

SIR JOHN SOANE'S MUSEUM

NEWSLETTER NO. 12

SUMMER 2006

A Letter from the Director

This Spring will be an exciting time for the Museum. In addition to reopening parts of the Crypt – most importantly the atmospheric Monk's Parlour – we unveil our *Miscellaneous Marvels* display for Museums and Galleries Month in May (see below). Moreover, we will once again be immersed in building work, this time next door in No. 14 Lincoln's Inn Fields, a fine Soane-designed townhouse which will be restored to serve as a base for our expanding educational programme, elegant rooms for lectures and events, and proper offices and conservation facilities for the staff – in short, all the necessities of a modern museum.

The restoration of No. 14 will take approximately 56 weeks and the works are being carried out by the old-established building firm of E. Fuller and Son, under the expert eye of our architect Julian Harrap. When complete, this will take much of the pressure off the magical historic ensemble that is Soane's house-museum and, in time, enable us to open more of it to the public. It is our dream that one day visitors will be able to penetrate beyond the famous 'rope of bells' on the staircase and see the recreated private apartments of Mr and Mrs Soane on the second floor of the Museum – Soane's Bedroom and Bathroom hung with red and yellow paper, Soane's diminutive 'Oratory' with its Flemish stained glass, Mrs Soane's Morning Room, and Soane's 'Model Room'. Thanks to Soane's habit of getting his pupils to record his arrangements we know exactly what these rooms looked like, and nearly all their contents survive – all we need now are the considerable funds required to implement the project.

Our very successful exhibition, *Soane's Magician: the Tragic Genius of Joseph Michael Gandy*, is attracting record attendances and unprecedented press coverage, while another group of our Gandy watercolours is being shown at the Richard L. Feigen & Co. Gallery, 34 East 69th Street, New York (see image below). The London Gandy show runs until mid-August and will be

succeeded by an exhibition devoted to the Poet Laureate and polemicist, Sir John Betjeman, as a maverick champion of architecture (Soane Gallery 8 September to 30 December 2006).

Regular visitors to the Museum will notice the reinstated Soanean arrangements in the Crypt of the Museum – particularly the antique busts which now form a marmoreal guard of honour around the famous Sarcophagus. Removed as encumbrances in the 1860s and redeployed elsewhere – probably as a direct consequence of the fashion for capacious hooped crinolines – they have now been put back, in a project overseen by Helen Dorey, our Deputy Director. This is a demonstration of our policy of reinstating, wherever possible, Soane's original arrangements throughout the Museum. Do come and see them.

MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES MONTH MAY 2006

In May, the Soane Museum will be celebrating Museums and Galleries Month, which is an annual event sponsored by the Campaign for Museums to promote and raise awareness of museums and art galleries all over Great Britain. M&GM kicks off on 29 April, and Sir John Soane's Museum is marking the occasion by a special display of little-known 'hidden treasures' from Soane's encyclopaedic collections. Some, such as the ammonites in the Monument Court, or the group of ancient Roman marble animal paws in Soane's Study, are always on display but are often overlooked. Others – like Soane's mummified cats – have not been seen by the public in living memory.

Originally, the idea was to concentrate on the few, curious objects of natural history within Soane's collections – a monster sponge, a bird's nest made of mud, the ammonites and the cats. Realising that these alone would not be a draw, we expanded our remit to include primitive architecture – partly as



Joseph Gandy, *Temple of Ceres at Eleusis* (1818). On show in New York until 22 July



Soane's mummified cats

(continued overleaf)

(continued from page 1)

an excuse to display Soane's models of Stonehenge and a primitive hut, and one of the charming watercolours depicting primitive home life he prepared for his Royal Academy lectures. But finally we gave in, realising that we could not resist sharing such wonders as the rare Maori spear recently discovered in the Museum's collection, John Flaxman's articulated artist's skeleton, Soane's image of Diana of Ephesus, the Duke of Richmond's mummy case or – best of all – the mummy's head, which is guaranteed to send a chill of horror shuddering down the spine of any child visiting the Museum during May.

Thus *Miscellaneous Marvels*, Sir John Soane's Museum's display in honour of Museums and Galleries Month, came about. The strange and thought-provoking exhibits will be displayed all over the Museum, accompanied by an illustrated leaflet explaining what they are, and how Soane came to own them. Research carried out on the objects has unearthed some interesting new information – Soane's mummy's head may be all that remains of a famous mummy unwrapped by the 'Egyptian Society' in 1742. *Miscellaneous Marvels* is intended for the curious of all ages, but a programme of related workshops and events especially for children is also being devised by our Schools and Families Education Officer, Jane Monahan. For more information visit our website at www.soane.org.

