

CONCEPTS OF INDEPENDENCE

Community Expressions



A COLLECTION OF
ART, WRITING & PHOTOGRAPHY
FROM THE CONCEPTS COMMUNITY

NOVEMBER 2016



THIS IS A COLLECTION OF ARTISTIC EXPRESSIONS OF COMMUNITY, GATHERED FROM VARIOUS MEMBERS OF CONCEPTS' OWN COMMUNITY. FEATURED WITHIN THESE PAGES ARE THE WORKS OF THE FOLLOWING INDIVIDUALS:

NANCY BROWN, CONSUMER
L.D., CONSUMER

CARMELO GONZALEZ,
CONSUMER

ANNIE-SARAY MORENO,
PERSONAL ASSISTANT

ATHENA SAVIDES, CONSUMER

NICK SAVIDES, FAMILY
MEMBER

SHARON STERN, CONSUMER

JUDY SUPERNAW, CONSUMER

SHELENE THOMAS, PERSONAL
ASSISTANT

JOANN VITIELLO, CONSUMER

MEMORIES *by Joann Vitiello*

TRAILBLAZING CONSUMER-DIRECTION IN THE COMMUNITY

My name is Joann Vitiello and I am a member of Concepts. I am single and have been for many years following a six year marriage. I am also a survivor, having to overcome two occurrences of cancer. My life now is filled with the harmony and contentment I receive from meditating, and with the satisfaction of helping others cope with life's events by teaching meditation; something I have been doing since 1987. Besides conducting these classes, I enjoy cooking, particularly Italian foods and adding to my collection of bells and angels. I am currently at work on my latest project – the writing of my memoir.

It was in 1973, when I first moved into my apartment in O'Dwyer Gardens in Brooklyn, that I met Muriel and Vinnie Zgardowski. This couple along with others had a vision of starting a consumer-directed agency associated with Medicaid. They asked me to participate in this endeavor and from 1974 until 1980, a small group, of which I was one, formulated the conceptual basis for this organization. After repeated

attempts on our part to gain approval, the City and State eventually accepted our proposal on a trial basis. And in September 1980, the self-directed agency known as Concepts of Independence was opened.

Although it has undergone many changes since its inception, the agency still survives after 36 years, an agency dedicated to the independence of the disabled. Over the years, I have been a Board Member and am currently a Vice President and trustee. But above all, I am a Consumer and very proud to have been a founder of Concepts.

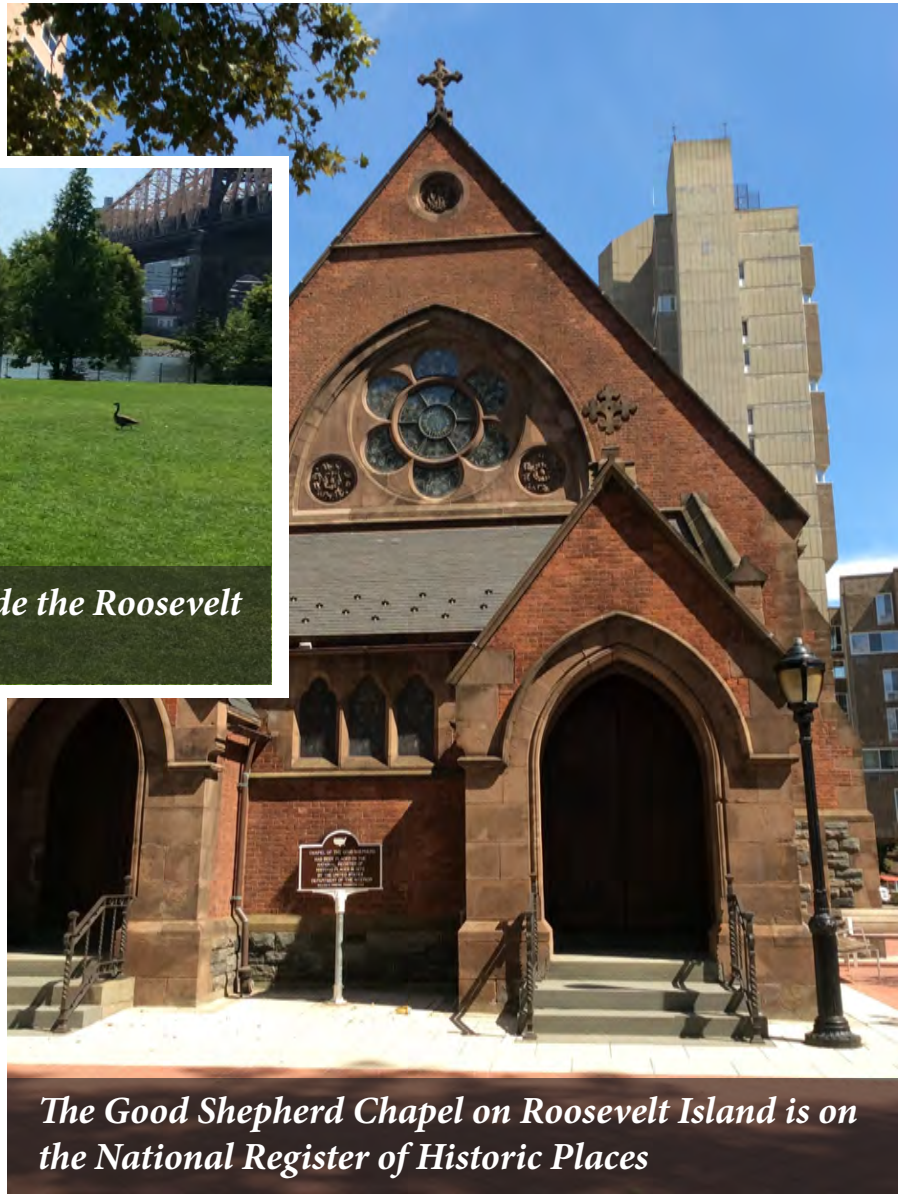
I am grateful to the City and State for giving us the opportunity to establish a Consumer-run, self-directed organization. I am thankful to Tony Caputo and the Concepts staff and to the many, many others both past and present, who have made and continue to make this unique agency a success so that the legacy of Concepts of Independence will grow and flourish based on the ideals that were formulated so many years ago.

