

SOANE  
TRAVELS

ROME  
NAPLES  
&  
PAESTUM

October 5 to 12  
2013

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Image:  
*Paestum: Basilica and Temple of  
Neptune*, by Giovanni Battista  
Piranesi



# SIR JOHN SOANE'S MUSEUM FOUNDATION

1040 FIRST AVENUE NO. 311 NEW YORK NY 10022

SPRING 2013

## SPOTKAJ OPIEKUNA WYSTAW W SOANE

*That's Polish for "Meet the Soane's Exhibitions Curator," Dr. Jerzy Kierkuc-Bielinski*



Jerzy Kierkuc-Bielinski. Photograph: Lewis Bush

Many a race has come down to a photo-finish, and not just in sports. In the design competition for Central Park, the entry by Olmsted and Vaux was the last of 33 submitted—and in fact was a day late. For his post as Exhibitions Curator at the Soane, Jerzy Kierkuc-Bielinski got the required paperwork in on time, but it was a squeaker.

Slowing Jerzy down was the thought that his academic specialization—postwar American art—might not be especially apt for an academy of architecture like the Soane. However, given a first-class bachelor's, double distinction at the master's level and doctorate from the Courtauld Institute of Art, and encouragement from his old boss at the Holburne, where he started as a curatorial assistant, Jerzy decided at the very last minute to pursue the job. "I had one day to fill out the application and write a covering letter," recalls Jerzy, "and I delivered them by hand to the Soane on the day of the deadline."

That was more than five years ago, and since then Jerzy has overseen 19 exhibitions. His favorite, apart from the current one on Piranesi, was his first, on George Scharf, the 19th-century art critic, illustrator and director of the National Portrait Gallery. Jerzy now realizes that his previous art historical focus chimes with the broad range of specialities other staff members bring to the Soane. "Whether it's art, history, architecture, conservation or historic preservation," notes Jerzy, "these varied backgrounds all complement each other in the exhibitions we've mounted."

In considering a new exhibition, Jerzy looks for ways to incorporate some of the backstage holdings of the Soane—the 30,000 drawings, the 7,000-volume library and the archive that the public generally doesn't

get to see. "What visitors initially experience when they come to the Soane are the rooms, which inevitably make an extraordinary impact. But they are only the tip of the iceberg," says Jerzy, who was reared in Somerset and is of Polish background (the reason he collects prints of historical Polish figures). "I am always looking to devise an exhibition that will help visitors understand the work and story of our founder, Sir John Soane."

There are occasional exceptions. "Sometimes there is an exhibition of such quality that—Soane link or not—it's hard to pass up," says Jerzy, citing the example of the showing in 2010 of the winsome flower collages that Mary Delany fashioned in the 18th century. For the 21st century, Jerzy has kept exhibitions on-trend with displays of work by David Chipperfield. "I never lose sight of the fact that the Soane has a focus on architecture," he says. Another consideration is ye olde bottom line. "I admit that in these days of tight budgets I have to think strategically: Will an exhibition drum up publicity and draw people in?"

To that end, Jerzy has promising bait. On view through April 27, 2013, *Marking the Line: Ceramics and Architecture* places the creations of present-day ceramists in the 19th-century rooms of the Soane for striking effect. A bit farther off is *The Dandy*, tracing the male fashion plate from Beau Brummel up to the Sex Pistols and Alexander McQueen. "What many people don't realize is that dandies were meant to be shocking and their attire went against the prevailing tastes of the day," says the 40-year-old Jerzy, who lives in southeast London, in Brockley. Even more reflective of Jerzy, given his enthusiasm for mid-20th-century American art, is a proposed show about Charles Sheeler. Says Jerzy: "The influence of architectural drawing on Sheeler's Precisionist paintings makes him an compelling artist to show at the Soane."



Installation view of the exhibition *Marking the Line: Ceramics and Architecture*, Christie Brown, *Thwarted Dynasty*, 2012. Photo by Hélène Binet

## PIRANESI'S PAESTUM: MASTER DRAWINGS UNVEILED AT THE SOANE



*Paestum: Interior of the Temple of Neptune from the West*, by Piranesi (Photo: Ardon Bar Hama)

Within the dazzling trove of Soane holdings permanently rests a series of drawings by Giovanni Battista Piranesi that Sir John Soane purchased for £14 in 1817 and used for his series of lectures on architecture at the Royal Academy.

