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By Josh Niland |

Tuesday, Oct 11, 2022

The Marygrove Early Education Center in Detroit, Michigan. Photo: Timothy Hursley.

An education project from Marlon Blackwell Architects has just been announced as

the winner of the 2022 Dedalo Minosse International Prize by the Italian ALA-Assoarchitetti and Regione del Veneto.

Located in metro Detroit, Blackwell's Marygrove Early Education Center was commissioned by the Kresage Foundation to support the revitalization of Detroit's Livernois-McNichols neighborhood and its shuttered Marygrove College campus with a brand-new facility that serves 150 students under the age of five.

Speaking at a ceremony in the historic Vicenza landmark Teatro Olimpico on September 16th, the firm's founder and longtime University of Arkansas professor called the recognition a "testament to the vital mission-driven collaboration between our client and design team."

Photo: Timothy Hursley.

The 28,871-square-foot structure comes clad in a modern terra cotta facade that's interspersed with colorful highlights to present a distinctive yet welcoming building profile that shields three exterior courtyards and interior educational spaces that are flooded with natural light.

Photo: Timothy Hursley.

Additional support spaces, such as a parents' lounge, community room, and flexible space, are programmed around the entrance. The firm says its design was informed through a community input process that included parents and children and is in line with best practices in behavioral health and early childhood education.

Photo: Timothy Hursley.

The project also ties into Detroit's P-20 program, which is helping to transform the rest of Marygrove's campus into a comprehensive Cradle-to-Career Campus that serves 1,000 students from nearby communities.

Photo: Timothy Hursley.

The Foundation said that Blackwell's new centerpiece was necessary to "highlight the critical significance of early childhood education through a new building with the highest aspirations for design" and help extend the former institution's legacy as a "beacon of education" years after its operation had ceased.

Photo: Timothy Hursley.

"Marlon Blackwell has created a transformational space that demonstrates dignity for young children. It's a magnificent and integral part of a neighborhood working to revive," Wendy Lewis Jackson, the managing director of the Foundation's Detroit Program, said of the design.

Photo: Timothy Hursley.

"To see this Detroit project honored by an international panel of judges is an incredible validation of what we've achieved with our Marygrove campus partners," Jackson added.