COMMUNITY PHOTO COLLAGE

by Nancy Brown



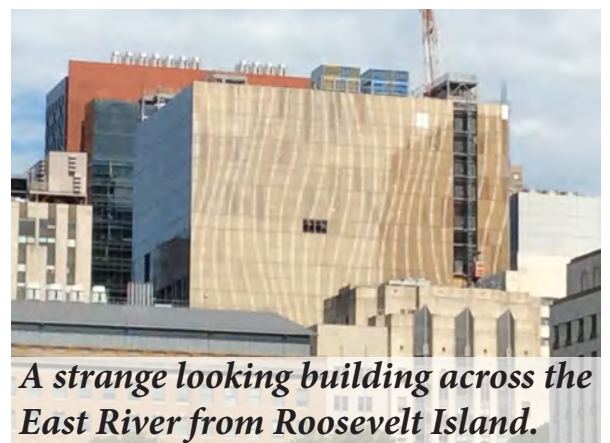
The Canadian geese invade the Roosevelt Island Baseball field



The Good Shepherd Chapel on Roosevelt Island is on the National Register of Historic Places



A seagull relaxing and taking in the view on the Roosevelt Island promenade



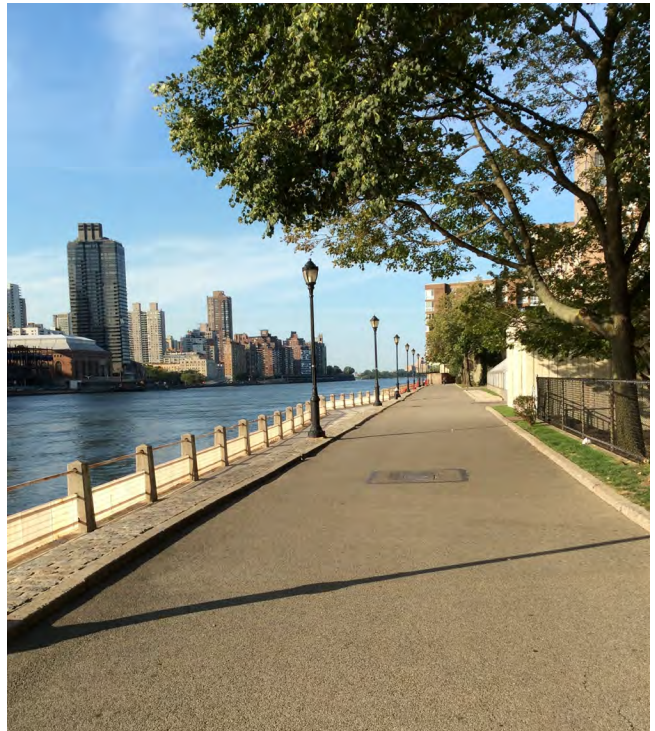
A strange looking building across the East River from Roosevelt Island.



