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# The Marine Garden at Villa Vizcaya Miami, Florida : A Management and Interpretation Analysis

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Presented to the Faculties of the University of Pennsylvania in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Science in Historic Preservation 2004.

Advisor: Randall F. Mason

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# The Marine Garden at Villa Vizcaya Miami, Florida : A Management and Interpretation Analysis

## **Abstract**

This graduate thesis analyzed the historical and current management of Vizcaya Museum and Gardens. This analysis was aimed at investigating the causes and circumstances that led to the physical deterioration of the Marine Garden. Through this examination two main goals were set. Goal one, the reassessment of the historic values specific to the gardens and Marine Garden and goal two, the provision of recommendations for the management, maintenance and interpretation for the gardens and Marine garden specifically.

## **Disciplines**

Historic Preservation and Conservation

## **Comments**

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Advisor: Randall F. Mason

This Thesis is dedicated to Mr. Sam Princeton Spector, whose enthusiasm and support have made its completion possible.

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Lastly, I would like to acknowledge the help and support of my family and friends throughout this project.

## FOREWORD

This graduate thesis analyzed the historical and current management of Vizcaya Museum and Gardens. This analysis was aimed at investigating the causes and circumstances that led to the physical deterioration of the Marine Garden. Through this examination two main goals were set. Goal one, the reassessment of the historic values specific to the gardens and Marine Garden and goal two, the provision of recommendations for the management, maintenance and interpretation for the gardens and Marine garden specifically.

This analytical investigation stemmed from my participation in a site recording project of the Rose and Marine Gardens at Vizcaya. The project was sponsored by Vizcaya Museum and Gardens and the Getty Conservation Institute during the month of August 2003. It allowed me to closely examine the current conditions and deterioration mechanisms present in these two gardens. The thesis topic originally focused on a conservation plan for the Marine garden, the more deteriorated of the two. However, as my research expanded, it became clear that in order to provide a sound conservation and restoration plan the management of the site had to be looked at in more detail.

The work involved in the production of this thesis included a review of literature on the subject of archival research, site analysis, interviews, and investigation of the current management. The information gathered from these sources was analyzed in order to answer the two goals mentioned previously. An extensive analysis of the printed literature was done focusing on historical and current philosophies for garden/landscape preservation and management. This investigation was performed through library research using books, periodicals, and case studies relevant to the topic. The archival

research was done over the period of a week in November 2003 at the archives of Villa Vizcaya. This research was intended to provide a detailed historical overview for the reassessment of the historical values. It was accomplished by the careful study of the correspondence between the historical figures involved in the creation of the project and other related archival documents such as receipts, bills of work, notes, photographs, working drawings, and other pertinent papers. This archival investigation was joined by a site visit. During this visit photographs were taken of the entire site, with an emphasis on the Marine Garden area, and notes were recorded on the conditions and visible maintenance issues. To better understand these observations, interviews were conducted with staff members to learn the perspectives of those involved in carrying out the management plan for the site on a daily basis. The analysis of all the data collected was done following accepted professional guidelines for management and interpretation of heritage sites such as values based management, as expressed by the Burra Charter and Freeman Tilden's six interpretation principles.

This study is meant to provide the basis on which a sound conservation plan can be created for the Marine garden. A plan that does not just look at the physical fabric but that it takes into account the values and circumstances analyzed in this work.

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## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Gardening is one of humankind's oldest traditions. It has been a source of fascination for millennia. Gardens have been used through history as metaphors of pleasure, meditation, wonder, and also showcases of power and ingenuity. They are mentioned as far back as the Old Testament with the Garden of Eden. The reputation of gardens was so great that the ancients included an example of this art form as one of the seven wonders of the ancient world, the Hanging Gardens of Babylon. This fascination with gardening is associated with the pleasurable enjoyment of nature. This taming and manipulation of the natural world is a fundamental aspect of the nature of gardens. As such the proper management and maintenance of this manipulated nature is a key component in the long term enjoyment of these works of art.

Villa Vizcaya<sup>1</sup> in Miami, Florida (fig.1) is a superb example of this tradition. When first conceived the gardens and nature occupied nearly the two thirds of the entire land mass of the estate.

The enjoyment and taming of nature manifested itself on acres of formal gardens, picturesque semi wild tropical gardens and virgin groves. The combined enjoyment of all these areas created the original experience of the Villa's landscape. Today only the formal gardens and a portion of the original forests remain part of the Vizcaya property. These areas combined to the house make up roughly 30 acres of the original 180.

Vizcaya is located just south of downtown Miami. The property is adjacent to the Bay of Biscayne. The house is located in front of the water and on the northern half of



Fig.1- Historic view of East façade of the villa facing Biscayne Bay. (from Mahler)

the property. The formal gardens are mostly found on the southern terrace from the house. These include a formal parterre with a central pool and statuary walks to each side, further south the pool terminates into a water stair flanked by two grottos. The stair rises up to the Casino Mount with its casino on top. To the east of this formal parterre one finds the secret garden, the Theater garden, Maze garden, Rose garden and Marine garden (fig.2).

The Marine Garden played a key role in the overall experience of the Vizcaya landscape. Today however, it does not fulfill its original intent due to the fracture of its original space and composition. The Marine Garden is located at the Southeastern corner

of the property and originally incorporated both sides of the canal. Only half of the garden still belongs to the Vizcaya property, while the other half has been let to ruin. Although its physical integrity has suffered through the years, its location has remained the same (figures 3 and 4).

Villa Vizcaya and its landscape were created by the artistic partnership of four men; James Deering, Paul Chalfin, Francis Hoffman and Diego Suarez. James Deering's role was mostly of patron. He voiced his opinions in regards to the process, but overall allowed the three designers to create the commission. Paul Chalfin played the most important role of the three designers as Deering's appointed artistic supervisor. He was involved in the project well before and after the physical construction of the villa. Hoffman and Suarez were in charge of the house and gardens respectively. Chalfin's concepts and artistic brilliance were the unifying element that maintained the project as a cohesive design effort; yielding the sumptuous villa and gardens that stands today on the shores of Biscayne Bay.

### **Historic Overview of Garden Conservation**

The field of landscape conservation has gathered momentum and ever increasing significance in the last two decades. It was not till the 1970s that the practice became wide spread both in Europe, primarily England, and the United States. This slow assimilation process of landscapes into the mainstream vocabulary and thinking of the preservation field was reflected in the three major international charters concerning cultural heritage, the Athens, Venice and Burra charters. The Athens charter (1931)<sup>2</sup> is clearly a building-centric document. The wording and spirit of the charter reflects the

needs and philosophy of building material not necessarily organic material; although, some of the wording can be interpreted to gardens. There is a clear mention

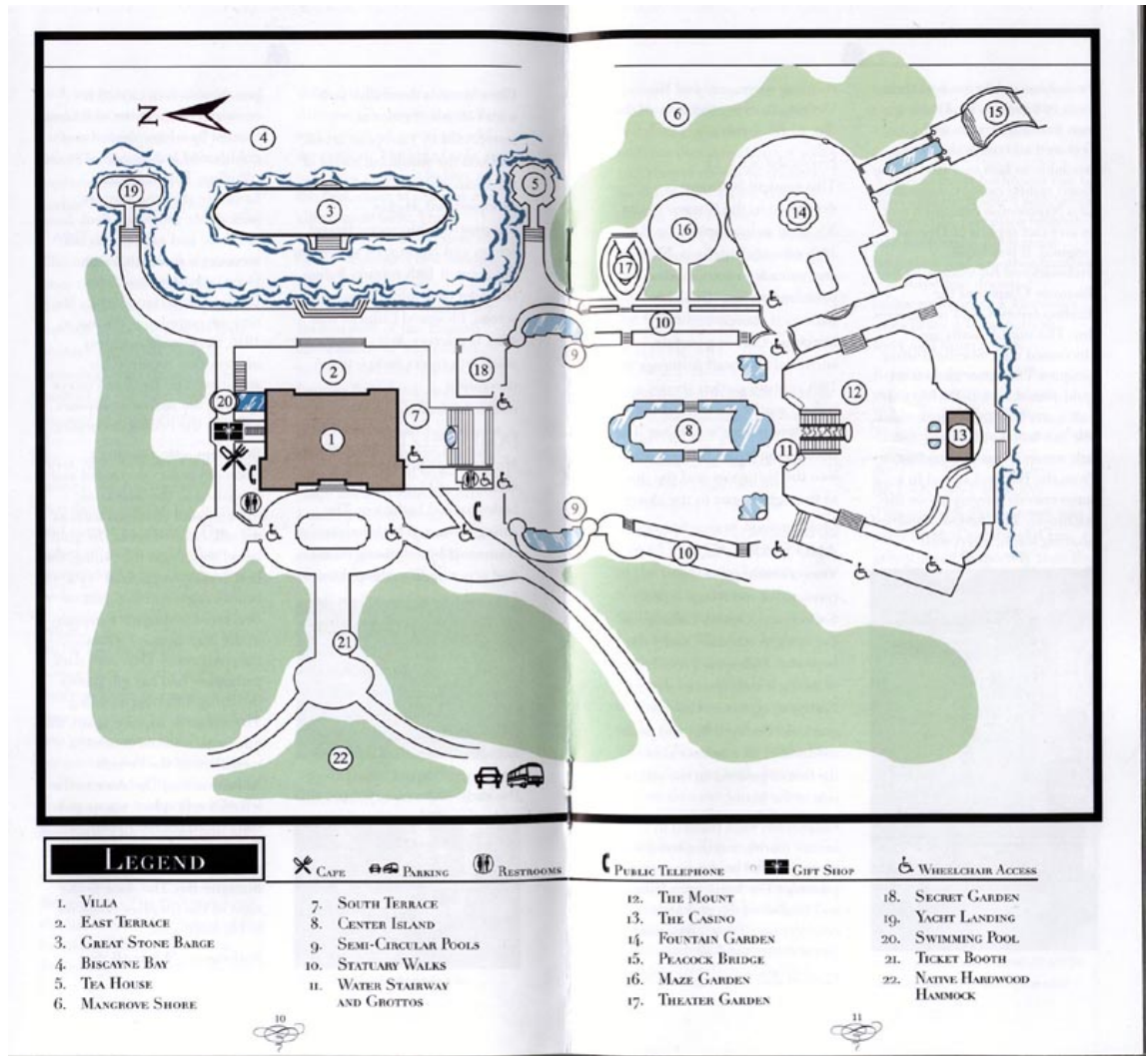


Fig.2- Visitors brochure Map describing each area of the gardens and their specific names. (from Vizcaya visitors guide)

of historic gardens in the document in article one, section three. However, this mention refers to gardens that are only part of monuments not crediting them in their own right.

The Venice charter (1964)<sup>3</sup>, which superseded the Athens charter, makes no clear



Fig.3- Vizcaya side of the Marine garden, picture taken from the Peacock Bridge, summer 2003



Fig.4-La Salle High School side of the Marine garden, picture taken from the Peacock Bridge, summer 2003

reference to gardens and its wording becomes even more building-centric than its predecessor. Both these documents treat landscapes as decorative elements subsidiary to buildings or monuments and both fail to provide a clear acknowledgement of their merit as cultural heritage.

The first step towards rectifying this view, on an international charter level, took place in the Burra charter (1979, revised. 1981 and 1988)<sup>4</sup>. This document was conceived as a follow-up of the Venice charter and expanded the wording to fully include historic gardens. The United Nations Educational and Scientific Organization (UNESCO)<sup>5</sup> World Heritage List included landscapes in its 1978 charter for World Monuments nomination. However, the listing of designed landscapes is even to this date very limited. Most of the landscapes nominations are broader cultural landscapes rather than gardens. An example of such listed broad cultural landscape sites is Trinidad and El Valle de los Ingenios in Cuba<sup>6</sup> (fig. 5).

In 1982 the first International Charter completely devoted to Gardens was drafted in Florence. The Florence Charter as it became known was added onto to the Venice Charter in 1982 as an addendum. This charter deals exclusively with gardens and encompasses both its vegetable and unmovable decorative elements that combined create the designed space. This charter contains a set of intervention guidelines for maintenance, conservation, restoration, and reconstruction for these artistic works.

In the United States the interest in landscapes can be traced back to the Antiquities Act of 1906<sup>7</sup>. This Act of Congress did not specifically talk about landscapes nor designed gardens. However, it allowed for the first time the preservation of landscapes associated with monuments. Thus their care was just a consequence of the protection of archeological remains or ruins in or on these sites. The National Park Service (NPS)<sup>8</sup> was



founded in 1916 [NPS.gov]. This agency of the Federal government was the first such agency created exclusively with landscapes in



Fig. 5 – View of Manacas Sugar Mill, property of the Iznaga family, and el Valle de los Ingenios, Cuba. (from Carley)

mind, although not designed gardens necessarily but rather natural landscapes. The National Trust for Historic Preservation<sup>9</sup>, founded in 1949 [Nationaltrust.org], was another important landscape guardian in the national arena. Its first property, Woodland Plantation, Virginia, was made up by a broad landscape. However, the idea of landscape preservation did not take greater hold in the field of historic preservation until the early seventies. In 1977 one of the first professional gatherings took place in Cleveland, Ohio.

This conference planted the seed for the creation of the influential Alliance for Historic Landscape Preservation<sup>10</sup> the same year.

On a national scale, the National Park Service and the National Trust are by far the two most influential protectors of landscapes in the United States. The definitions and guidelines they follow have formed the bases for the treatment of landscapes in other institutions. The NPS defines landscapes as:

*“A geographic area, including both cultural and natural resources and the wildlife or domestic animals herein, associated with the historic event, activity, or person or exhibiting other cultural or aesthetic value”.* [NPS preservation brief 36, p.1] This definition is subdivided into four categories, historic sites, historic designed landscapes<sup>11</sup>, historic vernacular landscapes and ethnographic landscapes. Their definition of landscapes embodies the years of transformation and maturity this agency has gone through. The same maturity is also seen at the National Trust. However, its definition of landscapes is not as clear. The Trust includes historic landscapes and gardens under its “Site” category for historic site listing<sup>12</sup>. This category is purposely vague and utilizes a key twist in the wording by giving importance to the site itself; regardless of the value of any existing structure and whether they are standing, ruined or demolished. The NPS through its subdivision of the umbrella term Landscapes has been able to acknowledge the specific qualities and needs of each of the different categories rather than grouping them into a single niche, exemplify by the National Trust’s definition for listing. However, this more precise definition serves the specific purpose of management oriented goals of the Park Service rather than the honorary role of the National Trust for its listing purposes.

## **Management of Gardens**

Landscapes, specifically designed gardens, rely on management perhaps more than in any other manmade or man shaped cultural heritage site. The building blocks of its appearance and character are far more difficult to manage and provide long term protection for than other traditional materials for buildings or other man made structures. The primary component of a designed garden is organic material (not including Japanese rock gardens) and by its very nature its life span or usefulness within the original design is limited. This is an accepted truth that has been acknowledged by designers, patrons and managers of this art form for millennia. The use of living material in the design of these sites incorporates a growth cycle that without proper intervention leads to the spatial brake down of the original intent and design (refer to pictures 18 and 19 for comparative visual). The nature of the material creates periodic intervention an essential element in the management of this cultural heritage, specially designed gardens [Birnbaum, p.45]. Intervention is thus a defining factor between the management approach of gardens and buildings, given that buildings can go for extended periods of time without intervention and still retain character defining aspects.

The appropriate level of intervention in a garden must reflect the significance and values specific to the site [Stewart, p.43]. These values should dictate the intervention plan and degree. For example, the management of a Botanical garden and a designed garden would reflect their respective hierarchy of values. In the Botanical garden, the plant species posses a higher value than the structures or enclosures in which some of these plants may be kept. This valuation of the plants over the structure is due to the significance of the site as a place to showcase exotic species of flora, not necessarily the

greenhouses; even though, the greenhouses in themselves have value. On the other hand the management intervention for a designed garden should reflect the key value of design intent. The careful pruning, replacement and management of the organic elements ensures the stability of the designer's intent. In this case the inorganic elements and design have greater value than the organic material. As such the management should be geared towards the protection of the designed ambiance of the space.

Management of designed gardens must always be aware of the life cycle of their organic elements. The unstoppable modification the growth cycle of a specific specimen(s) imposes on the design intent is one of the most threatening to the designs authenticity through time. How should a manager intervene when such specimen has reached a level of maturity and rarity that threatens the design integrity but that at the same time bestows the specimen with a new found value? This notion creates a set of values that must be weighted against the significance of the site; ultimately adhering to that significance for an intervention decision. However, these are site specific cases and many factors must be taken into account when dealing when this inevitable characteristic of designed gardens. This aspect has led to the notion that designed gardens can only be "managed never preserved" [Marston Fitch, p.268]

In the desire to maintain the original design intent, management must also be cautious not to cross the threshold from managers to designers. Given that such sites can only be managed through intervention and never preserved in a status quo. The periodic replacement and growth of the organic material should be cautiously monitored as not to yield a recreation of the original intent but rather to salvage original fabric whenever possible. In some cases restoration is the most appropriate decision management can take to maintain the significance of the site [Sales, p.82]. The risk of recreation through

replacement must be viewed as a necessary evil given the life span of the organic material. Through time the original plant material eventually dies and in many cases strict botanical accuracy can not be achieved due to the unavailability or rarity of specific varieties.

As a result, management of designed gardens should be approached in a continuum, acknowledging the limitations of the organic material and basing the level of inevitable periodic intervention on the values and significance of the site. This careful management at best preserves the design, but never the original integrity in a museum sense. Gardens are not static elements but living organism and as such must be approached. The fragility and nature of this heritage is expressed in the following passage:

*“Gardening, more than architecture, more than painting, more than music, and far more than literature, is an ephemeral art; its masterpieces disappear leaving little traces.” [Clifford, p.17]*

The Secretary of the Interior standards regulate interventions on nationally listed heritage properties under certain circumstances. These include those properties that are being restored, reconstructed or conserved using tax credits. Vizcaya is a National Historic Landmark and as such should uphold any intervention to its historic fabric to these regulations, but it is not obligated to. They are broken down into four main categories, preservation, rehabilitation, restoration and reconstruction. Each category follows a specific set of rules and regulations in accordance to their purpose. Preservation focuses on the maintenance and repair of existing historic materials and retention of a property's form as it has evolved over time. Rehabilitation retains the site's historic character while adding on for modern needs and uses. Restoration brings the site to a specific period in time removing layers of history postdating the chosen date.

Reconstruction recreates a non existing portion as historically accurate as possible. [SIS, p.5]. These categories must be weighed against the site specific factors, values and significance regardless of the selected category for intervention. One of the key components of such approach is that these interventions are not carried out in a vacuum [SIS, p.6]. The objectives of the management plan are also an important factor in the intervention upon the physical fabric; without a clear management plan any intervention taken can in the long run cause irreversible damage to the integrity of historic fabric. A clear objective and plan of action by the management is a necessary first step before any intervention is allowed to proceed. These standards are only the blueprint to follow once the site values and significance have been set and evaluated. This approach reaffirms the importance of a solid values based management.

### **Interpretation of gardens**

Significance and values propel the interpretation of a designed garden much in the same fashion that it does for the management mechanism. In both cases these values are the underlining foundations that lead to the most suitable approach for the site. These site specific values can encompass historical, aesthetic, cultural, ecological and scientific aspects [Dicaire Fardin, p.18]. In many cases more than one of these values can be found in one site and it is the job of the interpretation team to asses and properly set hierarchy and degrees of interpretation that each value should receive. These values must be backed by evidence in order to be useful in any interpretation and worked accordingly to the audience to whom they are presented.

Interpretations are the story or stories of places. These stories must be told in full, never in parts, regardless of how interesting some of the parts might be [Tilden, p.40]. The fragmentation of stories is detrimental to the interpretation of sites. It does not fulfill the learning desires of the visitor nor it does justice to the values of the site. This notion of interpretation is one of the cardinal rules set forth by Tilden Freeman in the late 1960s. His six principles of interpretation<sup>13</sup> have formed the core of professional practice in heritage interpretation. These six principles touch upon the need to provoke and entice the visitor into the story of the place; allow the visitor to become part of the story and provide the visitor with tools to allow for an “experience”, as much as possible, of the original design intent or of the evolution it has undergone through time. These six principles are applicable to a wide range of heritage sites including landscapes.

