

SIR JOHN SOANE'S
MUSEUM

ANNUAL REVIEW 2019 / 20

LOOKING FORWARD

Sir John Soane's Museum

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Nicola Coldstream



CHAIRMAN'S FOREWORD

The coronavirus pandemic and Black Lives Matter have raised significant issues for every museum in the world, and the Soane is no exception. But I am proud of the way in which our team has responded to the challenges this has entailed. The safety of visitors and staff was, of course, foremost in our minds when we took the decision to close in March. Since then, like everyone else, we have transformed our ways of working, implementing rotas to ensure the Museum is safe, and creating new operating practices to prepare for reopening. At the same time, we have all been made aware of the pressing issues around diversity and inclusivity that have been thrown into relief during the spring and summer. They are issues that none of us, collectively or individually, can ignore, and we shall act accordingly in order to engage with as wide an audience as possible.

We have benefited from various forms of support and counsel from the Government, which remains our greatest source of funding. In addition, we have been given extraordinary financial support from some of our loyal friends, above all Deborah Loeb Brice and the Sir John Soane's Museum Foundation. I should also thank Basil Postan and the Rothschild Foundation for their help in funding this publication.

Despite many challenges, the Soane attained new heights in 2019/20, as you will read. Top of the list was *Hogarth: Place and Progress*, a blockbuster show for a museum of our size and a great demonstration of our abilities as the smallest of the national museums. None of the year's achievements would have been possible without the terrific efforts of our Trustees, staff and volunteers, all of whom are key strengths for us. The same can be said for our Patrons and Friends. I am most grateful to all of these groups.

I should also take this opportunity to announce three new Trustees appointed to the board during the year: Alison Ross Green, Stephen Gosztony and Dr Frank Salmon. Another important appointment is the Executive Director of the Sir John Soane's Museum Foundation, Michael Diaz-Griffith. The expertise of those appointed will be a valuable asset in the years to come.

As I write, plans are well advanced for the reopening of the Soane. We very much look forward to welcoming visitors back to enjoy and be amazed by this much-loved institution.

Guy Elliott
Chairman of Trustees, Sir John Soane's Museum



A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

I think all of us will look back upon the past year as one of marked contrasts, but for the Soane it was also one of remarkable success. Above all, *Hogarth: Place and Progress* allowed us to reunite all the surviving series of 'Modern Moral Subjects' that have made the artist a popular social critic from the 1730s to the present day. It was an exhibition meant for this Museum, given John Soane's ownership of two of these great series of paintings, as well as a volume of all of Hogarth's engravings, but we were also fortunate to receive spectacular loans from the National Gallery, Tate Britain and other major British galleries. The novelty of the exhibition, displayed throughout the house and galleries, also garnered stellar reviews, and we are grateful to Professor David Bindman, our guest curator, and our own Joanna Tinworth for shaping this remarkable event.

Another memorable moment came in November when over 400 enthusiastic people filled a lecture hall at the London School of Economics to hear the venerable architect and critic Kenneth Frampton deliver the Soane Medal Lecture, followed by a discussion and presentation with our former Trustee, Sir David Chipperfield. The excitement of the audience, particularly the younger members, was palpable. We were also successful, thanks to a handful of loyal supporters, in raising £90,000 to conserve 15 watercolours that formerly adorned the walls of the Picture Room Recess. This is part of the continuing care and maintenance of our collection and buildings that so brilliantly began with *Opening up the Soane* (2009-16).

In one sense, the year ended on 18 March, when we closed in tandem with all other national museums in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. It was a difficult decision to take, but it has been gratifying to see the response from staff and Patrons, who have rallied around, and we are growing a strong cohort of digital followers thanks to several online initiatives. In particular, I must single out the role of our long-time Patron Deborah Loeb Brice, whose generosity has helped to steady our ship. A new chapter is beginning – one full of challenges, but also full of promise as we plan to reopen and, to some extent, reinvent the experience of Sir John Soane's Museum.

Bruce Boucher
Deborah Loeb Brice Director



A PAINTER'S PROGRESS

This year William Hogarth broke out beyond the
Picture Room with a blockbuster exhibition at the Soane.

by Ben Luke

As its title suggests, the exhibition *Hogarth: Place and Progress* (9 October 2019–5 January 2020) focused primarily on two intertwined aspects of William Hogarth's work. First, it gathered his complete groups of serial works in painting and engraving – 'Modern Moral Subjects' as Hogarth called them – revealing the decade-by-decade progressive achievements of the major painted series, from *A Rake's Progress*, 1734, through *Marriage A-la-Mode*, 1743-45, to *The Humours of an Election*, 1754-55. Then, it explored Hogarth's deep understanding of the geography of London, and the peculiar tension between the City of London and the West End. Arguably no museum is better placed to explore these aspects, since, of course, Soane bought both the *Rake* and the *Election* series and his Museum is located slap-bang between the City and the West End. It made for a unique exhibition, which drew critical acclaim and huge public interest.

As Bruce Boucher and David Bindman note in their introduction to the exhibition publication, today we think of progress as an essentially positive phenomenon, but to Hogarth's early 18th-century audience, the word had 'a different range of connotations'. And an extraordinary breadth of meanings can be found in Hogarth's works. Soane bought *A Rake's Progress* at auction in 1802 'with a great splash', as Boucher writes in his essay exploring the architect's sustained engagement with Hogarth. Then there were *The Humours of an Election*, four paintings that Soane acquired in 1823 at the sale of the estate of the actor David Garrick at Christie's. These two central modern moral subjects were augmented with a real coup for the exhibition: the loan of a third great series, *Marriage A-la-Mode*, lent from the National Gallery. As the Curator, Bindman, says: 'If there is a national treasure [of Hogarth paintings], it would be that. It was, after all, one of the foundation paintings or series of the National Gallery itself.'

All the paintings in another series, *The Four Times of Day*, 1736-37, were also included. Then there were the engravings of *A Harlot's Progress*, 1732, *Industry and Idleness*, 1747, *Beer Street* and *Gin Lane*, 1751, *The Four Stages of Cruelty*, 1751, and, as a kind of coda, the single print *Tailpiece*, or *The Bathos*, 1764. The show's most radical scholarly proposal related to *The Happy Marriage*, after 1745, the unfinished series of which three paintings survive, two in the Tate collection and one in the Royal Cornwall Museum in Truro. Using four engravings alongside the paintings, Bindman proposed a new sequencing of the series – a more joyous counterpoint to the tragic *Marriage A-la-Mode*. It was shown in this new order, alongside the National Gallery's series. And while Bindman acknowledges that there remain 'a lot of uncertainties' as to whether the prints do indeed belong with the paintings, he argues: 'By putting *The Happy Marriage* in its unfinished state together with *Marriage A-la-Mode*, it seemed to me to force a different interpretation on it.'

Central to the connection between progress and place was Hogarth's creation of what Bindman and Boucher call 'a kind of moral geography' – also the subject of a one-day workshop in November 2019, organised with the Paul Mellon Centre. Here, the journeys of Hogarth's protagonists are set against identifiable yet allegorical settings in London. A map of the city in the 18th century in the catalogue identifies 27 locations represented in the works, from the gallows at Tyburn (close to today's Marble Arch) where Tom Idle is hanged in *Industry and Idleness*; through the fashionable new Mayfair squares, Berkeley or Grosvenor, which would have been the setting for scenes in *Marriage A-la-Mode* and *A Rake's Progress*; to that den of iniquity The Rose Tavern on Drury Lane, in both the *Rake's* and *A Harlot's Progress*, and the more rural Sir Hugh Myddleton's Head Tavern, Clerkenwell, in *The Four Times of Day*; up to



It shows the people of the
city in the most
common and most
familiar scenes of
their daily life. The
first scene is the
interior of a public
house, where the
people are drinking
and eating. The
second scene is the
street, where the
people are walking
and talking. The
third scene is the
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William Hogarth, *The Four Times of Day*, 1736-38,
installation view in the Foyle Space. Photo: Gareth Gardner



William Hogarth, *A Harlot's Progress*, 3, 1732.
 Courtesy: Andrew Edmunds, London

Bedlam, on the outskirts of the ancient City wall at Moorfields, where the Rake's grim story concludes.

Hogarth's attention to the detail of his London settings is exemplified in the fourth, pivotal painting from *A Rake's Progress*, 4: *The Arrest*. Here, the Rake is arrested for debt in a location still recognisable today – from Piccadilly, with a view down St James's Street to St James's Palace – where he is on his way to be presented to Queen Caroline on her birthday in hope of social advancement and patronage. At the bottom right of the picture is a milestone; if he passed it,

the Rake would have been in the confines of the palace and could not have been arrested, a detail that reflects Hogarth's ability to build suspense in his narratives. It was important to reveal the sophistication of Hogarth's 'moral geography' through the interpretation, according to Joanna Tinworth, the exhibition's Assistant Curator. 'We were able to bring out this new layer of understanding. It would have been self-evident to Hogarth's contemporaries, but we've lost some of that meaning and, therefore, that layer of satire that is associated with the locations.'



William Hogarth, *A Rake's Progress, 4: The Arrest*, 1734

Perhaps the subtlest sense of progress in the exhibition – but one that would have been palpable to many who visited – was Hogarth's own development as a painter. As Tinworth says, it was crucial to Bindman that there was a chronology, and that the exhibition began with the Harlot and the Rake, 'so you understood that these were the first two progresses that Hogarth devised'. The presence of the unfinished and, as Bindman describes them, 'quite beautiful', oil sketches for *The Happy Marriage* revealed 'how Hogarth constructed his paintings; worked really directly

on the canvas and sketched things out'. For him, the show confirmed something that is often lost in the focus on Hogarth's iconography and moral and satirical content: that he was a brilliant painter. Bindman says: 'One of the things the show brought out, I thought, was the way that he gets better all the time. He just keeps on improving. The *Rake's Progress* paintings are a little rough around the edges. But by the time he gets to the *Election* series, he's an absolute master. He's really one of the great painters – just as a painter – of the 18th century.'



William Hogarth, *The Happy Marriage: 5: The Dance* (detail), after 1745. Courtesy: Tate

(Below) Installation view of *Hogarth: Place and Progress*. Photo: Gareth Gardner

In order to facilitate the visitor's journey through the exhibition, Tinworth says, it was necessary to 'turn the entire Museum route back to front'. Easy in a conventional museum, perhaps, but not in the Soane, where 'our galleries are actually the last thing on the visitor route', Tinworth says, and a typical visit is 'very much a self-guided experience'. All visitors were sent up the stairs at number 12 to the Rear Gallery, where they would encounter the Harlot and the Rake and then move through into the adjacent Front Gallery where *Marriage A-la-Mode* was paired with *The Happy Marriage*. The rest of the exhibition – on the ground floor, *The Four Times of Day*, *The Four Stages of Cruelty* and *Tailpiece*, or *The Bathos* in the Foyle Space and the *Election* in its usual setting, the Picture Room; and, in the basement, *Industry and Idleness* and *Beer Street* and *Gin Lane* in the Front Kitchen – could be seen in any order.

One key problem to solve was how to fit the 56 individual works in: space simply would not allow for a standard linear presentation. The solution, proposed by Charles Holland architects, took its cue from history. An illustration in *The Graphic* magazine in 1884 pictured the South Drawing Room at Sir John Soane's Museum with *A Rake's Progress* displayed on easel-like, zigzagging screens. Charles Holland adapted this design, using dark hardwood with red plaster panels on which the works hung, more spaciouly than in the historical example. Some mirrored panels beneath the paintings, alternating with openings, reflected and amplified the rooms, creating 'illusions and reflections that played subtle perceptual games', according to the architects.

The effect of the installation in this domestic setting led to, Tinworth and Bindman point out, a revelatory intimacy. 'I thought it was thrilling





William Hogarth, *The Humours of an Election*, 3: *The Polling*, 1754-55

just simply to get close,' Bindman says. 'That was particularly the case with *A Rake's Progress*. The setting behind those shutters in the Soane is amazing – it's one of the great sights of London – but you can't always see the pictures that well in Soane's setting. Having them out and seeing them close up was a huge treat.' The intimacy of the Museum also provided new perspectives on *Marriage A-la-Mode*. 'In a place like the National Gallery you feel a natural distance, but in a small room you're really rubbing right up against his paintings.'

Critics were unanimously positive, and for many the exhibition's special connection to London was a key theme. In *The Guardian*, Jonathan Jones's five-star review found evidence that 'Hogarth created a human epic about the life of a great city with few equals in world culture'. In another five-star review in the *Evening Standard*,

Melanie McDonagh noted that rather than simply being 'a backdrop' to Hogarth's series, 'London is where the moral dramas of life are played out.' She concluded by commenting on the 'colossal humanity' in Hogarth's world view. 'And now, as then, London is where we see the best and worst of it.'

Interestingly, Jones ignored the *Election* series and dismissed the rurally based *The Happy Marriage*, arguing: 'Hogarth clearly needed the adrenaline rush of London as much as he was horrified by its casual destruction of lives.' In contrast, Waldemar Januszczak in *The Sunday Times*, writing immediately after the UK had been to the polls in December 2019, recognised the *Election* series as Hogarth's 'masterpiece in the modern moral genre... the largest of his sequences, the funniest, the scariest and, currently, the most pertinent, and it shows both

parties chucking the rulebook out of the window in a squalid hunt for votes'. Januszcak noted that, with the idea of sequential series, Hogarth had done something no other artist in Britain had before, and that he had done so 'in an era of fierce political turmoil'. He added: 'It is not until our own era of fierce political turmoil that someone has had the smart idea of bringing together all of Hogarth's modern moral subjects and displaying them as a group.'

Januszcak also reflected on Sir John Soane's Museum as an 'adventure'. 'Going there in search of Hogarth's modern moral subjects, dotted and squeezed about the premises, in the kitchen, is an experience closer to a ghost-train ride than a normal gallery visit.' This exhibition's setting was clearly a major draw for visitors, too. Bindman admits concerns that people would lose the thread of the show as they left the galleries on the first floor. 'But I think people did seem to enjoy that,' he says. 'It was a sense of a hunt, in a way, for the next part of the exhibition.'

