Information for Artists
Lost Spaces and Stories of Vizcaya Site-Specific Project

LOST SPACES AND STORIES DESCRIPTIONS
Phase I

There are six Lost Spaces associated with Phase I.

Proposals for up to four of these will be commissioned.

These will be installed in April 2016.

They will be on view for approximately one year.
Recreational Rooms

As a balance to the very formal presentations visitors can experience in the decorated rooms of the Main House, historically Vizcaya also featured recreational rooms consisting of a Billiard Room, Bowling Alley and Smoking Room, which were all adjacent to the swimming pool. These spaces now house the Café and Shop, but still maintain remnants of the former spaces, including an antique fireplace and a staircase that was once used for quick access, but now leads to nowhere.

The space will continue to function as the Café and Shop and receives high amounts of traffic daily. We are interested in receiving proposals that will be considerate of the primary function of the space.
A diverse group of staff members maintained Vizcaya throughout the year and tended to the needs of James Deering and his guests when they stayed during winter months. Staff resided in the Main House but these spaces currently remain inaccessible for visitors. Additionally, several staff members lived in the Village, located directly across the street from Vizcaya Museum and Gardens. On view in the decorated rooms are several elements that allude to staff existence, such as the annunciator system, bell pulls in most rooms (the image to the right shows ornate iron bell pulls designed by Samuel Yellin), and the more functional spaces like the Kitchen and various pantries. Vizcaya’s archives include a handful of staff accounts, which could be accessed if a proposal is successful.

While developing a proposal consider the high volume of general visitation through the Main House. Consider media such as audio or visual that broadens options when integrated with regular day-to-day experiences with the site.
Many display changes occurred following Vizcaya’s transition to a public museum in the 1950s. Through the decades Vizcaya’s reliance on facility rentals required some of the significant spaces in the Main House to be entirely emptied of furnishings to allow for event use. Two such spaces are the first floor East Loggia and Enclosed Loggia. Included here are historic photographs that show the rooms during Deering’s occupancy from 1916-1925. While the rooms currently remain void of furnishings, the spaces are evocative of specific functions and decorative schemes. Vizcaya currently welcomes approximately 200,000 visitors annually and we intend for Lost Spaces installations to provide a deeper understanding of Vizcaya, its history, its transition from a private home to a public space, its evolving reality, and contemporary interpretations of it.

While developing a proposal consider the high volume of general visitation both rooms witness. Consider media such as audio or visual that broadens options when integrated with regular day-to-day experiences with the site in addition to facility rentals that set up in the space.
Deering was fascinated by the Age of Exploration and actively sought to feature it within the narrative of Vizcaya. While he resided at Vizcaya, several maps were made that highlighted his property. Originally these hung on two map racks located in the North Arcade of the first floor. The maps are in poor condition and were deinstalled several years ago, leaving two unadorned map holders in a prime location. For this project we are seeking an artist to consider the historic precedent along with Vizcaya’s evolving realities to result in a reinterpretation of what originally occupied the space.

We are interested in proposals that consider two-dimensional artwork for the space. There are two map racks; the dimensions of the newly created work should complement the historic object. Alternatively, Vizcaya is also interested in receiving multimedia proposals.
Every guest who has visited Vizcaya has unknowingly trekked over the former moat. This historic feature functioned as Vizcaya’s first line of defense against unwanted trespassers. Taking inspiration from European traditions, the moat was carved out in a linear model that connected to pools at each end. Building Vizcaya was an engineering feat, which required a fair amount of trial and error. The moat was a failed effort and contemporary newspaper articles reference the cacti that were placed as a deterrent instead of water. Through the Lost Spaces project we would like to convey the story of this provocative feature that has been dormant since Deering’s day and reference its early configurations.

This is an impactful location because of the high visibility resulting from proximity to the ticket booth.
Casino Rooms

The Casino building sits atop the Mound in the southern part of the formal gardens. The structure is akin to a garden pavilion with a center loggia flanked by two small rooms. In keeping with the Main House, the two rooms are fully decorated with antique furniture, light fixtures and decorative plaster walls. Vizcaya’s archives are vast, with much of the construction and creation of the estate documented in photographs, blueprints and correspondence. However, historic photographs of the two rooms are absent, leaving the space without historic precedent. Much of what is currently on view was acquired after Deering’s time and has no connection to Vizcaya’s original collection. We also have no concrete stories or recollections of how the rooms were used. The inclusion of this space in the project requires a different approach than other spaces and allows for a greater level of artistic license. We are seeking artists to connect the rooms with Vizcaya’s original history and consider how they might have been used, i.e., for afternoon tea or card games.

