

Historic Sacred Heart pedestal transported from the CWE to Villa Duchesne

BY ABBY WOJCIK

For years, a large white marble pedestal sat incongruously in the parking lot of a Central West End apartment complex. Anyone who may have noticed it likely didn't realize it was the last remnant of a historic private school. Thanks to generous alumni, the pedestal has been moved to a new home — the grounds of a school founded by the same religious teaching order that once educated children in the CWE.

The pedestal's longtime location at the West End Terrace Apartments on Greenwich Court is the former site to one of the earliest schools founded by the Society of the Sacred Heart in the St. Louis area: City House and Barat Hall.

City House was an all-girls school founded by Mother Philippine Duchesne in 1827, and Barat Hall was the affiliated academy for boys. The schools were closed and demolished in 1968, leaving only a statue of Jesus standing on a granite pedestal inscribed with "Cor Jesus, Miserere Nobis!"

The statue of Jesus was donated by the Religious of the Sacred Heart to the parish of Saint Catherine of Siena, separating it from the roughly 50,000-pound pedestal. The statue was later moved to the Academy of the Sacred Heart in St. Charles, where it now resides.

It is speculated that the pedestal was too heavy to relocate, donate or archive at the time, explaining why it remained in the CWE facing Taylor Avenue since it was erected by the McCarthy Monument Co. in 1906.

That is, it remained there until June 27 of this year, when the pedestal was transported to Villa Duchesne to display on its upper campus, across from the 1929 Main Building.

As the nearest Sacred Heart School, Villa Duchesne absorbed students from City House and Barat Hall after their closing. Passionate alumni of the Villa Duchesne-City House Alumnae Association have been the primary force behind moving the pedestal to Villa's campus at 10801 Conway Road.

"The alums have been dedicated

to this mission of moving the pedestal back to Villa for many years," said Deborah Schlattman, Villa's director of advancement. "So much so that we have alums who would have cocktail receptions at the old site of the pedestal, or they had their reunions there because that's where their home was."

Fortunately for Villa, the West End Terrace Apartments are owned by Kirk Mills and Mills Properties; Mills' daughter graduated from Villa Duchesne in 2023.

When the Alumnae Association approached Villa's head of school, Dr. Dawn Nichols, with their request, they were able to connect with Mills Properties and strategically work on transporting the pedestal. This was a fully funded donor project.

Specifically, Molly McKeon Hyde '75, Jim Hyde, Mary Niemann Ciapciak '75 and Bob Ciapciak (Barat Hall through eighth grade; St. Louis Priory '72) were integral in making this happen, as well as Bob Byrne with Byrne and Jones Construction and Grant Contracting.

The Villa Duchesne community is ecstatic to have this revered, educational monument returned to a Sacred Heart campus and reunited with students who deeply appreciate what it represents, Schlattman indicated. "Because it's not so much about the actual pedestal, it's about the piece of history coming home and forever being preserved on its home at Villa," she said.

St. Louis is somewhat of a headquarters for the Society of the Sacred Heart, as it is where Philippine Duchesne and two other sisters originally came from Europe



PHOTO COURTESY OF VILLA DUCHESNE

View of the pedestal in its new location on Villa Duchesne's campus.

to bring Sacred Heart education to America. There are 25 of the schools across North America, and The Academy of the Sacred Heart in St. Charles is the first Sacred Heart School in the St. Louis area.

"So, it's quite literally a very sacred spot, not only for St. Louis, but in the world and the history of Sacred Heart Education," Schlattman said.

St. Louis and the CWE are part of a rich, deep educational pedagogy with a mission grounded in relationships and focused on spreading the love of Christ in the world, a Villa Duchesne representative said.

"Our history truly is who we are. It is what makes Villa *Villa*," Alice Dickherber said, Villa's assistant head of school for strategic initiatives. "Because our history is so important to who we are, having this piece of our history here just enriches that for everybody in our community."

Villa Duchesne invites anyone passionate about St. Louis history, or who simply wants to see the pedestal and learn more to reach out to the staff or alumnae. As a historic symbol of spiritual enlightenment and a landmark for education west of the Mississippi, this pedestal is a meaningful relic that ties generations of young scholars together.



View of the pedestal at the West End Terrace Apartments before it was moved.



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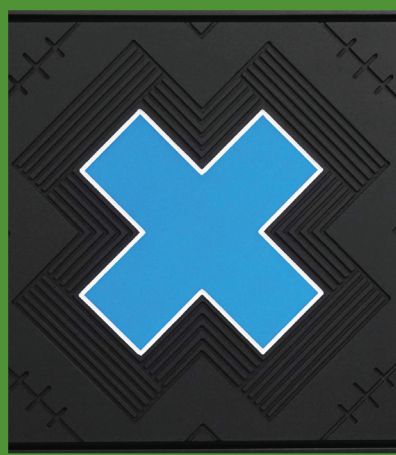
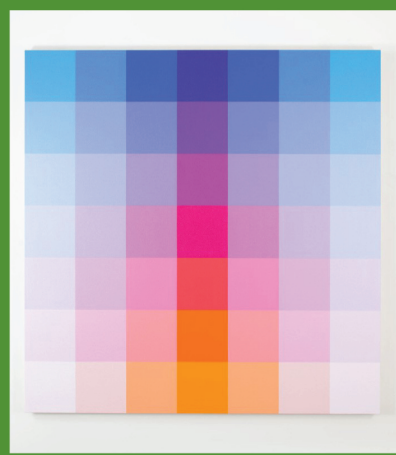
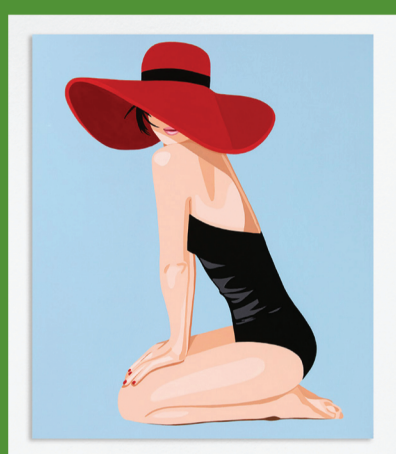
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