The small visitor survey carried out by the front-of-house staff during the exhibition confirms this, with 97% of visitors enjoying the placement of the works. The survey also found that for 27% of visitors, the exhibition was the only reason for visiting the Museum, while for 49%, the show was one reason for their trip. This suggests that, of course, Hogarth prompted visitors to make the journey, but also that many may have come because it was this particular artist in this particular setting.

The public response was phenomenal: there were queues outside the house and the task of implementing ticketing and late openings every Friday and Saturday to accommodate the sheer number of people wanting to see the exhibition was monumental. It required an enormous commitment from the Visitor Assistants, who not only managed the new flow of visitors in the

back-to-front route but assiduously learned 100 pages of notes in order to deliver the tours that were developed alongside the show. The entire staff were deeply committed to the exhibition, Tinworth says, 'and that investment came not just from the back of house, but the front of house and the senior management team'.

Hogarth seems perennially topical through his takes on society, but how fitting that this show should take place just at the moment of a British election exposing deep divisions within society, dominated by characters that would sit well within Hogarth's narratives. Yet *Hogarth: Place and Progress* was rare and novel – allowing visitors to see major works by a great artist in a unique setting at the heart of the city, still partly identifiable, which is the theatre for its dramas. So the exhibition had a contemporary relevance – a psychogeographic topicality – allowing Londoners and visitors to take a mental journey through a mirror image of the city across which they had travelled to see it. Of course, Hogarth is a fixture of Sir John Soane's Museum, but through this show, that relationship was deepened and made more intimate. It was the authentic Hogarth experience, closer to the way the artist himself would have seen his own work, and through it a familiar artist became more vividly present. This combination of elements was behind its success on many fronts. In its complex interweaving of pictures and place, *Place and Progress* had the feeling of a once-in-a-lifetime experience.



MAVERICK PROGRAMMING

How sugar-cube ruins and architectural furniture have helped the Museum channel its founder's spirit this year.

by Owen Hopkins

Looking at the portrait of Sir John Soane that greets visitors to his Museum in the Library-Dining Room, it might seem a stretch to describe its subject as a maverick. Resplendent in its recently restored gilded frame, it depicts Soane very much as a gentleman. Everything about the portrait, from Soane's decorous attire and expensive wig, to that lustrous frame and the very fact it was painted by Sir Thomas Lawrence, then President of the Royal Academy, exudes cultivation, sophistication and, we might even say, conformity. Yet a maverick Soane certainly was – as an architect, collector and maker of his extraordinary Museum.

For anyone in any doubt of this, just walk around his Museum, which, more so than any building I can think of, is a reflection of its creator: his triumphs and many disappointments, his strange and often difficult personality, and his thrillingly original, if idiosyncratic, approach to architecture. More than this though, it's the Museum's unique role as a testing ground, a place of experiment, a laboratory, where the architectural cultures of the past and present are brought together to forge the architecture of the future.

Today, that original experiment is over. Soane's stipulation that on his death in 1837 the Museum should be preserved exactly as it had been during his life means that everything in the buildings is now at least 183 years old, and that the original balance between past and present is now inevitably weighted towards the former. But not entirely.

Over the past few years, the Soane has embarked on a programme of exhibitions that has aimed to recalibrate this balance by staging a number of projects by contemporary architects, artists and designers. Whether confined to a single room or unfolding across the entire Museum, the curatorial approach driving these projects has

been to engage, integrate and at times playfully challenge what Soane created. The proviso for all of these projects is that nothing in the Museum is moved or taken away to accommodate them. Instead, they exist in, around, underneath and on top of the familiar configurations of objects and spaces, physically and metaphorically, filling in the gaps between past and present in a way that deepens and enriches the experiences of the Museum's visitors.

To follow in Soane's footsteps in this way is, of course, easier said than done. Not only does this approach require a carefully considered curatorial strategy, it needs collaborators who, along with their works, have a deep affinity with the Museum. This includes both established practitioners who have known the Soane for many years and those at the very beginning of their careers who are discovering the Museum for the first time, including students.

This goes back to one of Soane's principal motivations for establishing the Museum, which was to create a place where his Royal Academy students could experience architecture in three dimensions. This close engagement with students of architecture, and with education more broadly, continues today through tours, library visits and longer-running projects.

One such project this year saw Intermediate Unit 13 from the Architectural Association use Sir John Soane's Museum as a key reference, as the students worked towards the *Crude Hints towards an Architectural Academy of the Future* exhibition. Over the year, unit tutors Lily Jencks, Jessica Reynolds and Alex Butterworth set a series of briefs that saw students creating an 'exquisite corpse' model of the Museum, rich speculative designs for pavilions in Lincoln's Inn Fields and proposals for new architectural academies around London – all of which powerfully illustrated the enduring importance of



Paul Coldwell, *Scenes from the Kitchen*,
2019 (detail). Ceramic plate



Installation view of *proposal/B*. Photo: Tom Ryley

the Museum as an inspiration for new forms of architectural pedagogy.

While Unit 13 explored the Soane as a space of education, the artist Paul Coldwell, in his exhibition *Picturing the Invisible*, looked at the working life of the house. Unlike most exhibitions that constitute the culmination of a project, Coldwell's was staged as part of an AHRC-funded research network, which he led in his capacity as a Professor at Chelsea College of Arts, alongside Ruth Morgan, Professor of Crime and Forensic Science at University College London. The network brought together academics from the worlds of art, design, architecture, curatorial practice, literature, forensic science, fashion, medical science, psychoanalysis and psychotherapy, philosophy and astrophysics – all of whom shared an interest in exploring how the invisible or unknown are expressed. An international conference was organised at Chelsea College of Arts in November 2019 and a book will be published later in 2020.

The exhibition and, indeed, the Museum itself was, however, the starting point. During discussions with the Soane curators, Coldwell became interested in the idea of 'the house seen from below': the ways that servants would have seen, understood and perhaps even attempted to replicate aspects of what Soane created upstairs. Coldwell was struck by how, unlike the master they served, the views and perspectives of the servants are largely unrecorded and therefore ultimately unknowable. His project sought to find a way of giving voice to those mostly absent from the historical record through a number of site-specific works situated in the Museum's old kitchens.

For the duration of Coldwell's exhibition over late summer 2019, the installation became part of the Museum, intentionally devoid of the usual curatorial signposting such as labels,

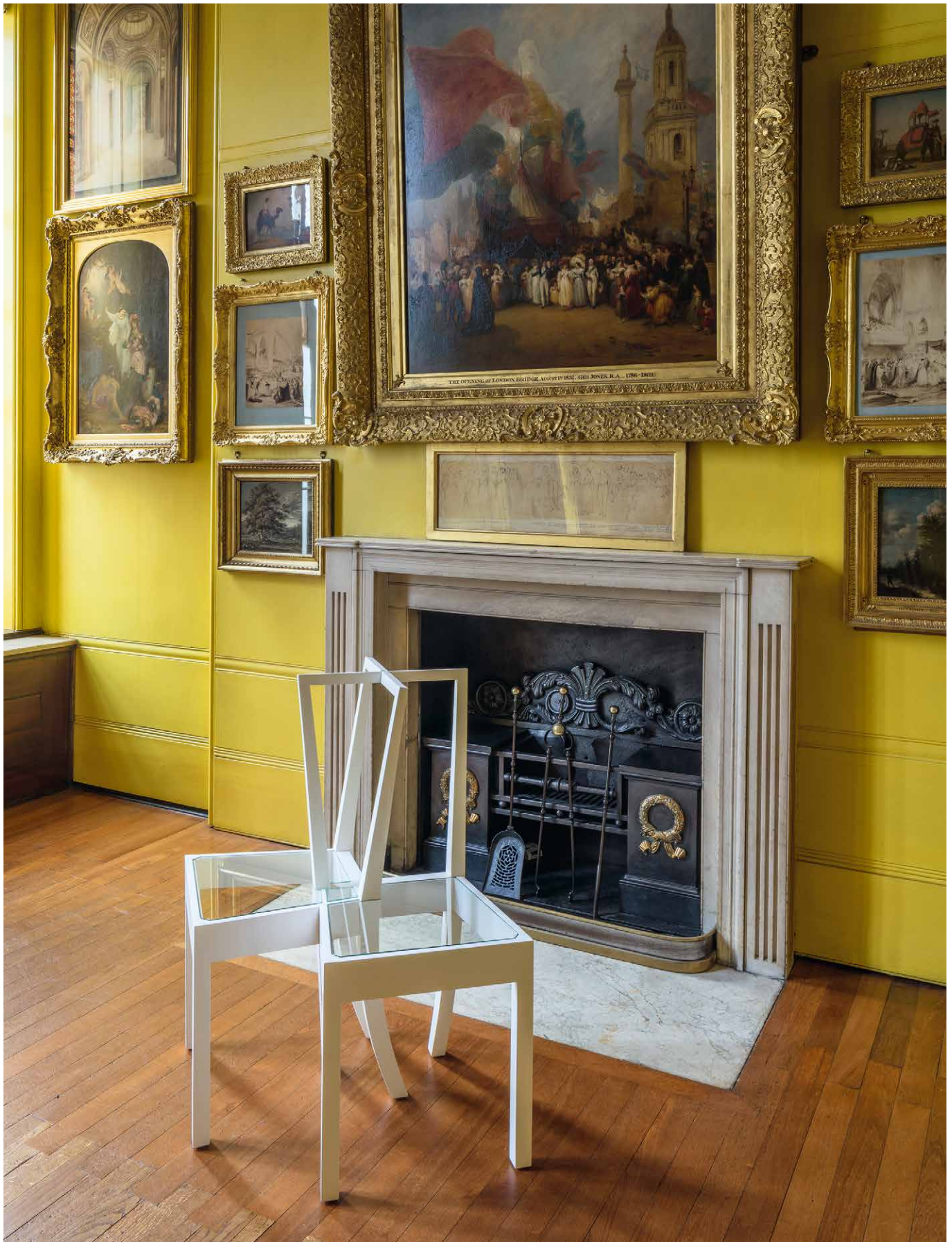
introductory panels or an overt title. This has frequently been part of the Museum's curatorial approach – after all, Soane himself rarely labelled works in the Museum – with viewers allowed to experience and make sense of what they see without being overly directed. Because of the sheer abundance of objects and the need to carve out spaces – physically and conceptually – for works to be placed, experiencing an exhibition in this way becomes something akin to a treasure hunt, but with the journey just as important as the destination.

There are, however, a few spaces around the Museum where the rules of the game are quite different: the kitchens, never intended by Soane to be on display and therefore comparatively empty, and also the Foyle Space. Added to the Soane in 1890 by the then Curator James Wild as a 'New Picture Room', and then restored in 2016 thanks to the generosity of the Foyle Foundation, the Foyle Space is a relatively conventional historic gallery space, yet one that is located at the very heart of the Museum, just off the Dome Area. It is a tantalising if rather challenging curatorial prospect, which has yielded several different approaches.

In June 2019, the Foyle Space hosted *proposals B*, a conversation seat designed by architects Peter Salter and Fenella Collingridge that was originally conceived for and displayed at the 16th Venice Architecture Biennale in 2018. Blurring the distinctions between furniture, art and architecture to create a literal and metaphorical platform for conversation and interaction, *proposals B* invited visitors to sit within the space it created and manipulate its moving parts, encouraging participation and interaction – an idea very much in keeping with Soane's conception of the Museum as an academy of architecture. While the scale of a large piece of furniture, *proposals B* retained the self-contained quality of a larger architectural work, in particular Salter and



Installation view of *All That Could Have Been*.
Photo: Tim Bowditch



Langlands & Bell, *Interlocking Chairs*, 1995,
Installation view. Photo: Gareth Gardner



Kenneth Frampton (left) with Sir David Chipperfield at the Soane Medal Lecture 2019. Photo: Barry MacDonald

this is manifest in both their work and the Museum in which it was displayed.

The laboratory ethos extends beyond the exhibitions and to other initiatives that celebrate Soanean spirit in the contemporary architectural world. Now in its third year, The Architecture Drawing Prize, run in collaboration with Make Architects and the World Architecture Festival, continues to help advance drawing's critical role in architectural culture and in the generation and transmission of architectural ideas. Meanwhile, the Soane Medal, also now in its third year, has become one of the key events in London's architectural calendar. This year saw the Medal awarded to the distinguished historian and critic Kenneth Frampton, who delivered his lecture on 'The Unfinished Modern Project at the End of Modernity' at the London School of Economics' New Academic Building to a packed house of more than 400 people, reflecting the

initiative's unique ability to bridge the established and the emerging.