These works, among the most significant examples of European graphic art extant, show views of the three great Doric temples in the former Greek colony of Paestum, located dramatically on a plateau not far from the coast of the Gulf of Salerno, a site Piranesi visited in 1777 on a taxing trip that ultimately cost him his life. Piranesi's drawings of these ancient treasures were engraved and published the following year, posthumously, in his last great graphic project, *Differente vues de Pesto*, along with two other drawings, one now in the Rijksmuseum and the other in the Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

For the first time ever, the Soane has united these powerful renderings in a focused exhibition that runs through Saturday, May 18, in London, before traveling to the Tchoban Foundation's Museum of Architectural Drawing in Berlin and other venues (to be announced). Don't miss the exhibition: It is an opportunity to view great works of art that also just happened to have revolutionized the understanding of early Greek Classical architecture.

# SOME ESOTERICA ABOUT SOANE EXHIBITIONS

In the museum in London, a beautiful two-room gallery opened last year on the second floor of No. 12, thanks to the generosity of an anonymous American donor. Designed by Caruso St John and built by Goppion SpA, the meticulously detailed, classically inspired rooms augment the Soane's special exhibition space by nearly 50 percent. The new gallery inspires us to reflect on Soane exhibitions to date:

**Most Offbeat Item Ever on Display in an Exhibition:** *Tolmomyias Flaviventris*, also known as a yellow-bellied flycatcher. A complete specimen, dried and in a glass tube, was borrowed from the Grant Museum of Zoology, University College London, for *Promiscuous Assemblage, Friendship, & the Order of Things*, an installation by the artist Jane Wildgoose that accompanied *Mrs. Delany and Her Circle* in 2010.

**Item Presenting the Most Challenge for Display:** A work by Anish Kapoor entitled *Vortex*, which formed part of the 1999 exhibition *Retrace Your Steps*. The work consisted of a table sculpture, displayed in the Breakfast Room of No. 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields, formed from a container of yellow fluid that rotated at extremely high speed so that the liquid took on the aspect of a golden mirror.

**Item Presenting Most Curatorial Challenge for Display:** The above-mentioned yellow-bellied flycatcher was not only light-sensitive but also had to be frozen before coming to the museum for a period of about a week to ensure that it harbored no parasites detrimental to collections. Soane curators had to use the facilities of the neighboring Hunterian Museum at the Royal College of Surgeons of England to undertake this precaution.



Top: Cardinal Grimani's Commentary on the Letters of St. Paul to the Romans, illustrated by Giulio Clovio, c.1537-8. Ink and watercolour on vellum in nineteenth-century green velvet binding. Soane Museum ref. no. Volume 143.  
Left: Mary Delany, *Grimm Zyctianum: Asphodeli Lily*, 1778, paper collage. British Museum, Department of Prints and Drawings

**Rarest Object Ever Displayed:** A toughie, since many objects displayed at the Soane are classified as rare, but let's say the *Clovio Manuscript*, an illuminated masterpiece from the Renaissance. The rarity and quality of Clovio's manuscript is also reflected in the considerable sum of money Sir John Soane paid for the work (along with two other illuminated manuscripts) in 1833—£735.

**Item that Has Showed Up in Several Exhibitions:** Probably Sir John Soane's autograph sketchbook drawn while in Italy in 1779. It reappears in the *Piranesi's Paestum: Master Drawings Uncovered* exhibition.

**Most Popular Exhibition by Attendance:** *Mrs. Delany and Her Circle*, co-organized with the Yale Center for British Art, drew in the neighborhood of 18,000 visitors in 2010.

**Proof That Even Dukes Recycle:** Two years ago, display cases designed by the cutting-edge architect Eva Jiřičná for the Soane's first-ever gallery were sold to Chatsworth House, the stately home in North Derbyshire. There they stand today, showcasing drawings and archival materials accumulated by the various Dukes of Devonshire over the course of five centuries, give or take a year.



Colossal marble foot, Roman, 1st-2nd century AD, Found near Naples, Italy. British Museum, Department of Sculpture

**Most Unusual Source for Item Borrowed for an Exhibition:** The Museum of Jurassic Technology in Culver City, California, which lent a work entitled *Museum Handouts Sent in the Spirit of Cordial Collaboration* for the 1999 exhibition *Retrace Your Steps*.