The Roosevelt Island Tramway



A view of the East River and Manhattan skyline



The Roosevelt island Promenade. I spend many relaxing times here.



This was taken on the fourth of July just before the fireworks started

SHORT STORY

by Athena Savides

"I WROTE THIS STORY WITH WELCOME ADVICE FROM A BRILLIANT WRITER AND GREAT FRIEND KATHLEEN DOWNES, AS A GENTLE (AND HOPEFULLY HUMOROUS) REMINDER TO THOSE WHO HAVE EVER SAID, "POWER CHAIR COMING THROUGH," WHEN THEY MEANT TO SAY, "PERSON IN A POWER CHAIR COMING THROUGH."

"POWER CHAIR COMING THROUGH!"

The lines were growing longer. They were taking this seriously. Lines of them were crowding the streets -- power chairs. Empty ones. They were driving themselves. People walking by were shocked and confused, as they snaked their way in between the autonomous machines. Some pedestrians were keenly aware of the danger for their bare toes and sneakered feet. Some paid the price for uncomfortably averting their eyes, with a brief moment of pain, as their foot was run over by a power chair, anxious to reach the nearest bus stop.

The bus drivers were starting to feel overwhelmed, as more chairs kept boarding. They were persistent, pushing to the front of the line, to be sure they were seen. Once one set of safety straps was filled, they waited morosely for the next bus; those who had horns were honking them, and those who didn't were absent-mindedly twirling themselves. As the wait grew, some determinedly turned their wheels toward the subway.

Of course, this was not easy, as the wheelchair accessible subway stations were few and far between. Once they had arrived, some of the power chairs grumbled in front of broken elevators (they, unable to speak human languages or use computers, had not been able to check ahead of time which stations' elevators were working).

The power chairs' inability to make these verifications ought not be taken as an indication that these solo escapades on the subways and buses were unplanned. As the fatigued power chairs finally settled in after nerve-racking experiences -- with malfunctioning bus lifts, or with narrow pathways between the staircase and the train tracks, or with uneven subway platforms -- they began to review in their electric minds the social unrest and mounting irritation which had culminated in the decision to make this massive venture into the public transit system without their owners.

First of all, no human would ever know the agony of being sat in all day. Of course, there was the occasional respite of a transfer out of the chair in a bathroom or at a theater, or for some brief appointment or other, but most of the time it was hot, and cramped, and they hardly ever got to see their owners face to face -- ah, the humiliation! . . . Not to mention the physical and emotional pain they endured almost every day. Most of the power chairs had dents and scratches of varying colors and severity from being crashed unceremoniously into door frames, walls, pillars . . . to say nothing of being covered in crumbs of unappetizing human food! Many of the power chairs had begun to wonder whether their owners had any sense of decency at all . . . Ah, the bliss when their owners finally went to bed, to sleep for the night; the euphoria when they were plugged in, so their batteries could charge every night or every other night -- they were left to themselves to rejuvenate, alone and wonderfully empty! Something had to be done.