Patricia O'Donnell, landscape preservation specialist, relates the interpretation of landscapes to the level of integrity<sup>14</sup> the site possesses [O'Donnell, p.12]. In selecting the values to be interpreted only those that maintain a high level of integrity should be incorporated into an original design intent interpretation. This high integrity offers the most accurate visualization and presentation to the public of the designer's work. When a site has lost all evidence of historical aspects, it is likely that its historical value has also diminished so as not to play a major role. These overlaying strata of history may diminish the original design intent and subsequently the interpretation value of that period in time of the site. However, it can also lead to an enhancement of other values in the site in ways not originally envisioned.

## CHAPTER II: HISTORICAL FIGURES

### James Deering



Fig. 6- James Deering. (from Mahler)

James Deering was born in 1859 to William Deering and Clara Cummings Hamilton. He had been preceded by Charles in 1852, fruit of William's first marriage, and followed by a sister, Abby, in 1867 [Mahler, p.160]. The family came from a long lineage in Maine, where William owned and operated a successful dry-goods company, The Deering Milliken Co. [Nardi, p.3] However, by 1873, William decided to move out West to Illinois for better business prospects there. The family first settled in Evanston and finally in Chicago. The business world of late XIX century Chicago was one of unprecedented vibrancy and opportunity. Thousands of new immigrants had poured into Nebraska, Montana and the Dakotas for the prospects of owning their own land. Thus, agriculture became the main economic activity out West. William Deering, like many



others, understood that in order to truly open up the West to farming, it had to be done through mechanization, not based on large pools of people that most western areas did not have, nor on slave labor, which was no longer an option after the civil war.

William Deering invested in the company of Elijah H. Gammon who manufactured and sold farm equipment in 1868, within a decade, he had become the sole partner in the company by 1879, renaming it The Deering Harvester Company [ibid,p.8]. The company performed so successfully that only McCormick Harvester Company<sup>1</sup>, then the largest agricultural machinery manufacturer, posed a real competition. The growth and success of the venture called upon Charles and James to join their father full time in the management of the company. Charles assumed executive responsibilities while James focused on the operational management aspects of the company. The Deering Harvester Company merged with McCormick Harvester Company in 1890 forming a formidable enterprise dominating the market. This company was later merged and financed by J.P. Morgan in 1902 with several other smaller companies forming the world renowned International Harvester Company. [Davidson, p.3] The Deering's were part of the board of trustees and acted as chairmen of the board and vice-presidents since the merger. Their new positions after the merger allowed them more time for leisure and enjoyment of their hard earned millions.

Through their business success the Deerings escalated to the upper crusts of Chicago society. Their wealth fitted in perfectly with the other Chicago fortunes that in comparison to those of the East Coast had no old-money status. In Chicago every family had made their fortune through business entrepreneurship and the drive of the family patriarch. Although *nuovo riche*, the Deering family members had a sound education and

social connections that expanded beyond the Chicago social circles. Charles had graduated from The United States Naval Academy at Annapolis and James had attended Massachusetts Institute of Technology [ibid,p.10]. Their friends were luminaries such as the painter John Singer Sargent, Elsie de Wolfe<sup>2</sup> and Isabella Gardner among others. Thus, both Deering brothers were surrounded by leading figures of good taste in their time. The influence of these friends would later play a key role in the vision and realization of Vizcaya.

### **Paul Chalfin**

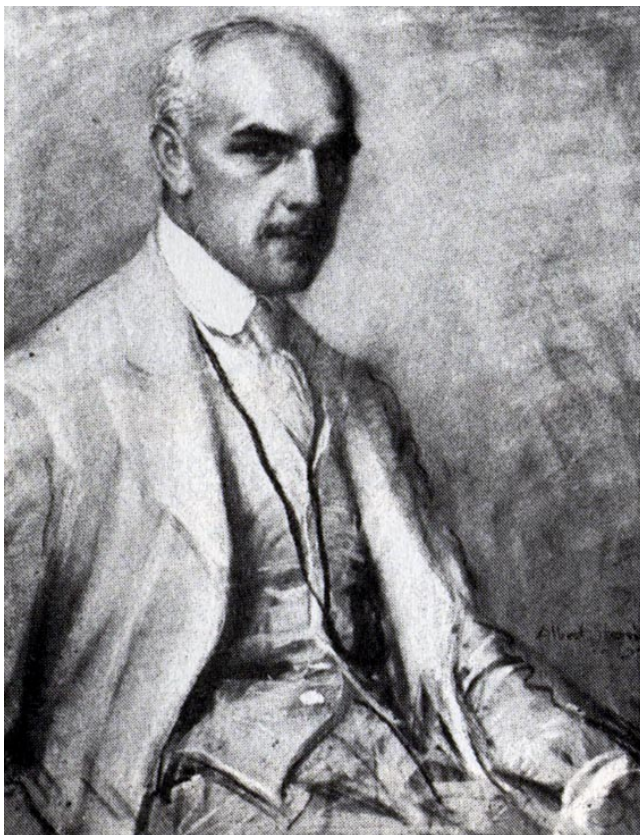


Fig. 7- Paul Chalfin. (from Mahler)

Chalfin was born on November 2, 1874 in New York City. His family and position allowed him to grow up in the pampered world of Fifth Avenue and the refinements that such a lifestyle provided. He studied at Harvard, the Art Student's

League of New York and The Ecole des Beaux-Arts and by 1903 he was working as a curator at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts[Nardi,p.41]. He was also named a fellow of the American Academy in Rome in 1909. He has been described as one of the most educated men in the arts in New York City at this time [Mahler and Hardwood]. It is unclear under what circumstances the two men were introduced. Chalfin was a business associate of De Wolfe and was also friends with Edith Wharton and Isabella Gardner both of who could have introduced them or recommend Chalfin to him. Regardless of the circumstances of their meeting, the two men went on to form a business relationship that lasted till Deering's death. Chalfin made wide use of his knowledge and expertise on the arts on Deering's behalf for the creation of Villa Vizcaya. The two men went on trips to Europe to purchase antiques and architectural fragments to use on the project at Vizcaya. These trips were the beginning of Chalfin's supervision of all aspects of the project.

### **Francis Burrall Hoffman, Jr.**

Hoffman was born in 1884 and also came from an old New York family. He attended Harvard and the Ecole Des Beaux-Arts, graduating there in 1907 [Mahler,p.175]. He started his professional career by joining the firm of Carrere and Hastings until 1909 when he set up his own firm [ibid.p175]. Although Chalfin was the artistic supervisor for Villa Vizcaya, he had no formal training in architecture and as such could not take upon the design of the house and buildings himself. Instead, he hired Hoffman<sup>3</sup> to be the architect. Vizcaya was the first project in which the two collaborated.

The Vizcaya commission was a very difficult one. The site proved to be a challenge, due to its terrain, soil and accessibility, but an even greater challenge were the



Fig. 8- Francis Burrall Hoffman, Jr.  
(from Mahler)

antiques, room paneling and architectural decorations that Chalfin and Deering had purchased to incorporate in the house. Thus, the house that Hoffman designed was already dictated in many instances by the decorative elements and objects that were going to be in it, all of which was going to be supervised by the ever watching eye of Chalfin. Hoffman took a trip to Italy to study Italian Villas. He submitted a design to Deering and Chalfin after his return in 1914, which was approved and led to the materialization of the house [Nardi,p.49].

### **Diego Suarez**

The gardens at Vizcaya were designed by Diego Suarez. Suarez was born in Bogotá, Colombia in 1888. He attended engineering school there at first and went on to graduate from architecture school in Florence, Italy in 1912 [Suarez,1953]. While in Florence,

Suarez worked on the restoration of several Renaissance gardens and designed and built Renaissance styled gardens at Villas Schifanoia, Selva and Guasto near Florence. Suarez met Deering and Chalfin at Villa la Pietra in 1914 [Davidson,p.5]. They were visiting



Fig.9- Diego Suarez (from Mahler)

Italy studying gardens of Italian villas gathering inspiration for the design of the gardens at Vizcaya. Suarez took the two men on tours through several villas and talked to them about Italian Renaissance gardens and his work around Florence.

Chalfin hired Suarez to design the gardens at Vizcaya; arguably under the same conditions that Hoffman was designing the house, based on what was going to be in it and the strictness of the site and regulations put forth by Chalfin's overall artistic vision for the project. Suarez had to accommodate a great number of statues, fountains and other antiquities purchased abroad into the overall design. However, Suarez had much

more room for design, given that statues and other antiquities for a garden setting do not dictate the overall design as much as interiors do in the house.

## CHAPTER III: HISTORIC OVERVIEW

### **Creating Villa Vizcaya**

James Deering was diagnosed with a severe form of megaloblastic anemia<sup>1</sup> in 1910 and was advised by his physician to spend extended periods of time in the healthy climate of warmer regions exposed to clean air [Nardi, p.40]. This diagnosis seems to have been the greatest influence in the decision to construct Vizcaya in Florida rather than anywhere else. William Deering had introduced the family to the Sunshine state when he began spending winters there as early as 1901. He made Coconut Grove, just south of downtown Miami, his winter residence [Lombard,p.24]. Charles seems to have been more enthusiastic about Florida than James was at first. He purchased a property, Buena Vista estate, north of Miami proper in 1910[ibid, p.24]. James did not seem to have considered Florida a suitable location where to spend his time. He already owned a house outside of Paris at Neuilly and Miami in the early 1900 was a far cry from the cosmopolitan life of Paris (fig.10). Deering was also very partial to the south of France. Europe seems to have been Deering's first choice to establish a winter residence rather than the semi-wild subtropical hammocks<sup>2</sup> of South Florida. However, perhaps due to family ties or the long distance of Transatlantic travels he finally decided to built in Florida.

The purchase of a Florida property came about in 1912. The choice of land was varied and there was plenty to be had in those early years. Miami in the 1910s was an outpost with a population of only 10,000 inhabitants [Patricios,p.15]. Both Charles and James Deering had rented lodging from the Brickell family<sup>3</sup> during their visits to his father.



Fig.10- View of Royal Palm Hotel in downtown Miami c. 1897 (from Miami Then and Now).

James seemed to have liked this property for he bought part of the Brickell land for the site of his winter residence.

The purchase included 130 acres of Florida natural hammocks and pineland along the coast of Biscayne Bay just south of downtown Miami. The transaction was performed by Chalfin on behalf of Deering, and shows the trust Deering had on him by now and the involvement Chalfin had since the very beginning with everything that had to do with the project. Surveying, ground clearing, fillings and preparations of the site began almost immediately<sup>4</sup> after the purchase.

Villa Vizcaya began as a Spanish style house. Chalfin mentioned in an article that he “...*thought the architecture should be Spanish...*” [Miami Herald, Dec 23,1934]. Nevertheless, at some point the plans shifted from Spanish to Italian. It is not unreasonable to speculate that the choice of style might have been Chalfin’s given Deering’s particular interest for the south of France, lack of concrete knowledge on the arts and the fact that Chalfin had spent a great deal of time studying in Rome and the Veneto and must have been very captivated by Italian villas. Deering and Chalfin embarked on a European voyage in 1911, not just to purchase art works and antiques for



the proposed estate, but to look in more details at northern Italian villas in the Veneto region<sup>5</sup> [Hardwood,p.15].

Upon their return Chalfin must have had a very good idea of what he wanted the estate to look like. During this trip he would have listened to Deering's requests and desires that must have led to a preliminary design concept for the site. However, Chalfin was approaching the project from a holistic point of view. His knowledge on decorative arts far exceeded that of Deering. He had advised Deering in the purchase of all the architectural fragments, furnishings and interiors and as such his main task was to eloquently integrate all these pieces into a unified creation. The same vision extended into the grounds, not just the gardens, but also the farm village and all other elements that were to become part of the estate. The aim was to create an Italian villa as authentically as possible; an almost surgical transplant of a piece of Europe onto the Florida coast.

Chalfin's artistic vision seems to have been well advanced even before the land was purchased and it was fully developed by the time Hoffman's design was approved in 1914. Ground breaking for the foundations of the house began at this date. Work on the house continued at an interrupted pace till it was officially inaugurated with a sumptuous gala on December 24, 1916.[ibid,p.52] Hoffman remained at the project supervising and designing all the other elements that made up the entire estate, such as the farm village, the gate houses and other service buildings. He was called up for military service in 1917 during World War I and his contract was cancelled by Chalfin who in turn hired another young architect, Phineas Paist<sup>6</sup>, to continue the work until final completion of the estate in 1921[Maher,p.180].

## **Construction of the gardens**

The original idea for the gardens at Vizcaya might have been for the Spanish villa that was originally talked about, but as the estate developed into an Italian Renaissance style Villa the formality and grandeur of the gardens took ever increasing importance.

Charles Deering was an avid amateur botanist and plant enthusiast. He was very interested in Florida vegetation. This enthusiasm might have played a great role in Jame's decision and approach to the gardens at Vizcaya. Exemplified in Deering's expressed desire to save and protect as much of the virgin hammock as possible [Deering file]. He however did not want an arboretum or just a wild setting for his estate. Thus a careful design of the landscape was the intended approach since the planning stage. By 1913, the idea of formal gardens at Vizcaya had taken full shape. The planning and construction of the gardens was not taken lightly and was well thought and reasoned just like everything else that had to do with this project. James Deering expressed this desire for planning in a letter to Chalfin:

*“In regards to building gardens ay Vizcaya. I wonder whether we could find come office or person in Miami who could do the work or even if we could wisely hire some experienced person to do this part of the work.”*[Vizcaya,Deering file,1913].

The site of the formal gardens was first chosen in connection to the design of the house under Chalfin's supervision. This is yet another piece of evidence of Chalfin's holistic vision and approach to the project, calculating the effect each element was going to have on all the others. As a result, even before there was a design for the gardens the site for them had already been cleared, filled in and prepared. In terms of style, it was not until 1914 that the final decision was reached as expressed by Deering:

*“We will have a formal garden that shall be really Italian, as I think under the circumstances it ought to be. What makes an Italian garden as distinguished from a French or English formal garden I do not know, but I presume you do...”*[ibid,1914]

With his final consensus on the style of the formal gardens it was now up to Chalfin to take up the design of these Italian gardens or hire a professional to undertake this task. In the end, Chalfin decided to hire Suarez to carry this undertaking.

Suarez designed the formal gardens and picturesque grounds from Chalfin’s New York studio based on the architectural model of the site and Hoffman’s design for the house. The original scheme was a series of descending terraces to the south ending at the lake in a rather Florentine villa hill garden<sup>7</sup> approach. In addition, Suarez had to work around the natural mangrove and hammock groves that Deering insisted on preserving and incorporating into the final overall design of the grounds [Nardi,p.47]. Suarez, first design was abandoned after he made his first visit to the site in January 1915. The reason for the modifications to the original plan can be best summarized in Suarez’ own words:

*“I had made a terrible mistake, and I knew it as soon as I stepped from one of the main rooms out onto the south terrace overlooking the garden site. It was exactly noon and I looked straight ahead where the gardens would be, and I couldn’t see a thing. I was blinded by light...”*[Suarez,1953]

The lake at the end of the terraces functioned as a huge reflecting mirror under the intense mid-day Florida sun. The original scheme was appropriate for a Tuscan hill setting but not for the flat sub-tropical Florida. This led Suarez to redesign the entire proposal upon his return to New York. This second and final design called for a fan shaped approach, in which the terraces would be substituted by a raised Mount and a

casino to block the glare from the lake<sup>8</sup> and the incorporation of three main vistas, two on the sides of the Mount, and one straight through it (Figs.11 and 12). These three vistas acted as visual connectors between the formal gardens and the picturesque grounds on the southern half of the property. These vistas were best admired from the second floor balcony on the Southern façade, occupied in the interior of the house by the Chinoiserie breakfast room. This point had been chosen by Chalfin in his early concept and during the clearing of the land as the vertex from which vistas ought to emerge. This interconnection between the house and the gardens was mostly influenced by the design rules of Renaissance and Baroque Italian gardens and architecture. This garden design tradition views both components as one unit; the gardens as an extension of the house and not a separate element. They are treated as rooms to be lived in and not just as backdrop.

For this design Suarez mined his vast knowledge of Italian gardens and perhaps influenced by Chalfin's discriminating opinion, designed the gardens in a less Florentine manner to blend in better with the Veneto<sup>9</sup> inspired house and setting. The entire design was composed of separate gardens or rooms, described in Suarez terminology as the Giardino Secreto, the Parterre Garden, the Rose Garden, the Nappe' Deaux, Fish Garden, Verdure Theater, Maze, the Picturesque Tropical Gardens and the mangrove and hammock groves.

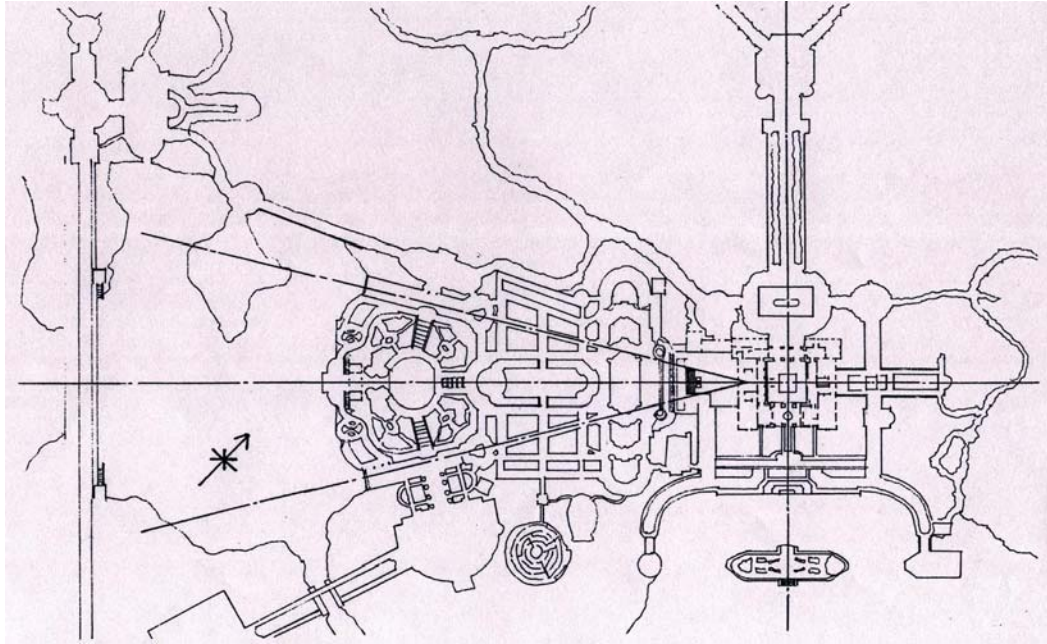


Fig.11-Vizcaya plan axes originating at the house. (from Davidson).

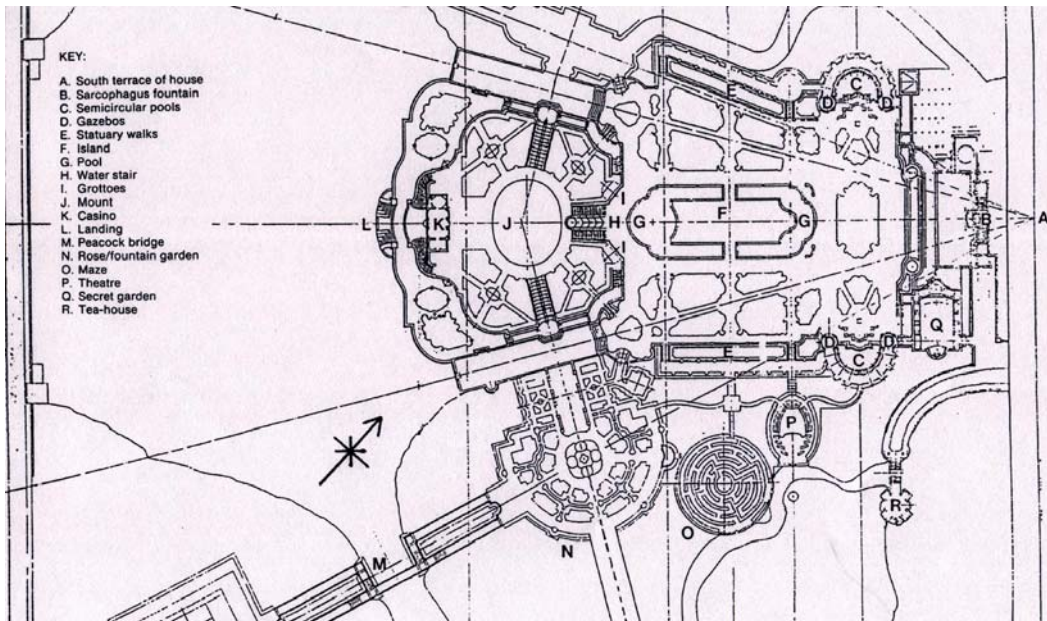


Fig.12- Fan shaped three axes of the formal gardens, two at each side of the Casino Mount and one through it. Notice how the Marine garden was designed aligned to the Southeastern axis of the formal gardens. (from Davidson).