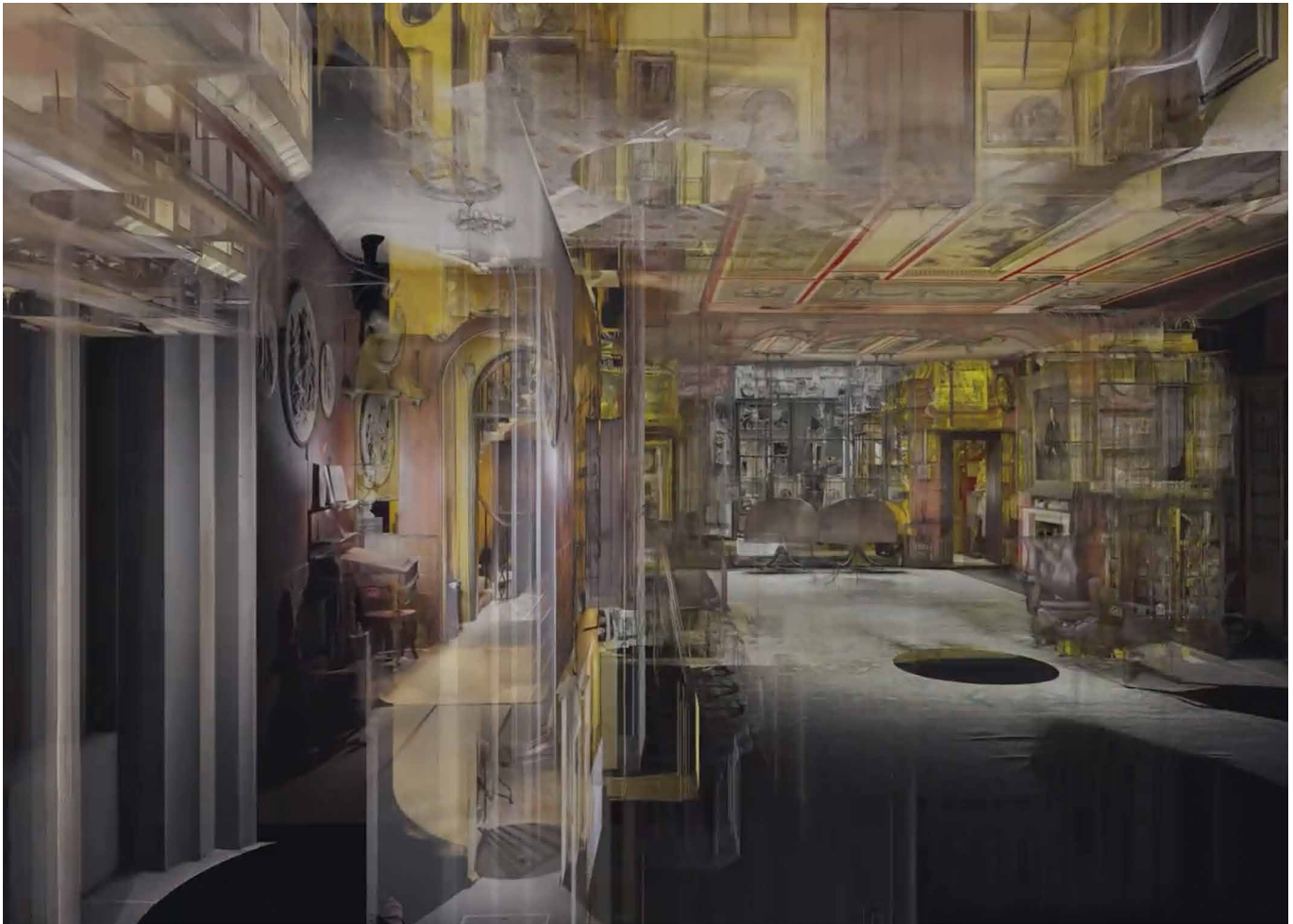
Many historic houses and museums now run contemporary programmes of different sorts. What makes the Soane's different is that it builds so explicitly on the vision of the Museum's founder to connect past and present. Just as the Museum's many conservation projects over the past few decades have restored its physical spaces and objects, so the exhibition programmes look to reinstate its spirit of experimentation and enquiry in a way that is similarly meaningful. Only a maverick spirit could have created a museum that remains one of the world's great architectural laboratories two centuries after it was established – and, as the Museum's exhibition programmes demonstrate, the same mission continues to be upheld.



BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

In response to a national shutdown, how has the Museum continued to engage the public with its collections and exhibitions, and how might this experience affect its future?

by Gareth Harris



A screenshot from *Explore Soane*

In this era of digital saturation, curating an Instagram feed is a fine art, with the best accounts supplying a drip-drip feed of intelligent and accessible material. Since closing temporarily on 18 March, Sir John Soane's Museum has given digestible, illuminating insights into its art collection and historic building via its Instagram account, which offers 'on-target bursts of 18th-century architecture' according to *The New York Times'* art critic, Jason Farago.

With the Museum temporarily closed in the wake of the Covid-19 outbreak, staff were determined to keep engaging with the public. Putting key objects from Soane's vast collection under the spotlight on Instagram proved an

effective way of keeping the Museum in the public consciousness – one post on the social media platform revealed that a fig leaf hanging delicately from a cast of the god Apollo was a later, controversial addition to the original statue. 'We've realised that when people look online, they need to be directed. If you give people too much information they switch off,' says Bruce Boucher, the Museum's Director.

The most popular Instagram post throughout March and April 2020 asked visitors to nominate an area of the Museum they would like to discover in more detail. The winning room was the Dome Area at the back of the Museum, which is dotted with casts and antique fragments.

How this space developed over time was outlined in a later series of posts, leading to a spike in Instagram engagement.

The Museum maintains a healthy presence on social media with 16,900 followers on Twitter, where impressions have risen significantly with the advent of lockdown, and more than 14,800 followers on Facebook. Posts on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook have focused on driving traffic to the Museum's enhanced digital portal known as *Explore Soane*.

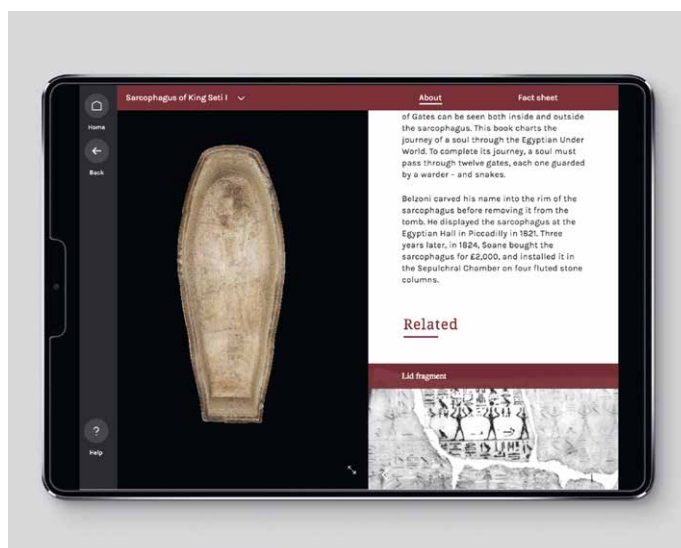
This comprehensive programme comprises a number of distinct strands, including a sophisticated fly-through tour of the Museum that takes the viewer on a virtual magic carpet around the historic buildings. This digital taster, made using the latest 3D technology, begins outside and zooms into 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields, enabling the viewer to move through the walls of the building and see rooms and objects up close, bringing a new dimension to the Museum and its contents. The tour revolves around Soane's Model Room and the ancient Egyptian sarcophagus of King Seti I in the Sepulchral Chamber. Seti's tomb is described in forensic detail; we learn, for instance, that in 1824, Soane bought the sarcophagus for £2,000, while an image of fragments from the lid, which can be magnified, brings inscriptions from the Egyptian *Book of Gates* to life.

Crucially, critics at major international publications have singled out *Explore Soane*. The virtual tour 'moves you through the strange, Piranesi-like spaces in a way that actually gives a better sense of their architectural relation than seeing them in the flesh', said Philip Kennicott of *The Washington Post* (27 May, 2020). *Apollo* magazine told subscribers in its newsletter (15 May, 2020) that the 3D experience is 'excellent' while *The Telegraph* (1 June, 2020) reported that the new virtual project is a 'wonderful reminder of one of the capital's most intriguing spaces'.

For many, the physical act of seeing the *kunstkammer* assembled by Soane remains paramount. 'Visitors enjoy moving through the Georgian façade and into the myriad surprising corners in the Museum. We tend to try not to give too much of that away, but during closure we're using initiatives such as *Explore Soane* to whet the appetites of online visitors,' says Willa Beckett, Director of Development and Communications.

There are plans to develop the tour further. 'One of the things we want to do is expand the *Explore Soane* virtual tour to include the Picture Room. In the near term, with social distancing, we may only be able to have two or three people in that room. I hope we can open the shutters and present all 118 paintings online; this would be a terrific learning tool,' Boucher says.

The Soane website also includes a lively, impressive blog; its mix of stories, object information and book excerpts features plenty of



Tablet view of *Explore Soane*



fascinating nuggets about the life of Soane and his wife Eliza, whose love of food is explored in an entry about the celebrated cookbook *The London Art of Cookery*, 1783. Meanwhile, the recent contemporary art exhibition, *Langlands & Bell, Degrees of Truth*, displayed across the floors of the Museum, has also been recreated as an online show. Works such as *Wind Dried Whippet*, 1982, can be viewed from home on a mobile phone or tablet.

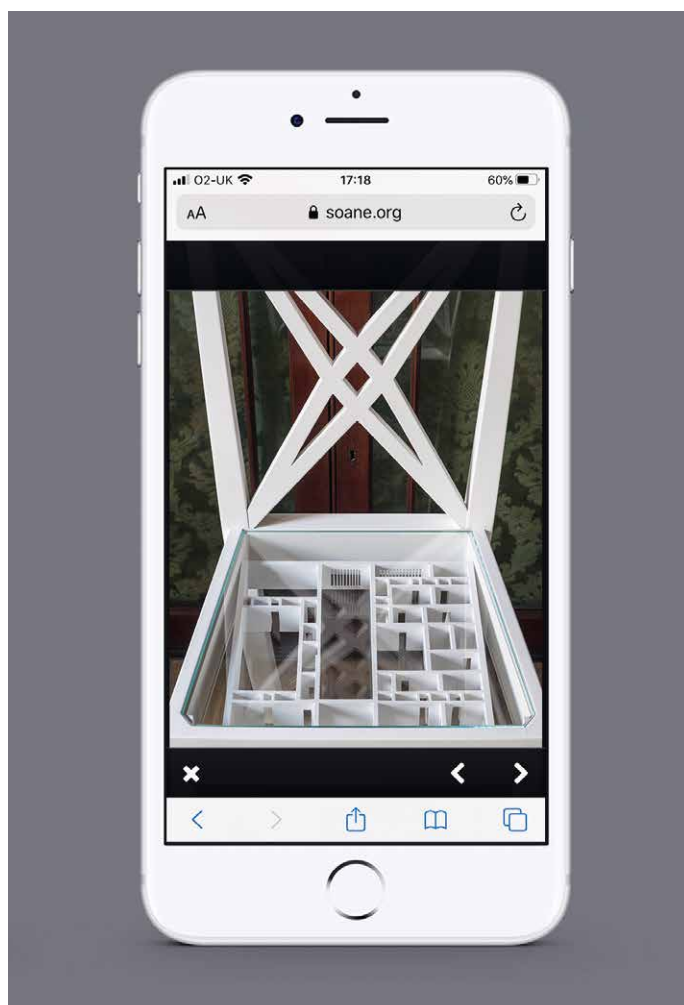
The three-part television series *Opening up the Soane*, generously funded by Elizabeth Cayzer, tells the story of the restoration of the Museum, filmed over six years by Director Jonathan Crane. It is also available to view online as part of the Soane's digital offering. Episodes chart the restoration of the recesses on the Museum's central staircase and the refurbishment of Sir John Soane's private apartments. The TV series was watched by over 100,000 viewers and prompted increased activity on the website, with three visitor session peaks recorded in April and May after the episodes were aired on the London Live channel.

'As we have no labels, we rely on our Visitor Assistants' encyclopedic knowledge about Soane, his house and collection, as well as related topics, such as the political issues and domestic customs of the time,' says Beckett, who adds that online material rounds out the visitor experience. 'To get the most out of the Museum, we also encourage people to visit our website for supplementary information,' she adds. The thousands of objects that comprise the Soane's collection can also be browsed online.

Post-lockdown, reconciling the digital and real worlds will be a challenge for all museums, which now need to reflect on how the Covid-19 pandemic has changed the experience of visiting cultural institutions. 'I think, like all museums, we have to reinvent ourselves after this – there is the pre-corona period and post-corona. We have to

accept that it may take a while for the public to come back,' Boucher says.

'In the meantime, we have revamped our digital platform to direct visitors to what they can experience virtually, such as *Explore Soane*, the *Opening up the Soane* documentary, and our current Langlands & Bell exhibition. The pandemic has clearly accelerated a tendency towards the virtual that was already there. We don't want to lose sight of the unique experience of visiting the Soane, but for the time being, our digital offering is providing inspiring compensation.'



Mobile view of the online version of *Langlands & Bell: Degrees of Truth*



— ALAS —
POOR FANNY

A RESTORATION STORY

A small but remarkable space in the Museum
has undergone crucial conservation this year.
House and Facilities Manager Liam McCull describes
the assiduous work it involved behind the scenes.

by Rachel Potts



The restored Monk's Yard. Photo: Lewis Bush

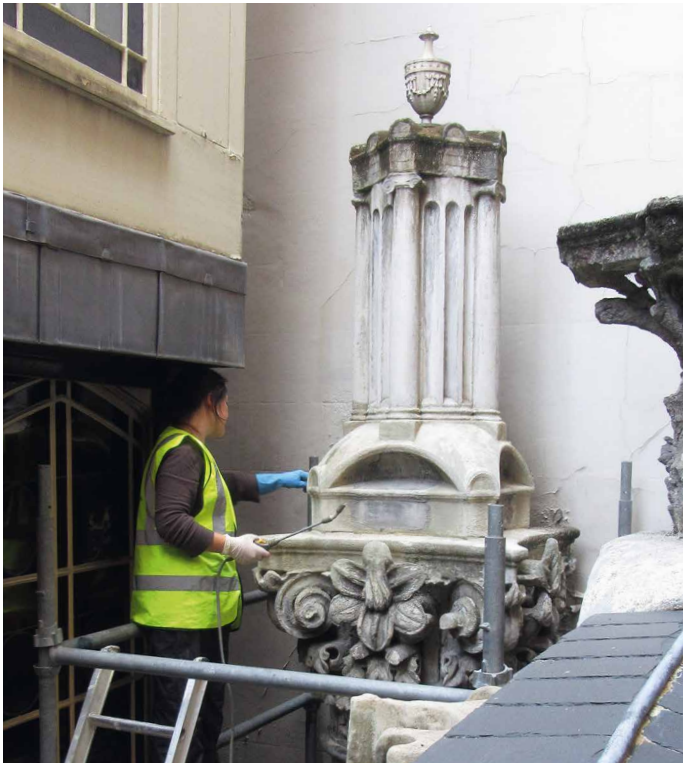
Featuring medieval stone arches that Sir John Soane rescued from the Palace of Westminster, obelisks that were once pre-gas lamp posts in Lincoln's Inn Fields, a monumental tomb for his dog Fanny and a bust of the Duke of York among other features, Soane's Monk's Yard is a romantic fantasy in miniature. This 'mock medieval ruinscape', according to Helen Dorey, the Museum's Deputy Director and Inspectress, is 'a wonderful expression of Soane's architectural imagination'.