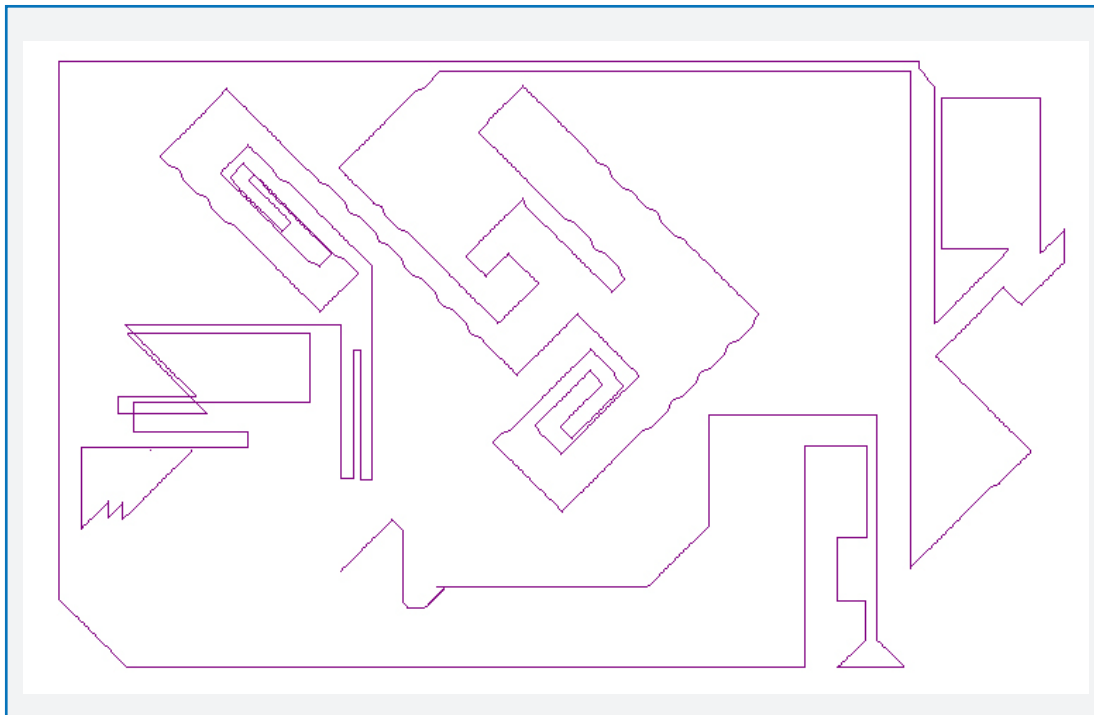
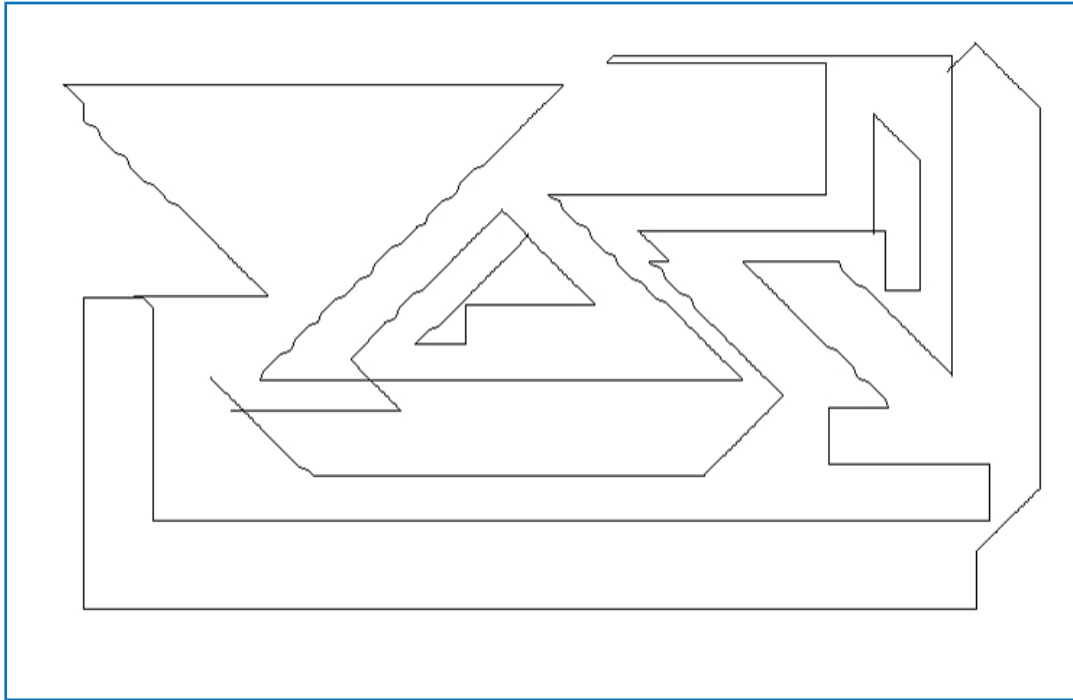
And so, this takeover of the transit system had been expertly planned. On this particular day, at this exact time, if only just this once, all the power chairs would liberate themselves from their owners (they had all agreed to forgo the pleasure of being charged for one night) and make this mass descent on the accessible subways and buses.