The two rooms will need to remain closed to the public but will be viewable through glass doors. Vizcaya can remove all movable objects from the rooms.
Phase II

There are six Lost Spaces associated with Phase II.

Proposals for up to four of these will be commissioned.

These will be installed in November 2016.

They will be on view for approximately six months.
Vizcaya’s iconic Barge in Biscayne Bay is generally regarded as a decorative breakwater. As Vizcaya’s creators were first discussing this whimsical feature, Paul Chalfin, the site’s artistic director, suggested several decorative elements, including fountains, a pool, landscaping, statuary, and a tea house to adorn the Barge. The Summer House, as it came to be known, was realized in a trellis design popularized by the influential American interior decorator Elsie de Wolfe. Seen in different iterations in Vizcaya’s archival materials, the structure provided refuge on the fantastical Barge. The Summer House barely lasted a decade, as it was destroyed in the Great Miami Hurricane of 1926.
James Deering was an avid boater and even won a competition in the 1915 Miami Regatta. Vizcaya’s bay front location was well suited to boating. The Boat House, seen in the image above, is no longer in existence. The structure housed Deering’s two boats, **Nepenthe** and **Psyche**. **Nepenthe** can be seen docked at the Boat House in the photograph. Today, in the Main House’s Serving Pantry, visitors can view custom-made serviceware for each boat. Most other traces of boating at Vizcaya are gone. Hurricanes destroyed both boats and the Boat House, leaving only the Boat Landing, seen in the picture below, to allude to a once-popular activity at Vizcaya.
The Main House was completed in an impressive two years, culminating with James Deering taking residence on Christmas Day, 1916. The gardens were a monumental undertaking that were not fully completed until 1922. As work was taking place, the North Gardens, which currently adjoins the Café and Shop terrace and David A. Klein Orchidarium, was a prime element of the gardens. As seen in the 1917 John Singer Sargent watercolor here, several statues were temporarily displayed in the area before being permanently placed in the formal gardens. Also appearing here is a historic drawing of a Samuel Yellin-designed gate flanked by two eighteenth-century Italian statues.
Outlined in the map shown here and the image below, the entire South Property is lost, although there are extensive archival materials that document it. The land is now occupied by Mercy Hospital, La Salle High School and La Ermita. Intended as a multi-sensory feature of the gardens, the South Property contained a portion of the Marine Garden, tennis courts, Lagoon Gardens and a causeway, among other elements. In contrast to the formal gardens, which still exist today, these gardens were exotic, with more Florida native plant life, thus providing an alternate experience to the main gardens. Although no specific site is associated with the South Property, Vizcaya is interested in activating the space behind the Casino Mound, which is in closest proximity to the former site and would have been the transitional area between gardens.
The Fountain Garden is adorned with several imposing European statuary and sculptural elements. Historically, from this site guests could access the Marine Garden, which led to the less formal and untamed South Property. Located at what is now the southeast extremity of the property, one of the most whimsical features of Vizcaya resided in this very formal Fountain Garden. It was a Paul Chalfin-designed, self-standing treillage swing, reminiscent of what one might imagine in a Jean-Honoré Fragonard painting of the Rococo period. Swings were not uncommon features at Gilded Age estates (for example, Stanford White’s famed red velvet swing and the scandal that ensued). Vizcaya’s delicate swing didn’t last long and was likely destroyed in the Great Miami Hurricane of 1926.
Still in existence, a small structure historically referred to as the Casba was part of the South Property, which was conveyed to the Archdiocese of Miami in the 1940s. The extraordinary pavilion is evocative of the exotic references one could encounter in the South Property. The Casba is currently located on the property of the Archdiocese of Miami and is inaccessible to museum visitors. For this project we would like artists to consider how to return the concept of the Casba to Vizcaya’s current property. Vizcaya will facilitate a visit to the original site for the successful artist. Although no specific site is associated with the Casba, Vizcaya is interested in activating the space behind the Casino Mound, which is in closest proximity to the Casba.