PATINATED BRONZE (DETAIL R) WHICH WOULD BE FABRICATED WITH BACKLIT ART GLASS INSERTS



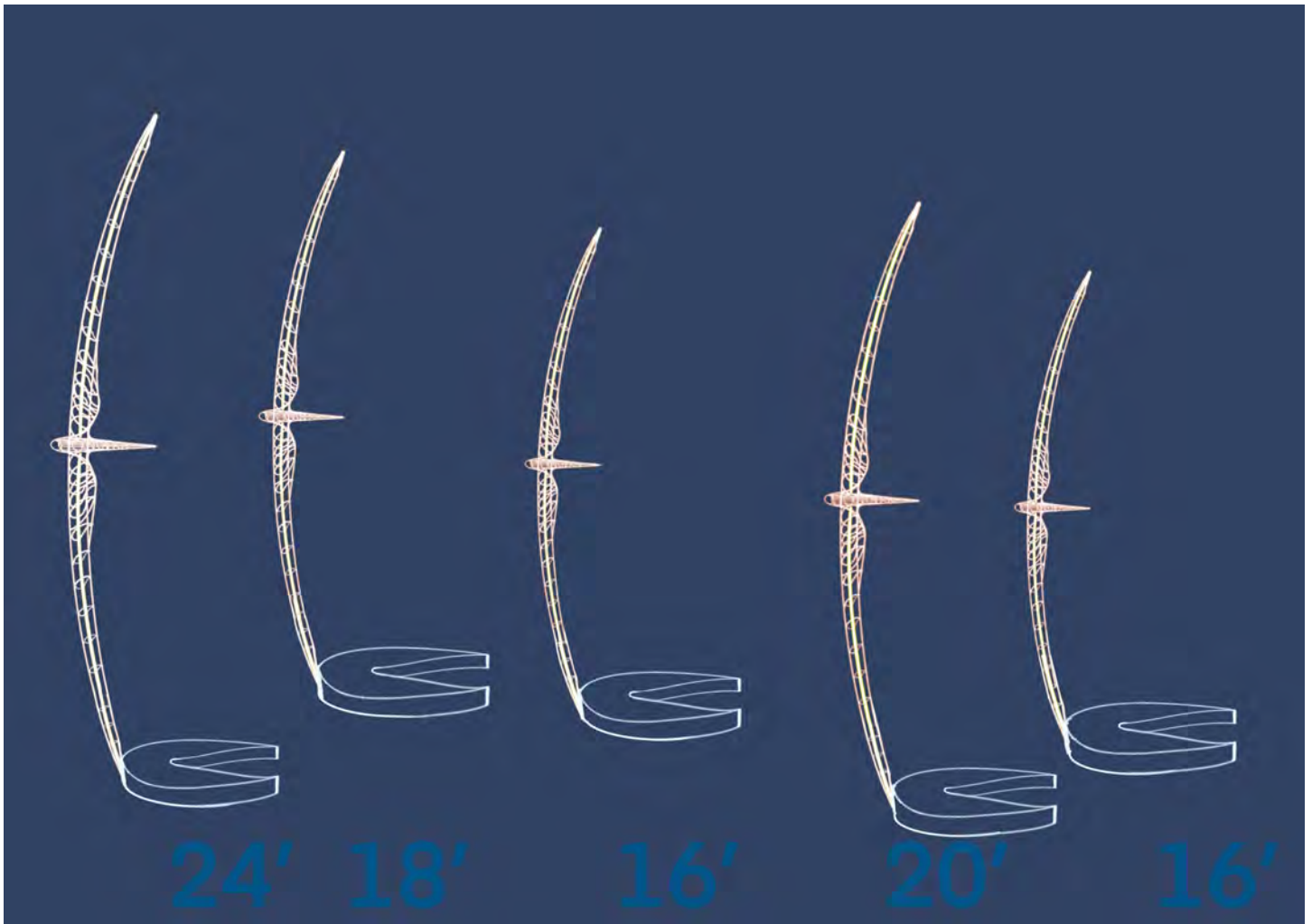
ALUMINIUM SKIN (SHOWN HERE WITHOUT GLASS INSERTS.)



