

Dutch artist Madelon Vriesendorp wins 2025 Soane Medal



Madelon Vriesendorp in her studio in London. Photo: Tilly Buckroyd

Dutch artist Madelon Vriesendorp (b.1945) is the first UK-based female artist to be awarded the prestigious Soane Medal since its inception in 2017.

Vriesendorp was one of the founders of OMA (Office for Metropolitan Architecture) in 1975, and many of her surrealist, mystical and comedic images have become iconic and continue to influence the architects of today and tomorrow. Over the decades her work has given architectural theories playful and memorable identities, helping to explain complex ideas behind Modern and Post-Modern architecture through visuals fuelled by her own unique imagination, where buildings have human characteristics and inner lives.

She will collect her award at the Royal Academy in London on Tuesday 18 November 2025, where she will deliver a lecture that is open to all.

The annual Soane Medal continues Sir John Soane's commitment to encourage a better understanding of the central importance of architecture in people's lives. Winners receive a replica of the original gold medal presented to Sir John Soane by the 'Architects of England' in 1835.

Selected by a panel of distinguished judges, comprising of architects, critics and curators, and led by Trustee of Sir John Soane's Museum, Amin Taha, Vriesendorp joins previous winners Hanif Kara, Anne Lacaton and Jean-Philippe Vassal, Peter Barber, Marina Tabassum, Denise Scott Brown, Kenneth Frampton, and Rafael Moneo.

Born in 1945 in Holland, Vriesendorp studied at London's Central St Martin's before moving to New York in 1972 where she co-founded OMA with Rem Koolhaas and Elia & Zoe Zenghelis. Here she produced paintings in support of the firm's work that were used for book and magazine covers.

One of the paintings produced during this time was the iconic *Flagrant Delit* depicting a love story between the Empire State Building and the Chrysler Building – both are in bed illuminated by the torch of the Statue of Liberty while the rest of the New York skyline watches. The painting was used as the front cover of what came to be seen as the OMA manifesto, Koolhaas's *Delirious New York*, which analysed the urban design of the city over the previous 100 years. The image would also later be developed into an animated film by Vriesendorp with filmmaker Teri When-Damisch.

The humorous and dream-like imagery of Vriesendorp became synonymous with OMA as the firm's reputation continued to grow from fantastical designs to competition entries and eventually realised buildings, such as the Netherlands Dance Theatre in the Hague, featuring a mural by Vriesendorp.

In recent years Vriesendorp's contribution to architecture has finally been recognised, and her influence on one of the most famous architecture firms of the 20th century is now understood more clearly. The exhibition *World of Madelon Vriesendorp* collected many of her works over the decades and was a huge success when it first opened in 2008, being shown at the Architectural Association, Aedes Berlin, Venice's Art Biennale and the Swiss Architectural Museum amongst others.

Now, the Soane Medal recognises her lasting contribution to architecture and the legacy of designs, images and paintings she has created.

Madelon Vriesendorp said: *"Rightly or wrongly, artists and architects are often regarded as the 'legitimate' arbiters of beauty. Classical forms and ancient objects found in the ruins of earlier civilisations traditionally provide our inspiration. These connections often feel more personal than material – we are inspired less by the objects themselves than by the inspirations of others. It is a cascade of inspiration.*

When I first visited the Soane Museum at 19 I found true inspiration. Maybe even a kindred spirit. The building is magnificent. You are engulfed in a cornucopia of art and artefacts. Above all else, it is a work of the imagination. Soane has influenced my work as an artist, my method, and my approach to creative collaborations. His museum gave me legitimacy to surround myself with my own very personal choice of objects, gathered over a lifetime to form an idiosyncratic autobiography. It is a great honour to be awarded the Soane Medal and to find myself in such illustrious company, and I am extremely grateful to the judges and Trustees of the Museum."

Will Gompertz, Deborah Loeb Brice Director of Sir John Soane's Museum, said: *"As Sir John Soane had Joseph Gandy as an architect-cum-artist to help determine his creations through Gandy's atmospheric watercolours, so architects Rem Koolhaas and Charles Jencks have collaborated with Madelon to draw on her visionary creativity to bring an added dimension to their practice.*

The fact that students today are inspired by Madelon's art and approach – a combination of humour and intellectual rigour – is a mark of the continued relevance and resonance of her work."

Edwin Heathcote, Architecture & Design Critic, Financial Times and Soane Medal Juror, said: *"Madelon Vriesendorp's is an architecture of the imagination. Coloured by surrealism, pop, dreams and haunted by the legacy of modernism and the twentieth-century city, her practice has been central to forming the visual culture of contemporary architecture. Her work imparts a humanity and character to architecture, creating playful identities and suggesting even inanimate structures might have complex inner lives. Her sculptures use waste to forge improbable beings, their junk roots always showing through. Her enjoyment and employment of kitsch and visual gags humanises architecture, making interiors into games of discovery and drawing on dreams and fantasies to create new interior landscapes."*

Ingrid Schroder, Director of the Architectural Association and Soane Medal Juror, said: *“The importance of Madelon’s work is hard to overestimate but incredibly difficult to characterise. A handful of her images persist in so many of our memories as to be canonical. They represent a radical turning point in architectural debate, but they are only a small part of the ongoing importance of her work. For decades Madelon’s paintings, drawings, objects and even her casual conversation, reveal unspoken truths and absurdities. She is architecture’s best satirist, holding a mirror up to our ever self-serious profession with wry kindness.”*

The 2025 Soane Medal Lecture and drinks reception will take place at the Royal Academy on Tuesday 18 November, 6.30pm. [Tickets can be purchased here.](#)

NOTES TO EDITORS

[HIGH RESOLUTION IMAGES FOR MEDIA USE CAN BE DOWNLOADED HERE](#)

About Sir John Soane’s Museum

Sir John Soane’s house and collection at No. 13 Lincoln’s Inn Fields has been a national museum since the early nineteenth century. Designed by renowned architect Sir John Soane and filled with his world-class collection of paintings, sculptures, artefacts and models, the Museum retains the same fabric and design as at the time of Soane’s death in 1837. Today, the Museum encourages access to Soane’s legacy in its broadest sense: architecture and design, creative originality, a commitment to learning and enquiry, and the connections between past and present that the Museum and its collections reveal. The Museum is open Wednesdays to Sundays, 10am to 5pm. Entry is free. There is no need to pre-book – you can walk in on the day. Sir John Soane’s Museum, 13 Lincoln’s Inn Fields, London, WC2A 3BP. More at www.soane.org | #SoaneMuseum | @soanemuseum

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO ARRANGE INTERVIEWS

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