## ABOUT US

*Mission Statement of the Foundation*

Sir John Soane's Museum Foundation's mission is to provide for an expanding audience a lively educational forum in the fields of art, architecture and the decorative arts within the Soanean tradition and to assist financially Sir John Soane's Museum in London. For more details, please refer to our website: [www.SoaneFoundation.com](http://www.SoaneFoundation.com).

The Foundation is a registered 501(c)3 organization.

<p>President, Board of Directors: Thomas A. Kligerman</p> <p>Executive Director: Chas A. Miller III</p> <p>Newsletter Team: David Cobb Craig Amanda de Beaufort</p> <p>Original Design: Robert Van Nutt</p>	<p>Concluding its successful three-month run recently was <i>Giving Our Past a Future: The Work of The World Monuments Fund, Britain</i>, a Soane exhibition that saluted the good work of the New York-based World Monuments Fund (WMF). The show spotlighted WMF's completed and ongoing projects in the U.K., including Stowe House, which contains the Gothic Library—one of Sir John Soane's very few undertakings in the Gothic style. The exhibition also spawned a video created by WMF Britain pairing installations in the gallery with visits to the actual places represented in the show. As Lisa Ackerman, WMF's Executive V.P., points out: "This video allows the Soane and WMF to encompass the broadest possible audience via web tools, reaching untold numbers around the world who didn't have the chance to visit the Soane and allowing the exhibition to resonate long after its close." Check out the video for yourself on YouTube by searching Soane-Giving-Our-Past-Future.</p>
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## Soane Exhibition Goes Global Via YouTube

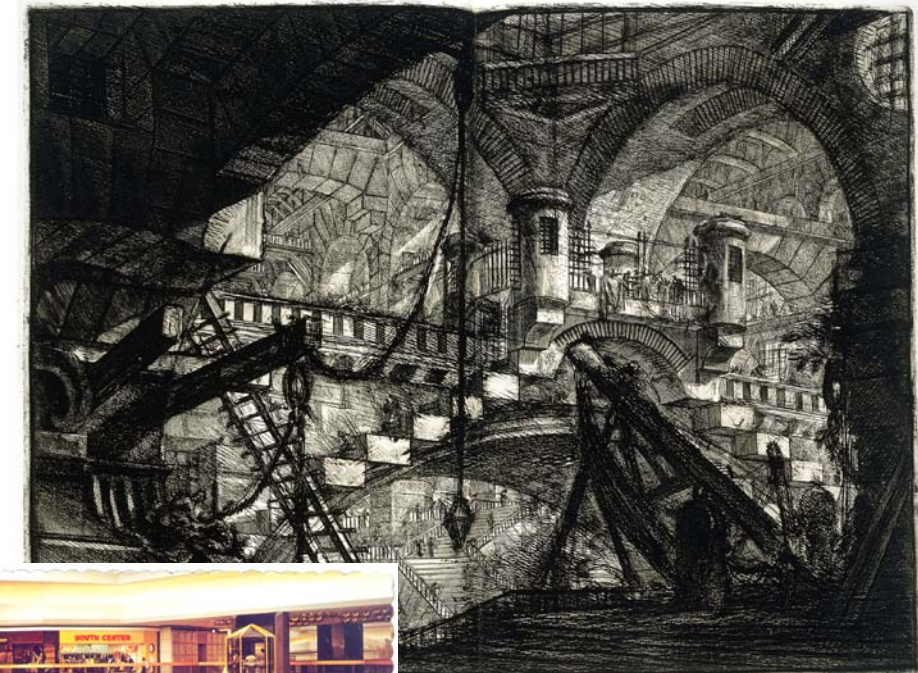
[www.wmf.org/event/soane-giving-our-past-future](http://www.wmf.org/event/soane-giving-our-past-future)

# PIRANESI: ETCHER, DESIGNER, AND ARCHITECT



Felice Polanzani, Portrait of G.B. Piranesi, from Opere Varie, 1750

Though he died 235 years ago this year, Giovanni Battista Piranesi lives on, not just at the Soane, but through the works of other artists who have drawn from the deep well of his fantastical designs. Operating with a creative license that was utterly restrictionless, Piranesi broke all the rules—shifting scale radically, compressing images and warping spatial relationships—in such a manner that he is now recognized as a powerful contemporary influence. Just ask Robert A. M. Stern, Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, Michael Graves, Daniel Libeskind or Peter Eisenman—all give Piranesi credit for being a major influence on their work.



Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Carceri*, Plate XI, an etching. Italy, AD 1761 (later state). One of 16 etchings of imaginary prisons. British Museum, Department of Prints and Drawings

But it is not just in the built world of today where that Piranesian influence obtains. His series of drawings called *Prisons*—frightful yet majestic spheres he rendered with enormous, labyrinthine subterranean vaults, grisly machinery and dizzying staircases—make it easy to understand why Edgar Allan Poe was a fan—and why he virtually transcribed that world in his short story, *The Pit and the Pendulum*. And it is no mighty leap to recognize those Piranesi's imaginary dungeons as an inspiration behind the vertiginous woodcuts and lithographs of Escher or the Expressionist



Vintage postcard of the Fairlane Town Center in Dearborn, Michigan.

sets of *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*. And one could even argue—probably successfully—that there is a connection between Piranesi's darkest fantasies and a few of the shopping malls that sprang up in this country in the 1970s.

# TIM KNOX BIDS A FOND FAREWELL



Tim Knox as Sir John Soane at The Regency Rout party held at the Royal Hospital, Chelsea - 20 September 2012

After eight years as the 11th director of the Soane (and the first, he points out, "to leave other than by death or retirement"), Tim Knox now becomes the 13th director of Fitzwilliam Museum at the University of Cambridge. This storied repository (which is about three times larger than the Soane and was designed, coincidentally, by Soane pupil George Basevi) contains a panoply of ancient Egypt and China treasures, superlative old master paintings, manuscripts and bronzes and Impressionists and contemporary art—providing some of the fodder for the courses Tim will be teaching in addition to his executory duties. These new roles have of course required relocation to Cambridge, but Tim isn't complaining. "I get very splendid official lodgings," he says, which he'll be sharing with his partner, the noted landscape architect and historian Todd Longstaffe-Gowan—and their beloved dachshunds, Tiger and Sponge. "But," he adds, "I'll still keep one foot in London, and won't lose touch with my friends at the Soane." We recently asked Tim for some of his reflections on his time there.

we have researched and planned it all and raised all the money needed to completely reinstate Soane's vision.

**One of the necessities of being the director of a museum is occasionally leading private tours. Is there one that sticks out as particularly memorable?**

HRH Princess Alexandra, the Duchess of Kent, is a charming and loyal supporter of the museum and lives in a Soane-designed house. I was showing her around one evening and I could swear that I saw, to my complete horror, a large dollop of icy cold water fall from one of our leaking skylights right down the back of her neck. Such is the training of these Royal personages, she didn't even flinch.

**Eight years of being so involved with the life and work of one man—Soane—must have privileged you with a rare perspective on this 18th- and 19th-century personage. His greatness is well-established, but what were some of his surprising foibles?**

Well, for a start, he wore an auburn wig—you can see it in the Thomas Lawrence portrait and it cannot have convinced anyone.

**What do you think Soane would enjoy about 21st-century London?**

He would be astonished by its size and scale and the way it has changed, but surely delighted by the survival and success of his museum, and places like the Dulwich Picture Gallery. I am sure he would be touched and amused by the Soanian red K2 telephone boxes, but disappointed by the demolition of the Bank of England and so many of his other buildings. He would have simply loved the idea that he had so many admirers in America, and would be on the first plane over to see you—and get a commission while at it!

**You and Todd reside in an 18th-century merchant's house replete with assorted aggregations of art and natural history. Sounds Soanian. Is it?**

The Soane Museum is obviously a potent influence on our collections and arrangements—I have known the museum since I was 16. But arrangements at Malplaquet House are also inspired by country houses, especially the shabbier Irish ones, which is where all the portraits and busts, and the stuffed birds, seals and trophy heads come from.

**Any valedictory words?**

Listen carefully to the museum, and keep the atmosphere!

**Visitors to the Soane are impressed that the museum has remained in the same state since its founder's death in 1837. But changes are always afoot, aren't they. What are some you were able to implement that have amplified Soane's vision for his museum?**

Yes, the Soane Museum is supposed to be some sort of time warp where nothing has changed for nearly 200 years. But actually over the years, lots of changes had been made to arrangements and the buildings that were alien to the spirit of our founder's intentions. Putting back Soane's arrangements in 15 hitherto lost rooms has probably been the most dramatic impact I have been able to make in my time at the Soane. It's not all done yet, but