

November 6, 2018

Bas-reliefs embedded in Stone Walls

The lovely and historic 15-century stone sculptures collected by Mrs. Bratenahl have given the garden a look of antiquity during the century since they were placed in the walls and planting beds. The wall behind the Upper Perennial Border, the Norman Court, and the Hortulus all are graced with this art in stone, and time and exposure have brought serious deterioration.



Kneeling figure in Upper Wall



St. Catherine Bas-relief

Microorganisms covered the surface and soiled the reliefs, and outdoor conditions have considerably eroded the stone. This autumn, the Guild engaged [McKay Lodge Conservation Laboratory](#) to work on our sculptures. Marcin Pikus was resident in the Bishop's Garden for two weeks, cleaning all five reliefs with steam and then applying a biocide and mild

detergent. He scrubbed the surfaces with soft synthetic brushes to carefully clean the sculptures of dirt and microbes. Finally he applied a protective coating to help consolidate the stone and repel water.

Carolingian Font



Font in Hortulus During Conservation

The baptismal font in the Hortulus is easily six centuries older than the bas-reliefs, dating from the time of Charlemagne. The octagonal font has a base and bowl of limestone connected by a sandstone column. All three parts exhibited a layer of dark grey surface crust, as well as numerous colonies of microorganisms, such as lichen, algae, bacteria, and moss. Previous repairs to the bowl had deteriorated and had to be removed. Again, Mr. Pikus gently steam cleaned the surfaces and filled fissures. He removed the old cementitious repair material with chiseling and diamond grinding. Mr. Pikus applied a waterproof membrane bowl to the and carefully replaced missing stone pieces with color-matched restoration mortar.

Their location outdoors with the hazards of heat, humidity, freezing, rain, and pollution have put our sculptures at risk. We will continue to be watchful and mindful that we are stewards not only to the growing things but to these treasures as well.

For more information about statuary, fountains and plaques on the Cathedral Grounds [CLICK HERE](#)