

# EXCERPTS

## from the ARCHIVES

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Over twenty years after its installation, the giant twisted hunk of metal that sits outside the Berning Gymnasium continues to confuse and delight. To some, it seems out of place; to others, it's a beautiful work of abstract art; to most, though, it's a mystery. So, what is it? Who made it? And how did it end up at St. Xavier?

In 1984 a group called the Linclay Corporation was constructing the Commerce Center, a 30-story office building located at Sixth and Vine Streets downtown. Clement Meadmore, an Australian-American artist known for his massive outdoor pieces crafted from steel and bronze, was commissioned to decorate the plaza outside with one of his sculptures. Built at the cost of \$100,000 and weighing more than seven thousand pounds, the piece was dedicated in August 1984. Its name? "Open End."

This abstract and minimalist work of art remained in its original location for fifteen years until the plaza upon which it sat was slated to be remodeled. Due to frequent pedestrian injuries caused by its sharp edges as well as its propensity for attracting graffiti, "Open End" was not included in the renovation plans. Tim Helmick '68, regional accountant for Grub and Ellis, the property management company, contacted St. Xavier and asked whether the school would be interested in the piece. After an enthusiastic response from art teachers and administrators, the massive sculpture was refurbished and donated to St. Xavier High School where it was installed pro bono by Fenton Rigging in late September 1999.

Two decades after its relocation, "Open End" still manages to confound the St. X community as much as it did when it first arrived. Some viewers have likened it to Gumby, while others have compared it to heating pipes; some have even said it resembles a can opener. But perhaps this diversity of interpretations is part of its charm. As the late Fine Arts teacher Dennis

O'Brien mentioned at the time of its installation, "Abstract art is like poetry; you bring your own background to it." And at the very least, according to then St. X President William Verbryke SJ, the sculpture "makes a good conversation piece."

