

Matthew 25 Collection

Created by Canadian artist, **Timothy Schmalz**, this group of six sculptures represents the areas called out in the Gospel of Matthew to care for the least of our brothers and sisters in need. Community West Foundation permanently installed these artworks on the near west side with the intention to spark conversations around social justice and empathy. Cleveland is the second city in the world, following Rome, Italy, to have the full collection of bronze figures.

Location Map

When I Was Hungry and Thirsty

Old Stone Church
91 Public Square
Cleveland, OH 44113

Homeless Jesus

Saint Malachi Parish
2459 Washington Avenue
Cleveland, OH 44113

When I Was Naked

Malachi House
2810 Clinton Avenue,
Cleveland, OH 44113

When I Was Sick

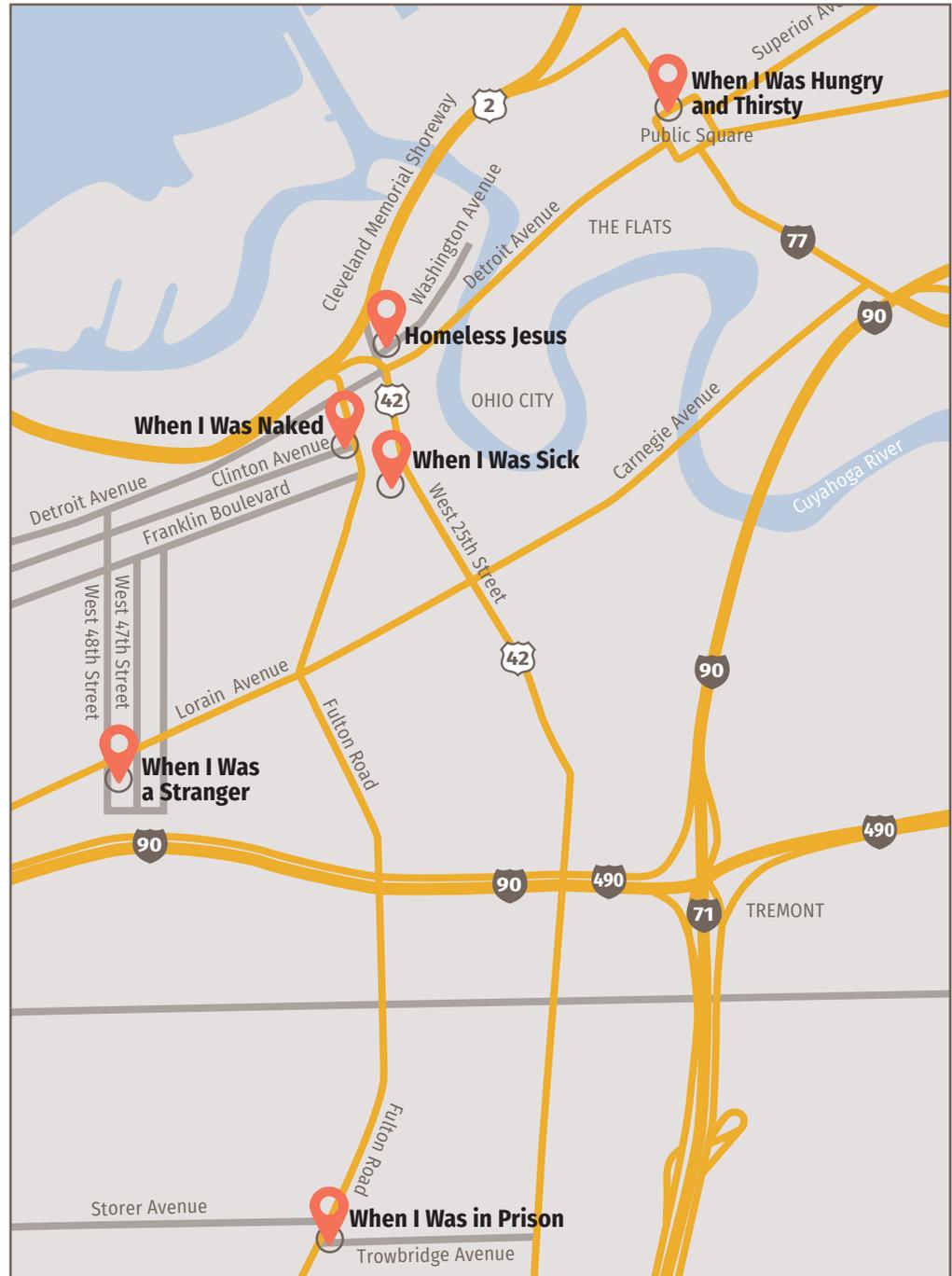
**Cleveland Clinic
Lutheran Hospital**
(corner of main entrance on West 25th Street)
1730 West 25th Street
Cleveland, OH 44113

When I Was a Stranger

The Refugee Response
(on the Urban Community School campus)
2054 West 47th Street
Cleveland OH 44102

When I Was in Prison

Bridge CLE
(formerly known as Family Ministry Center)
3389 Fulton Road,
Cleveland, OH 44109



When I Was Hungry & Thirsty

Schmalz loves this sculpture. He feels the most fascinating thing about this piece is its simplicity. It's like so many homeless people you see out there sitting cross-legged with their back against the wall with a cup out to collect change.

