



New York University
Villa La Pietra

The Villa's Putti Under Care

All of the conservation work at Villa La Pietra is supervised by the Conservation Center of IFA, under the direction of Michele Marincola. Jack Soutanian, conservator for European Sculpture at the Metropolitan Museum of Art and adjunct faculty at the IFA, comes regularly to the Villa as its consulting conservator. In July 2007, with two graduate students from the IFA Conservation Center, Emy Kim and Diana Johnson, he cleaned two pairs of marble putti from the Acton Collection. They used a brilliantly simple and versatile technique: vinyl erasers.



Jack Soutanian cleaned the pair of putti which have adorned the mantelpiece in the *Salone* since the first decade of the 20th century. These were the subject of an article by a recognized authority on Venetian Renaissance sculpture, Anne Markham Schulz, in *Arte Veneta* in 1999. Holding shields with the coat-of-arms of the Gabriel family, they were made by Lorenzo Bregno for the tomb of Bishop Lorenzo Gabriel of Bergamo for a chapel in the great church of Santi Giovanni e Paolo in Venice. They were recorded there as works



by Bregno by Francesco Sansovino in his guide to Venice published in 1581. The monument was erected in 1515-1519 and was just one of the many superb tombs commemorating important historical figures in that church. It has survived many vicissitudes (the chapel was demolished in 1812; the

effigy is now in Vienna; and a statuette of the Christ Child is now in the Duomo of Cesena) but the Acton *Salone* still provides a safe and cozy home for these two putti with their beautifully modeled tunics, by one of the most important sculptors of his time. The students worked on two reclining putti from the 17th century made in Rome displayed in the *Atrio* on the ground floor of the villa. This is just one example of the collection care and conservation program of Villa La Pietra, which takes in objects across a wide range of materials.

Alta Macadam