Once Suarez finished his design and drawings of all the main features of the garden had been made he was demoted from designer to draftsman in Chalfin's office. He remained in Chalfin's office until 1917 when he decided to leave [Davidson,p.6]. After Suarez' departure Chalfin took charge of the entire garden construction process until the completion of these in 1922<sup>10</sup>.

### **Construction of the Marine Garden**

One of the most peculiar components of the formal gardens is the Marine Garden. This garden is located on the eastern vista axis pass the Rose garden and it encompasses both sides of the canal that connects the lake to Biscayne Bay (Fig.13).

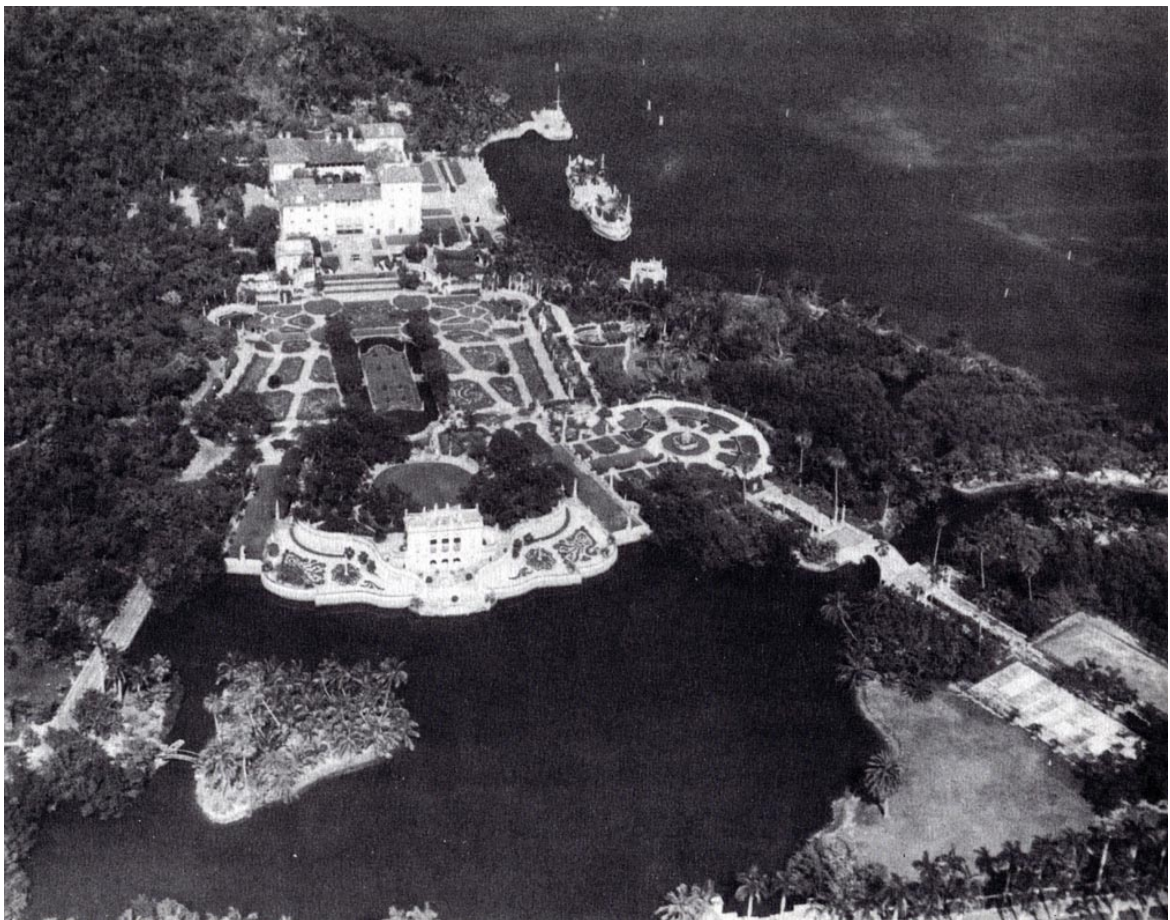


Fig.13- Historic aerial view of the gardens at Villa Vizcaya. The Marine Garden is found on the right hand side between the tennis courts to the south and the Rose garden to the north. (from Mahler).

It is composed of two identical pools, one on each side of the canal, enclosed by a wrought iron baluster and adorned with Solomonic columns on each corner crowned with peacocks. There are two walking paths at either side of the pool and these are flanked by raised walls with planting spaces. The two sides of the garden are linked by an arched bridge (fig. 14).



Fig. 14- Peacock Bridge connecting link between the two sides of the Marine garden over the canal. (Summer 2003)

The present site of the Marine garden was considered to accommodate some sort of garden since the very beginning, given the holistic master plan approach by Chalfin. However, it was Suarez who gave the space its earliest shape in his garden design. It appears that Suarez conceived this space as two elongated pools, whose design and function mostly evolved in 1915 and subsequently expanded as work progressed [Suarez

file,1915]. The Marine garden owing to its location proved to evolve as the key link between the Picturesque Tropical gardens to the south and the formal gardens. The earliest mention of the nature of these two pools took place in February of 1915 in a letter between Deering and Chalfin, in which Deering mentions his desire to plant the pools with pond lilies or the possibility of making the north pool into a rock garden pool [Deering file,1915]. By March Chalfin mentions the pathway running through the hammocks to the canal on the north side of the garden as one of his earliest ideas and one that he thinks must be carried through [Chalfin,1915]. However, it was not until April of the same year that the garden acquired its final form and use as described by Chalfin in a letter to Deering:

*“Your idea about the fishing cage fits in exactly with the esplanade to the causeway and permits perfectly a sea garden which could be examined from both sides. A fish cage on one side of the bridge and a sea garden on part of the other seems to belong there. I wish you could get some information about the sea garden while you are still there.”*[Chalfin file, 1915]

It seems Deering himself came up with the idea of having a sea garden on this location. However, whether this was his own idea, an influence from a similar garden he saw around Miami or derived from a conversation with the project superintendent it is not known. Also, if there were any objections by either Chalfin or Suarez to this possible garden, they were quickly discarded by Deering, since by April 1915 Suarez referred to the site as the sea garden in a lengthy description of his proposed master plan for the site [Deering file,1915].



The drawings for the sea garden or Marine garden were completed by 1917 and work on the construction began soon after. This construction date coincides with Chalfin's take over of the project for the gardens after Suarez' departure. It is most likely that the drawings for the Marine Garden were done by Suarez himself in Chalfin's office or where nearly complete at this time. However, it was probable, that the site's superintendent and Hoffman's replacement Paist, made most of the construction decisions given Chalfin's inability to deal with the technical aspects of construction.



Fig. 15- Historic View of Marine garden form Peacock Bridge nearly completed showing historic plantings including Washingtonian palms

The pace of construction was quick and efficient with the garden acquiring its shape and the introduction of the first plants by late 1917 with the planting of six Washingtonian

palms on either side of the pools (fig. 15), aside from these reference there are no other records of the original scheme for the planting material [Marine Garden file,1917].

The Marine Garden began to worry Deering soon after construction as he clearly mentioned in a letter to Chalfin:

*“ I believe I have never said so, in so many words, but I think you know that I have given up the idea of having a tank to keep edible fish alive and sea gardens with living things... I don't know what else we can do with these two tanks unless we can put coral and other ornamental things that are not living in them, trusting to luck the water being clear enough to make them visible occasionally...”*[Deering file,1918]

But Chalfin would have none of it. His reply to Deering was a strong disapproval of his idea of abandoning the project and expressing his desire to make it an inexpensive experiment by allowing fish to remain in the pool and see if they survived. Moreover, he blamed the murky waters to leftovers from the construction process that had not been cleaned yet [Chalfin file,1918]. At least two modifications took place after Suarez' departure to the design of the Marine garden. The first addition was a boat landing with steps onto the pathway in the north side of the garden that Chalfin had reputed was his idea in earlier correspondence. The second was the lowering of the pool basins. However, the problems with the flow and quality of the water in the pools did not go away. It remained all throughout construction. By this time Deering was apparently tired of the expenditure and the results he was getting. The Marine garden project received a strong disapproval from Deering when some of the costs were made available to him:

*“...In this estimate also is Marine garden \$35,105. I do not know what this work is and should hope that it might be cut down largely. I think you understand that I have*

*fully decided that I will not have any Marine garden which it is costly to maintain...*[Marine Garden file, 1919]

Many of the ornamental work for the garden that was manufactured away from the site went through competitive bidding. An example of such items was the metal baluster that encloses the pools. Estimates for the manufacturing of these were supplied by Renner & Maras as well as Yellin, the latter being the chosen manufacturer. Regardless of the project's fall of grace in



Fig. 16- Ornate grill manufactured by Yellin Foundries, Philadelphia. It is a physical separator between Marine and Rose gardens, also refer to maps appendix (summer 2003)

Deering's eye, work continued through 1920 applying finishes touches with the delivery of the carved peacocks to crown the Solomonic columns and the oak handrails for the balusters. The construction was finally completed in 1921 with the delivery of the

ornate grill placed between the Rose garden and Marine garden also manufactured by Yellin (fig.16).

### **Villa Vizcaya: Time and Place**

Vizcaya was not just the creation of its designers but also a result of its time. The project was as influenced by European precedents as it was by the world of early XX century America. Starting with the Monroe Doctrine of 1823<sup>11</sup>, the United States sought to consolidate its power through expansion outside its continental borders. This fueled and empowered the lives and imagination of all citizens creating a sense of grandeur and reachable goals. In addition, the industrialization of the country created unprecedented growth and wealth. These two historical transformations shaped and influenced the way America saw itself and the image it wanted to portray. No other sector of society was more conscious of this than the upper classes that had the means to translate this image into physical manifestations.

This manifestation took the form through the elegance of European design. Best expressed and popularized in the Columbia World's Fair Exposition of 1876<sup>12</sup>. Architecture has always been used as a statement of power and American millionaires were no exception. The new American gentry saw itself as the heirs to the European tradition and the creation of an aristocratic ambiance fitted in perfectly with this state of mind. The idea of the Italian garden was one of these borrowed pieces ready to be manipulated and reshaped for this game of social validation. Rebecca W. Davidson, expressed how American's use of the Italian garden as a model was a deliberate action and an important cultural signifier, for it gave tangible form to the unique intersection of the forces of society, art and nature in the search for meaning in American life and

culture during this period[Davidson,p.1]. James Deering's circle of friends were part of this trend setting group and their influence must have influenced his decisions and look on the world. The acquisition of European artistic spoils was made popular by Deering's friend Isabella Gardner when she amassed her world famous collection between 1892 and 1903<sup>13</sup>. [Shand-Tucci].

The popularity of the Italian garden design had two underlining driving forces, aside from the socio-cultural influences already mentioned. The two driving forces were two publications, the first, *Italian Gardens*, by Charles A. Platt in 1894 and the second, *Italian Villas and their Gardens*, by Edith Wharton in 1904. These two books were the first to be published in America on the subject and were widely read and printed. James Deering and Paul Chalfin must have been aware of these two publications, quite possibly through Wharton herself, given that she was one of Deering's friends. However, the greatest influence and popularization of the Italian garden was taken up by Platt who made it a trade mark to his career. Platt's design for villas and gardens throughout the country were widely published and Chalfin must have been very aware of his designs and the Italian garden iconography as interpreted by Platt.

However, Vizcaya presents a more direct link to the source, i.e. Italian gardens themselves, rather than publications of the time. Suarez was very knowledgeable on the subject and had studied first hand Italian gardens in detail. This might have been one of the reasons why Deering and Chalfin decided to hire Suarez to design the gardens rather than the well known Platt or even the firm of Carrere and Hasting, which were also successful practitioners of the style in the United States. Suarez had the validation

so important at this time in these projects, that direct link between the old and the new world; the sort of panache that Carrere and Hastings for example could not have provided through their rigid formulas for garden design<sup>14</sup>. Never the less, Suarez Italian garden was transformed to fit its locale, climate and available vegetation and in doing so creating a uniquely American example.

### **Significance**

The analysis of the historical process involved in the construction of Villa Vizcaya and specifically the Marine garden have led to the identification of five key historical values.

- 1- The valuable place of the gardens in the history of Florida and nationally.
- 2- The ecological value of the site in its preservation of native mangrove and hammock groves. Thus the complete wholeness of the place as a unit
- 3- The high artistic value of the gardens as a superb example of a European tradition of garden design.
- 4- The key importance of the Marine garden as a key component in the use and design intent of the formal and picturesque gardens.
- 5- The uniqueness of the idea for the Marine garden

These five historical values are at the core of the original intent of the site as envisioned by its creators.

The value of the gardens in the history of Florida and garden design in the peninsula is perhaps the most important. This notion incorporates all the elements together, as first intended, bestowing them with an all encompassing value that does not refer to a specific element, but rather to the whole. Florida has always had a reputation for its natural

beauty and vegetation. The first impressions of Florida's landscape were made by the Frenchman Jacques le Moyne de Morgues in 1564 that were later widely spread through the publication of his voyage and engraving by the publisher Theodor de Bry in 1588[Lombard.p.2]. This publication presented a fantastic vision of a wild territory inhabited by exotic people and populated by a lush landscape. This vision has remained part of Florida's character all throughout its history and has fostered its mythical vision of a "fantastic land of wonder".

Prior to the construction of Vizcaya there were very few formal gardens to speak of in the entire state, none of which could match the grandeur, size and refinement that Vizcaya would set. One of the earliest grand estates built in Florida was Whitehall, the home of Henry Flagler in West Palm Beach, constructed in 1902. Although palatial in size, it was surrounded by only a small fountain garden and not much landscaping at all, except for royal palms and other tropical vegetation. Other great estates constructed after the completion of Vizcaya did not match the refinement and grandeur of the Vizcaya gardens. Places like Ca'd'Zan (fig.17) and Mare Lago approximate Vizcaya in their sumptuous interiors and scale but not in the designed formality of their landscape. Their styles are also Venetian Gothic and Mediterranean respectively rather than the more academic precision of Vizcaya's Renaissance approach.

Florida's natural beauty has been a source of fascination to visitors since its discovery to Westerners. James Deering was fascinated with Florida's flora. The southern Florida ambiance, landscaping and way of life before the opening of the Flagler railroad in 1912 can be best summarized by the words of Dr. Henry Nehrling when he visited the winter estate of Thomas A. Edison:



Fig. 17- Ca'D'Zan, Sarasota, Florida, Venetian Gothic estate of John Ringling (from Mahler).

*“There are many dense rare tropical trees everywhere in the grounds, and there is a wealth of fine dense shrubs everywhere. There is nowhere formality. Everything appears natural.” [Lombard.p.13]<sup>14</sup>*

James Deering does not seem to have shared the botanic interest that his brother Charles had, but he shared the same enthusiasm for the natural vegetation and his preservation. Whether this was something innate in him or a direct influence from his brother is somewhat unclear. It is most likely however that James had this fascination with the virgin landscape and the tropical flora out of innate interest rather than mere influence (fig. 18). Otherwise his decisive stand in preserving the natural landscape at Vizcaya might have been easily persuaded by Chalfin or Suarez otherwise.





Fig. 18. Brickell Ave in the early XX century when it was densely covered by Hammocks and still part of the Brickell family property. (from Miami Then and Now).

James Deering's vision for the gardens was since the beginning bordering on the Victorian fascination for the "collection" in regards to the plant species as expressed in a letter to Chalfin in 1914:

*"I have never thought of having an arboretum or anything like it but I should like all the varieties of trees that we can expect to grow with reasonable care, especially such as would be interesting or curious. In this connection I think there are many things that we might have, like papyrus, rice, sugar cane etc. I refer to those things as would be a curiosity to people who have never seen them."*[Chalfin file]

The design for the formal gardens thus evolved from this “curiosity” approach that Deeri

ng had in mind to incorporate both the formal, picturesque and natural settings of the entire landscape design as one single master design. Vizcaya was conceived a villa, and as such, the lifestyle of the villeggiatura<sup>17</sup> was meant to be enjoyed by its owner and guests. In 1709 the French scholar A.J. Dezallier d’Argenville<sup>18</sup> in his book La Theorie et la Practique du Jardinage, stated that “A *pleasure garden served only one single purpose: to give pleasure*” [Toman,p.228]. Pleasure was a key purpose of the gardens at Vizcaya, but not its only intent. Certainly the main aim of the formal gardens was to provide Deering and his guests the enjoyment of outdoor rooms, but the sensual experience of the gardens expanded to the visual pleasure of the vistas and flora. The preservation and interplay of the virgin landscape with the designed landscape was then an integral part of the original design and one and a value that has only strengthened with time (Fig 19).

On the other hand, Vizcaya was a beacon of Western refinement and culture amidst the wilderness of a frontier. The design of the house and gardens incorporated the artistic brilliance and vast knowledge of two men whom had both studied the source that led to the final concept. They had both experienced and studied the villas of Tuscany and the Veneto in search of knowledge and inspiration for their commission, Hoffman once the commission has been secured and Suarez bringing what he already knew with him.

There is no doubt that the Italian Renaissance was the underlining foundation for the entire project and the villa and that it followed renaissance precedents and influences.



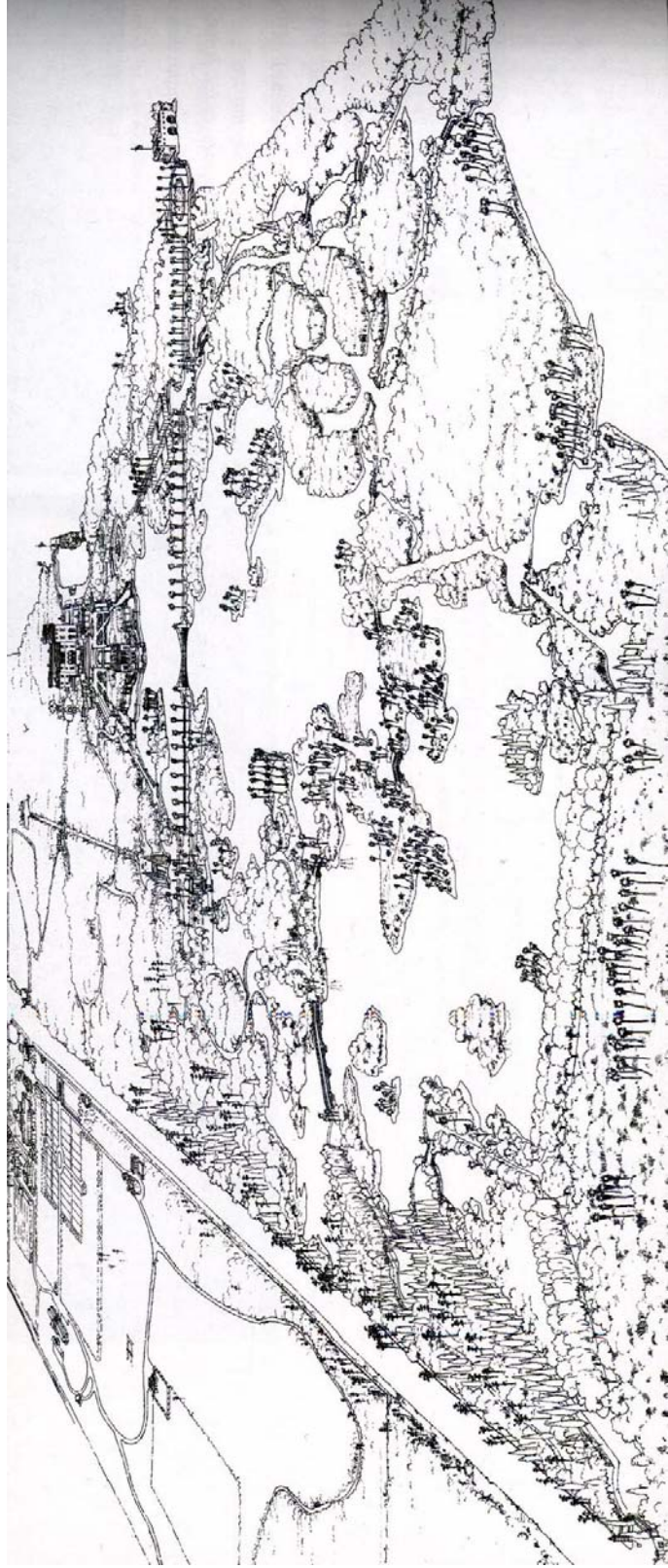
Fig. 19 – Historic view of Main parterre and Casino mound on the upper left corner soon after completion of the gardens (Vizcaya Archives)

However, the final composition of the gardens both by Suarez and Chalfin are deeply rooted in an eclectic Baroque<sup>19</sup>, rather than pure Renaissance. This was a direct consequence of two factors throughout the design and construction of the project, the Florida terrain and the academic recreation of an Italian Villa for the estate. The first is the Florida terrain. Florida's topography is rather flat with no major shifts in elevation. This terrain was perfect for large formal French style gardens<sup>20</sup>, but not so for Italian ones. The second was the idea behind the estate. Both Deering and Chalfin, had envisioned and approached the design of the estate as a transformation of an Italian Renaissance villa from the XVI to the early XIX century. This approach was most

evident in the interiors, but evidently so in the grounds as well. Arguably, if Vizcaya had been a real villa from the XVI century, the most altered spaces would have been the interiors and the landscape, as new decorative tastes and designs became popular. This would have been so much more apparent at the time of its completion when there was a link between the formal gardens and the picturesque tropical gardens. It would have given a much clearer sense of time and style. This would have been much more apparent through the experience of the entire landscape as a unit than is not possible today. It was this eclectic approach what makes the classification of the gardens at Vizcaya “Renaissance” rather arbitrary. Nevertheless, they are a superb example of the European garden tradition in this country. Not just in the complexity and digestion of the models and sources that led to the elements at Vizcaya but in the high level of artistic achievement as a design expression. Vizcaya is not Renaissance but a superb example of early XX century academic eclecticism.