The cup and the plate in this piece symbolically and economically suggests the idea of Hungry and Thirsty with the hand reaching out in between. Schmalz said that often times in Rome, people leave change in the cup or on the plate which is collected at the end of the day and brought to a charity or homeless people will pick it up during the day if they need it.

Homeless Jesus

Timothy Schmalz saw a homeless person in Toronto – a figure shrouded in a blanket in the city and it moved him spiritually and stopped him in his tracks.

He returned to his studio inspired because he had felt he saw something sacred and he wanted other people to see it.

His initial thought about seeing that homeless person was “I just saw Jesus” – he reflected that maybe it was because it was the middle of the day, or that it was close to Christmas one the busiest streets in one of the busiest cities in Canada. There was a contrast between the city and this human figure that was silent and shrouded. Being a Christian, he thought “that was Jesus”.

Schmalz wanted to create that scene so others could experience it. He dropped all his other projects and started sculpting the exact scene he experienced that day. He did purposefully move the blanket up so the feet would be exposed revealing the wounds which would serve as the only identification it was Christ.

At first, Schmalz had the face exposed on the sculpture but he felt it was too much and didn't conform to Matthew 25. In Matthew 25, there is that mystery and ambiguity where the identification of Jesus comes afterwards. The Jesus figure is identifying with the least of those in our society. Schmalz wanted to emphasize the least of us could be any of us.

When I Was Naked

This sculpture was difficult for Schmalz because it is a naked representation of a figure. He did not want it to be risqué or shocking. He wanted the message to be legible for people who perhaps do not follow the Bible. It took him 3 years to do because the design was looking too pornographic or too perfect, like an Athens sculpture. He didn't want it to be too nude or too Greek.

Schmalz was in Rome when the idea came to him. He was staying at the Vatican View Hotel – and his room happened to NOT overlook the Vatican. It did overlook a side street where a number of homeless people would be sleeping at night. What Schmalz saw that night shocked him into his design path for this piece – he saw 3 homeless people, two men and one woman who prepared their cardboard for the night. He saw how carefully and precious the cardboard was and how they used it. They used it as their pillows, their blankets, they even used it to create little houses cornering up against the wall. It made him really sad because he had never observed homeless people for that length of time.

At 3 o'clock in the morning, the rats came out at night. He saw the rats go inside the cardboard and the figure would shift and then the rat would pop out. Schmalz was horrified that these men and women had to deal with rats.

After witnessing that scene, he knew exactly how the design should look – it's a fragile, small figure holding a piece of cardboard, sheltering himself.

When I Was Sick

Timothy Schmalz wanted the sculptures in the Matthew 25 Collection to be cleverly created in that there is something to discover in each.

Schmalz admitted that the Sickness statue was very difficult for him and he spent years designing it. He did not want to bring any modern medical equipment into the design in fear it would date the piece and in 100 years, it would look like it was done in the year 2000. He wanted it to be universal in its representation and timeless.

Schmalz did sketch after sketch filling up notebooks with different representations. He realized 'when I was sick' had to be with the gesture – with the positioning of the figure. The one arm is draped over the face to show suffering and agony. You know that the figure is sick, but not dead. The other hand reaching out fulfills the text – 'when you visited me' – the hand is beckoning someone to visit them. Timothy felt this was as important as feeding the hungry because there is that sense of suffering. The sculpture is reaching out to the people experiencing it.

When I Was a Stranger

This sculpture was an amazing discovery for Schmalz. He always thought that “When I Was a Stranger, you let me in...” was letting a stranger into your home for a warm meal out of the cold. But then he realized the text could have several layers of meaning. He thought of all the social circles we have in our society – in schools, businesses, countries. It would be limiting to that gospel text to think it is just having someone come into your home for a meal.

He felt the circle was a powerful way to represent that text. A circle can describe a country, a social group, it can also represent welcoming. The way the sculpture is created it allows people to join in and participate. When no one is around the circle, Jesus looks forlorn. It’s almost a beckoning to come around as a community, as different individual people, to come together.

When I Was in Prison

This piece really moved Timothy Schmalz. He feels gospel artwork can be medicine. That these sculptures provide comfort but are shocking, just like many parts of the Bible.

Schmalz heard news of a horrible murder that happened and the story went all over the nation. His first thought was, we need to torture this person – not just put him in prison. He thought about being a Christian and he knew torture was not the right thing. He reflected that Jesus would want him to have compassion for that criminal and actually love him.

He feels that the request to love your enemies is so powerful in Christianity – it asks for us to love unconditionally and see Christ in everyone – even criminals. He feels it is almost easier to love a homeless person sitting on a bench because they are not threatening you. But Schmalz feels that this sculpture, When I Was in Prison, needs to be out there as a reminder to all of us.