PISTRUCCI DISCOVERY

The Soane Museum's recent display of Benedetto Pistrucchi's mysterious white marble sculpture, the *Capriccio*, has led to the rediscovery of a long lost work by this rare Regency sculptor. Dr Frances Palmer, Curator at the Royal Academy of Music, contacted us during the exhibition to tell us of the original plaster

model for Pistrucchi's portrait bust of the great Italian musician and composer Nicolo Paganini (pictured). The bust was listed in a sale catalogue of Pistrucchi's effects following his death in 1855, but the only known cast, a bronze in the Town Hall of Genoa, disappeared during the last War. Modelled from life in London in December 1832 during Paganini's first British tour, it is a remarkable portrait of the musician, described by Hector Berlioz as 'a man with long hair, piercing eyes, a strange and haggard face'. The painter Daniel Maclise, who witnessed the sitting and wrote an account of it, particularly admired the forehead of 'the electrifier of all Europe'; 'What a beautiful formation of the temples, the abode, phrenologically, of the musical organ!' Pistrucchi's bust belongs, most appropriately, to the distinguished violinist, Andrew McGee.

TIM KNOX

May 2006



Museum News

REGENCY LAMP

The Museum would like to acquire this oil lamp, which dates to c.1820 and has its original glass oil reservoir. Only one of Soane's own oil lamps survives (the one in the Study) and over the last twenty years the Museum has been gradually buying authentic lamps for its historic interiors. The lamp will cost the Museum £1,400 and there will be an additional cost for conversion to electricity and for a glass shade to be made. The lamp is bronze, with a beautiful patina and appropriately architectural ornament. If any reader would be interested in helping the Museum to buy it or to acquire others in the future please contact the Development Office.



CURRENT LOANS

The Museum has lent six works by Joseph Michael Gandy to *Joseph Gandy: a visionary architect* at the Richard Feigen Gallery, 34 East 69th Street, New York, which runs from 26 April to 22 July, 2006. Among the loans is the splendid reconstruction of the ancient Greek temple of Ceres at Eleusis, 1818 (pictured on page 1). The exhibition is open from Monday to Friday, 10am to 6pm.

One of the great treasures of the Museum, the *Codex Coner*, a volume containing early 16th-century drawings depicting Roman architecture, is currently at the British Museum for the exhibition *Michelangelo Drawings: Closer to the Master* (until 23 June). Drawings in the volume were copied by Michelangelo who brilliantly abstracted their sculptural and three-dimensional qualities.

HELEN DOREY

Supporters News

A MID-SUMMER VISIT FOR MEMBERS OF THE SOANE SUPPORTERS' CIRCLE AND THEIR FRIENDS

To celebrate the opening of the newly restored Three Courtyards, *Pasticcio* and Crypt at Sir John Soane's Museum, we are very pleased to offer Soane Supporters and their friends the chance to enjoy a glass of wine and a brief talk about the history of the Museum and its collections. Guests will be free to explore the Museum and the newly opened spaces, and to enjoy the current Gandy exhibition, which has collected enthusiastic reviews in the national press. The event will take place at the Museum on 15 June 2006, from 6.30–9pm with a talk about the project at 7.15pm.

Tickets are £10.00 and must be purchased in advance. Places are strictly limited.

To make your booking or to request further information please contact Claudia Celder on 020 7440 4240, email ccelder@soane.org.uk. Cheques should be made payable to 'Sir John Soane's Museum' and envelopes should be marked 'Three Courtyards Event'.

For details on how to join the Soane Supporters' Circle go to our website www.soane.org or contact Claudia Celder (details above).

MIKE NICHOLSON
Development Director

Education

The start to 2006 has been a lively social one for the Schools and Families Education Officer. Interesting insights emerged for the new unit in No 14 from a fact-finding mission to see behind-the-scenes management at other museums and galleries offering architectural education. The idea for a linked-up walk during Museums and Galleries month was developed at an informal lunch with education officers from nearby 18th-century collections. Three new schools booked workshops after a reception at the British Museum for teachers and educators organized by *Museums Libraries and Archives, London*.

Tours of the Museum were reorganized this term to allow time for students to draw in the Museum. Teachers welcomed this and

some delightful work has been produced. Outreach programmes on Bridges and Light continue to be popular: one teacher booked another session for her class the following term and noted that the workshop leaders genuinely enjoyed it as much as the children – the secret is out.

Schools from a wider area have been sent copies of a new education information leaflet which is already generating more bookings. Teachers are able to file resource packs and worksheets to share with colleagues in a glossy new folder illustrated with photos of enthusiastic participants.

JANE MONAHAN
Schools and Families Education Officer

News from the House of Lords

THE FIGHT FOR THE FIELDS

In March the Museum, together with other frontagers and community groups, secured an important victory over Camden Council to safeguard the future of Lincoln's Inn Fields, London's largest and most historic garden square. The Fields, which create a sublime setting for the Museum, came under threat in 2004 when Camden Council gave notification of its intention to sweep away existing legal protection for the square to make way for private events. The Council began hiring out the Fields in 2001 and, as the marquees proliferated, the public was excluded from ever larger areas. In 2002 an 18-metre high super-structure went up in the centre of the Fields. The structure took a week to erect and the subsequent events, which were attended by up to 2,000 people at a time, rocked the square into the early hours of the morning.

Camden was found to be breaking the law, however. An Act of Parliament, passed when the square was leased to the London County Council in 1894, forbade the holding of private events or the erection of structures. The council then took dramatic the step of promoting a Clause in Parliament to amend the Act in its favour.

