

ALVAR NUNEZ CABEZA DE VACA

Title: Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca

Artist: Pilar Cortella de Rubin

Date: 1986

Type: Sculpture

Medium: Bronze (sculpture), Granite (pedestal)

Location: Hermann Park

Prominent in the International Sculpture Garden is the bust of Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca, cast in bronze and displayed on a granite pedestal. It is the work of Houston artist Pilar Cortella de Rubin, a native of Spain. It was acquired by the City of Houston in 1986.

A Spanish pioneer to America in the Sixteenth Century, Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca was part of an ill-fated Spanish colony in Florida. A series of misfortunes and bad planning caused the colony to be abandoned, and a few survivors of the original population of 600 sailed for Mexico on homemade boats. Cabeza de Vaca was shipwrecked on Galveston Island with three shipmates, and they spent several years as slaves, traders, and healers to various Native American tribes as they traveled on foot across Texas and into Mexico, where they were reunited with Spaniards. He later wrote an account of his experiences, detailing everyday life among the natives.

