

CABINET OF CURIOSITIES

ARQUINHA WATERSPOUT AND FOUNTAIN

Trachyte

19th Century

H. 36cm x L. 30cm x W. 25m

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The piece presented, which is part of the Museu de Angra do Heroísmo's Stone Specimens Conservation Unit, is the exterior spout of a private fountain and includes its barrier. It's connected to an *arquinha* in which it is still possible to see a section of the lead pipe that fed it. It was collected in 1985 from a building in Rua da Pereira, at Angra do Heroísmo, in the post 1980 earthquake intervention that encompassed a large part of the city's buildings.

The access to public water was a concern for governors and settlers, since their first arrival. Besides the direct collection from streams and springs, cisterns and tide wells were also built. Using the existing springs, distribution systems were installed that worked through gravity, using clay pipes that fed the public fountains.

In the mid-19th century, due to the concern over the potability and sanitization of the water distributed as well as the comfort of the population, an action that Victorian England had initiated, Angra began, also, installing a gravity-based household water distribution system, using the existing clay pipes and a system called *arquinha*, which allowed the same service through lead pipes.

Arquinhas were small water reservoirs fed by a larger tank, or an irrigation tank, located at higher levels than those it fed, and from them came lead pipes that fed the different houses.

This water distribution system was spread all over the island and in some walls the set of fountain/livestock watering hole/washing station/*arquinhas* still exists. These are recognizable by the door that was placed on them for greater safety and to guarantee the cleanliness and potability of the water. However, the system was deficient because the pipes, being permeable, were vehicles for the circulation of all kinds of noxious materials. The placement of the fountains, installed very close to roadsides and pavements, enabled them to become receptacles for all kinds of rubbish and impurities.

It was just by the 1930s that this water supply system began to be replaced. The replacement was made with cement asbestos pipes under pressure. Some of this equipment can still be found in the city, although, as they became obsolete in the water distribution system, the function of the *arquinhas* has been forgotten.