PROPOSAL RENDERINGS

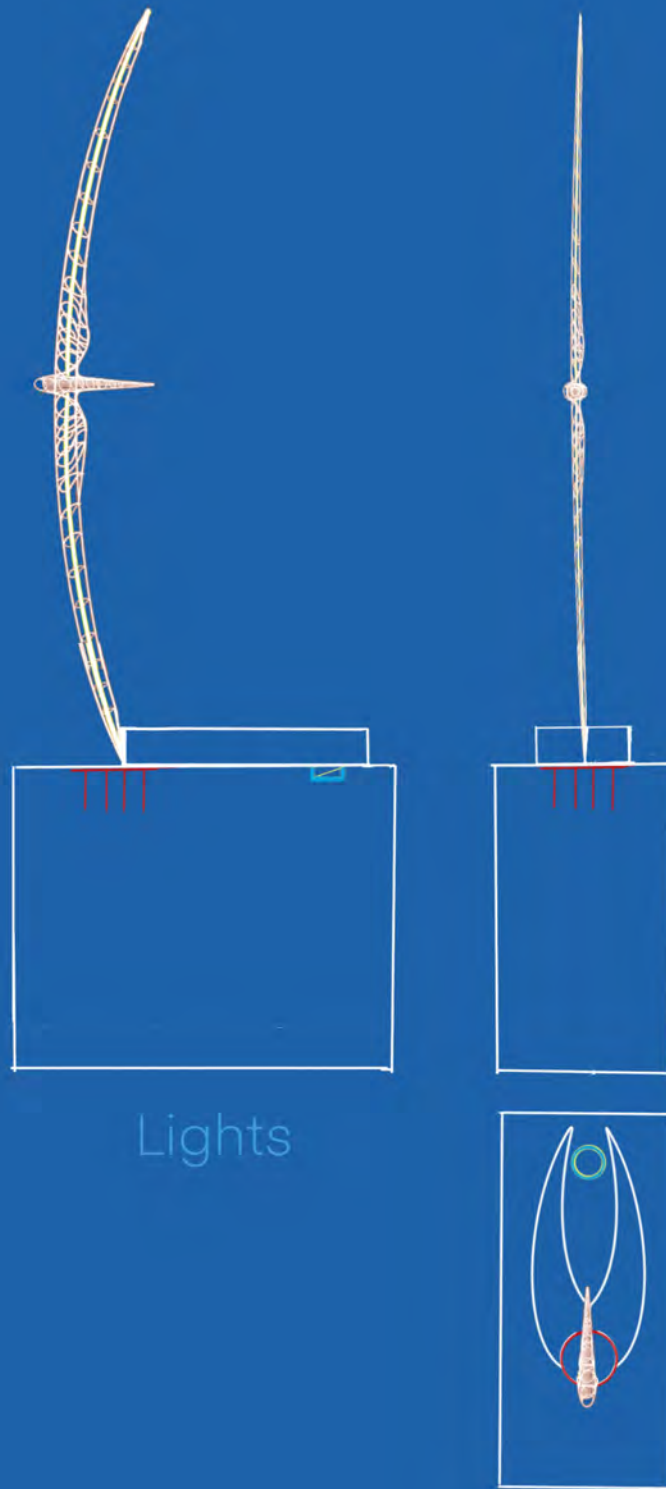


INTERIOR ARMATURE AND FOUNDATION SCHEMATIC



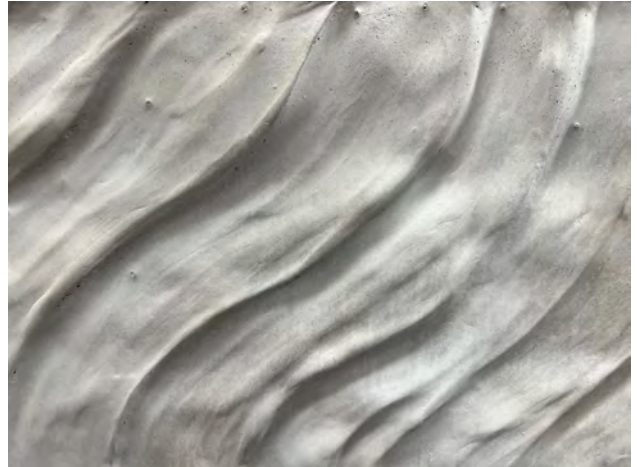
PLOUGH SIZES AS ARRANGED IN THE INSTALLATION.