The Marine garden possesses its own specific value aside from the overall artistic and ecological value when viewed within the context of the entire site. The Marine garden was a key element in the complexity of the formal grounds. It served as the linkage between the formal spaces and the wilderness. Its location at the furthest Eastern edge of the formal gardens made it the last formal garden before entering the realm of the tennis court and the picturesque tropical gardens areas. It was here that these two spaces transitioned into one another. The Marine garden for example has no garden wall, as some of the most formal areas of the gardens do. In this area, the mangrove served as the wall, but not to keep out the visitors, but to invite them in and prepare them for what was going to be ahead further south over the bridge.

There is also value in the Marine garden's unique design. The idea of a Marine garden as far as the research for this thesis has gone yielded no previous examples of such a tradition in Italian garden design. If there was a precedent to this unique garden prototype it might have derived from Genoese villas owing to their direct link to the sea as it is the case with Vizcaya; but very unlikely to Veneto or Tuscan villas. However, what precedes this idea is that sense of play and wonder so prevalent in Italian Baroque gardens translated to the shores of Biscayne Bay. There is also great Baroque theatricality in its function as a "fish cage". The recreation of an underwater world with the application of tropical sea shells, sea fans decorations and painted corals to simulate speaks to that desire to awaken curiosity. That sense of oddity that Deering had put forth early on in reference to plant material was reflected in this garden as well. One of the most obvious elements were the fish themselves, which according to some accounts were fished by guests to be later served during dinner.



## CHAPTER IV: HISTORICAL MANAGEMENT

### **Historical Management, private estate**

The site has undergone three major management phases that led to the current configuration in place today. The first period roughly spans between 1925 to 1953, the second period from 1953 to 1998 and the third from 1998 to the present.

There were no documents found during the research part of this thesis that indicated with clarity and precision what the pre-1925 management of the estate was like. There is however a lot of information on the management and maintenance at Buena Vista, Charles Deering's estate. The first experience James Deering saw first hand in the management and care of a Florida estate took place at his brother's Buena Vista property. Thus, it is very likely that the management of Vizcaya closely resembled that of Buena Vista. Buena Vista estate was composed of 212 acres of virgin hammocks, pine woods and mangroves and a simple Spanish style house. According to David Fairchild, Charles intention was of transforming this estate into an arboretum [Fairchild,p.10]. He was passionate about the natural vegetation and was crucial in establishing a plant, managed by the United States Department of Agriculture, for the management and introduction of seeds and plants in South Florida. This plant was set up within 25 of the 212 acres at Buena Vista. The estate had no formal gardens. Charles wanted no formal man made aspects obstructing the beauty of the natural landscape. However, whether the land was left untouched or closely monitored it is unknown, since by 1912 Charles had decided to sell Buena Vista and acquired an even larger lot of land south of Miami, at Cutler (Fig.21). It can be speculated that the management approach

for the landscape followed at Cutler was a continuation of many of the same principals that had been laid at Buena Vista. This second estate was also made up of the same composition of mangroves and hammocks. It is known that at Cutler monitoring of the landscape took the form of a Picturesque English Park garden approach; maintained in a perfect natural setting. This is best expressed in the management intervention the estate manager J.N. Morrison followed :

*“To get the trails in the old hammock in good condition: 1. Clear the paths of snags, projecting roots and loose stones. Cut off all dead or living branches that obstruct the trail or that project enough to strike one in walking...eliminate all dead shrubbery and herbs, and remove all such materials to some spot in the hammocks out of view and let it decay. Remove dead palmetto leaves. If any rocks have been chopped off and show the white instead of the weathered gray, give them a dab of gray paint. In short clean up the trails, both the ground and the immediate vegetation so that there will be nothing to offend the eye or interfere with the walking.” [Lomabrd,p.29]*

There is a very strong possibility that Cutler’s landscape management regimen influenced the one followed at Vizcaya’s once it was completed and James’ estate manager and staff set out to manage it. This influenced was surely felt in the hammocks and perhaps the picturesque tropical gardens, but not in the formal gardens. The design intent of the formal spaces was very clear and strict and must have followed a completely different set of guidelines in order to maintain its design. After James Deering’s death in 1925 the property was bequeathed to his nieces and nephew.



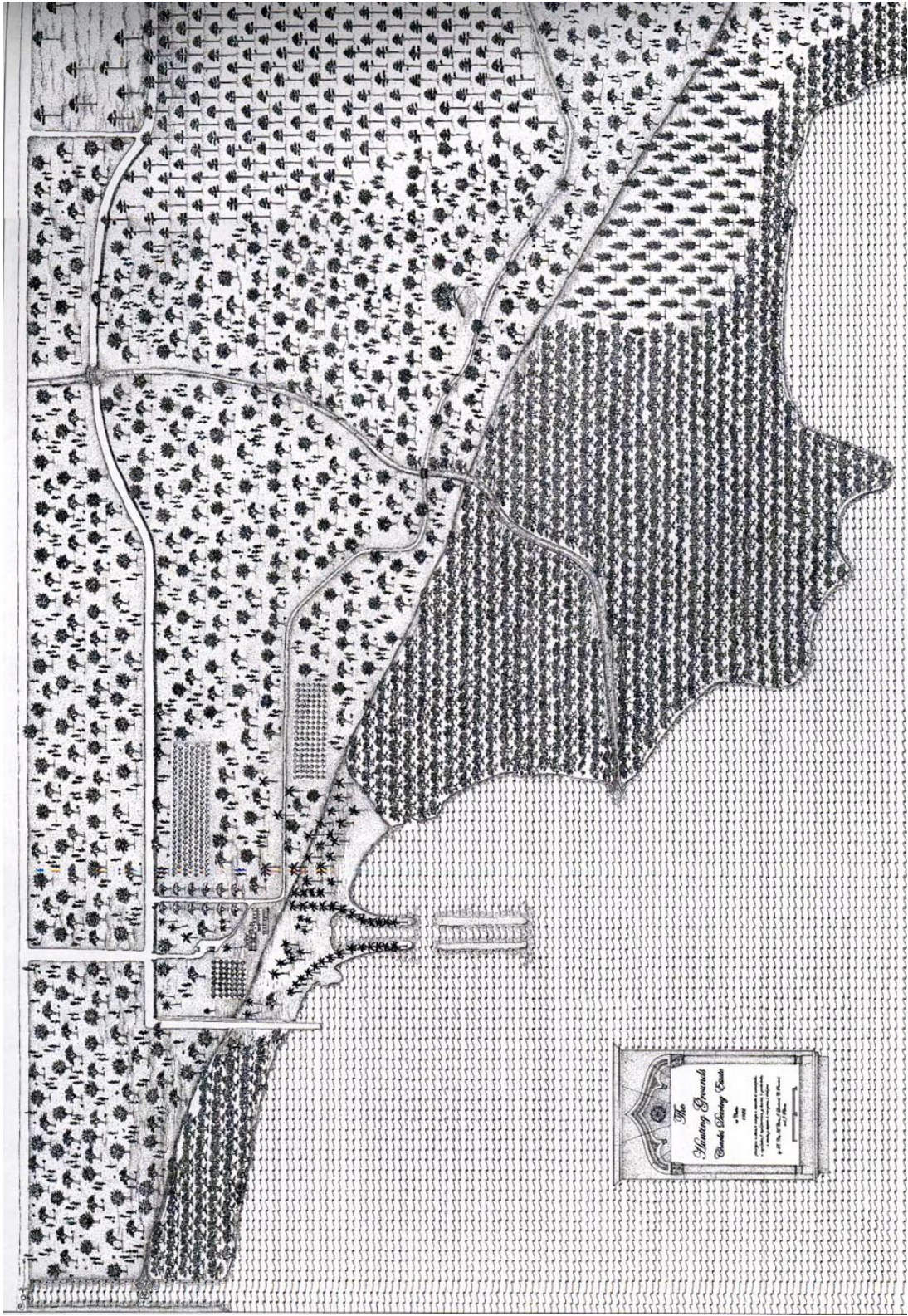


Fig.21 – Cutler, the estate of Charles Deering south of Miami. The estate remains intact and is owned and operated by Miami-Dade County (from Ceo/Lombard).

Marion Deering McCormick and Barbara Deering Danielson, bought out their brother and used the house as their winter residence [Maher,p.212]. The expense of maintaining such an estate was very high and financial strains began to appear soon after they took over ownership. Neither of the heiresses wished to live in the property all year round and treated it as what it had been originally designed to be, a winter residence. The first attempts to open Vizcaya to the public were made by the Deering heiresses during 1934 and 1935. The move was clearly made for financial profit that would alleviate the strain on resources by the upkeep and management of the site. However, the way in which the house was presented to the public, as well as the interpretation visitors were given is not known. It appears that visitors were allowed to stroll through the grounds and visit some of the main floor rooms during the summer months when the hostesses were not using the residence. These two attempts were not as popular as first imagined and revenues from the venture proved not very lucrative thus it was abandoned after the 1935 season.

By the early 1940s the estate was getting ready for even greater transformations, which led to phase two in the management of the site. The grounds had fallen into disrepair by this time, specially the outer grounds, and the maintenance expense was proving just too burdensome for even two Deering-McCormick heiresses. They took the drastic decision to subdivide and sell most of the estate. The original 180 acre estate was subdivided to a mere 28 acres (Fig.22). The subdivision was carried out in two major periods. The entire southern portion east of South Miami Avenue was sold as a single tract to the archdiocese of Miami in 1945 (fig.23). The acres west of South Miami Avenue and just south of the farm village were sold to speculators for residential

development soon after. The remaining property was an L shaped site which included to the northeast

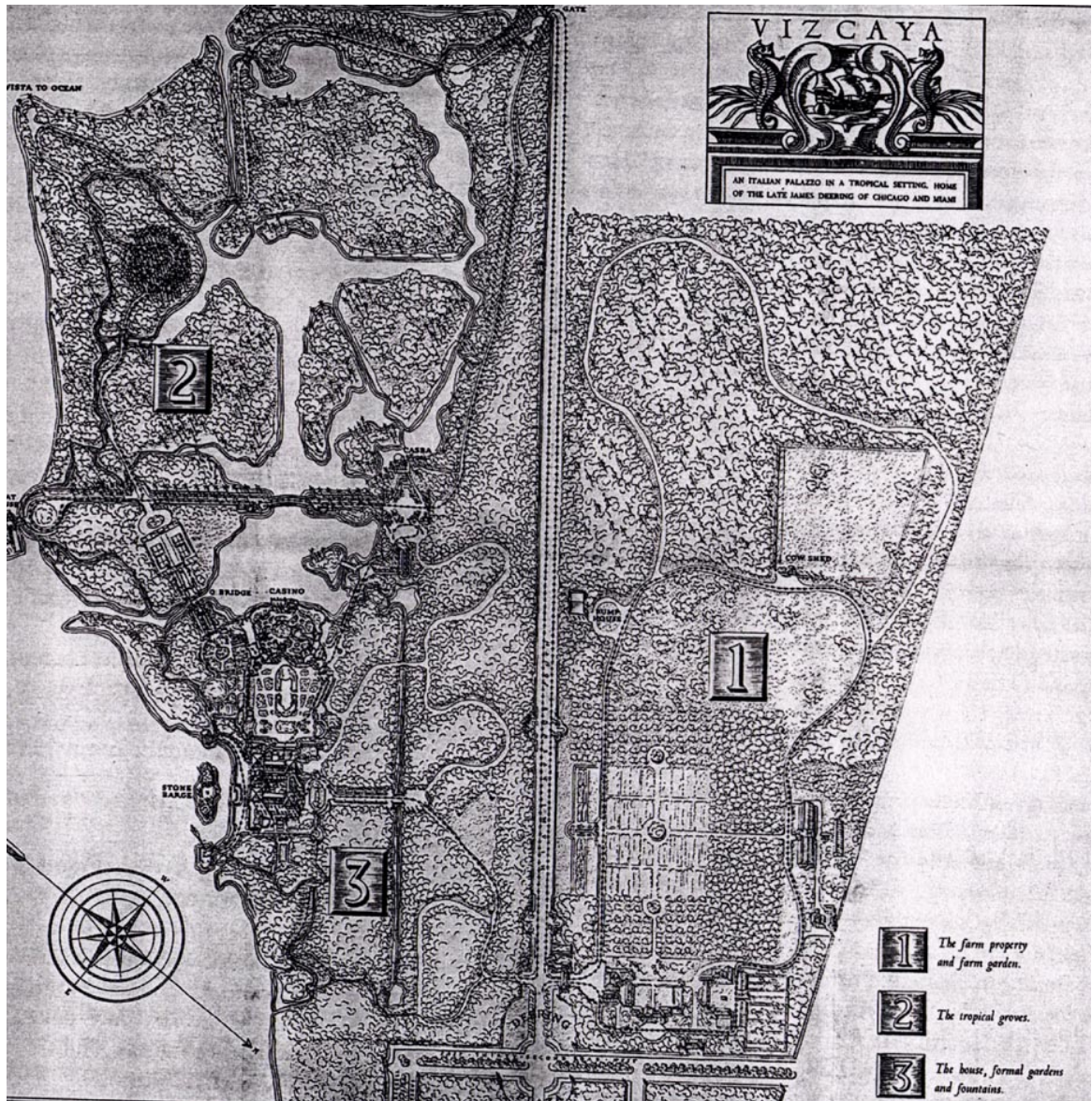


Fig. 22- Plan of Vizcaya in the 1930s prior to subdivision by the Deering-McCormick heiresses (from Mahler).

the farm village and the gate houses at either side of South Miami Avenue. To the east the property encompassed the house, the remaining hammocks as well as half of the

gardens. The picturesque tropical gardens with most of the hammocks, Deering so eagerly wanted to preserve, were lost to the archdiocese and the original holistic design intent for the landscape lost as well. The farm village remained as a protruding limb on the other side of the Avenue with no real connection to the rest of the estate, except for the imposing gatehouses and driveway as only means of visual connection. This disjunction between the parts of the site was further accentuated when the acres just south of the village were developed as a residential neighborhood (Fig.24)).

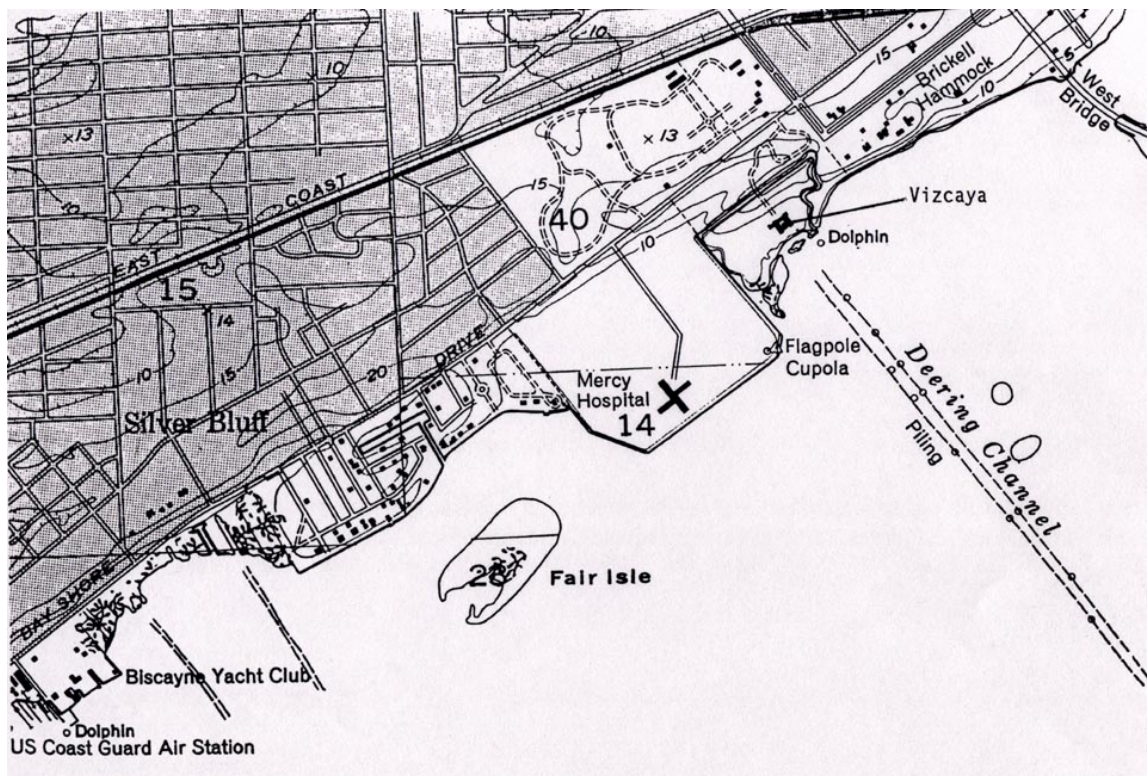


Fig.23-1940s Map showing the subdivision of the Southern half of the estate and the construction of Mercy Hospital. At this time the Farm Village lands were still part of Vizcaya (from Davidson).

The archdiocese leveled the picturesque gardens, dismantled the boat house, tennis courts and filled in the lake to the new property line, which ran through the middle of the body of water. The actions by the archdiocese were dramatic and irreversible. The

entire site was built-up as a compound housing Mercy Hospital, La Salle High School and two parochial churches, La Ermita de la Caridad de el Cobre and St. Francis (Fig, 24). As stated before, the acres south of the farm village, were originally used for cultivation and housing of farm animals, were developed in the 1950s as a residential neighborhood. The design for this neighborhood offered no visual or aesthetic connection to the farm village. The houses were all designed in typical California ranch style houses creating not just a physical but also an aesthetic disconnect to the Italian Renaissance farm village buildings. This disconnect became even more acute when in the 1980s the Museum of Science was constructed in a parcel of land between the farm village and the neighborhood with the museum's parking lot adjacent to the property line of the farm village.