The yard was created in the 1820s when Soane had bought and completely rebuilt number 14 as the third of his adjoining houses. He was in his 70s. As part of a suite 'inhabited' by the fictional hermit Padre Giovanni, the yard adjoins a Monk's Parlour and a tiny Monk's Cell, in which Soane insisted one of his servants sleep.

The unique space and its contents underwent major conservation this year, funded entirely by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport. The first stage saw all freestanding sculpture that could be moved taken to the adjacent Monument Court for treatment. The timber of a glazed bay window in the Monk's Parlour and the failing render on the west wall of the yard were repaired, and, in what was perhaps the chief driver for initiating the project, the imposing ruins were given extensive treatment.

The yard also features a pavement 'composed of the tops and bottoms of wine bottles, and pebbles found amongst the gravel dug out for the foundation of the monastery', according to Soane's 1835 *Description* of his house-museum. A grave for Giovanni (Italian for John) 'adds to the scenery of this hallowed place, wherein attention





A conservator working on the Monk's Yard. Photo: Taylor Pearce

has been given to every minute circumstance'. The *Description* contains additional novelistic flourishes from Soane's friend, the writer Barbara Hofland, including: 'But where did the good monk get so many bottles wherewith to aid his innocent labours?'

The yard's conservation, orchestrated on the ground by the Museum's House and Facilities Manager Liam McCull, was, like this curious place, far from straightforward. Since joining the Soane in 2015 after a role in managing warehouse facilities, McCull's work ranges from changing Museum lightbulbs to writing its security policy. The challenges of looking after these three Grade-I-listed townhouses can be encompassed by one fact: 'The buildings are part of the collection.'

The plumbing, for example, is no less listed than the Museum's domestic decor or works of art, and so everything faces the same sets of decisions based on how to retain as much of the

original fabric as possible. 'If an historic lock isn't working properly, we don't want to replace it,' says McCull, 'but we do need to secure the door', so a modern replica may be used. Where new pipework has been installed in some *Opening up the Soane* project work, original pipes remain, too, under the boards. 'A lot of things you have to balance and juggle,' he says.

The Monk's Yard project spanned August to December 2019 and was carried out with architect Lyall Thow of Julian Harrap Architects, the conservators Taylor Pearce and Fullers Builders, who specialise in listed-building work – all of whom have worked at the Soane over many years and carried out the yard's last restoration in 2005. 'This continuity of personnel when it comes to conservation is really important,' says Dorey.

Thow characterises the yard as 'a special little place', but one that is overshadowed by tall buildings. 'So it's quite a dark space. That sort of adds, in a way, to the gothic gloom,' and also means organic growth such as algae and moss thrive in it, away from the sunlight. The works involved removing this build up of matter as well as the 'urban pollution'.

The medieval fragments threw up their own very particular challenges. 'They are ruins; they were built here as ruins,' says McCull, 'and one of the first things that's an issue is getting scaffolders to understand that even though it's a flaking, crumbling wall, we don't want them to touch it because it may crumble more.' Some edging and doorways were covered, but they had 'lots of discussions around protection', says Dorey. 'Is it better if the scaffolders can really appreciate what they're avoiding?' Some covers are bad for the material underneath, too, by blocking airflow for instance, hence over-protection was carefully avoided.

The arches are in Reigate stone, a very friable form of limestone which held 12th-century



The restored Monk's Yard, detail. Photo: Lewis Bush

carving very well but now will turn to powder if touched or moistened by water. After gentle defrassing, or cleaning of the surface, a translucent lime wash was applied to protect the stone from atmospheric wear. Taylor Pearce used new and synthetic nanolimes – not available when the ruins were last conserved in 2005, but hopefully much more potent – and carefully mixed subtly different shades of wash to match differences in the stone.

Organising access at high levels was among the most serious and expensive challenges. The initial problem was getting 16-metre-long scaffold poles into the yard via the Museum's small spaces. Installing and using the scaffolding was more difficult still, as it would often be placed over the delicate floor, or the protective material around an object might prevent people from walking along

the scaffolding due to lack of space. The process was slow and complex.

Workers from Taylor Pearce and Fullers used the scaffold together at times, so organising when people came up and down, and when and where contractors took breaks, was a major issue. School groups would walk through to the education space past the yard, and on the other side of a door was the visiting public. 'Everything is a sensitive surface, or historic fabric, so you need to be careful where you tread with your wet boots,' adds McCull.

Another key component was the conservation of the paved floor, which is so 'delicate and intricate', says McCull. 'We don't allow anybody to sweep it; we try not to walk on it at all.' Moss always grows here, says Thow, which is, of course, aesthetically apt. 'It really is like a living



ruin with vegetation growing on it. But plants will eventually destroy the fabric, which includes the original mortar bed dating from the 1820s.' To treat unwanted microbial growth, biocide was applied before any other works began, and it worked away under layers of protection while the project continued above. It was December by the time the scaffolding came out, when cleaning and repairs to failed mortar around certain pebbles could happen.

In Soane's *Description*, the mosaic of glass bottle bottoms and pebbles, 'disposed in symmetry of design, furnishes an admirable lesson of simplicity and economy, and shews the unremitting assiduity of the pious monk'. McCull was struck by a similar vision. 'Originally it must have taken weeks of somebody's work, or lots of people all on their knees.' He reserves particular credit for the conservators from Taylor Pearce who would 'come in and lie down, in the freezing cold, in the rain, piecing patterns of little stones back together'.

He's keen to stress the input of workers on the ground. Two coping stones at roof level, which protect from rainfall, were loose and needed taking off and re-laying. 'Quite a simple job, really, except that it was above the passageway underneath,' says McCull. 'You couldn't take the risk of those falling. A plasterer was doing the bricklaying with his assistant and myself. And we stood up there working out how to arrange some ropes so that if it did slip, it wouldn't fall. So there was a lot of detail about a very small line in the instruction: "re-fix coping stones". It took us a day.' McCull pays tribute to those who made daily decisions like this – 'They're the ones who make it real.'

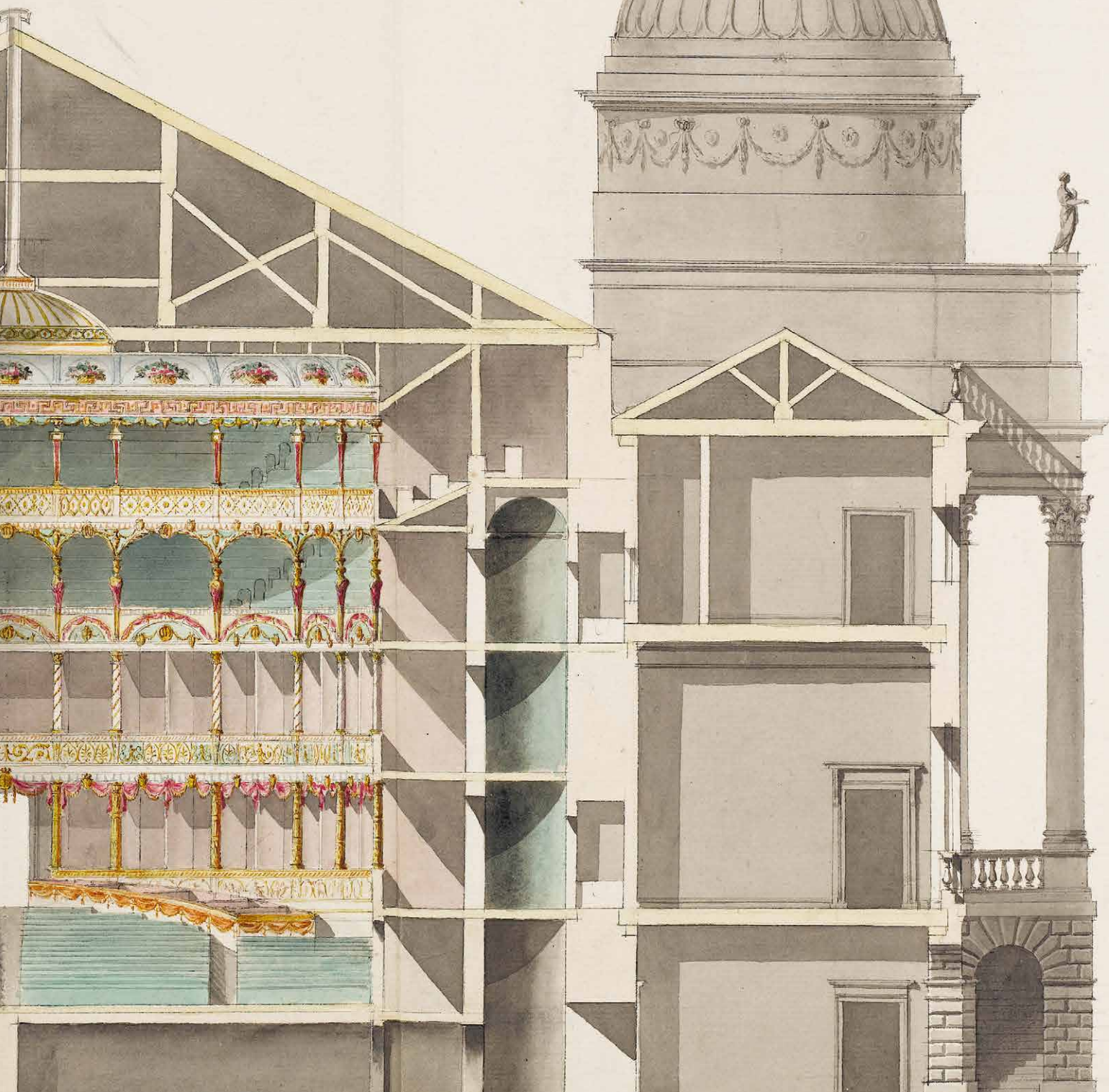
Conservation at the Soane is not always about 900-year-old stone, and a more contemporary issue came to bear a few weeks after the Monk's Yard work was completed. Hazmat suits were a

less familiar sight this January, when the ground floor of the Museum was sealed to remove a small piece of asbestos in the skirting board. 'We had to build tents, seal the area, and run equipment in through a window,' says McCull. In February, the entire stairwell of number 14 was also redecorated, requiring scaffolding reaching from the basement to the third floor.

For the first time McCull had an assistant for these projects, Shopon Khan, a student of Facilities Level 2 run by Capital City College Training at Westminster Kingsway College, whose apprenticeship at the Soane is supported by the Stavros Niarchos Foundation. From January until lockdown began, Khan helped across all areas of house management. 'It made a big difference,' says McCull. Khan's is the first apprenticeship at the Museum, which McCull calls 'a really good way to get people into this environment who normally wouldn't have, or even look for, a way in'.

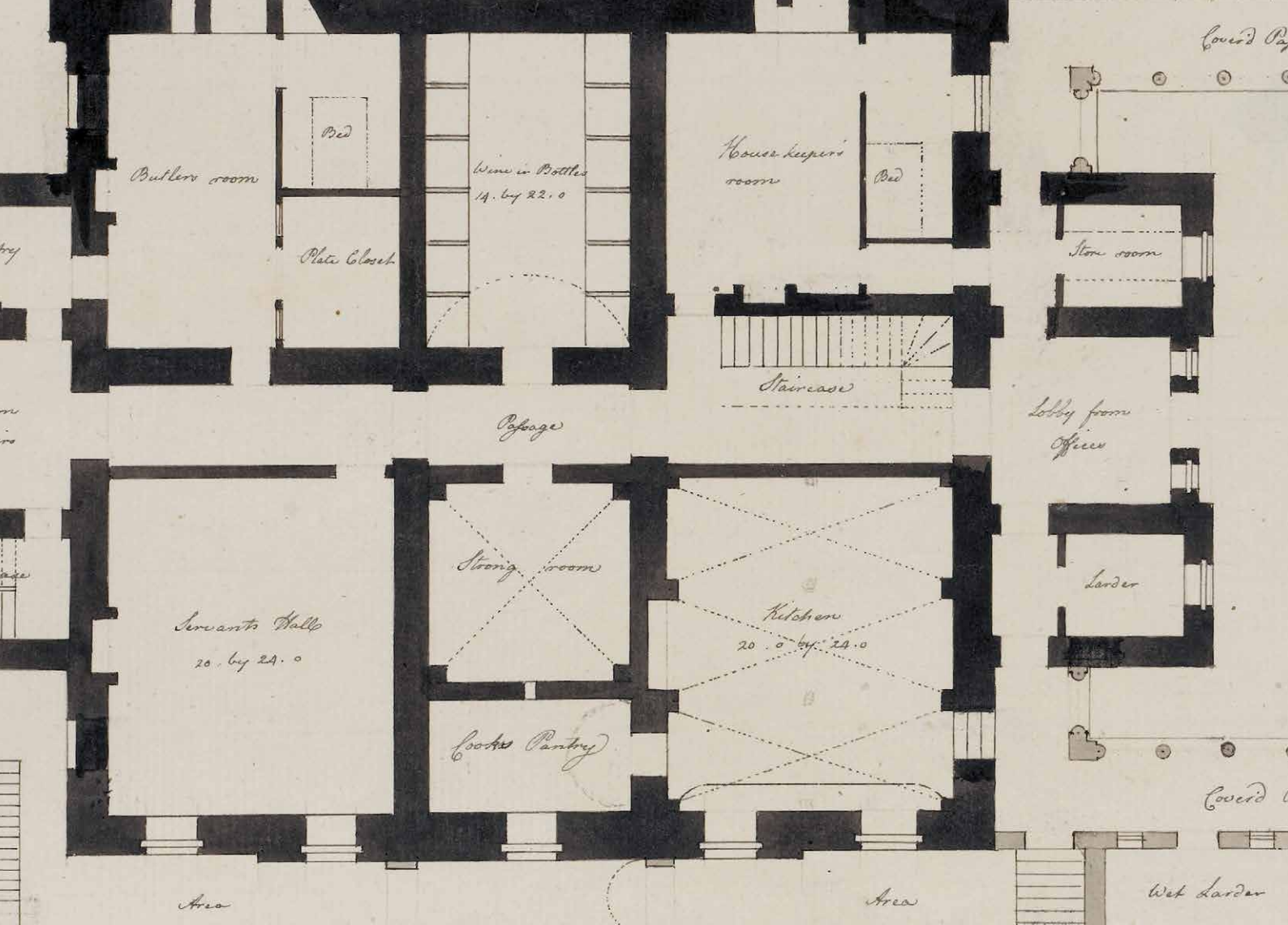
'And he is willing to do anything, even if it's not directly a facilities thing, which is part of working in a smaller institution,' he says. McCull likes this inter-departmental collaboration because 'it just makes it all more interesting', and is part and parcel of the juggling between preservation and function that his role entails.

