After years of delay the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam (NL) opened its doors again to the general public in April 2013. The building, dating from 1876-1885 and designed by Pierre Cypers, not only houses an important art collection, but the general public can also freely enjoy the sculptures and historic fragments surrounding this art cathedral.

The collection has grown over time, instigating a change in how it should be displayed. The garden is no exception. It was originally divided into specific styles (French, English, etc.), with different types of objects being displayed together. The museum collection contains sculptures as well as building fragments from all over the Netherlands, and plays a crucial part in the way visitors experience historic Dutch building styles. Many of these fragments have since disappeared from the garden, due to changing tastes over the last century. The recent renovation of the museum has allowed for a new approach regarding the display of the remaining objects, and the re-installation of objects that been moved to the storage.

All the chosen objects, including the 128 reliefs in the façade, two historic garden pavilions, and the former city gates, were documented before conservation and restoration strategies were discussed. The objects and their plinths contain a wide range of materials: marble (6), sandstone (24), limestone (3), ceramics (1), lead (4), bronze (3). Every case presented ethical dilemmas concerning their esthetic representation, and how to deal with former treatments. New treatments included moving an 18th century historic garden pavilion, cleaning, mortar repairs, repointing, retouching as a protective coating, wax treatments. Technical research concerning surface deterioration of limestone was executed. Material analyses of a sandstone consolidation treatment from the 1980's was compared to condition reports, giving an insight into the deterioration of the object over time.

Since the reopening of the Rijksmuseum, the garden has become a green hotspot, causing the number of visitors to present its own challenges in terms of the preventive conservation measures to be taken.