Fig. 24- Map highlighting the current Vizcaya property in red. Notice Mercy Way and Samana Drive, utilize preexisting estate wall features as their entrances into South Miami Ave. In the case of Mercy Way, a preexisting gateway original to the design and Samana Drive the opening of a niche. (from Miami-Dade County Property records)

The museum buildings also did very little in marrying the two sides, although, the use of key stone and pastel painted stucco made it a more welcomed neighbor. However, the walls that enclosed the estate along South Miami Avenue remained standing throughout all these transformations and even today they are a visual link that brings together all these completely separate parts as a whole entity and hints to the visitor of the original dimensions of the estate<sup>1</sup>. It was in this broken-up form that the heiresses sold what remained of the property to Miami-Dade County in 1952 for one million dollars in bonds<sup>2</sup>[Davidson,p.6]. With this sale the Deering family no longer had any ownership of the property, but they did not disconnect from it entirely. The terms of sale outlined that the property would be owned by Miami-Dade County in perpetuity and that it would be open for public use. The Deering family was selling the property to the County with the sole intent of creating a memorial to their late uncle. This action was also an attempt to maintaining their uncle's legacy and accomplishment through the resources and care that Miami-Dade County was willing to provide. The Deering family was so serious in their commitment to the formation of the museum that they advanced the County \$50,000 as a starting fund and donated nearly all the furnishing and decorative arts inside the house to serve as the bulk of the collection. The desire on the well-being of the estate was a mutual feeling between the County, who saw the potential of buying such an important landmark at a bargain basement price, and the Deering's who could see no other way of maintaining the estate without complete demolition and subdivision. Miami-Dade purchased the property to open it to visitors as the County's decorative arts museum.

## **Historical Management, Museum**

After the sale the management of the site was transferred to the Miami-Dade Parks commission. The museum was operated under the supervision of a director who in turn answered to the Parks and Recreation Department and ultimately the County commission.

The Vizcaya Volunteer Guides group was the first non-County affiliated group formed in 1954 to help with the management and interpretation of the site. Their members were all unpaid volunteers in charge of gathering information and presenting it to visitors through tours. Tours are still provided by this group to this day. Once the governing structure was in place, the museum was officially open on March 8, 1952[Maher,p.213]. The assurance of a steady trust for the upkeep and well being of Deering's legacy was finally materialized by the formation of two not-for-profit groups; the Vizcayans in 1956 and the Foundation for Villa Vizcaya in 1979.

The Vizcayans responsibilities include the raising of funds for preservation, restoration and education projects exclusively throughout the site<sup>3</sup>. The Foundation of Villa Vizcaya was formed to raise an endowment and fund major capital improvements as needed throughout the house and the grounds. These two organizations were formed to help the site with the expenses of upkeep and to finance large scale intervention projects.

The management strategies implemented throughout the years by the Parks department as well as, management and allocation of revenues created tension between the museum's directorship and the County. One of the most contended issues was the maintenance of the site by the Parks and Recreation Department as another park property

and not as the important historic site it was. The maintenance decisions were very often questioned and in some cases detrimental to the historic quality of the site. An example of such interventions can be seen in the Marine garden and the statues of the Rose garden. This unpleasant relationship led to a major reshuffle of the management structure at Vizcaya in 1998.

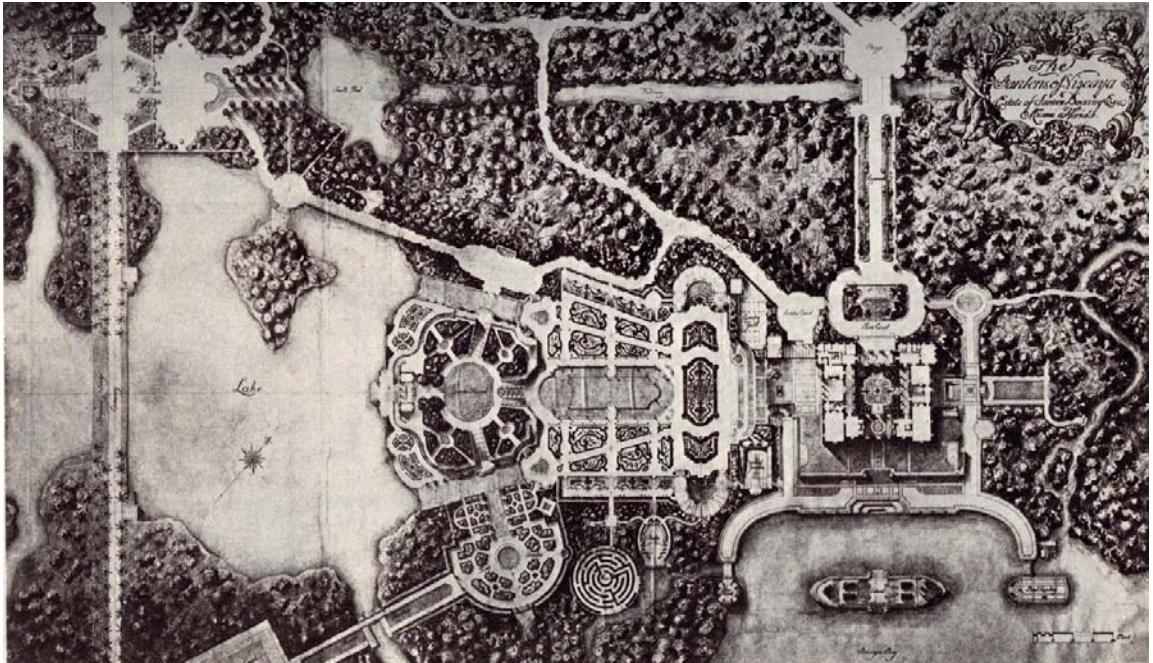


Fig. 25-Plan of house and formal gardens encompassing the roughly 28 acres that remain to this day, notice the two pools of the Marine garden with its connecting bridge leading to the Tennis courts on the lower left portion of the plan. (from Mahler)



## CHAPTER V: CURRENT MANAGEMENT

### **Current Management**

The County, through the implementation of ordinance # 98-112, created the Vizcaya Museum and Gardens Trust as the sole manager of the site. The Trust, although a not-for-profit, is at the same time a County agency. It was bestowed with the power to govern all activities associated with the site, but ultimately adhering to Miami-Dade County's mandate given that the museum remained a County property<sup>1</sup>. This new administration structure saw the need to create yet another affiliated not-for-profit; the Volunteer Support Groups. This group was formed to bring together all three associated groups as one body for discussion of site-related issues and to provide inter-organizational support to one another.

The current governing structure of the site thus presents a tier system in which all related foundations are under the leadership of the museum's director and the Trust's Board. This governing arrangement is in turn adhered to the County's commission through their ownership of the site.

### **Current Finances**

After the 1998 management reshuffle Vizcaya became its own separate financial entity from the County. This financial separation from the county started earlier in 1989 during which time the site began to have more control over its finances<sup>1</sup>. This control did not solidify completely until The Vizcaya Museum and Garden Trust was made responsible for the site's financial solvency and the management of all associated assets

in 1998. This task fell upon the hands of the Foundation's board and the site's director. The combined assets of all related parties, i.e. the three not for profits, Volunteer guides, Foundation for Villa Vizcaya and The Vizcayans, make up the current Vizcaya endowment.

In the fiscal year ending in 2002, the site had a combined endowment of roughly \$2,168,144.00 [2002,IRS]. This endowment reflected the combined assets of the Foundation and the Vizcayans. The volunteer group, although possessing their own finances, is not calculated in this figure, given that their task within the organizational structure of Vizcaya is not financial. Their assets fall below \$ 25,000 and as such they are not required by law to submit an annual return to the IRS. In addition, this money is not used towards any site related projects. The Foundation and the Vizcayans are the two organizations upon which the stability of the site projects rest. Their endowments are the driving engines of nearly all projects related to the house and the gardens. As stated earlier, the Foundation for Villa Vizcaya is responsible for major capital projects, while the Vizcayans are responsible for preservation, restoration and education projects. Both organizations have roughly \$ 1,000,000.00 each in assets for their respective tasks. The Vizcayans, due to the nature of their responsibilities, try to maintain a higher level of liquidity than the Foundation<sup>3</sup>. The funds needed for education, restoration and preservation have been in greater demand than those needed for major capital improvement projects. This has caused restoration/preservation projects to lag behind in terms of how much money is spent on them. Although, the organization has a sizable endowment, only a small percentage is made available for projects while the rest of the endowment remains invested to assure continued earnings. Technically, capital

improvement projects encompass both the house and the grounds. However, in the recent past, there has been an unequal balance of house-related project to grounds-related projects involving the Foundation's money. The house has undergone a major climate control project, roof tile replacement project and Hurricane shutters project<sup>4</sup> while the grounds have only received attention recently with the retrofitting of the Farm Village complex. The grounds have benefited by The Vizcayan's intervention more than any funds provided by the Foundation, given that many of the projects that have taken place on the landscape have been restorations. Example of these projects have been the restoration of the gardens after the devastation caused by Hurricane Andrew in 1992, which caused ground related projects to consume all of the allocated funding for projects that year[McDonald interview].

Aside from the endowments provided by these two organizations, the Vizcaya Museum and Gardens Trust manages all income generated within the site. This income makes the greater part of all site operations and the budget that affects everyday management decisions at the site. The Trust collects revenues from admission ticket sales, sales at the gift shop, revenues from facilities rental, and special paid events sponsored by the museum. The Trust, as governing body for the site, does not have to submit IRS annual returns and the yearly budgets are audited by the county. This audit allows the county to provide the Trust with full range autonomy over their decisions but assures the smooth management of its property.

Vizcaya receives around 200,000 visitors a year, most of which are out of town residents on a one-time visit to the site. The sale of admission tickets creates 44% of the

annual revenues for the site, with facilities rental following at 28%, special events revenues at 20% and gift shop sales and miscellaneous at 8%. The Trust divides and manages this annual budget. Currently, the maintenance of the house and grounds receive only 5 % of the entire annual budget<sup>5</sup>. In addition to the site's revenues, the site applies to county, state and federal grants that qualify to increase their annual budget [2000 plan].



Fig. 26 – Tent on the East Terrace overlooking Biscayne Bay utilized during events. (summer 2003)

The facilities rental program is a great revenue source for the site (fig. 26). It is a great marketing program for people to visit the site and return at a later date for a regular museum visit. However, it is a program that takes a great toll on the historic fabric of the

house and grounds. Historically, there have been up to 190 events held in the site annually [McDonald interview]. These events range from small corporate parties to large weddings with a limit of 3,000 guests. The gardens are also a favorite location for Quinses<sup>6</sup> photo shoots. The formal gardens, specially the Casino Mount and the East terrace are the most popular spots of the landscape for such events. The house is mostly off limits except for the South Enclosed Loggia that is open for use during these events. The popularity of the site for such events in the Miami area has led to hasty decisions in regards to accommodations for rental equipment, such as the drilling of permanent tent fasteners on the East Terrace paving stones to ease tent assembly<sup>7</sup>.

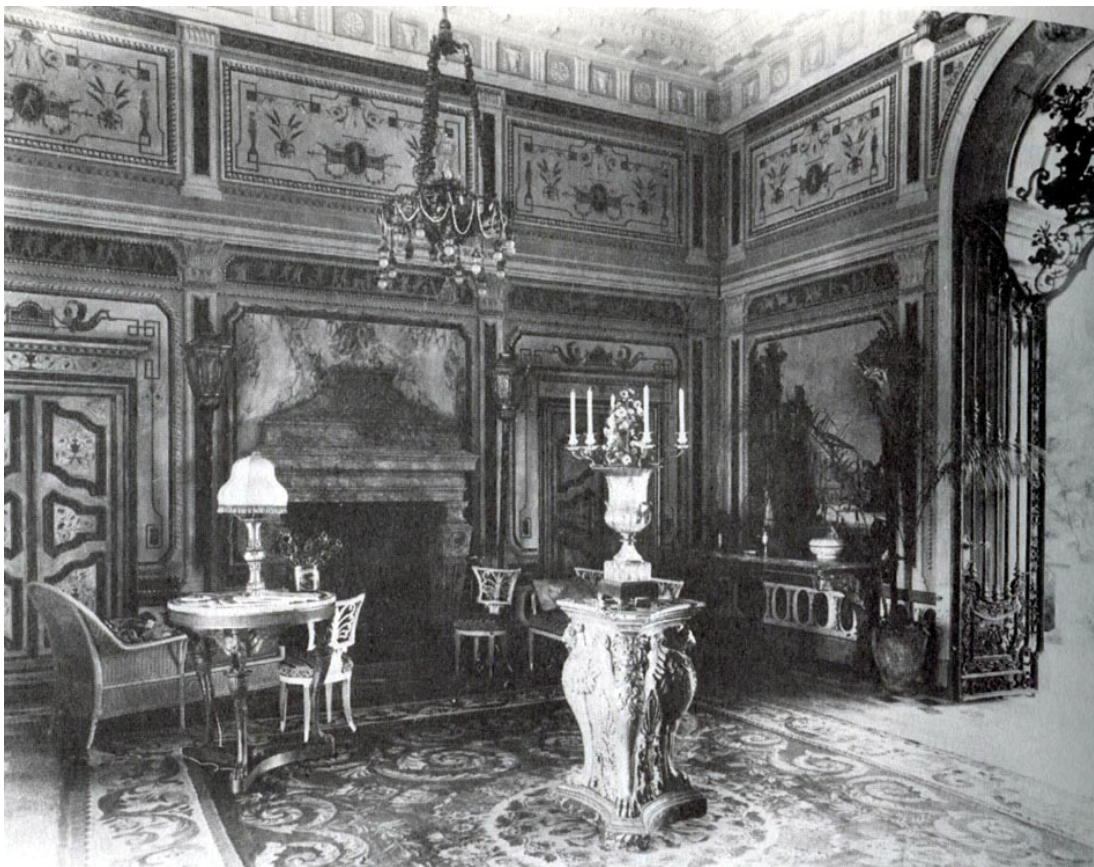


Fig. 27-Historic view of enclosed loggia. This space is the only area of the house open during rental events. (from Mahler).

## 2000 Strategic Plan

After the formation of the Vizcaya Museum and Garden Trust one of the first steps taken was the formation of a strategic plan for the site. The site had only management plans in place prior to 1998 and all strategies and management related steps were created through the Park and Recreations Department. This strategic plan was created in 2000 by Museum Management consultants based in San Francisco through the help and support of all five organizations involved in the management of Vizcaya. The resulting document listed eight goals that the site aimed at achieving within five years. These were:

*1-Enhance cooperative governance structure*

*2-Collaboration with volunteer groups*

*3-Establish priorities for estate and collections, preservation and use*

*4- Increase public awareness and community participation*

*5- Develop new educational and scholarly initiative*

*6- Integrate and increase contributed and earned income*

*7- Develop management structure in support of strategic plan*

*8- Plan for full integration of historic estate [2000 plan]*

These eight goals presented the site's immediate concerns and the future vision for the museum. At first glance the goals illustrate a variety of management issues, some of which have been on going since the establishment of the museum in 1952 such as goals four and five. The governance structure is undoubtedly the number one priority for the site. This is due to the already explained recent changes. In many ways, Vizcaya is

beginning anew. The 1998 management restructuring created a new system that is in its infancy and trying to find its place; not just within the site's already existing structure, but also within the county as well. The highest priority with this goal is the relationship between the Trust and the county. The County wants the site to be financially sustainable under its new governing structure. It is at the core of a successful management of the site that these two organizations maintain a bilateral working relationship and understanding. This relationship must translate into the other three organizations and their intercommunication. This step was already taken into consideration when the volunteers Support Group was created to address this relationship issue between all organizations and the implementation of working relations agreement between the Trust and the not-for-profit groups. This agreement emphasizes the loyalty of these groups to the well being and priorities of the site.

The Volunteer Guides, as the oldest and most visible of all the organizations, are the public face of the site's management and the Trust understands that without their support the site could not be run successfully. Although, their performances are closely monitored by the professional staff and their services considered invaluable, the strategic plan points out the need for more professional involvement with this group. Currently all volunteer dozens go through a six week training program and are tested before they can conduct any tours throughout the site. The tours are periodically audited by the professional staff to assure accuracy and professionalism.

The role of the Trust within the context of the site has also been evolving since 1998. This is clearly stated in the plan not just in regards to the needed involvement in the volunteer's tour structure but also in the fund raising and endowment structure of the

Vizcayans and Foundation. The intent is to unify all five organizations into a more coherent single force that would work better towards the common goal of the site. The current tier system presents many challenges to the control of the Trust and its successful management. A first step taken was to include, as part of the ordinance that created the trust, a set of guidelines and contracts for the other not for profits by which they would adhere and function. The hope of these actions was to promote a better image of the site within the community and to show a more unified face for fund raising activities. The Trust hopes that with such steps it would be possible to create a more centralized staff nucleus. This unified image could also increase community interest on the site that at the moment remains very low.

This community image goal, as established by the strategic plan, is believe to be a key element in the future of the site. The necessity for community involvement and support for the site is now greater than it has ever been and without it the museum could not survive. The autonomy of the site from the Parks and Recreation department is seen a positive step towards the formulation of a new image for the museum within South Florida. Although, the importance of Vizcaya in the region's history and as a national iconic symbol has never been questioned, the community has not been engaged to their full potential in previous years. This has resulted in an unclear image of the site within the context of greater Miami [Gherlach interview].

This new image and status that the site aims to recapture within the community can only be achieved through the implementation of goals three, five and eight. These goals are the back bone of a successful community engagement. Currently, the site's educational programs include mostly fourth to twelfth grade students through the



museum's partnership in Museum Education Programming<sup>6</sup>. Nevertheless, in order for the site to fully engage the public, its collections must be re-cataloged and a new inventory taken into account to bring up to date the site's holdings and better use the collection for interpretation context and visitor experience.

Perhaps, the most important but of less pressing importance in the hierarchy of strategic plan is goal eight, *Plan for full integration of historic estate*. The plan calls for the reintegration of the farm village, across South Miami avenue, as an integral part in the future integration of the original historic estate. The farm village is currently undergoing restoration with funds from both the Vizcayans and the Foundation. The buildings will be used for expanded storage facilities for the collection, new exhibition galleries, conservation laboratory and most importantly a visitor orientation center<sup>8</sup>. This center if conceived properly can fill the vacuum that the current volunteer docents leave. The adaptation of this ensemble of buildings will not just physically connect this important part of the historic estate back to the site, but it holds the possibility of unifying the site by non-physical means as well, mainly through interpretation.

## CHAPTER VI: SITE MAINTENANCE

### **Maintenance of the Gardens**

The maintenance of the landscape was performed by Parks and Recreation Department employees since 1952 to 1998. These men performed all landscape maintenance and in the early years of the site's operation, repairs to physical fabric. This practice was dropped by the 1970s and it has been the norm for the site to contract a specialist to do this type of work since that date.



Fig. 28 – The Nappe' Deaux, or central parterre. (Summer 2003)

The management of the gardens since 1998, after the separation of the site from the County, has fallen under the care of the Vizcaya maintenance staff. Currently this staff is divided into three groups, gardeners, custodians and general maintenance. There are a total of 15 staff members. Garden maintenance alone includes 7 individuals, including the head gardener. Their tasks include the upkeep of all plant species and general maintenance of garden areas including cleaning, watering and replanting campaigns. The bulk of their work concentrates in the Nappe' Deaux, which is the area immediately adjacent to the South façade of the house and the area that receives the most day to day care and upkeep (fig. 28). The remaining tropical hammocks and mangroves are not maintained on a regular basis and are left in a natural state, except for the necessary removal of dead trees or road blocking debris.

### **Marine Garden: Maintenance**

The realities of the Marine Garden are not the same as those of the rest of the site. The current conditions in the Marine Garden are far more neglected than any other area within the formal gardens. Given that the garden is made up of two sides under different maintenance regimes the end result is two very different approaches. This was made clear in an interview with Jim Rustin, site maintenance supervisor, for Vizcaya and conversations with La Salle high school staff members.

The side of the garden within the Vizcaya side receives little routine maintenance. All other areas of the formal gardens go through cyclical cleanings and care to assure their maintenance and design, especially the parterres and clipped hedges. However, this cyclical intervention is reduce in the Marine garden to removal of dead plants from the

two main paths along side the pool, and the sporadic replacement of plant material in areas where the foliage gap becomes too noticeable.

The pools and fountains around the grounds are drained as part of this cyclical maintenance schedule and cleaned of algae growth. The Marine Garden pool receives no such treatment. The water in the pool is a result of the natural flow of the tide and rain water accumulation. The feeding pipe that originally controlled a constant water level is broken underground and all pipe lines to this part of the Garden are shut and abandoned<sup>1</sup>. The algae growth inside the pool is the natural Marine ecosystem resulting from the salt water flow from the bay of Biscayne and the porous key stone that clads its interior faces (fig. 29).



