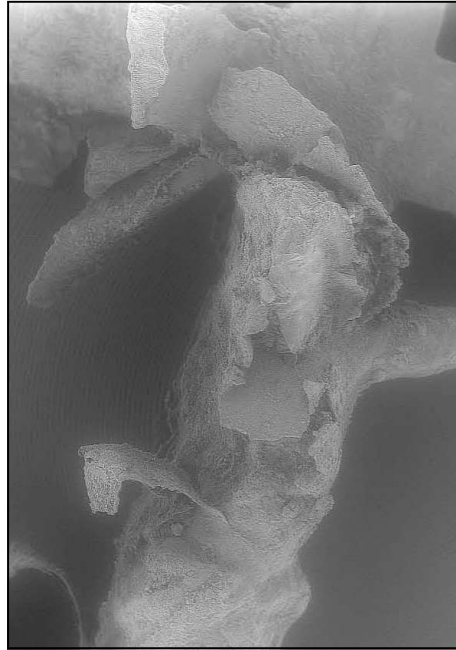


ZINC CRUCIFIX, St. Antoine’s Garden– Cathedral-Basilica of St. Louis, New Orleans, Louisiana



Images courtesy of Clemson Conservation Center.

Client/Owner
Cathedral-Basilica of St. Louis

Location
Conservation Studio, District Heights

Project Dates
2009

Materials
Zinc
Nickel Plating

Services Provided
Testing
Treatment
Documentation

The Cathedral-Basilica of St. Louis is one of the true icons of the historic city of New Orleans. The structure of the cathedral dates primarily to the mid-nineteenth century, although the parish was founded on that site in 1720. Recent archaeological excavations in the adjoining St. Antoine garden following damage sustained during Hurricane Katrina yielded a wide variety of artifacts, including a deteriorated, jewelry-sized metal crucifix.

The crucifix was recovered during the summer 2008 excavation season. As the host soil was, like all soil in New Orleans, extremely damp, the cross was packed in distilled water until a course of action could be determined. The crucifix was of an unknown metal. Corrosion had already claimed much of the proper right portion of the figure. The plating was beginning to peel back on the proper right arm of the cross, revealing a corroding and possibly salt-laden core. Sand and particulate soiling was firmly bonded to the surface, making what remained of the figure difficult to discern.

Conservation Solutions, Inc. (CSI) conservators were contracted in 2009 to conserve the artifact. CSI partnered with an independent testing lab to examine the object. Elemental analysis performed via Scanning Electron Microscopy/Energy Dispersive Spectroscopy identified the crucifix as nickel-plated zinc. A treatment program was designed accordingly to stabilize but not restore the fragile artifact. Active corrosion and soiling was removed using a 10% solution of EDTA, and thoroughly rinsed. The crucifix was consolidated using B-48N to limit further loss of fragile plating. Following thorough drying, the object was secured to a custom-fabricated acrylic mount and returned to the client.