'In the mornings when we're opening up, I'm unsetting alarms and unlocking doors, and then we walk through the Library-Dining Room and there's a great hush in there. That's one of the highlights of this job, is the setting.' McCull's work and the people he oversees ensure attention has been given to every minute circumstance of Soane's Museum, and that through finely balanced conservation work, it is able to remain just as he wished it.



AN INSIDE VIEW

What insights into the workings of the Robert Adam office emerge from the close study of its drawings? After nearly two and a half years, Trainee Drawings Cataloguer Anna McAlaney discusses her findings on a great 18th-century architectural practice with Frances Sands, Curator of Drawings and Books.



Frances Sands There are around 9,000 Adam drawings in the Soane collection. The 1,000 drawings from Robert and James's Grand Tours were catalogued by Alan Tait between 1998 and 2008, and then I began the mammoth project – still ongoing – to work on the 8,000 Adam office drawings. What are you working on specifically?

Anna McAlaney Largely the office's later schemes, for sites in London and the country, which is approximately 1,100 drawings across 70-odd projects. One of the wonderful things about this period is the sheer breadth of projects: speculative designs for monumental public

schemes, country villas and townhouses, but also more modest and unique projects. I'm currently working on a small group of designs for a school and almshouses in Leicestershire.

FS Are there any defining features of Adam's more mature work in England, compared with his earlier, perhaps more famous projects?

AM In the later works you definitely see a refinement in the Adam style; in the elegance and detail applied, and the degree of movement they are able to convey. The

office has in many ways perfected the style, but you also get a sense of its frustration too. The designs seem to become increasingly elaborate just as commissions begin to tail off. The later years for the Adam office are difficult, largely due to an unstable economic climate, but as a result you also see a wider variety of commissions. With the rise of the professional classes the office produces a number of small-scale villa designs as the Adam style, in a way, becomes more accessible.

FS Are there any sets of drawings you have enjoyed cataloguing more than others?

AM Honestly, what I've enjoyed most is the sheer variety of schemes and designs. There always seems to be something unique. But I have found myself increasingly drawn to plans for the domestic and kitchen offices. One of my earliest experiences working in heritage was as part of a research project involving kitchens of the early 18th century, and I think this is an extension of that. Adam's domestic plans are often incredibly detailed, and the thought process behind the design is visible in the drawings themselves. It's in these that you see the most pencil notations and alterations, all part of the working process, and quite possibly evidence of an ongoing discussion with the client about the functionality of these spaces.

FS What different types of drawings have you found within these later Adam office schemes?

AM The full range, from preliminary designs through to more finished drawings. Among the rarest in the collection are full-scale

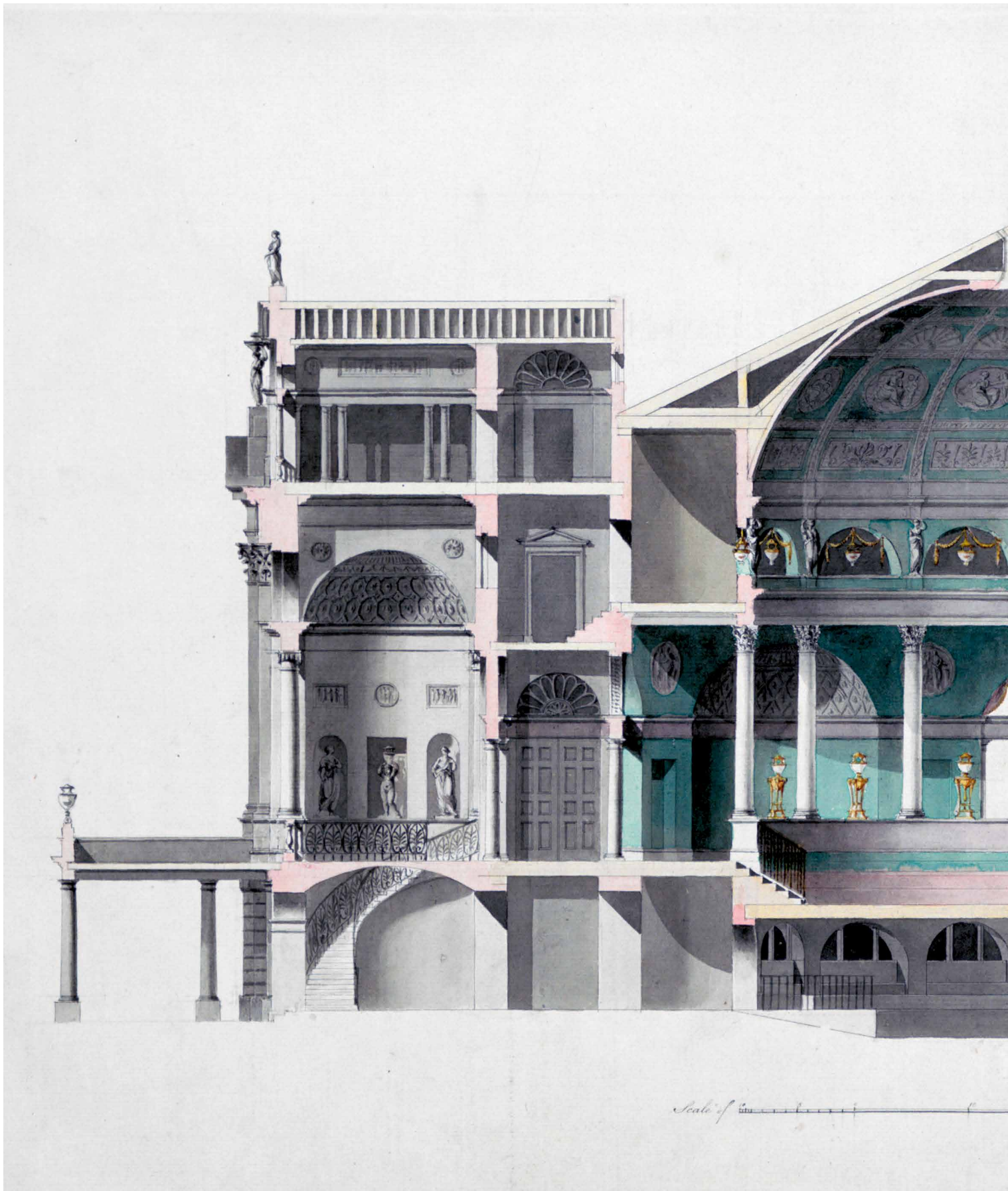
working drawings. Produced for the various craftsmen to work from, they rarely seem to survive the working process. However, I have catalogued a small number, including a full-scale drawing for an ornamental pilaster which was around three metres in length.

FS Can these varying types of drawings teach us different things about specific projects?

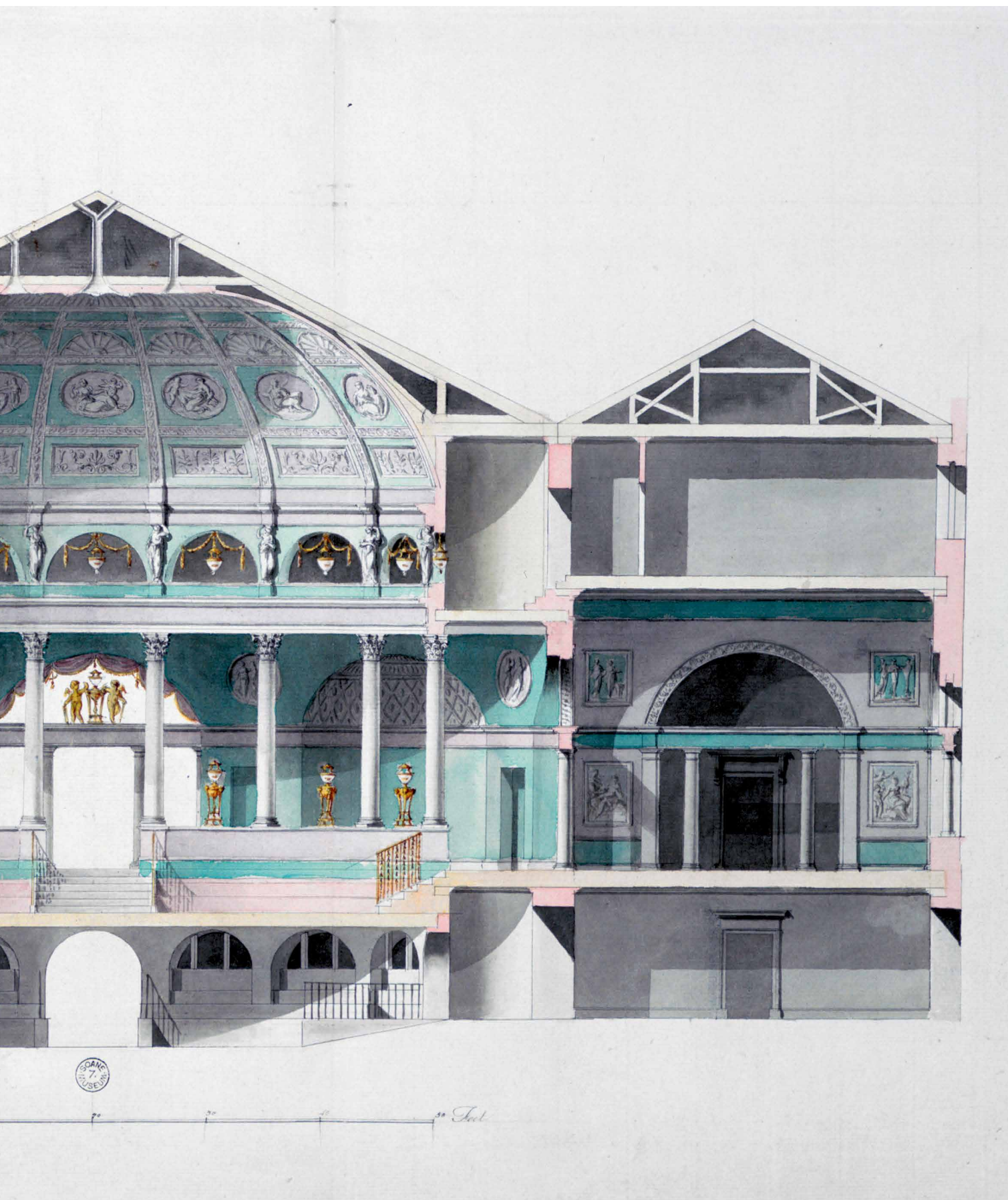
AM The preliminary designs are particularly significant, where you see Robert Adam's ideas take shape, and how that might then develop into the finished drawing. Often the grand speculative schemes, or projects for a notable client, contain more finished drawings. The degree of time and work spent shows the Adam office doing their utmost to win those large-scale commissions.

FS You have developed an interest in plasterwork and the extraordinary efforts of Adam's collaborator Joseph Rose. Can you talk about your research on Rose?

AM I first became interested in the Roses while cataloguing a small villa scheme for the Reverend William Rose and his rectory in Beckenham. It transpired William was the only son of the plasterer Joseph Rose the elder, and that the villa, previously thought unexecuted, had indeed been built to the Adam designs. The paper I'm writing explores the working relationship between the Adams and the Roses. It's been acknowledged that the Adams relied heavily on Rose and Co. for the faithful execution of their plasterwork designs, but I'm trying to understand the practicalities of that relationship. When the Roses set up their London workshop in Marylebone,



Adam Office, Finished drawing for the Haymarket Opera House, showing the Haymarket (east) entrance and principal staircase, oval ballroom and adjoining assembly room, c.1789, unexecuted. (SM Adam volume 47/7)



it was just a mile from the Adams' office at the Adelphi. With the villa in Beckenham, we see the Adams produce designs for Joseph Rose's son. It's also clear that Rose and Co. were more than capable of operating independently of the Adams, so I am looking closely at their own designs and work for other architects, such as James Wyatt, William Chambers, and even one possible design for Soane.

FS You have chosen to illustrate this interview with a beautiful set of drawings for the Haymarket Opera House. Can you explain what these drawings show?

AM It was one of the first projects I catalogued and it is such a remarkable and ambitious design. It is a speculative scheme, *circa* 1789, produced by the Adam office following the fire that destroyed Vanbrugh's King's Theatre in the Haymarket. It is monumental in scale: if executed it would have been unlike anything seen before. This series of plans, elevations and sections reveal an extensive complex of buildings: an elegantly designed, horseshoe-shaped theatre, with four tiers of boxes, a raked pit, and two tiers of galleries, but also a whole series of spaces designed specifically for entertainment. We see an elaborate oval ballroom to house the masquerades for which the opera house was famed, card rooms and assembly rooms. There's an extensive curved façade that incorporates an arcade of shops and an elaborate entrance reserved solely 'for the use of the Actors & Actresses & other people belonging to the Theatre', which links directly to the rear of the stage. The sections of the auditorium reveal a barrel-vaulted stage flanked by Corinthian-colonnaded screens, which

form wings. There is even a tavern annexe, which links directly to the opera house via a series of bridges.

FS What about these opera house drawings fascinates you the most?

