



CASCADE FOUNTAINS Vizcaya Museum and Gardens, Miami, Florida



Client/Owner
Vizcaya Museum and Gardens

Location
Miami, FL

Project Dates
2006

Materials
Carrara Marble

Services Provided
Assessment
Cleaning
Stain Removal
Remounting
Documentation

Between 1914 and 1916, agricultural industrialist James Deering, one of the founders of International Harvester, built his European-inspired winter home on a bayfront site in Miami. This property, Vizcaya Museum and Gardens, is now a National Historic Landmark. The formal gardens include an outstanding collection of statuary and objects dating back to antiquity. The Casino, a raised folly on the central axis of the formal gardens, is crowned by the Cascade Fountain. Water flows from a marble Italian Renaissance baptismal font down the steps of the mount towards the house to the north. The elegant marble fountain is the focal point of the primary garden axis.

The fountain had suffered from deterioration and abuse over its long history since installed at Vizcaya. Iron had leached from embedded water pipes staining the white stone a deep brown. The spray feature had been lost and the font became structurally unstable when bent by vandals. It was no longer level, which caused uneven wear on the basin lip.

Conservation Solutions, Inc. (CSI) was contracted to conserve the Cascade Fountain in 2006. CSI conservators carefully disassembled the marble components of the font and removed them for treatment. Each was cleaned of iron staining by a repeated sequence of washing and poultice cleaning. Deep seated iron stains required more than 15 separate cleaning procedures until they were removed. A new stainless steel structural pipe was milled to fit within the existing mountings and integrated into the water feed system. The font was then re-mounted on a restored coral stone base within the fountain.