Fig. 29 – Water quality inside the pools of the Marine garden. The same is found on both pools at either side of the property. (summer 2003)

The current plantings in the garden are overgrown and in an untamed state. The original planting scheme for the garden is not known, except for the Washingtonian Palms mentioned earlier, and the trees and plants found today in the garden are a combination of planting schemes performed through the years and periodic replacements since the years of James Deering's death (fig 30 and 31).

The La Salle side of the garden receives scheduled mowing of the lawn as part of the school's lawn maintenance. The garden is seen as a relic and it is not disturbed in any way. This approach appears to have been the attitude since the purchase of the property by the archdiocese. There are other remaining garden features, such as pedestals, that are also treated in the same manner (fig. 32). In addition, both sides have suffered greatly from their proximity to the bay during bad weather, specially during tropical storms and hurricanes. The Vizcaya side of the garden has been repaired after such weather related damages, but the La Salle side has not been treated the same way. Thus, the current ruinous state it presents is a combination of natural decay accentuated by nearly fifty years of deferred maintenance.

### **Marine Garden: Current Conditions**

The greatest damage in the site is found on the floor paving. All drainage pipes on the floor are clogged and abandoned (fig. 21). In the subtropical climate of Miami with frequent tropical downpours this translates into water accumulation. This water accumulation combined with the root systems of overgrown trees and shrubbery has created a threatening danger to the soft coral limestone used throughout the garden.



Figs. 30 – 31 – Comparative views of historic and current conditions of plant material in the Marine garden. (Vizcaya Archives, summer 2003)



Fig. 32 – La Salle High School backyard with remnants of Vizcaya garden elements such as these two pedestals. (summer 2003)

The stone shows extensive spalling, granulation and fragmentation. The damage is most visible on the path leading from the Marine Garden down to the boat landing on the canal, where roots have cracked and dislodged entire pavers and punctured through retaining walls (fig. 34). Another major damage source is water infiltration, especially along the retaining walls. Water migrates from the planting beds and egresses through the stone face. There is a water spigot on the northern planting bed that has caused advanced deterioration on the faces of the stone cladding in the adjacent area by water infiltration (fig. 33).



Fig.33 Clogged drains in the Marine garden, (summer 2003)



Fig. 34 – Dislodged retaining wall block due to overgrown root systems (summer 2003)



A black plastic plaque on the Northeastern side of the pool mentions a restoration that took place between 1979 and 1980. However, there are no records of such interventions in the Vizcaya archives and no knowledge from the current staff on what was this restoration involved. There are several distinct repair techniques and methodologies throughout the stone work of the garden. Some repairs were done with great care and other in very poor craftsmanship techniques. Perhaps, the most intrusive repair is the pre-cast concrete peacock replacement atop the western Solomonian column<sup>2</sup> leading to the bridge. It is purely speculation to say that this peacock or the crudest patches were part of this supposed restoration.



Fig. 35 – Water spigot and damaged stone cladding on a retaining wall planting. Notice the root systems of the plants penetrating through the stone. (summer 2003)

The different repair techniques lead one to believe that it is the result of several interventions by different people through time and not the outcome of a major campaign. These could have also been the result of Parks and Recreation Department decisions and interventions which have stopped since 1998 (figures 24 and 25). Today all repairs and conservation to historic fabric are done by professionals. The garden staff only secures or removes damaged pieces to prevent further deterioration but is not involved in any sort of restoration<sup>3</sup>.



Figs. 36-37- Examples of repairs performed on historic elements of the Marine garden, both of these two repairs are on two different Peacock columns and show clear different craftsmanship methodologies. (Summer 2003)



## CHAPTER VII: SITE INTERPRETATION

### Site Interpretation

With the purchase of the property by the County and the creation of the museum a site mission statement was created to reflect the purpose and roles of the site. This statement has remained the back-bone for the interpretation of the site since its beginning. The first mission statement was created in 1952 with the opening of the museum and reads as follows:

*“Vizcaya Museum and Gardens preserves in its historical context the legacy of a romantic Italian villa on Biscayne Bay. Through scholarly research and educational programs, Vizcaya fosters a deep appreciation of its architectural and artistic achievements and inspires the residents and visitors of Miami-Dade County to participate in the preservation of our heritage”*  
[Vizcaya archives, Mission Statement]

This statement was revised in the year 2000 to incorporate new values and needs of the site that had been created through time. The new mission statement however, retained at its core the presentation of the site to the public within its historic context and within the original intent of its creators.

There are four main aspects to the revised statement as follows:

*1-Preserving the historic and artistic integrity of Vizcaya as envisioned by American Industrialist James Deering and his designers.*

*2-Connecting the past to the present in relevant and appropriate ways for the local community and Miami-Dade County visitors.*

*3-Placing education at the core of all museum endeavors*

*4-Adhering to accepted museum and historic preservation standards and ethical practices* [Strategic Plan,p.8]

The interpretation of the site has evolved very little throughout its fifty years of operation, primarily because it has always been under the control of the volunteer guides

and the unchanged mission of the site as a decorative arts museum<sup>1</sup>. As mentioned earlier, since the opening of the museum the interpretation of the site and the public face of the museum have been performed by dedicated volunteers<sup>2</sup>. The museum's main purpose has been to showcase the collection of antiques inside the main house and relate this collection to the life and times of Deering at Vizcaya. The interiors have remained with most of their original contents in the present museum setting and the phantom of Deering has played a key role in interpreting these spaces (figs. 38 and 39). He is the unifying element that brings together all stories under one united thread. Thus, the interpretation has always followed a concentric approach with James Deering and the house he built as the focus and all other aspects included in the interpretation radiating from it in decreasing order of importance.

The current experience of this interpretation by the visitor relies heavily on the information provided by the tour guides. Visitors are welcomed to walk through the rooms of the house at their own accord; however, there are no signs for them to get acquainted with what they are seeing. The only way of getting information on what they are viewing is to purchase a guidebook along with their tickets prior to entering the house. However, given that the ticket salesman does not inform beforehand the visitor about this, they are faced with only two choices upon entering the house. Either walk throughout the house getting a visual treat of European decorative arts or wait for the next tour to begin. The volunteer guide's tour presents visitors with a brief introduction on the life of Deering and the construction of the house and gardens, and goes on to an exhaustive provenance and description and use of the different rooms in the house<sup>3</sup>.

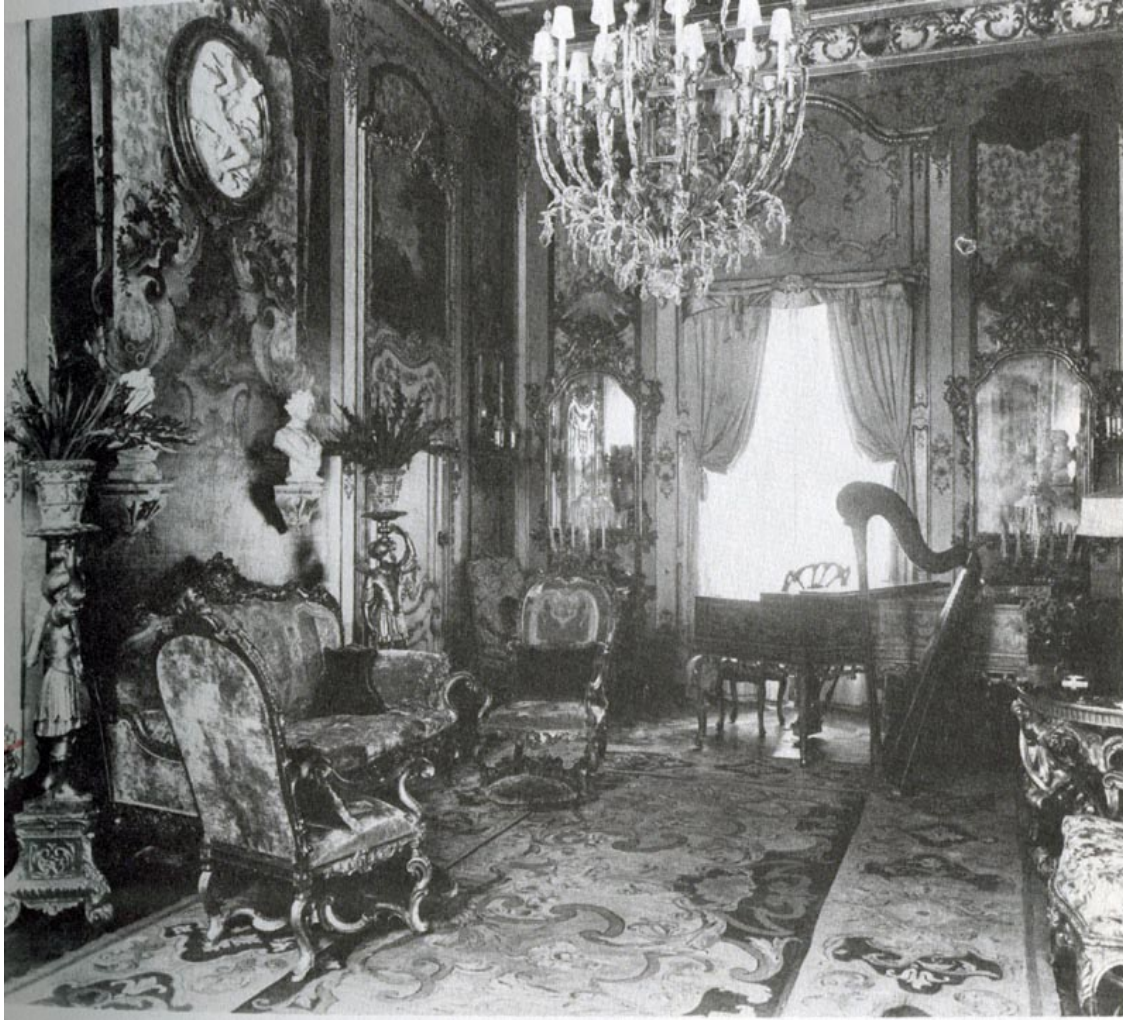


Fig. 38 -. Historical view of the Venetian Music room on the ground floor of the house. The chandelier seen in this historic view is now in the French Reception Room (from Mahler )



Fig. 39- Current view of Venetian Music room, (from Vizcaya postcard)

The gardens do not receive the same attention, although they are mentioned as an integral part of the design during the house tour. But visitors are left to explore them by themselves for the most part. There are approximately eighteen tours on any given day inside the house. However, the gardens only have two scheduled tours weekly, and only one volunteer member out of twenty is trained to conduct garden tours. The visitor's guidebook provides a brief history on the construction of the gardens and provides a map that pin points the different gardens that create the formal landscape site. However, it fails to provide any information on the different gardens to interested visitors.

As mentioned earlier, the gardens are the focus of all the site's special events and site's rental venues. Vizcaya is a favorite spot in the Miami metropolitan area for society weddings, quinceañera balls and photo shoots. In addition, the management has created moonlight garden tours and the Renaissance Fair Festival that showcase the gardens to visitors. However, even during these special events tours of the house are the primary focus of the volunteer guide's attention. The Marine Garden is currently not included in this interpretation, given that although it is shown on the guidebook map it is locked and visitors have to go around the decorative grill through the planting bed in order to access it.

This neglect of the landscape is further reflected in the application for National landmark nomination submitted in 1970 and 1978 respectively. In this application, the statement of significance encompasses five pages explaining the importance of the site's history, personalities involved in its creation, design and craftsmanship. The gardens are highlighted as an integral part of the overall site in the description. However, the criteria

under which the site is listed is architectural significance, and does not include landscape nor garden design.



## CHAPTER VIII: CASE STUDIES

The following three case studies are presented to provide the reader with examples of how maintenance and interpretation has been carried out in other similar sites with formal gardens or landscapes. These case studies focus on Dumbarton oaks, Vanderbilt Mansion at Hyde parka and Lyndhurst.

### **Management Case Study**

#### Dumbarton Oaks, Washington D.C.

Dumbarton Oaks is an example of top rate landscape management. The gardens were designed by noted landscape architect Beatrix Farrand<sup>1</sup> in 1920. The work was commissioned by the Woods Bliss family for their Georgetown estate. The original design encompassed fifty three acres, ten of which were formal gardens. The property was subdivided in 1940 into three major sections. The house and formal gardens were donated by the family to Harvard University<sup>2</sup>, twenty seven acres were donated to the Park Service and ten acres were sold to the Danish government for the construction of their embassy [Fanning, p.61]

The Harvard and Park Service properties have remained mostly intact and both enjoy similar management approaches. These two plans are both based on the set of values and stipulated significance of the site that views the landscape as a “work of art”. The management of the landscape accommodates to the needs of the landscape and its specific necessities. It also dictates the mode of thinking and specific tasks that are performed in the garden.

A key element in the success of the management plan is the close relationship between the director of the site and the landscape superintendent. The separation of the landscape from the site is seldom a positive step and the unity of the two should be maintained not just in the physical sense but also at the human level as well. This approach however, is rooted in the complete acceptance of the landscape's significance and set of values; something that unfortunately does not happen in all such sites. Dumbarton Oaks possesses an invaluable archival resource that has driven the management plan to a superior level of excellence. Beatrix Farrand compiled notes, inventories and explanatory texts on her design for Dumbarton from 1941 to 1947 at the request of John Thatcher, the first director of the site [McGuire, p.84]. This compilation is known as Plant Book for Dumbarton Oaks. In this book she explained her design intent for each garden, how each should be cared for and ways to "preserve" the basic character of the design; in addition it includes a full inventory of all the species in the garden in 1942. Such a resource is a manager's credo, and as such it has been used at Dumbarton. The rarity of such a direct dialogue between the current manager and the original designer is undeniable. The great majority of sites do not possess such a valuable resource. However, most sites do have historic photographs to aid in this process. These archival resources are key elements in the correct maintenance of the landscape.

The use of Farrand's inventory has allowed the management of the site to monitor the plant material in great detail. This approach recognizes the value of the organic material as a vital element in the value of the landscape as a unit made up of harmonious elements. The current management of the landscapes categorizes the plant material into three periods. Period one relates to plants at the site before 1920, period

two plants introduced by Farrand and period three those introduced after 1940 [McGuire, p.83]. This inventory proves crucial in the decision making process as well as emphasizing the value of the evolved organic milieu.

This document has proven to be a chief allied in the management of the original design intent. An example of this use is the management of invasive species. The careful study of Farrand's inventory and designed revealed that several species currently categorized as invasive were introduced by Farrand herself. These species have proliferated well beyond their original intended areas and are creating a threat to the original design intent; even though they were part of the original design. This has led the management to carefully pin point, which species were original and have since become invasive and those that are currently invasive and were never part of the design in order to appropriately act.

### **Interpretation Case Studies: Vanderbilt Mansion and Lyndhurst**

The following two case studies deal with two levels of interpretation based on integrity following O'Donnell's approach mentioned earlier. The Vanderbilt Estate has a high level of integrity while Lyndhurst has a moderate level of integrity.

#### Vanderbilt Mansion, Hyde Park, NY

The Vanderbilt Mansion at Hyde Park, NY is one of this countries greatest late XIX century estates. The entire site covers 211 acres with a core area around the

house of 55 and two acres of formal gardens. The property was transferred from private ownership directly to the stewardship of the National Park Service in 1941 [O'Donnell, p.25]. The estate has three major periods of significance, each period according to the dates of family ownership of the property. The first period dates to the Hosack ownership (1828-35), second the Langdon ownership and the third, Vanderbilt ownership (1895-1938) [O'Donnell, p.26]. The present configuration and house are the result of the Vanderbilt ownership and as the last period prior to NPS stewardship it is considered the most significance and authenticity.

The three periods of ownership created a complex landscape in which successive owners expanded upon the original estate. Each successive owner all shared a keen interest in Botany which made the quality and management of the landscape remain at the highest level through each generation. This history combined with the smooth transition from private to government hands ensured the preservation of these layers intact (figs. 40 and 41). In cases like this it is appropriate to use this high level of integrity for the interpretation of the site's historic character through the use of character defining aspects of the past. Such interpretations allow the visitor to enjoy the spatial organization, topography, space circulation, scale and original elements in their original settings. Although changes, such as plant material growth, might have altered the original design slightly, there exists enough information still to convey to the visitor this original intent by just presenting the landscape.



Fig. 40 – Painting by Johann Hermann Carmiencke of Hyde Park, c. 1856. (from Vanderbilt Mansion Cultural landscape Report)



Fig. 41 – Current view of Hyde Park c. 1992. (from Vanderbilt Mansion Park Cultural Landscape Report)

### Lyndhurst, Tarrytown, NY

Lyndhurst was designed in 1838 by architect Alexander Jackson Davis for William Paulding to serve as his country retreat. The house was designed along with a

park landscape to complete the estate. The house was expanded by Jackson Davis in 1865 under the ownership of George Merritt. It was later purchased by the Gould family and remained in their ownership until 1961. The property passed unto the care of the National Trust for Historic Preservation at this date and was opened to the public. The house did not undergo any alterations since the 1865 configuration [Lyndhurst.org]. However the landscape has been transformed since its original period of significance in the first half of the XIX century.

Lyndhurst's major significance lies in its superb design as one of America's finest Gothic Revival mansions. The house retains all its original interiors and many furnishings. There is also added value in the continuation of the original dimensions of the estate and the park surrounding the house. However, the current landscape does not possess a high level of integrity in relation to the period of significance of the house. The changes and alterations that occurred through time have diminished its authenticity to Jackson Davis design period.

The National Trust currently interprets the landscape through a self-guided tour accompanied by a brochure [O'Donnell, p.13]. This tour provides to visitors information on the development and changes occurred on the landscape and the owners involved in each change. The self guided tour utilizes comparison rather than just presentation to provide a sense of original intent to its audience. The use of historic photographs engages the public to compare the original to the current condition. Since the high level of integrity of the house does not transfer to the grounds the National Trust has acknowledged value in those changes and has steered away from a recreation of the original design. Although, recreation has been mentioned before as a valid alternative, in

moderate cases such as Lyndhurst the destruction caused by such an attempt would ultimately diminish its integrity even more.

The interpretation approached by the National Trust at Lyndhurst is thus a good example of values based interpretation, in which the changes that have taken place are accepted and embraced regardless of the integrity of the main component in the site, the house.

## CHAPTER IX: ANALYSIS

The preceding management, maintenance and interpretative analyses have led to the formulation of the following recommendations regarding the gardens and Marine garden at Villa Vizcaya. They are presented and detailed according to their relevance to management, maintenance or interpretation.

### **Management**

The site must be accepted and viewed by the management as a complete unit rather than fragmented pieces.

The Trust should have greater control over the fund raising activities currently performed by the Vizcayans and the Foundation. This centralization will strengthen the unity of the people involved and benefit the site as a whole.

House centric revenue distribution should be reevaluated. Both house and gardens are key components in the economic success of the site and such both should be treated as equal partners.

Given the historical and current management it seems unlikely that the house-centric significance and attitude will change overnight. This view is based on the mission of the site as a decorative arts museum presented in the theme of a house Museum. The value placed on the objects inside is as important as the value of James Deering's life. The acknowledgement and incorporation of Deering's life as a crucial value to the significance of the site automatically implies that the story of Vizcaya does not stop at the French doors leading to the terraces of the house, but that it continues beyond, across South Miami Avenue and beyond to the Mercy Hospital property. Deering's intent and vision in creating Vizcaya included a wide range of values that are not being taken into account by the management, and have not been historically. The entire significance of the site is not taken into account by the management team and



rather certain values have been given higher priority while others have been relegated and have even been omitted completely; exemplified in the focus on the house, relegation of the gardens to a lesser status and almost complete abandonment of the Marine Garden. Management should always be based on values and these values should also be weighted in order of importance. The management of Vizcaya has prioritized its values, but it has placed great emphasis on the economic values creating a hierarchy that performs as an obstacle to the development and true fulfillment of the site's significance. The significance of the site should be utilized as the thread that ties these values together and assures that the entire significance is not trampled by one or two overpowering values. This approach also leads to the preservation of certain elements while allowing others deteriorate as seen with the Marine garden.