AM It's the detail: we see a clear understanding of the function and necessity of various offices, with spaces reserved for theatrical machinery, scenery painting and storage, the wardrobe departments and even a green room. The project would have required a reorganisation of the surrounding street plan. A number of the drawings contain pencil notations regarding the opening up of routes from the Haymarket to St James's, and also leading up to Carlton House.

FS The Adam drawings are renowned for being especially beautiful, and we know that is, in part, because the Adam brothers only hired professional draughtsmen, and unlike Soane, they never took apprentices. As a trainee yourself, how does this make you feel? Do you like the Adam brothers?

AM It is something I am conscious of. I certainly have an enormous appreciation for Soane's approach to his students and apprentices; indeed it features quite heavily in the tours I give of the Museum. With the Adam office there is a completely different approach, with this overriding need to protect the individuality of their designs. I think, though, that the way in which the Adam office operated is interesting – run within the family as it were, you almost get a sense of them closing ranks. Neither Robert, James nor William married, and the family were thought to be a little unaccepting of their



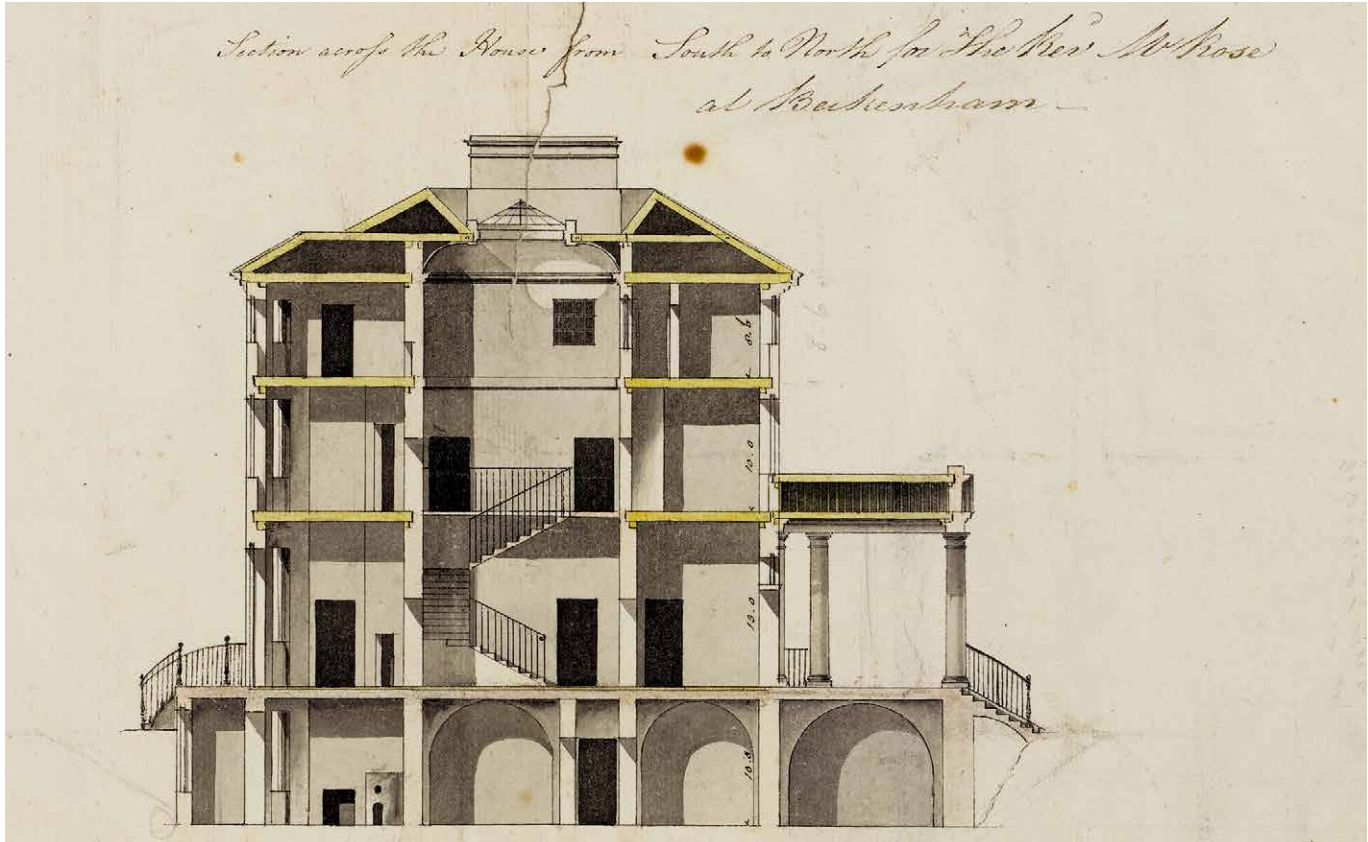
elder brother John's wife. The unmarried sisters saw supporting their brothers in their work as a priority – this is a subject that Soane Scholar Sydney Ayers, a PhD candidate at Edinburgh University, has been exploring. Then following the death of Robert and James, their niece Susannah Clerk was enlisted to help her uncle William Adam sort through the drawing office to preserve the designs. It seems as a family they saw a need to protect and support Robert and James's legacy, and that perhaps didn't leave room for outsiders.

- FS** How did you first become involved with Sir John Soane's Museum?
- AM** I started out as a volunteer back in October 2015, in a role designed to support the ongoing Adam cataloguing project: data cleaning the entries and maintaining an up-to-date record of the current literature for various Adam office schemes. When I saw this role advertised I thought it was a brilliant opportunity to expand my experience in collections, and I had some previous knowledge of the Soane and the Adam collection through my Master's thesis, so it was perfect for a number of reasons.
- FS** How does working hands-on with the original drawings affect the cataloguing process?
- AM** It's incredibly important in order to understand the nature of the collections: their size, scale, how they have been collated within volumes. You also understand better how the Adam brothers operated; some drawings show signs of folding for posting directly to clients, some even have the address and sealing wax preserved on the

verso. Preliminary designs are often drawn on whichever scraps of paper were to hand – one design I recently came across was drawn up on the back of a letter where Robert Adam discusses his intentions for Sunday lunch. So you gain this appreciation of the collection as part of a working architectural office.

FS We had the Adam drawings collection photographed by Ardon Bar-Hama in 2010 and 2011 thanks to funds from the Leon Levy Foundation. Have you used the digital images?

AM They've been vital. With the drawings of any given scheme spread across a number of volumes it has been so useful to understanding the development of an individual project. To be able to compare any drawings within a scheme side by side helps enormously when trying to ascertain the chronology. It's also wonderful for identifying any previously unattributed drawings that might fit into a scheme. The resolution of these images gives a level of detail that is better than the human eye: useful when transcribing faint pencil inscriptions. They form a significant part of the catalogue.



Robert Adam (attributed to), Longitudinal section for Beckenham Rectory, Kent, for the Revd William Rose, 1788. (SM Adam volume 35/105)

FS When complete, the catalogue will provide a fully illustrated record of the Adam drawings collection, and offer free access to an international audience. It has struck me that that fact demands a certain scholarly rigour when cataloguing.

AM When I started this project back in 2018 I was a little naive in that regard, but it's something I've gradually become more aware of. I've attempted to approach each scheme consistently, looking at what can be learned from the chronology of the designs, the client and Adam's relationship with them, what was executed, and, if executed, what survives.

FS Unlike the Soane office drawings, there is very little archival material pertaining to the Adam drawings collection. No office day books, little correspondence, and certainly nothing in the Soane's collection. How have you drawn conclusions about things like a design's executed status, or individual draughtsmen?

AM The recent increase in access to other collections across England and Scotland has been invaluable. The digitisation of 18th-century tax records or early photographic collections can reveal a good deal more about a particular project than we were previously aware of. For example, my research into Beckenham rectory, and the discovery that the Adam designs for this project had indeed been carried out, was thanks to the digitisation of the 19th-century photographic collection at Bromley Archives.

FS You have been involved in crucial fundraising for this project, particularly having the opportunity to provide drawings sessions

for Simon Hurst, who is a Soane Patron and project supporter. Can you say any more about this?

AM I've very much enjoyed the sessions with Simon – to be able to discuss the progress of the project, my current research and the collections themselves. It's wonderful, because as an architect Simon always brings new insight to the drawings and an appreciation of the practicalities of the designs.

FS I deeply envy whoever has the opportunity to work with you next. Have you any plans for the future?

AM Working on the Adam project has been such an enormous privilege. It occurs to me that the opportunity to work on a collection in such depth is possibly a rare thing. I may look for another architectural drawings project. During my time here I've been greatly encouraged to develop my curatorial experience, so I might look at assistant curatorial roles or a position with a research library.

This phase of the cataloguing of the Adam office drawings has been made possible by the Foyle Foundation and Simon Hurst



LIGHT WORK

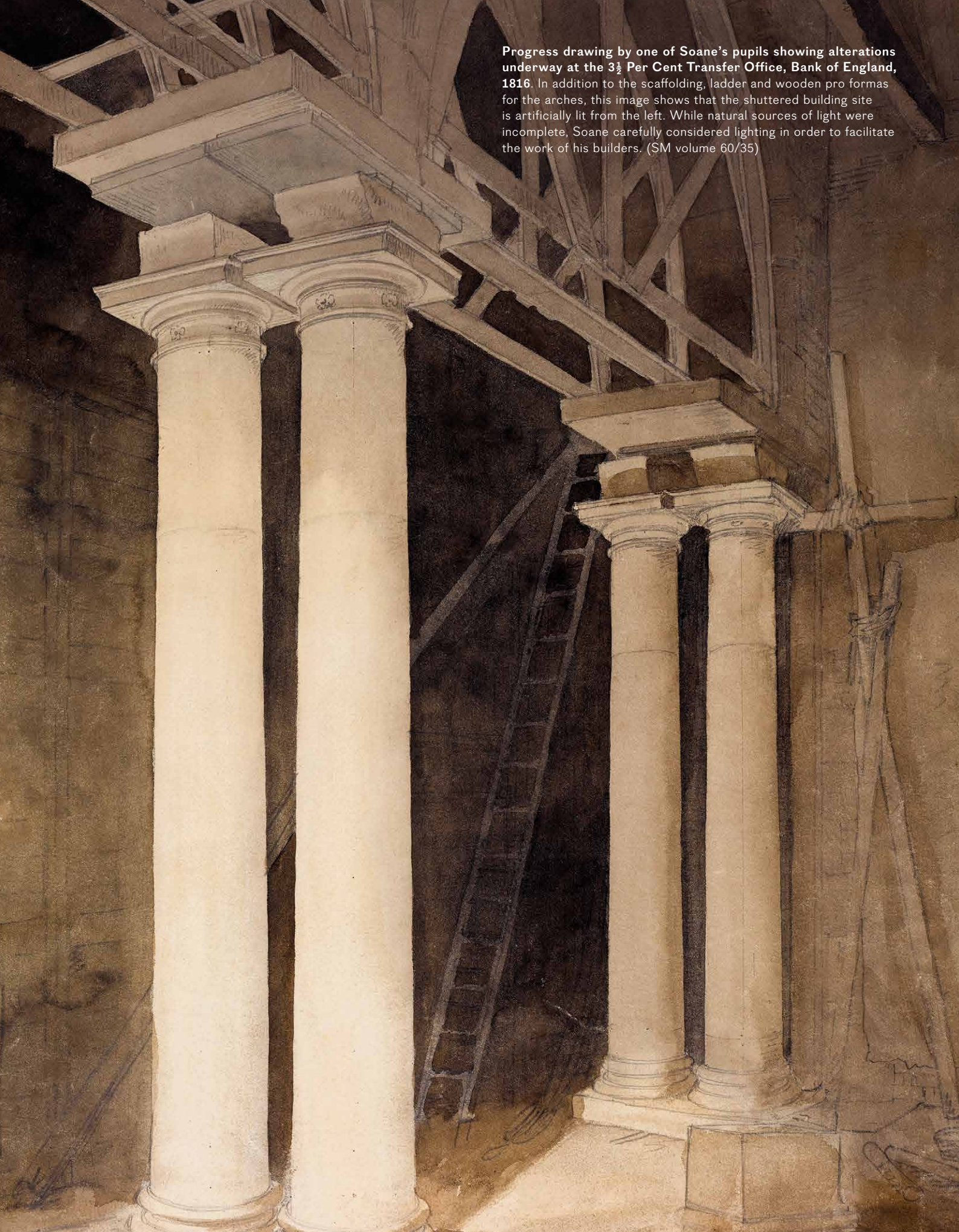
Soane's mastery of light and shadow was celebrated this year in the exhibition *Lumière Mystérieuse: Soane and the Architecture of Light* and an accompanying display of specially commissioned photographs.