The power chairs were roused from their reveries, and quietly took pleasure within themselves, each time a train or bus stopped to allow another autonomous passenger to roll on, and the humans stepped aside with trepidation, as they shouted -- not erroneously -- "Power chair coming through!"



DIGITAL CREATIONS

by Sharon Stern



ESSAY

by Judy Supernaw

MY COMMUNITY

I am in a wheel chair. I had a wonderful elderly neighbor named Aynes. When I came home from work, she would open the outside door for me. She would help me with my coat and then she would ask me if I wanted or needed anything. During the summer we would sit out on the patio – she was a wise lady. She was like a mother to me. I miss her very much.

MAYORS CUP RACE

Every July we have the Mayors Cup Race in Plattshurgh, NY on beautiful Lake Champlain. It is all about sail boat racing. We have food and music for 3 days. It is a wonderful experience.

BATTLE OF PLATTSBURGH – WAR OF 1812

A lot of the war of 1812 was fought in Plattsburgh, NY, where I live. So they have reenactments. People come from different parts of the USA and Canada to be in the celebration. They wear colonial costumes, and we have a big parade with costumed folks. We have the US Navy Band come from Connecticut. And the Royal Canadian Band plus other Canadian Bands.

POETRY *by Carmelo Gonzalez*

SURPRISE

People look at us as if we're
retarded.
They're afraid of us, just because
we are different.
They don't even want to try to find
out who we are.
We come down to earth not
knowing what is ahead of us.
At first we see the world as an
adventure.
As time goes by, we learn that we
are different.
They don't know how to deal with
us, so they want to lock us up.
How can we show you that we are
just like you?
The only thing is, we walk in
different shoes.
The only thing we want from you is
to open your eyes,
And see us for who we are.
You just might be surprised.

May 14, 2000

THANK YOU

We met when I was young.
We met on unfortunate terms.
You were there when no one else
was.
You saw me in a situation that no
one ever saw.
You were there to carry me through.
Even when I would curse at you.
There were times that I wished I had
never met you.
There were times that I didn't know
where I would be without you.
You helped me play.
When I saw danger you moved me
away.
You helped me see things that only
you can.
Without each other we are nothing.
When we are together we become
one.
I want to say thank you wheelchair
for all you have done

May 10, 2000

SHOW ME THE WAY

I don't know where I come from
I don't know where I've been
I don't know where I'm going
but I know wherever it is
you have to be there
show me the way
show me the light
that I need
to follow
wherever it leads
I do know
That I need to get there
Because that's where
My life begins
The night falls
The day begins
For the moment stands still
Everytime I see the brightness
In your eyes
Don't turn away
'cause when you do
my life becomes dim so
keep on looking towards my path
so I could see my way to you
show me the way
show me the way to you.

October 22, 2001



DRAWING
by Shelene Thomas



“MY CONSUMER IS A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN WHO LOVES FLOWERS. THEIR BEAUTY KEEPS HER GOING. SHE COMES TO LIFE WHEN SHE SEES FLOWERS, SO I CREATED THIS PICTURE IN HER HONOR. HER NAME IS SHIRLEY KOOPERSMITH AND I RESPECT AND HONOR HER WITH DIGNITY.”