There are two major factors that have led to this management approach. The first is the involvement in the site by the different affiliated not-for-profit groups. The valuable service these groups have offered Vizcaya throughout its fifty years of operations is undeniable. However, the decentralization of the fundraising tasks performed by these groups reflects the decentralization of the management structure. This fractured structure have might worked best prior to 1989 under the Parks and Recreation Department involvement. However, now that Vizcaya is fully managed by its own board, the need and importance of these allies must be reevaluated and reconsidered. The need for the Trust to unify the management at Vizcaya should not be stopped in any way by these organizations. The first steps have been taken in the agreements in place between these organizations and the Trust. Nevertheless a strong site director and trust should make sure that these not-for-profits are not unconsciously

working against the fulfillment of the site's goals and significance. On the other hand the possible disassociation of such allies from the site might prove to be more damaging politically and of greater implications than the museum can afford to take in this transitional period. The Trust should manage the Vizcayans and the Foundation of Villa Vizcaya in ways that does not alienate the influential people that are part of these organizations from the site. It must also assure that the invaluable help these organizations have paid to the site through the years are not taken for granted and fully acknowledged. This necessary public's relation strategy must be carefully played by the Trust so as to take greater control and centralize the fund raising mechanism for the site without hurting anyone. This centralization of the fund raising activities will lead the way for a better management and allocation of funds in response to the needs of projects as they arise. This need for centralization has already been expresses in the analysis of the 2000 Strategic Plan. This goal is one of their strategic goals. However, given that these goals were meant to be reached within five years and the strong need for this unification to take place, it has been added to this set of recommendations. This step is a necessary goal that must be stressed.

The second factor is the separation of the house from the gardens and vice versa. This division is reflected in both the management and interpretation of both components. The site, now more than ever before, depends on its ability to attract visitors to be completely self supported. Aside from grants, Vizcaya relies on ticket sales and rental facilities revenues for its annual budget, depending on ticket sales for 44 % of the annual budget alone. Management, through its emphasis on economic value, has historically catered visitors at the house more than at the gardens. However, both components are

key assets in the economic stability of the site; the gardens as providers of a setting for parties and events and the house as the main focus of the visit, under the current interpretation. Yet, the economic value of both components is not reflected in terms of the shared attention and merit the management places on them. The house receives far more benefits and attention than the gardens, even though they are equal contributors to the economic activities and ultimately the significance of the site.

This separation is also seen within the gardens themselves. The areas closest to the house are maintained to a higher level of attention than those further away. In this regard, it should be mentioned that the original design included a gradual brake up of the restrains of design to give way to an ever increasing wild setting. However, this design approach was a very gradual transition that only fully materialized over the Peacock Bridge in the Picturesque Gardens, what it is now the Mercy Hospital property. The formal gardens were always meant to be maintained as formal spaces. Thus, the maintenance practice is a contradictory approach to the original intent.

This separate management of house and garden is rooted in the two main factors, the facilities rental program and the radius of exploration visitors take and the facilities rental program. The first factor is the facilities rental program. Most events at Vizcaya take place in two main locations, the Eastern terrace and loggia or the casino mount. This leaves a great percentage of the formal gardens out of the path to and from these two locations. Thus, the maintenance of the Nappe' Deaux, the Casino Mount and the areas adjacent to the eastern terrace are maintained to a higher degree than the Eastern promenade along the bay including the Maze, Green Theater, Rose garden and ultimately the Marine Garden (see maps appendix).

The second factor is the type of visitors the site receives. A sizable percentage of visitors remain within close proximity of the house and that the percentage decreases the further away one gets from the bay and house (McDonald interview). This can be attributed to lack of information on the landscape on the part of the visitor and the attention on the house during the great part of their visit. As mentioned earlier, the only way a visitor will be acquainted with the landscape and get a map of the site is by purchasing a visitor's guidebook at the ticket booth, a quarter of a mile away from the house. Once the visitor has explored the house and decides to venture into the gardens, they have no way of exploring it correctly without a map that tells them what they are experiencing. Another factor in this pattern is the type of visitors the site receives. The 2000 Strategic Plan concluded that most visitors were foreign tourists to the city and not county residents. These foreign tourists in many cases might not be as interested in the full experience of the site due to restrictions of time as county residents. However, regardless whether the visitor is foreign or local; it is unlikely any of them would fully appreciate the landscape without a guided map to explore it.

This current management approach that places such emphasis on the economic values and the showcase of the house would take a different approach if the site is approached as a whole unit. A proper reassessment of values and a true fulfillment of the site's significance would adjust this current approach. The importance the overall economic value of the museum placed by management is unlikely to change. This is after all the reality of nearly every site. However, the benefits from such economic activities should be properly shared accordingly throughout the site. This unequal distribution of funds is best exemplified by the attention placed on the house through the

climate control, roof tile replacement and hurricane shutters projects, while the Rose garden fountains are non functioning, garden pipe lines are abandoned and garden paths remain as exposed dirt and without their historic gravel covering. The wear by visitor's use of these paths without proper covering is extremely detrimental to the design and fabric just as much as visitor's breath, without a proper climate control is on the objects inside the house. In order for this current approach to be rectified, management must embrace the site as a complete unit, not as pieces. This embrace should physically incorporate the land within the current property and in an interpretative manner the original boundaries of the estate and all the elements that were part of it. It was never the original intent for the museum to be viewed in such a fragmented manner and it goes against its significance as expressed in the National Landmark form; where it clearly mentions the importance of the designed landscape as the same level of the house even though it fails to include the landscape in the actual criteria for nomination.

This separation also goes against the original vision of Deering, Chalfin and Suarez. The gardens in the Italian tradition are part of the house not just a back drop for it. Both units are integral elements in the overall feeling and spatial relationship of the place. The gardens can be said to be in fact the greatest set of rooms at Villa Vizcaya. The lack of full integrating of both house and garden as equals in the eyes of the management of the site is a contradictory approach. Through this methodology, they are depreciating the grand ballroom of the house, the formal gardens; the place in which the choreography of the *villegiatura* was meant to take place. This *villegiatura* tradition, in many ways, is kept alive by the festivities, weddings and events that take place amidst

the terraces and parterres of the garden. This facilities rental program is perhaps unconsciously fulfilling part of the design intent for the gardens.

## **Maintenance**

The hierarchy of maintenance, mostly driven by economic values is a dangerous and contradictory approach.

The maintenance of a historical status quo through re-creation of garden elements and areas is acceptable as long as it is implemented in all areas of the garden. One area should not be maintained at a different level than the rest when they were all designed with the same level in mind.

The Marine Garden should be reintegrated into the cyclical maintenance regime of the site.

The gardens would benefit from a closer personal connection between the gardeners and their surroundings.

The maintenance of Vizcaya is a reflection of the priority system of values put forth by the management. Unless the site is unified as a whole the maintenance of the landscape will never reach its full potential. The organic material in the garden is nearly all recreated, except for specimen and full matured trees, such as the live oaks around the central pool and on the Casino Mount. The gardens have been maintained in a status quo that has taken periodic intervention to a degree culminating in recreation. The natural forces acting upon the site have also contributed to this and it is not just a result of historical maintenance regimens. The salt content in the air, the soil capabilities, and the experimentation with the plant material when first introduced left an open ended design

since the completion of the gardens in 1922. Suarez was manipulating an Italian garden to fit the requirements and site specific regulations of South Florida.

This recreation and the maintenance approach associated with it is acceptable as long as it fits the overall mission of the site, which so far it has. This approach reflects the desire to maintain a historically accurate status quo and its “preservation in a historical context the legacy of a romantic Italian villa”. This mission is clearly reflected in the house and gardens. The house is maintained in the spirit of Deering’s life and time. The rooms are kept decorated as if to be lived in, without signs or other obstructive museum equipment (fig. 32). The gardens have also been approached in the same manner. Now, given that this preservation of a historical context is the foundation to the established maintenance approach; then it can be said that it is completely unacceptable to abandon the Marine Garden.

This priorities-based attitude, which goes against the significance and the mission statement of the site, should be rectified. Through the historical analysis it became evident that the Marine Garden presented a maintenance problem right from the beginning. As stated in chapter II, the flow of the water and the silt deposits were problems to which Deering seemed to have had neither solutions nor patience for. This phenomenon continues today in the silt choked pools; further accentuated by



Fig. 42 – View of Adam's Library on the second floor of the house. This set up is the typical approach of all interiors in the house. (Vizcaya postcard, author's collection)

the fracture of the buried pipe lines. In addition the nature of the key stone facing allows for the burst of an algae ecosystem that is seen throughout all the other pools in the site. This event should be accepted, to a certain degree, as a natural process of time upon the stone and the proliferation of a natural ecosystem. It should also be accepted in terms of the historical value. The pool did not work since it was constructed, why try to present it as something that is not. However, given that all other pools and fountains receive periodic cleanings it is only appropriate that the same be implemented for the Marine Garden pool. This periodic cleaning cycle includes the draining of the water, and the scraping with brushes and a diluted solution of water and sodium hypochlorite that dislodges the algae from the surface of the stone. This treatment is a temporary solution



that is performed in accordance with the maintenance plan. This reinstating of the pool back to the same level as all other pools in the site would break that maintenance barrier between the Marine Garden and the rest of the formal gardens and is it another step towards full integration.

In addition the plant material must be maintained at the same level as all other areas of the formal garden. The current planting scheme in the Marine garden is a recreation scheme that has evolved through time, with the exception of the Washingtonian palms. There are no archival sources that provide a clear list of the plants used in this space and historical photographs provide little evidence and sadly Suarez did not compile a Vizcaya plantings book as Farrand did for Dumbarton. However, it is not anachronistic to approach the Marine garden as a recreation given that so many other areas of the formal gardens are just that. The design intent has been achieved in those highly maintained areas through the proper trimming, pruning and replacement of overgrowth and dead material. This intent is currently highly threatened by deferred maintenance at the Marine garden. However, this recreation approach should be a values based approach and not just a thoughtless recreation. Some of the original values of the Marine garden are no longer valid due to its current physical integrity. The Marine Garden no longer has an active value of linkage between the formal gardens and the Picturesque Tropical Gardens because the latter do not exist anymore. In addition new values have evolved through time by the maturity and growth of the plant material. An example of such new found values is the Live Oak tree on the northwest corner of the garden within the Vizcaya property (fig. 43). This tree was not part of the original planting scheme by Suarez. However, it has reached a certain level of maturity and

historic value that makes it a factor to be considered. This consideration should reflect the Secretary of the Interior's guidelines that clearly express the assessment of all factors and not decision making in a vacuum.



Fig. 43 – Live Oak specimen on the right hand side of the grill leading to the Marine garden. (Summer 2003)

The proper maintenance of the organic material will also slow the decay process upon the key stone retaining walls and paving. Although, this is a natural process and one which will ultimately prove terminal for the stone, due to its material composition and porosity, it can be slowed considerably. This will ensure the permanence of as much historical fabric as possible through time. This cyclical maintenance should include the cleaning of drain gutters to stop the deterioration of the paving stones due to water accumulation.

Aside from this intervention, the site as a whole would benefit greatly from a connection between the garden staff and the gardens. It was my very personal observation that these men lacked a connection with the site. They did not understand the historical and superb artistic value of their surroundings and treated it as such without the level of care that the interiors of the house are. By this one should not expect the outdoors to be retain to the same standards than the indoors. The nature of the two spaces makes it impossible. However, the outdoor immovable elements and the organic material, do not receive the same level of admiration by its caretakers than the objects in the interior of the house do. The long term preservation of such objects, that are works of art in their own right and many one of a kind creations, depends greatly on the care with which they are treated.

### **Interpretation**

The unification of house and garden has to take place in the interpretation. The complete story must be provided to visitors rather than the house/Deering centered approach currently in place.

Greater emphasis should be placed in providing information to the public in order for the landscape to be fully appreciated.

The rehabilitation of the Farm Village provides the perfect opportunity to provide a passive interpretation, through exhibits, focusing on the landscape and layers of history at change at the site without disturbing the work of the volunteer guides.

The Marine garden can gain a new found value as the link that would allow the comparative analysis of the historical versus the current through such an interpretive exhibit.

The current interpretation, as previously stated, fails to provide the visitor with a complete story. The duality of values present in the management approach to the site is also reflected in the disjunction of part of the story from the overall interpretation. Vizcaya must accept and welcome its past to be able to truly live up to its mission statement. It can not present part of the story but rather the entire story and all its layers of history. The manner in which the interpretation has been handled by those involved presents an obstacle to the full realization of the site's significance.

The way in which the volunteer guides have presented the interpretation fo the site lies at the core of this problem. The change of this pattern requires the Trust's involvement in the Volunteer Guide's inner sanctum. However, the site depends on the devoted work of these women and men. The current staff number and facilities are not adequate to take on a major restructuring of the current guided interpretation tours; a point that was clearly acknowledged by the management in the 2000 strategic plan. In addition, fair treatment must play a key role in any changes in this matter. The volunteer guides group is the oldest group and in many cases its members have connections to members of the Vizcayans and the Foundation through social, business or personal relations. The disrespect of this group of dedicated people by an uncalculated action on the part of the professional staff can send ripples to the other two allies and in the end hurt Vizcaya.

The perfect opportunity for an integrated interpretation plan without upsetting the fifty year balance of the Volunteer guides group can take place after the completion of the Farm Village buildings rehabilitation. The new visitor center planned for the main building in the complex provides a tabula rasa space in which new approaches can be

implemented without the involvement of the volunteers and without restructuring the way the interiors of the house have been presented and interpreted. The house will never be able to house a visitor's center without major restructuring in the way it is presented.

The entire history of the estate can be interpreted at the farm village through a passive interpretative exhibit using models, pictures and films. This interpretation at the Farm Village should focus on the whole history of the site and highlight the landscape and the original dimensions and subsequent fracture and subdivision of the estate. Vizcaya counts among its many underutilized assets with the original Menconi Brothers models made for Hoffman (fig. 44) and dozens of detailed photo albums on the construction of the house and gardens. These wonderful historical resources have never been used towards the interpretation of the site, except for archival research or publications. The incorporation of these materials would bring the original estate to life and provide visitors the information to allow them to want to venture deeper into the gardens and explore them. In Tilden's own approach, it would provide the visitor with the "provocation" to explore [Tilden, p.5].

This interpretation should incorporate two key topics that would be an integral part of such a presentation; the ecological value of the site in its preservation of virgin hammocks and mangrove forests and the subsequent destruction of the original design intent by the subdivision of the original estate. Vizcaya is in fact one of the few water front areas in the Miami metropolitan area in which one can still see virgin

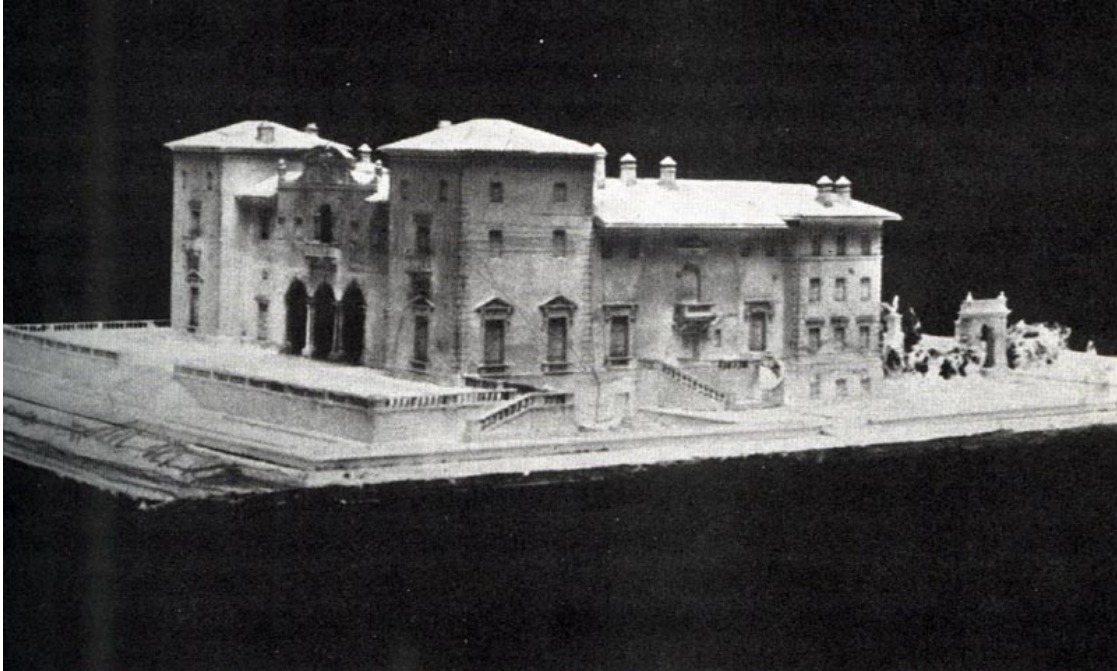


Fig. 44 – Original Menconi Brothers model for Vizcaya. (from Nardi)

hammock forests. The development of Florida's Atlantic coast has been an integral part of the history of this part of the state and only a few men paid as much attention to the preservation of these natural resources as Deering did in his life time. This value was an integral part of the patron's desire and is currently nearly omitted from the interpretation. This value is also one that has strengthened with time due to the rarity of these virgin groves. Its incorporation into a passive interpretation would be of great value to local residents whom would benefit the most from such information and ultimate connection to the site. The presentation of this ecological value would gain Vizcaya a new found interest and interest by the local residents. It would allow local residents to view the site as not just a European transplant of decorative arts into Florida, but also as a rare survivor work of art from nature's hand.

It is in the interpretation of the second topic that the Marine Garden can make use of its original design intent. As explained earlier in chapter II, the Marine Garden was the link between the formal gardens and the Tropical Picturesque Gardens across the bridge. This value can be fully interpreted at a different location in which the visitor can understand the changes that have taken place. For instance, the treatment of the historic vistas that were originally designed could not be recreated physically due to the management needs of the La Salle property. The Marine garden portion within their property is the backyard for the school and a physical recreation of the vista would clash with the use value they place upon their property. This interpretation of the vistas and original intent can be better realized through an interpretative exhibit. It would allow the visitor to experience the Marine Garden and the southern property through a comparative analysis. The Marine Garden is the most appropriate candidate for this comparative analysis given its historical values and design intent. This Lyndhurst approach can only be achieved if the information is in place for the visitor to understand.

In addition this move towards a passive interpretation at the visitor's center would be a welcomed compliment to the stifling structure of the guided tour. It would allow visitors to brake away from the dependency on the guide as the only source of information and allow them to think, compare and digest information with the aim of truly experiencing the site.

## CHAPTER X: CONCLUSIONS

Through the analysis of the historical and current management, maintenance and interpretive plans at Villa Vizcaya it became evident that the hierarchy of values in place has caused the Marine garden to physically deteriorate. The current conditions of this garden are however not for the greater part due to monetary restraints but rather to the management priorities and the lack of a holistic approach at the site. The funds acquisition structure is in place to provide for the restoration of this garden. However, such a step without a reassessment of values and priorities on the part of the management would prove fruitless. It would ultimately lead the Marine garden down the path of deterioration it has followed for the last fifty three years.

Vizcaya has taken its first steps by the hiring of a new site director, Joe Hoffman. In addition the departure of Michele McDonald, a thirteen year veteran archivist at the site, will open the doors for new blood to enrich the staff. It is my hope that a proper reassessment of values, less emphasis on economic value, and a true acceptance of all layers of history will hopefully steer the management of the site towards the full fulfillment of its significance and the intent of its creators.



## END NOTES

### Chapter I

1. Vizcaya is a Basque word meaning elevated place.
- 2-The Athens charter was the first international charter that put on paper a “code of practice” for the treatment and proper restoration of historic buildings. It was signed in 1931 in Athens, Greece.
- 3-The Venice Charter formed at a conference of the International Committee of Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) in Venice, May 1964. This was the first international charter to include rules and professional guidelines for the treatment of historic buildings and cultural heritage. Its guidelines were also the first to be widely used and accepted in professional circles mainly through the formation of ICOMOS comities throughout the world.
- 4- The Burra Charter was written by Australia ICOMOS on August 1979 as a revision to the Venice charter to better suit the needs and language of Australian heritage. It underwent revisions in 1981 and 1988.
- 5- The United Nations Educational and Scientific Organization (UNESCO) is the branch of the United Nations in charge of culture, education and science endeavors throughout the world.
- 6-Trinidad and El Valle de los Ingenios was listed under criteria C (iv) and (v) in 1988. It is an example of a world monument site that includes both buildings and landscape. In this case the colonial city of la Santisima Trinidad and the sugar mills that surround the city. The designation also includes the landscape of El Valle de los Ingenios or Valley of the sugar mills as a vital component of the significance of the site. The city and was founded in the early XVI century and the mills reached their height of production during the XVIII and XIX centuries.
- 7- The Antiquities Act, was approved by Congress on 8 June 1906. It was the first legislation passed in this country to protect cultural heritage from destruction or unbalanced use. It was written with prehistoric or ancient remains of an archeological nature.
- 8- The National Park Service (NPS), a branch of the U.S. Department of the Interior, was created in 1916 to preserved, protect, and manage certain natural, cultural, historical, and recreational areas put under its jurisdiction.
- 9-The National Trust for Historic Preservation was formed by an executive act of president Truman on October 26, 1949. IT was formed to lead grassroots efforts to encourage preservation of America’s monuments, heritage and past.
- 10- The Alliance for Historic Landscape Preservation is an inter-disciplinary professional organization which provides a forum for communication and exchange of information

among its members. It is dedicated to the preservation and conservation of historic landscapes in all their varieties, from formal gardens, to public gardens and rural expanses.