View of the bridge in the park at Tyringham Hall, Buckinghamshire by Joseph Michael Gandy, August 1798. Depicted against a bright blue summer sky, both the bridge and the shadow it casts in this image are reflected in the water below, offering the illusion of doubling both the scale and impact of the physical architecture. (SM 13/5/4)

View of the South-East Transfer Office at the Bank of England, attributed to Joseph Michael Gandy, c.1820-21. Like the other public spaces within the Bank, this high-ceilinged Transfer Office required ample natural lighting because it was too large to light exclusively by artificial means. Soane devised a lantern-topped dome paired with smaller segmental clerestory windows to light the space solely from above and reserve wall space for the clerks' desks. (SM 11/4/2)



Progress drawing by one of Soane's pupils showing alterations underway at the 3½ Per Cent Transfer Office, Bank of England, 1816. In addition to the scaffolding, ladder and wooden pro formas for the arches, this image shows that the shuttered building site is artificially lit from the left. While natural sources of light were incomplete, Soane carefully considered lighting in order to facilitate the work of his builders. (SM volume 60/35)



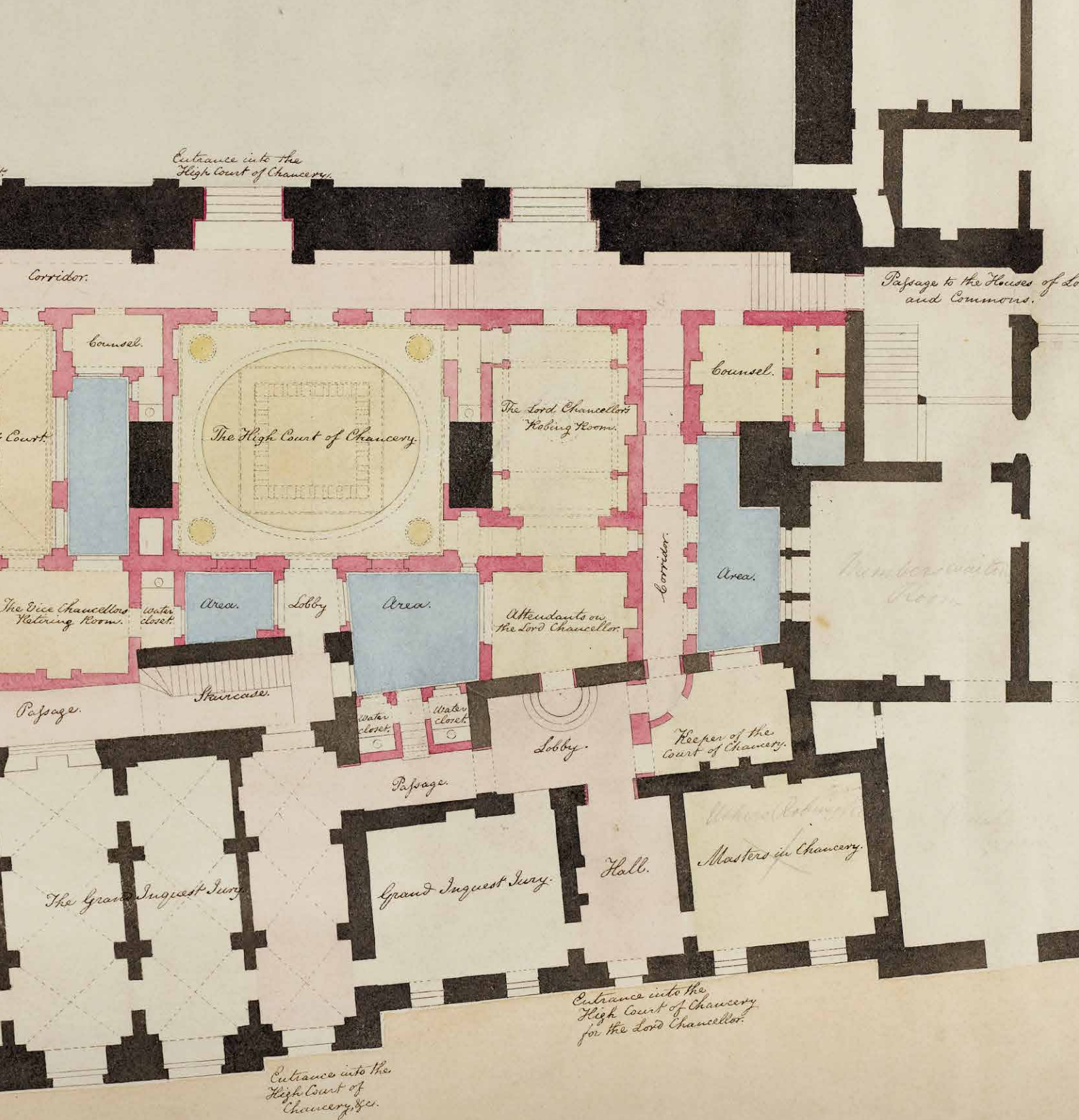
This stone is about 20' high, and from a complete circle, nearly concentric with the outer circle of stones.

The Stones marked with yellow letters are the highest of all, being nearly 20' high. Those marked with red letters are from 12' to 18' high. Those marked with blue letters, from 5' to 8' high, and all the others appear to be much worn, or fallen from their original positions. The letters enclosed with a circle, thus, (A) denote the architraves, or great stones lying on the tops of others; which the large view, to which all the letters refer, will render more intelligible. The stones marked A and B, with their architrave C, fell down 20 years ago.

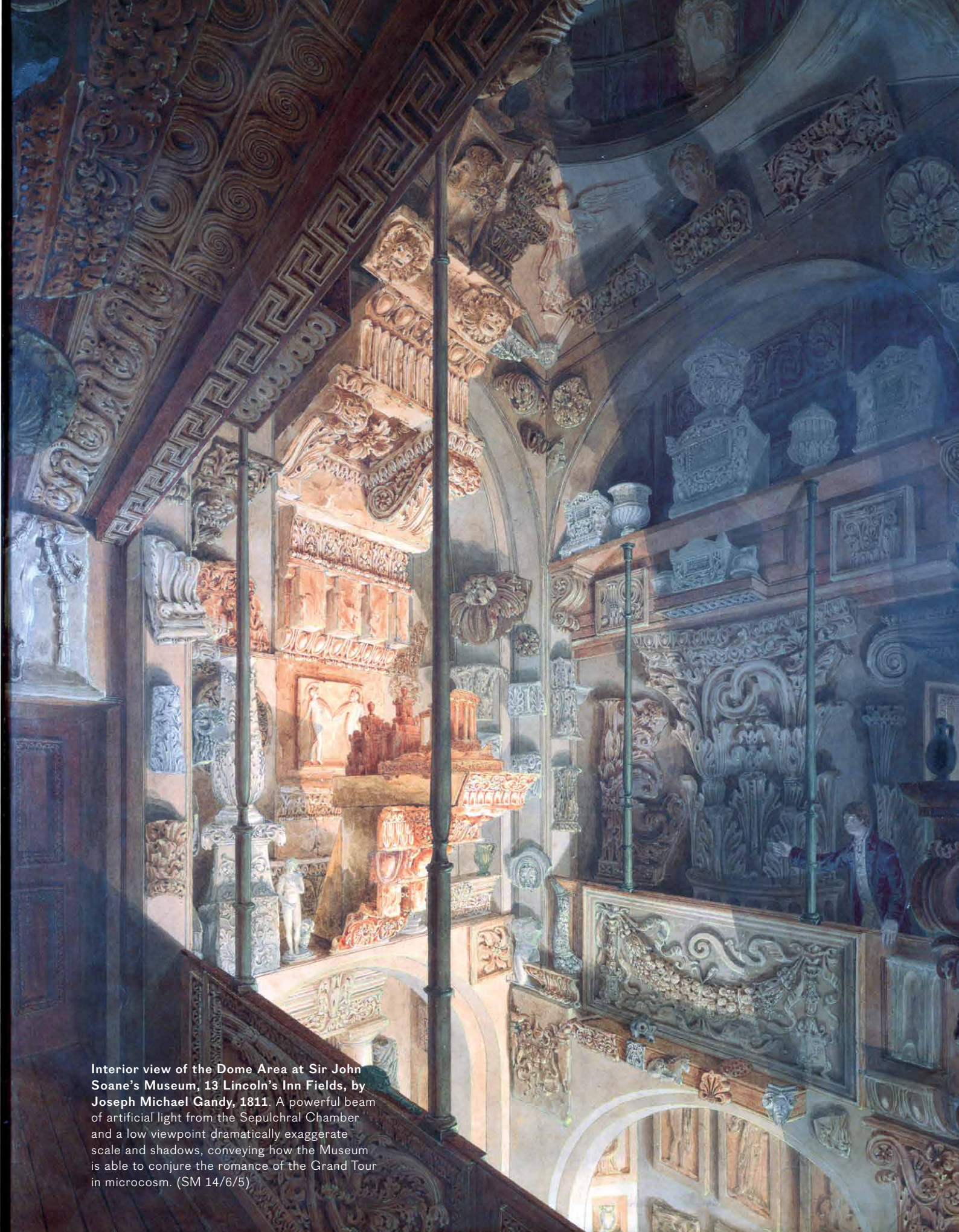
Royal Academy lecture drawing by Henry Parke showing a bird's-eye view of Stonehenge, August–September 1817. Stonehenge probably functioned as a solar calendar. In this drawing, the depiction of the site from above was clearly chosen in order to best illustrate its reliance upon sunlight. (SM 24/9/1)



PLAN OF STONE-HENGE.



Plan for the New Law Courts, Palace of Westminster, by one of Soane's pupils, September 1823. To allow natural light into the interior of the seven new courts and other related rooms, Soane created a series of lightwells, seen here in blue. Invisible from the building's carefully arranged exterior, the location of the lightwells was thoughtfully considered so as to illuminate as many internal rooms as possible. (SM 53/1/23)



Interior view of the Dome Area at Sir John Soane's Museum, 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields, by Joseph Michael Gandy, 1811. A powerful beam of artificial light from the Sepulchral Chamber and a low viewpoint dramatically exaggerate scale and shadows, conveying how the Museum is able to conjure the romance of the Grand Tour in microcosm. (SM 14/6/5)





Hélène Binet's Dressing Room skylight, Sir John Soane's Museum, and (opposite) Basement West Corridor, Sir John Soane's Museum, both 2019

The Swiss-born architectural photographer has become one of the most celebrated in her field, though it was during an early experience shooting opera performances in Geneva that she 'fell in love with the world of shadows and light'. These images are among the three commissioned to hang alongside *Lumière Mystérieuse* as part of *Soane's Light: A study by Hélène Binet*, and reveal the theatricality of Soane's dramatic lighting in space.



THE ART OF PRESERVATION

Important paintings in the Museum have been removed from display to protect them for future generations, and will be replaced with facsimiles.

Conservation can often be about preserving appearances, but in a building dedicated to one man's vision, this aim is a complicated one. 'Conserving the Soane is a subtle balancing act,' says Head of Conservation Jane Wilkinson, 'between protecting objects from agents of deterioration and preserving the building as closely as possible to how Soane left it when he died. We try to clean and repair surviving gilding on frames, for example, rather than resort immediately to applying new, modern gold.' This finely balanced practice has recently been exemplified in the work carried out in the Picture Room Recess.

Recorded as 'magical' in Soane's own time, the dramatic and innovative lighting effects he conjured using architecture are among his most famous achievements, but not all of their effects are positive. While the light from the skylight that floods the Picture Room Recess is wonderful for its visual impact, it also poses a risk to the pictures beneath. Fifteen of the works in the Recess, and on the picture planes that open out from it into the Picture Room itself, have recently been removed for conservation and will be replaced with facsimiles. These comprise important watercolours by Joseph Michael Gandy, views of the antique by Charles-Louis Clérisseau and two works by Henry Hake Seward, one of Soane's pupils.

'We're very conservative about making decisions to replace original works of art,' says Wilkinson. 'Every time you do, however good the copy is, you lose that direct connection to Sir John Soane and some of the sense of what the space was like in his lifetime.' She has been helping preserve this state since the mid-1980s, when she arrived at the Museum ('I think I'm the longest-serving member of staff') and she has led the Soane conservation team for a decade. Even the original picture glass in a frame is always kept; its slightly rippled appearance being subtly unlike modern glass.

But with this set of works, 'We felt it would be irresponsible to future generations of visitors and the preservation of the collection if we didn't replace the originals,' says Wilkinson. Daylight causes watercolours to fade, but the works are also damaged by atmospheric pollutants and changes in temperature and humidity (harder to control in a centuries-old home than they would be in a purpose-built museum). Acidity in some old framing materials reacts with light too, causing browning and brittleness in the paper. 'It's irreversible,' Wilkinson says. Left in place, 'these works would eventually be irreparably damaged'.

The pictures taken down were those deemed most at risk from light damage and their preservation and reproduction was enabled by a fundraising campaign. After removal, the paper conservator Lorraine Bryant treated them – only undertaking surface cleaning, repairing tears using acid-free Japanese tissue (made from the inner bark of mulberry trees) and removing acidic backing. 'Because they are now so fragile we didn't want to carry out invasive treatments such as cleaning away discolouration,' says Wilkinson. 'We just wanted to make them stable.'

High-resolution scans will be made of the conserved works, and fine art Gicleé prints produced on Hahnemühle acid-free rag paper, selected for its appearance consistent with the 19th-century papers. The original pictures are to be stored in a custom-built plan chest and will be available to view by appointment in the Museum's Research Library.

This project was also about giving attention to the works' frames, some of which had not been opened since Soane's time and were in need of cleaning and repair. The same light-touch approach was applied to their treatment, which included, where possible, the preservation of any surviving 19th-century surfaces. It is thought that many of the Gandy watercolours are framed as



Joseph Michael Gandy, *Views of various buildings designed and executed by Sir John Soane between the years 1780 and 1815*, watercolour on paper. Photo: Jeremy Butler

they were for Royal Academy annual shows, where Soane was entitled to show a number of works every year. 'What's very interesting is that when we opened the frames we found some of them had been fixed to canvas on a timber stretcher,' says Wilkinson. 'It seems a curious way to frame a drawing, but the use of quite grand frames and no mounts was Soane's idea so that they were being elevated to the status of oil paintings rather than being presented as architectural drawings.' Where it was felt they weren't at risk of deterioration, they have been left on these supports.

Once all the conservation work is complete, the facsimiles will be re-hung. Visitors will be told about the reproductions in the guidebook and by Visitor Assistants when appropriate – as they are for objects like the facsimile carpets in the Library-Dining Room, and other facsimiles of delicate Piranesi drawings in the Picture Room. A programme for managing the light levels in the

rest of the museum spaces is being developed, based on calculating the maximum annual light appropriate for each space and managing levels accordingly. 'We're trying to slow the ageing process as much as possible,' Wilkinson says, 'while preserving the appearance of Soane's interiors.' This project will ensure the beauty and drama of his luminous Picture Room Recess can continue to be experienced by visitors for many years to come.

The Museum is extremely grateful to all those who very generously supported our Picture Room Recess fundraising campaign. Without their support, the conservation of the watercolours, their frames and the production of facsimiles would not have been possible.