Plough 20' with 8' foundation

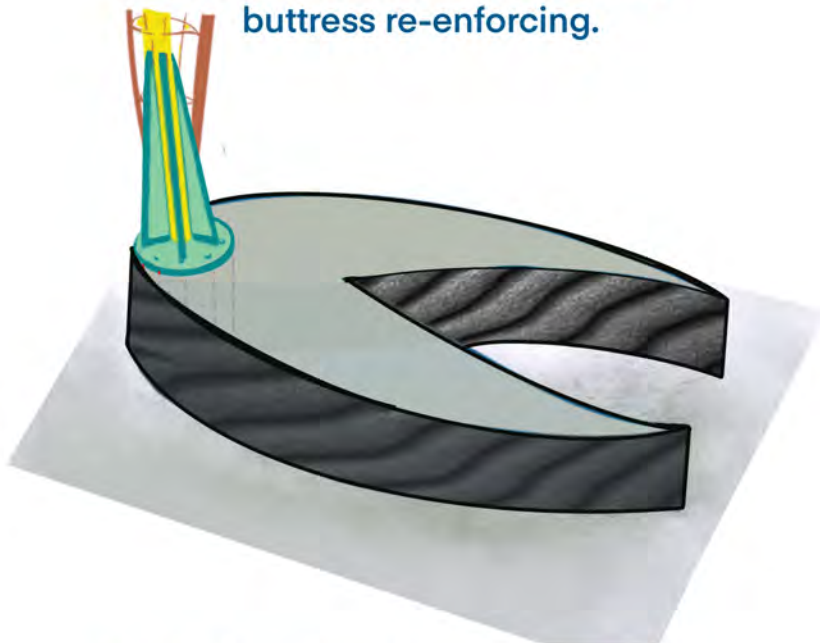


Lights

EXTERIOR DIRECTIONAL LIGHT PLACEMENT (FOR NON-GLASS MODEL)



Detail of bolted base plate with
buttress re-enforcing.



Ripple form bench and foundation

FABRICATION AND INSTALLATION PROCESS

Each phase of the project, from conception to installation, is meticulously documented online, enabling the community to track progress in real time and gain insights into contributors, thereby fostering a sense of ownership and engagement. Further information is available at www.themilliganstudio.com.

The fabrication process is scheduled to span approximately one year.

METHODOLOGY

We will start both structure construction and kiln-formed glass fabrication at the same time.

When complete, each glass segment will be affixed to the frame with a rounded rivet encased in acrylic washers that won't yellow and can endure temperatures from 115°F to -50°F.

Our method has proven effective with shatter-resistant glass sculptures in locations with extreme temperatures, including Minnesota, Washington (State), and North Dakota.

BESPOKE GLASS

Collaborating with artisans at Paul Wissmach Glass Company, an American art glass company since 1904, we will create a series of water panels to be sealed and riveted in place.

The glass will be laminated with an organic shatter protection coating that is UV resistant and produced without heavy metals.



Bronze bolt in acrylic shock absorber (center) set into metallic capped glass.

This type of glass has been utilized in other major projects located in extreme climates. It offers durability, safety, and maintains its color over time.

Recent studies indicate that glass has an atomic decay rate equivalent to two universes.

INSTALLATION

We will deliver the work in segments in flatbed trucks. Using a crane, we will install each wing and then add the glass. We estimate the installation process to take a week to 10 days, weather permitting.

ABOUT THE MILLIGAN STUDIO

"Do continue the great impactful work."
Jai Winston, Director, Knight Foundation

"Your aesthetic is sophisticated and accessible, and your fabrication plan and budget are sound. You put beauty in the world. We are proud to be your partners."
—Dakota County Public Art (Minnesota), 2020

*"Altitude is a beacon of hope and a symbol of the resiliency of St. Paul
as we move forward through some pretty difficult times in our history."* —YWCA



"WE DEFY GRAVITY WITH JOY"

The award-winning Milligan Studio has created Public Art in collaboration with communities in the United States, United Kingdom, and EU, specifically Ireland and Paris, for more than a decade.

Samples of their work in glass can be found in The Corning Museum of Glass.

The two have received grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, Bush Foundation, PEN America, Jerome Foundation, and both the Florida and Minnesota State Arts Board.