11- The National Park Service defines designed landscapes as: A landscape that was consciously designed or laid out by a landscape architect, master gardener, architect, or horticulturist according to design principles, or an amateur gardener working in a recognized style or tradition. The landscape may be associated with a significant person(s), trend, or event in landscape architecture, or illustrate an important development in the theory and practice of landscape architecture. Aesthetic values play a significant role in designed landscapes. Examples include parks, campuses and estates.

12- The National Trust for Historic Preservation defines a Site for historic listing as: the location of a significant event, a prehistoric or historic occupation or activity, or a building or structure whether standing, ruined, or vanished, where the location itself possesses historic, cultural, or archeological values regardless of the value of any existing structures

13- Tilden's Six Principles of Interpretation include:

- Any interpretation that does not somehow relate what is being displayed or described to something within the personality or experience of the visitor will be sterile
- Information as such is not interpretation. Interpretation is revelation based upon information. But they are entirely different things. However, all interpretation includes information
- Interpretation is an art, which combines many arts, whether the materials presented are scientific, historical or architectural. Any art is in some degree teachable.
- The chief aim of interpretation is not instruction, but provocation.
- Interpretation should aim to present a whole rather than a part, and must address itself to the whole rather than any phase.
- Interpretation addressed to children, should not be a dilution of the presentation to adults, but should follow a fundamentally different approach. To be at its best it will require a separate program.

14-Integrity is a property's historic identity evidenced by the survival of physical characteristics from the property's historic or prehistoric period. This identity includes seven main qualities, location, setting, feeling, association, design, workmanship and materials.

## Chapter II

1. The first patent issued to a working reaper was issued in England to the Reverend Patrick Bell. In America the first patent was issued in 1833 to Obed Hussey.

2. Elsie de Wolf was part of New York society and a renowned interiors decorator. She held weekly salons that became the epicenter for bohemians and socialites alike. She published a successful book The House in Good Taste in 1913.

3. There has been great speculation why Deering did not hire a well known architect to design his estate, such as Charles Adams Platt, Charles Mckim, the firm of Carrere and Hastings etc. However, due to the conditions of the project and Chalfin's involvement it can be said that a young architect would have been a better choice to handle than an older more experienced architect who would not have yield to Chalfin's supervision of every inch of detail.

### Chapter III

1. Megaloblastic Anemia (pernicious anemia) is the body's inability to absorb Vitamin B-12 from food. It usually manifests itself at its worst during middle age and if not treated can progress rapidly, causing loss of balance and sensation, depression and general weakness causing ultimately death.

2. A Florida Hammock is the name given to the native forest of broad-leaved trees that originally occupied the entire limestone base in between the mangroves and the pinewoods further inland. The hammocks are made up of mostly West Indian species of tropical hardwoods, such as Pigeon Plum, Strangler, Live Oak, and Mahogany.

3. The Brickell were a pioneer family who had settled in the area in 1871 and held the largest water front real estate in Miami [Davidson,p.3].

4. The original team set up for the project included the construction company of John J. Bennett, Biscayne Engineering and Joseph A. McDonald as site superintendent. As the project went underway there were several changes and replacements, apparently all influenced by Chalfin's personality.

5. The choice of style and approach to the project for Vizcaya was a typical way of designing large estates in America at this time. Gardener herself had completed Fenway Court and other great families, such as the Vanderbilt's were setting the stage for the eclectic pastiche of old world refinements and panache combined with an innate American democratic way of choosing your own style that became the signature style of America's 'Gilded Age'.

6. Phineas Paist was a graduate from the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts and had studied in Paris at the atelier of Duquesne. After Vizcaya was complete he became an influential architect in the Miami area playing a key role in the design of the City of Coral Gables and the design of Charles Deering's home at Cutler Ridge.

7. Florentine Villas are usually on hillsides. Their gardens descend down the hill on terraces away from the house.

8. Deering had his reservations about the casino and Mount. He was afraid they would block the main vista.

9. Veneto is the geographical area formerly governed by the Republic of Venice. It refers to the mainland, not the island city of Venice.

10. After Suarez departure Chalfin was in charge of finishing most of the design for the picturesque tropical gardens south of the property for which plans had not been made yet and only the overall idea and guidelines had been put forth by Suarez.

## Chapter II

11. Monroe Doctrine was dictated by president James Monroe on December 2, 1823 in a speech to congress in which he warned European nations not to interfere with the sovereignty and affairs of the nations of the Western hemisphere.

12. The Chicago World's Columbia Exposition of 1876 has been described as a grand classical spectacle of architecture. Nearly all of the buildings constructed to house the different expositions were in some classical tradition. This led to the grounds be known as the "white City" because of the stark white washes of the classical facades in contrast to the Victorian polychrome in vogue at the time. This exposition has also been identified as one of the key factors in the popularization of classical architecture in the country and the beginnings of the so called "American Renaissance" in architecture.

13. Isabella Stewart Gardner was born in New York City on April 14, 1840. Gardner was one of the foremost female patrons of the arts. She was a patron and friend of leading artists and writers of her time, including John Singer Sargent, James McNeill Whistler and Henry James. Over three decades, Isabella Stewart Gardner traveled the world and worked with important art patrons and advisors Bernard Berenson and Okakura Kakuzo to amass a remarkable collection of master and decorative arts. In 1903, she completed the construction of Fenway Court in Boston to house her collection. She died in 1924.

14. The firm of Carrere and Hastings was one of the most prestigious New York firms of the early XX century. They designed several villas with Italianate gardens, such as the E.C. Benedict estate in Indian Harbor, Connecticut. However, their approach was based on their almost archeological connection to the stylistic imaginary of their buildings, creating a result that was rather rigid.

15. Florida was first inhabited as early as 12,000 years ago. The first written records of the inhabitants and landscape of the peninsula are from the XVI century, after the explorer Juan Ponce de Leon in 1513 landed on the Northeastern coast of the state, somewhere near present day Saint Augustine. However, it was not until 1565 that the Peninsula was firmly claimed as part of the vast Spanish empire in the Americas [Tabeau,p.15]. Although, the Northern part of the state had seen permanent European settlement since the late XVI

century, its southern half did not being to be populated until the later part of the XIX century, only reaching considerable influx of new inhabitants in the 1920s. This was possible by the expansion of the railroad from Saint Augustine to Key West by Henry Flagler in 1912. The boom of the 1920s brought unprecedented growth and development which caused the landscape to change forever within the course of a decade. Among the most drastic changes was Carl Fisher's development of Miami Beach, which transformed a small ridge island of dense mangrove into a playground for escapees of the harsh northern winters.

16. Villegiatura, Italian word that means the essence and culture of country life.

17. A.J. Dezallier d'Argenville was a French gentleman and amateur garden design scholar. His publication la Theorie et la Pratique du Jardinage, published in 1709 is one of the most important treatises on the history, theory and design of Baroque gardens.

18. Renaissance, period in the history of the arts roughly dated from the early 15<sup>th</sup> century to the late 16<sup>th</sup> century. This classification varies according to place.

19. Baroque, period in the history of the arts roughly dated from the 17<sup>th</sup> century to the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

20. French formal gardens differ from Italian gardens in their calculated long open vistas on flat terrain and the careful design of parterres to accentuate the relatively open spaces. Best examples of this approach are seen at Vaux-le-Vicomte and Versailles.

#### Chapter IV

1-The entrance to Mercy Hospital, as well as the residential neighborhood along South Miami Ave used pre-existing wall features. In the Mercy Hospital case, it used the southern entrance that led down the Avenue of Royal Palms to the boat house and in the neighborhood's case it is a new entrance carved out of a niche in the wall, a twin of which, still remains across the street in the wall along the site's property.

2- This amount was paid to the Deering family based on the sale of admission tickets and sales to the site not as a lump sum at the moment of the acquisition by the County.

3- The Vizcayans is made up of important community personalities and fund raiser people who use their leverage power for the good of the site

## Chapter V

1- The Trust is governed by a board which includes civic leaders, community personalities, developers, historians, a Deering family heir and the Parks and Recreation Department director. Their appointments are not in perpetuity.

2- This 1989 financial separation was the result of ongoing inquiring between the Vizcaya directorship, the Parks and Recreation Departments and the county in regards to funds and budgets. It marked the beginning of the separation that was finalized in 1998 with the county commission ruling and the Trust's full take over in 2000.

3- The 2002 IRS documentation shows that the Vizcayans had only \$470,031 of their \$1,020,931 endowment invested, while the Foundation had \$616,078 of \$1,213,947 invested.

4- These three major capital improvements, although preserving the contents of the house, have ruined the original design intent of the house. The climate control design included the roofing of the interior open courtyard with the introduction of four massive poured concrete columns to support the glass roof and the hurricane shutters project has forever changed the facades of the building by permanently sealing all windows and balconies with a black mesh hurricane protection shutter.

5- During my staff interviews it was mentioned that the allocated percentage for the grounds was a small fraction from that 5 % and that most of the money was spent on the house. However, the site does not divide up the percentage between the house and the grounds and it is kept in their records as one single entry.

6- Quinses are a cherished Hispanic tradition that originated in Spain and became widely popular in Latin American countries. It is a ball celebrated on a girl's fifteenth birthday to introduce her to society, much in the same way of an American debutante ball. This tradition was fiercely held on to by the Cuban exiled community after the 1959 Revolution and it was them who first made Vizcaya popular as a picture spot for this event.

7- These events are very detrimental to the historic fabric of the house. The South enclosed Loggia is decorated with fresco paintings of ancient ruins and city escapes throughout. These walls are not protected with Plexiglas and the frescos have suffered greatly from spilled alcoholic drinks and finger oils.

8- This program is run by Miami-Dade public schools and it involves local museums and institutions bringing together local public school children in arts classes to have special classroom related activities in these institutions.

9- The farm village was used as the headquarters by the Miami-Dade Parks and Recreation Department until they were forced to vacate the buildings in 1997 due to their advance state of deterioration.

## Chapter VI

1- A healthy water flow is noticeable in the pools ability to sustain a healthy algae colony that has taken over all water washed surfaces and sea animals, from fish to turtles. These creatures must come into the pool by means of the pipes connected to the canal and Biscayne Bay. Hence the water is not stagnant otherwise these animals would not survive.

2- A Solomonic column is a column whose shaft is twisted. Examples of such style are the columns in the Baldachino in Saint Peter's Basilica, Rome.

3- This point proved to be a rather contradictory translation from guideline to reality. There are many loose parts throughout the side, many of which are easily recognizable as part of lanterns and garden features. However, no staff member seems to care enough to pick them up or secure them. I witness many moments of carelessness behavior on the part of the staff towards the garden features, such as reckless driving, pruning of matured tree limbs around unprotected sculptures and use of garden features as rest points for tools and other gardening equipment. It led me under the impression, that the staff is responsible for a percentage of the damage seen around the gardens.

## Chapter VII

1- Since 1952, when Vizcaya opened to the public, other museums have formed in the greater Miami metropolitan area, such as the Bass Museum of Art(1963), the Miami Art Museum(1996), Museum of Contemporary Art(1996) and The Wolfsonian(1993) among others.

2- Most volunteers are elderly women with an average age of 65

3- Although, the Deering family donated most of the contents to form the collection of the museum, there were no restrictions on how these objects were to be showed to the public. For example, at the Gardener museum in Boston, objects must remain exactly as they are. At Vizcaya, objects have been changed, but always maintaining the original intent as designed by Chalfin. Each room still contains most of the objects and furnishing that were meant to go in them, this approach is not just a question of intent and interpretation tool but also of style, given that each room has its own style and a set of objects and furnishings associated with it.

## Chapter VIII

1-Beatrix Farrand was born in New York in 1872. She was a founding member of the American Society of Landscape Architects in 1889. Her family was influential in garden design and history, notably, her aunt Edith Wharton. Her style can be categorized to follow the Arts and Crafts movement, exemplified at Dumbarton Oaks. She had a practicing career of nearly fifty years. She died in 1959.

2-Harvard University utilized the house to open a research library and collections facility to hold its vast holdings of Byzantine, pre-Columbian and garden history materials. It serves the same function to this day.



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## APPENDIX

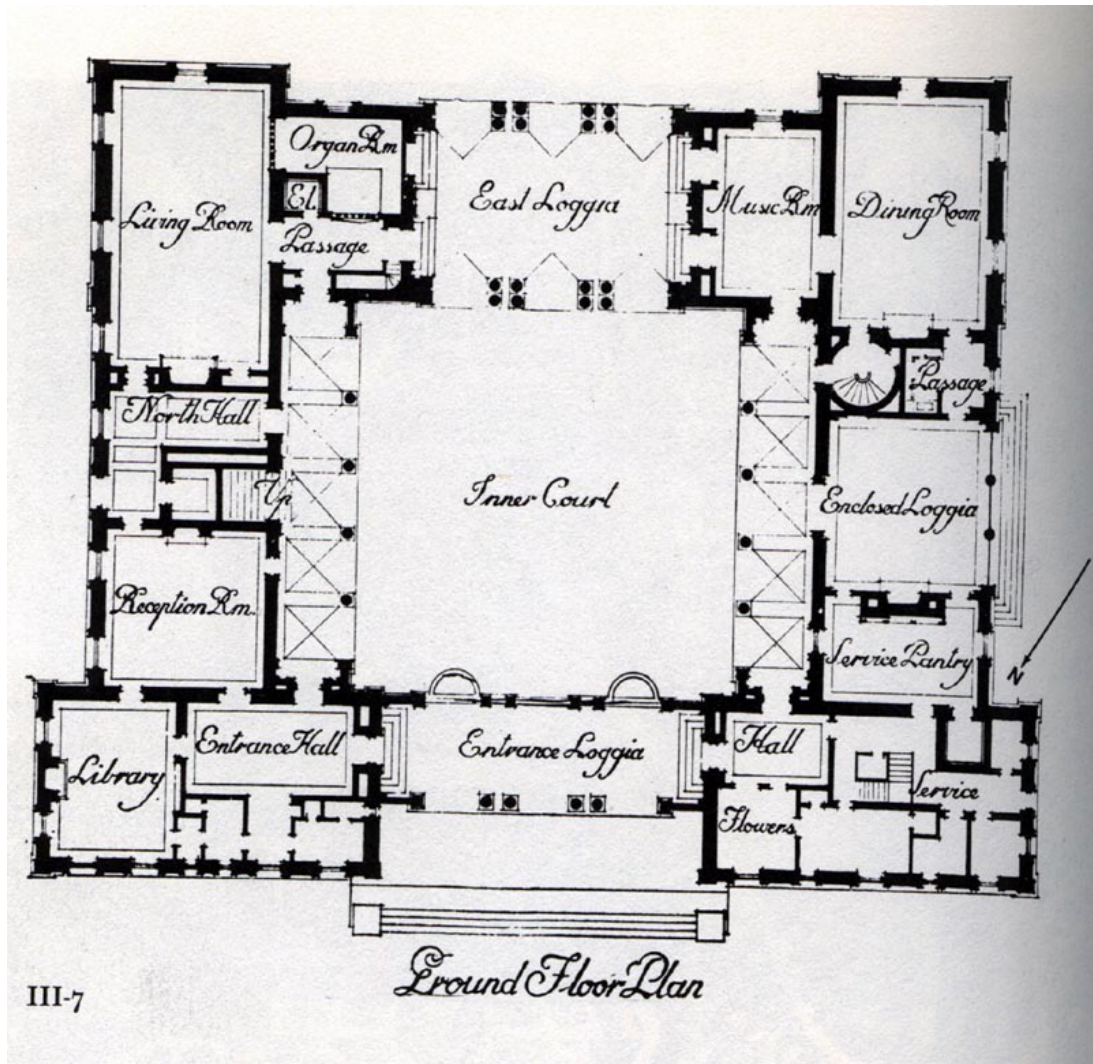


Fig. 45- Plan of ground floor of Villa Vizcaya. (from Mahler)



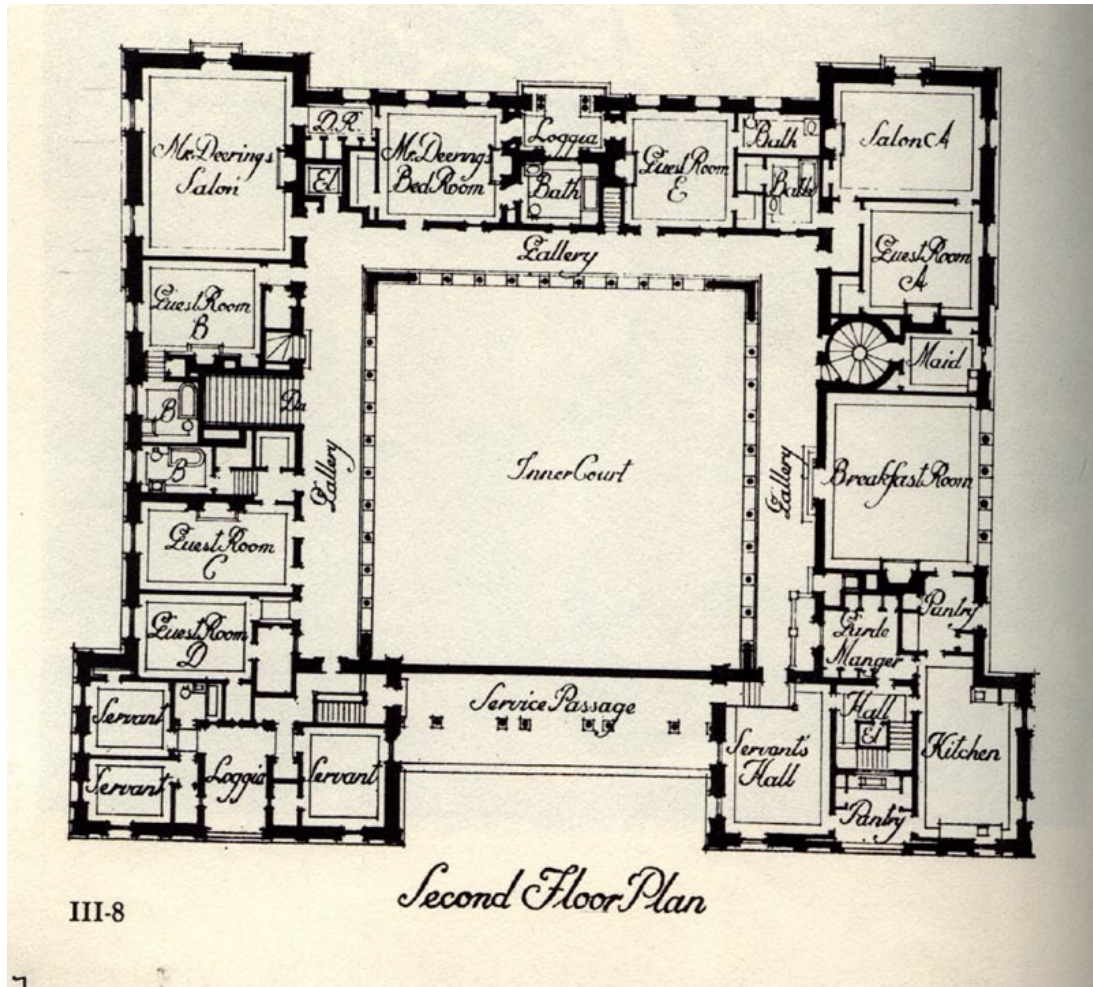


Fig. 46- Plan of second floor of Villa Vizcaya. (from Mahler)

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