THE FOYLE SPACE



ESSENTIALS

**Sir John Soane's Museum is grateful to the
following for their generous support during 2019/20**

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Sir John Soane's Museum would like to acknowledge those who provide ongoing advice and *pro-bono* support

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Key Performance Indicators

	2019/20	2018/19
Total charitable giving	£1,520,635	£1,070,711
Ratio of charitable giving to DCMS grant-in-aid	121%	104%
Number of visits to the Museum (excluding virtual visits)	118,015	131,459
Number of unique website visits	535,544	456,590
Number of visits by children under 16	4,883	6,574
Number of overseas visits	68,367	66,010
Number of facilitated and self-directed visits to the Museum by visitors under 18 in formal education	2,009	1,623
Number of instances of visitors under 18 participating in on-site organised activities	1,171	652
% of visitors who would recommend a visit	90%	95%
Admissions income (gross income)	£112,963	£76,612
Trading income (net profit)	£207,833	£186,550
Number of UK loan venues	3	4

EXHIBITIONS

Eric Parry: Drawing

20 February – 27 May 2019
(Throughout the Museum)

This exhibition brought together more than 80 drawings by contemporary architect Eric Parry across three themes. 'Observing' focused on the architect's sketchbooks, which were situated around the Museum in Parry-designed display cases. 'Designing' examined the role of drawing in the design process. And 'Building' presented pamphlets to illustrate how such designs resolve into finished buildings.

A book resulting from a conversation between Eric Parry and Senior Curator Owen Hopkins accompanied the exhibition, featuring an essay by architectural historian David Leatherbarrow.

This exhibition was supported by David and Molly Lowell Borthwick, Chelsea Barracks, Ruth and Stuart Lipton, Sir Robert McAlpine Ltd and those who wish to remain anonymous.

Crude Hints towards an Architectural Academy of the Future

5 June – 9 June 2019
(Soane Gallery)

As part of the London Festival of Architecture, this pop-up exhibition presented work by students from Intermediate Unit 13 at the Architectural Association speculating on the future of architectural education. Following Soane's description of his house-museum as an 'academy of architecture', the students' work offered proposals for new architectural academies around London, including spaces for discourse and debate, exhibition spaces and a private residence. Each project responded in its own way to the question: how can the architecture academy of the future act to engage the city and allow the city to influence pedagogy?

Unit tutors: Lily Jencks, Jessica Reynolds, Alex Butterworth

Students: Stephanie Cheung, Nata Dzhmukhadze, Soon Han, Dongki Kang, Da Gyung Lee, Kyungjoo Min, Vivian Olawepo, JinGyeong Ryu, Peixuhan Zhang, Mu Zhang

proposal B by Salter + Collingridge

30 May – 16 June 2019
(Foyle Space)

Originally designed for the 16th Venice Architecture Biennale in 2018, *proposal B* blurred the boundaries of furniture, architecture and art, and was shown as part of the London Festival of Architecture. Museum visitors were invited to sit within a space, inspired by historical precedents such as medieval 'poche' window seats, and manipulate its moving parts. *proposal B* offered a place in which to think or converse, acting as a smaller domestic space within the Soane. The work also spoke to the broader practice of architects Peter Salter and Fenella Collingridge, who combined construction and craftsmanship to create an object that retains the self-contained quality of a larger architectural work.

The Museum gratefully acknowledges the support it receives for all exhibitions from the Government Indemnity Scheme, administered by Arts Council England.

Lumière Mystérieuse: Soane and the Architecture of Light

19 June – 8 September 2019
(Soane Gallery)

A selection of Soane's drawings explored his innovative use of light and optical devices, revealing how he utilised light not just through the shapes and ornamentation of his architectural compositions, but also by implementing tools such as top-lighting, grilles, coloured glass and mirrors. Together these allowed Soane to form lighting effects, as well as effects of shadow and gloom, which to this day dramatically impact the way we experience his work. Alongside the drawings were situated objects – a mirror, a model and a candle lamp – that Soane used to transform the experience of his spaces.

This exhibition was made possible thanks to the support of David and Molly Lowell Borthwick.

Soane's Light: A study by Hélène Binet

19 June – 8 September 2019
(Foyle Space)

As a contemporary companion display to *Lumière Mystérieuse*, the Soane Museum commissioned award-winning architectural photographer Hélène Binet to create three photographs that explore how Soane used light in his work. Two of Binet's photographs captured spaces in the Soane Museum and one depicted the Bourgeois and Desenfans Mausoleum at Dulwich Picture Gallery. Together they showed what Soane achieved through the interaction of devices such as top-lighting, mirrors and coloured glass, revealing how he manipulated light and shade to shape the mood, feeling and character of spaces – effects that endure today.

Paul Coldwell: Picturing the Invisible

17 July – 15 September 2019
(Front Kitchen)

Artist Paul Coldwell exhibited a new body of work in the Kitchens of the Soane Museum that explored the idea of 'the house seen from below': how Soane's servants would have seen, understood and perhaps even attempted to replicate aspects of what their master created upstairs. In work ranging from prints to film to sculpture, Coldwell proposed how Soane's servants might have used those resources available to them – their imagination, food and household objects – to become modelmakers themselves. These works gave voice to those largely absent from the historical record, yet whose presence was vital to the house's functioning.

EXHIBITIONS

Hogarth: Place and Progress

9 October 2019 – 5 January 2020
(Throughout the Museum)

Hogarth: Place and Progress united all of Hogarth's eight 'Modern Moral Subjects' in one place for the first time. The exhibition, curated by David Bindman, Emeritus Professor of Art History, University College London, with Joanna Tinworth, Exhibitions Curator, Sir John Soane's Museum, used existing and new research into the places depicted by Hogarth in his Modern Moral Subjects to explore for the first time how the artist's choice of location is central to the meaning of the narratives and deliberately calculated to add layers of nuance and satire. Most of the moral tales show flawed individuals' progress either towards death or redemption. The exhibition identified that the progresses are expressed in journeys through London, where real places like Newgate Prison, Bedlam, St James's Palace and Tyburn gallows signify the protagonists' moral and social position and have symbolic meaning as stops on a journey through life: a 'moral geography' in fact.

The Museum's own *A Rake's Progress* and *An Election* were joined by *Marriage A-la-Mode* from the

National Gallery, *The Four Times of Day* from the National Trust and a private collection, as well as the three surviving paintings of *The Happy Marriage* from Tate and the Royal Cornwall Museum. The exhibition included engraved series lent by Andrew Edmunds: prints such as *The Harlot's Progress*, *The Four Stages of Cruelty*, *Industry and Idleness* and *Gin Lane* and *Beer Street*. The exhibition received unprecedented levels of press coverage and was universally acclaimed.

An academic workshop entitled *Hogarth's Moral Geographies* was held in partnership with The Paul Mellon Centre for British Art during the exhibition's run.

A catalogue was published to accompany the exhibition. Edited by David Bindman, it included essays by Bindman, Bruce Boucher, Frédéric Ogée and Jacqueline Riding.

This exhibition was made possible thanks to the support of Andrew Edmunds, Sir John Soane's Museum Foundation, William Loschert, David and Molly Lowell Borthwick and those who wish to remain anonymous.

The Architecture Drawing Prize

15 January – 16 February 2020
(Soane Gallery)

This exhibition displayed the winning and commended entries of the third annual Architecture Drawing Prize, jointly conceived by Sir John Soane's Museum and the World Architecture Festival and sponsored by MAKE Architects. The prize celebrates drawing's significance as a tool in capturing and communicating architectural ideas, recognising the continuing importance of hand drawing, but also embracing the creative use of digitally produced renderings. The entries were evaluated for their technical skill, originality in approach and ability to convey an architectural idea, whether for a conceptual or actual building project.

All That Could Have Been: A project by CAN and Harry Lawson

16 January – 16 February 2020
(Foyle Space)

The latest in a series of projects by emerging architects and designers at the Soane, this collaboration between the architecture studio CAN and artist Harry Lawson resulted in an installation that explored the relationship between architecture, objects and time. Drawing from Soane's approach to collecting, the installation took the form of three cabinets, titled *All That Was*, *All That Is* and *All That Could Have Been*. Objects inside the cabinets reflected on how we understand the digital age and the ways in which objects shape our understanding of the wider world. The work by CAN and Lawson has since been shortlisted for *The Architects' Journal*/Small Projects Award.

Langlands & Bell: Degrees of Truth

4 March – 3 January 2021
(Throughout the Museum)

Arranged across the whole Museum, this exhibition brought together four decades of work by Langlands & Bell, including new works specially commissioned for the exhibition. The show reflected on the capacities of architecture and objects to bear witness to the technological, political, economic and cultural relationships that define contemporary society in the 'post-truth' era. Due to the interruption early in its run by Covid-19, the physical exhibition at the Museum was supplemented by an online version that brought together installation photographs by Gareth Gardner, images from Langlands & Bell's vast digital archive and new interpretations conceived specially for the online display.

A cloth-bound hardcover catalogue, resulting from a conversation between Langlands & Bell and Senior Curator Owen Hopkins, accompanied the exhibition.

This exhibition was made possible thanks to the support of Pomellato and Christian & Florence Levett.

TOURING EXHIBITION

In Character

21 March – 15 June 2019
RIBA North

This display presented the imaginative sculptural characters that Studio MUTT designed for *Out of Character* at the Soane, re-contextualising them in the galleries of RIBA North. By re-exhibiting these works, Studio MUTT asked how context affects a reading of architecture, what implications these changed meanings can have across a building's life cycle and, inversely, how we can change an existing construction's context to offer new meanings, re-readings and fresh insights.

LOANS

Tate Britain

William Blake: The Artist
11 September 2019 – 2 February 2020

- Two books from Soane's library: Edward Young's *The Complaint and the Consolation, or, Night Thoughts*, 1797, and Robert Blair's *The Grave, a Poem*, 1808

The Royal Castle in Warsaw Museum

The World of the Polish Vasas: Space,
People, Art
5 November 2019 – 14 January 2020

- A volume of drawings of Polish buildings and monuments by Giovanni Battista Gisleni (1600–72) (SM volume 121)

Tate Britain

British Baroque: Power and Illusion
5 February 2020 – 19 April 2020

- Survey plan by Henry Wise of Hampton Court Palace and Gardens, c.1710–11 (SM volume 111/20)

Pitzhanger Manor and Gallery, Ealing

A Rake's Progress: Life in the City
September – December 2020

- The eight canvases making up William Hogarth's *A Rake's Progress* (SM P40 – P47)

FINANCES

2020 (Draft – not audited)		2019	
Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £	Unrestricted Funds £	Restricted Funds £

Charitable Income

Grant-in-aid from Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport	1,087,000	165,000	1,032,000	-
Other grants and donations	870,138	650,497	511,236	559,475
Visitors	112,963	-	76,612	-

Trading activities

Retail sales	344,605	-	355,892	-
Room hire	236,604	-	211,155	-
Other trading activities	73,792	-	99,684	-
Other income	20,941	-	28,941	-
TOTAL INCOME	2,746,043	815,497	2,315,520	559,475

Expenditure

Development and fundraising	235,897	45,411	195,299	25,993
Trading and communications	554,187	66,210	570,277	41,634
Charitable activities	1,644,569	703,394	1,595,802	692,450
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	2,434,653	815,015	2,361,378	760,077
NET INCOME/(EXPENDITURE)	311,390	482	(45,858)	(200,602)

Notes

1. The figures for 2020 above are the draft results for the year ending 31 March 2020, which had not yet been finalised as at the time of publication. These figures have not been audited.
2. The 2019 figures above are extracted from the Annual Report and Accounts of Sir John Soane's Museum for the year ending 31 March 2019, reported in the Consolidated Statement of Financial Activities.



LETTERS TO THE SOANE

by Nicola Coldstream

Classicism, tradition, modernism, imagination, innovation. Are these the qualities, so characteristic of Sir John Soane, that attract people to his museum? I first visited decades ago, to see the fragments that were once part of the Palace of Westminster. With no signage to help, I stumbled all over the building in search of them. My conventional student soul was startled at its sheer unexpectedness, but beguiled by its 'house-ness': not a solemn gallery nor a daunting museum, but a house, full of a confusion of objects, now, thanks to *Opening up the Soane*, restored to their places within his final scheme.

These same qualities informed a Patrons' Visit to the Veneto in May 2019, to look at the architecture of Andrea Palladio. This was an innovation for the Soane, and since our Director is an expert on Palladio, an obvious destination for it. Other cultural institutions have been running them for some time: a small group spends a few days in focused study of art and architecture in a chosen city or region, expertly guided. Part of the cost helps support the gallery or museum, and the trips are both fascinating and fun: an informal way for a museum to express its gratitude to Patrons and become better acquainted with them. Attended by local guides and Guido Beltramini, Director of the Centro Internazionale di Studi di Architettura Andrea Palladio in Vicenza, Bruce Boucher and his wife Diane led us through Palladio's developing technique as architect and designer. Willa Beckett and Kezia Evans ushered us in and out of buses to and from our base in the town of Asolo in the foothills of the Dolomites.

At the pre-Palladian Villa Porto Thiene and at Valmarana and Rotonda outside Vicenza, the owners were present to tell us more; at Cornaro, the restoring architect. We examined proportions, windows and building techniques; brick columns plastered and treated to look like stone; wonderful vaulting at the basement levels, built expertly in a tradition that continued from earlier centuries and was of great interest to me as a medievalist; and astonishing programmes of fresco painting.

It was not all Palladio. Yet, except for the extraordinary Modernist tomb and sanctuary designed by Carlo Scarpa for the Brion family at San Vito d'Altivole, we stayed within conceptual reach of ancient Rome, with the sculpture of Canova and nebulous Roman remains among the roses, lavender and irises in the garden of Freya Stark.

The sun shone most days but storms swept in for our last, shrouding our boat trip on the Brenta Canal in pouring rain, through which it seemed that the Villa Malcontenta would never appear. Then, suddenly, there it was, among dripping willow trees: withdrawn and secretive but perfect. The rain stopped and the house cast its spell – or was it the spirit of Sir John, come to join us at the last?

Dr Nicola Coldstream is an acclaimed historian specialising in Gothic architecture and a former President of the British Archaeological Association.

**Sir John Soane's Museum
Annual Review
2019/20**

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Looking Forward