The Museum joined forces with Lincoln's Inn, the Royal College of Surgeons and numerous other businesses, residents and community groups to fight the Clause – supported by English Heritage and the Garden History Society. Petitions were submitted and a long legal battle

ensued, culminating in a seven-day hearing in the House of Lords (at which the Museum was represented by George Laurence QC, who generously gave his services on a *pro bono* basis). The council argued that they needed the money generated by private events for the maintenance and improvement of the square, yet they provided no reliable figures to back this up. They also admitted that they had not explored other ways of raising revenue (through donations from the businesses around the square for example).

The Lords were not impressed by Camden's case, not least because it was shown that the council had not bothered to consult with the local community, and the Clause was thrown out. It is hoped that the victory over Camden in the battle for Lincoln's Inn Fields will inspire other community groups to fight the exploitation of their own precious open spaces.

A new body, the Friends of Lincoln's Inn Fields, is currently being formed to represent the interests of the users of the square in future discussions with Camden Council. If any readers are interested in joining FLIF then please contact William Palin on 020 7440 4246 or wpalin@soane.org.uk.

WILLIAM PALIN

Staff News

April saw the retirement of one of our long serving Warders. Len Preston had been at the museum for ten years. During that time Len built on his already extensive knowledge of art and history to become somewhat of an expert on Soane and the Museum. His colleagues will miss this wonderfully accessible source of information! As well as the usual Warding duties, Len has helped enormously with photographic work around the Museum. After travelling abroad this summer, his own 'Grand Tour', Len intends to indulge in his other interests of gardening and photography. We all wish him well and hope to see him back as a regular visitor.

Anne Hughes is a new part-time Warder who has come to us from the Handel House Museum where she was working as a volunteer. Another new full-time Warder will be joining the team soon: Glyn Callingham used to manage the specialist music shop, 'Ray's Jazz' in Covent Garden. Ann and Glyn bring with them a variety of skills and knowledge to the Warding team. Like several of our current Warders,

they are both fans of jazz: we could be in for a few interesting evening 'meetings'.

All warders have now attended a housekeeping course delivered by Helen Lloyd of the National Trust and Jane Bush, Conservator. This is the culmination of months of preparatory work by Jane producing Manuals and organising the correct equipment. The new skills enable the Warders to become more involved in the conservation care of the property and the collections at the Museum. Some of the work can be carried out during opening hours and thus becomes another opportunity for visitors to learn about the work that goes in to looking after historic collections. The Warders take great pride in the presentation of the Museum and have welcomed this opportunity to increase their professionalism. Thanks to Jane and Helen for a very interesting course.

SUSAN BOGUE
House Manager

News from New York

SIR JOHN SOANE'S MUSEUM FOUNDATION

As Sir John Soane's Museum Foundation recently celebrated its fifteenth anniversary, we look back on our accomplishments and forward to the future. Since 1991, \$600,000 has been raised by or passed through the Foundation to the Museum. These funds have helped support the Breakfast Room, Model Room, and the new Robert Adam Study Room.

For the past ten years, the Foundation's educational programmes have included Soane Seminars, which enlighten a growing group of Soaniacs with spring and fall sessions, and offer American Institute of Architects (AIA) accreditation to working architects. For autumn 2006 the theme is Restoration, with illustrated or hands-on themes dealing with the restoration of architecture, interiors, fabric and wallpaper and furniture. Our spring 2007 seminars focus on the work of Inigo Jones, who as well as being an inspirational architect – and a favorite of Soane's – as a designer of masques, provides the theme for our major fund-raising Gala to be held at that most festive amphitheatre-style setting, New York's Rainbow Room. We can't resist the title Mood Inigo!

The Foundation offers an annual travelling fellowship to graduate students. This year marks the launch of a collaboration with the American Architectural Foundation in Washington, DC as it will underwrite the scholars' grant. The fellowship winner is committed to provide a free lecture to the Foundation based on his or her studies.

Both educational and as marvellously inspiring as Soane's own Grand Tour are the Foundation's special architectural trips. Whether for a day, a weekend, or a week, these are intensive, with enthralling sites and impressive social encounters, and especially useful for busy architects who get AIA credits. Next year's trip will be Derbyshire – which because of such an enthusiastic response, may have to be expanded into two trips. Future trips include St Petersburg (2008) and Ireland (2009). Details of these and many other Foundation activities

can be found on the new US web site that was launched last year www.SoaneFoundation.com.

With an illustrious advisory board that includes architects Paul Byard, Michael Graves, Peter Pennoyer, Robert Venturi and Stuart Wrede, the Foundation actively participates in the effort to preserve and enhance Sir John Soane's Museum as an international resource for study, inspiration and pleasure.

CHIPPY IRVINE
President of Sir John Soane's Museum Foundation



Plaster bust of Inigo Jones in the Museum

Contact Details: Chas A. Miller III, Executive Director
Sir John Soane's Museum Foundation, 1040 First Avenue, No. 311, New York NY 10022
T. 212-223-2012 | F. 212-223-9366 | E. Chas@SoaneFoundation.com