



Terra Cotta Sculptures

BILTMORE ESTATE, ASHEVILLE, NC

Starting in 2003, we initiated and has implemented a comprehensive treatment plan for the Biltmore Estate's outdoor sculpture collection. Central to the collection are 4 terra cotta figures by Antoine Coysevox. The sculptor, who was commissioned by Louis XIV to produce many works for Versailles, was noted for his delicate and subtle use of the plastic qualities of terra cotta. The sculptures installed on Biltmore's South Terrace were produced towards the end of his work at Versailles. They depict allegorical figures in the guise of rustic types, characteristic of other Versailles sculptures.

The delicate terra cotta sculptures suffered from exposure to a century of North Carolina weather. Skins of loosely bonded clay spalled from freezing of entrapped water. The roughened surfaces held more moisture, encouraging active biological growth and further loss. Previous repairs in cementitious and organic materials also deteriorated, leading to cracks and further spalling. Some of the repairs were not consistent with the fine sculptural detailing of the originals.

We treated all of the works over the course of two years. Each was carefully assessed and documented. All surfaces were cleaned using heated water, surfactants and biocides. Deeply embedded biological growth was also removed mechanically. Previous fills were reversed and new custom formulated mortar fills were installed. Two replacement arms and floral wreaths for Flora were modeled based on historic documentation and cast and installed. The Estate's staff was trained in on-going maintenance of the collection to deter future deterioration.

MORE INFORMATION:

<https://evergreene.com/projects/terra-cotta-sculptures/>

SERVICES PERFORMED

Conservation Treatments



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