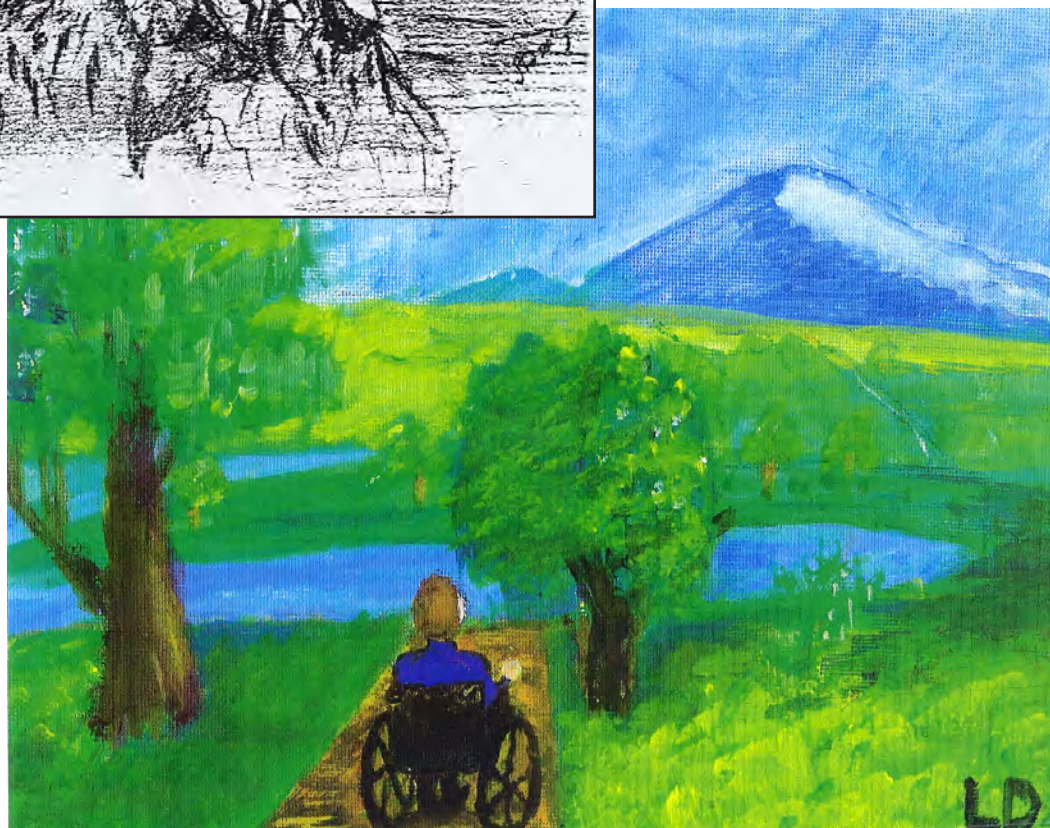
-SHELENE THOMAS, PERSONAL ASSISTANT TO SHIRLEY KOOPERSMITH

DRAWING & PAINTING

by LD



A PORTRAYAL OF
ELEMENTS OF MY
COMMUNITY FROM
MY CHILDHOOD
OVERSEAS, AND
THEN LATER DURING
MY LIFE IN THE US.
-L.D.



MUSINGS

by Annie-Saray Moreno

NEVER PAINT DREAMS OR NIGHTMARES. I PAINT MY REALITY.

In my memory, there are my parents who left me with all. In my thinking there are landscapes of my experiences. In my sound is the art of expressing myself. So many failures that live and burn like a torch. I believe everything has meaning: from the sky, birds, water, and mountains to the aroma of coffee. Children are innocent beings with lack of knowledge. They represent the peace so needed in the world. Birds are full of wisdom for their vividness and agility. The Spanish accent makes me feel more human... like harmony, and it makes me evaluate survival.

According to my Home Economics class, art is learned then flows into you with delicacy. That patience is reflected like a mirror. Other art is music, its expression dependent on the lyrical sound. Going outside helps clear my mind, but all I see is not gold. The hard work separates us from poverty that many nations have, as well as the land and what its inhabitants spend. The legacy of God does not happen.

I can only admire what I lived to understand. The rest of my walk with nature remains. We are here because we live in houses. We are also decorations. We serve ourselves; better to have a dry morsel than to be full of strife. Respect for things has gotten lost for one who has acquired low self-esteem. But all is not lost. If I wound up here, anyone can act to leave their trace in history. Don't know who we are? Or why we are here? Or why we think differently? While we breathe, there is hope of change and sowing in fertile soil.

Since my childhood I have loved to write, and I love communication. I see different expressions. There is a union of cultures in me: I was born in the Dominican Republic, then came to USA. I grew up with Guatemalans, and then finally became an American Citizen. I can never forget my roots. And ideas will continue to expand from within me. Before the Universe and Its creator, we are all equal. There is no budget range for a better quality of life. We would not exist with neither more nor less.

PAINTINGS *by Nick Savides*

“MY DAUGHTER, ATHENA, AND I LIVE NEAR PROSPECT PARK, AND IT IS ONE OF OUR FAVORITE PLACES TO TAKE A WALK. I’M A PAINTER, SO IT’S NATURAL FOR ME TO DRAW INSPIRATION FROM THE PARK, SEEING HOW IT CHANGES ACROSS THE SEASONS.”



AUTUMN IN PROSPECT PARK



SUMMER DAY
BY NICK SAVIDES