

CERAMIC TILE FOUNTAIN TREATMENT - FROG FOUNTAIN – PINWOOD ESTATE



Before Treatment



After Treatment

Client
Pinewood Estate, Bok Tower

Piece
Frog Fountain

Location of Origin:
Cuba

Date
1930

Location
Lake Wales, FL

Project Dates
January – May, 2017

Materials
Majolica ceramic tiles, basin, and sculptural elements

Services Provided
Full conservation treatment, fabrication of missing elements, maintenance recommendations

In 1929, Charles Austin Buck, vice president of Bethlehem Steel, hired landscape architect William Lyman Phillips of the Fredrick Law Olmsted, Jr.'s firm to design the gardens for a sprawling estate that would eventually include a 1930s Mediterranean style mansion. A centerpiece of Phillips' garden entrance to the mansion is a delicate fountain of low fire ceramic tiles with exuberantly colored glazes. The Frog Fountain, as it is known, had been repaired numerous times in the past and sat on uneven bedding, causing it to list and crack. By 2016, the fountain suffered from extensive cracking, surface losses, thick mineral deposit build-up, incompatible cement repairs, and leaks. The flow of water was sporadic and several spouts were flowing erratically or not working at all.

Conservation treatment began with manually draining the fountain, removing decades of debris and poor caulking around the bowl, and removing the bowl for treatment at RLA's Miami studio. In situ work included cleaning all surfaces with chemical solutions and poultices that would not damage the delicate glazes, and application of layers of biological growth inhibitors. While repairs were carried out, the plumbing system was retrofitted and a stable foundation was installed. The fountain was then reassembled in situ and a maintenance plan was provided to insure long-term stability.