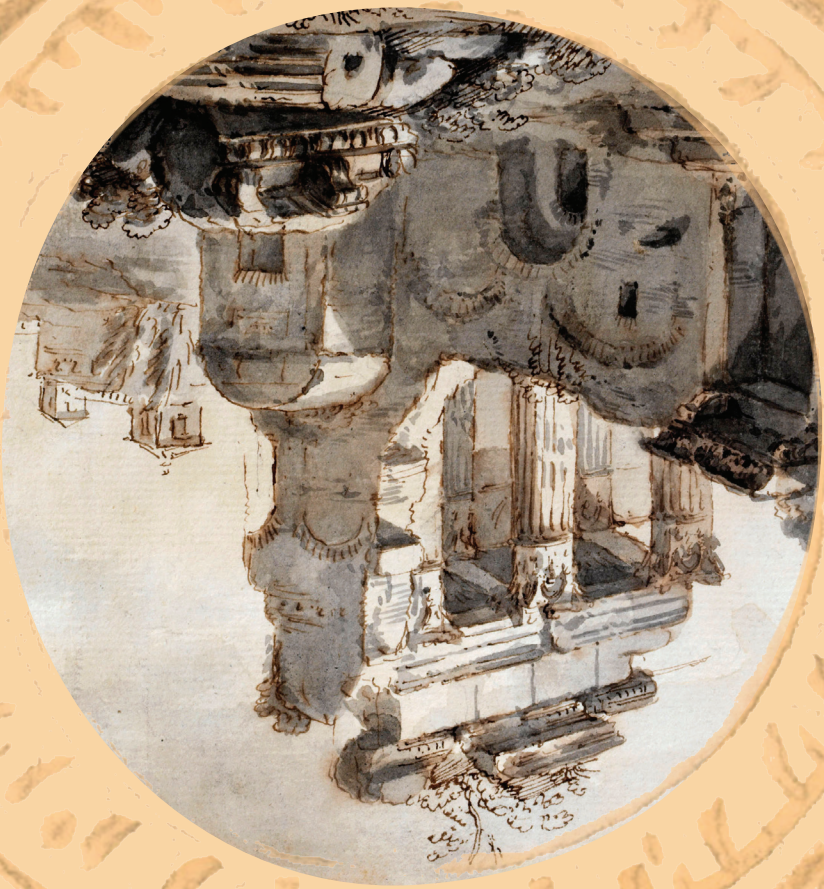


*A collection of 9,000 works on paper at Sir John Soane's Museum*

# JAMES ADAM AND ROBERT ADAM OF THE DRAWINGS OF



## SIR JOHN SOANE'S MUSEUM FOUNDATION

1040 FIRST AVENUE NO.311 NEW YORK NY 10022

## ROBERT ADAM: A PRIMER

*Who He Was, What He Did, and Why His Significance Endures*



Above: Portrait of Robert Adam attributed to George Wilson, c. 1770-1775 © National Portrait Gallery, London  
Right: Postage Stamp, issued by Royal Mail in 2011  
Below: Bath's Pulteney Bridge, designed in 1773



ROBERT ADAM  
1763 KEDLESTON HALL

Robert Adam was born in 1728, the son of William Adam, Scotland's foremost architect of the era. In 1748 Robert's brother John inherited the family business and took 20-year-old Robert into the partnership, which later will include their younger brother James.

As the innovator in the practice, Robert Adam enlivened the proportioned Georgian style with a graceful, more elegant feel, using all the parts of the classical design kit—swags, garlands, medallions, vases, urns, sphinxes, griffins and nymphs—to embellish buildings, interiors, furniture and carpets.

Adam recognized no boundary between architecture and interior design, and took on responsibility for a building's totality: shell, ceilings, fireplaces, fixtures, all designed down to the meagerest detail for a complete sense of unity. Of this conviction

for comprehensive design, John Soane said: "We stand indebted [for] the electric power of this revolution in Art."

Robert Adam's style inspired others in his day—including Josiah Wedgwood, who applied Adamesque motifs to his jasperware, the colored stoneware with applied relief decoration still sought after today.

Adam's Pulteney Bridge across the River Avon in Bath is one of only four bridges in the world with shops across the full span on both sides. All the working drawings for the bridge are preserved in the Soane.

After Robert Adam's death in 1792, Sir John Soane—never one to miss an opportunity to collect significant examples of the architect's craft—snapped up nearly 9,000 of his drawings for £200 (about \$15,795 today), £50 less than the asking price.



### DON'T KNOW FROM ADAM?

*Look for these features to ID his style:*

- Virtuoso plaster-work with swags, urns and garlands
- Elliptical and circular motifs formed by fluted radiating lines
- Palladian, circular, and elliptical windows
- Seductive pastel color schemes
- Oval rooms, curved walls, domes, and niches
- Front doors topped by fanlights and flanked by narrow side windows

## A VIRTUAL MILESTONE FOR THE SOANE

*The Adam Drawings Project Goes Live on the Internet*

Flowers in spring, the robin that sings...or so goes the lyric to "The Best Things in Life Are Free." Add to the list the Soane's online catalog of Robert Adam's iconic building designs.

Thanks to generous support from the Leon Levy Foundation and other donors, some of the Museum's most prized treasures, the architectural drawings from the office of Robert and James Adam, are now accessible, free of charge, via a new online catalog. Today anyone anywhere—architectural students in Addis Ababa, art enthusiasts in Sydney, design aficionados in Shanghai—can study and

view digital images of Adam's work over the Internet.

Says Tim Knox, Soane's director: "For nearly 200 years, the Museum's incomparable collection of Adam drawings has been carefully preserved within the Museum, and as with his house and other collections, Soane would have been delighted that we can share the Adam collection with everyone—and for free."

The Museum holds more than 9,000 drawings from the office of Robert and James Adam. In 1833 Sir John Soane acquired 54 folios of

*continued inside...*



Above: Section of the staircase at Home House by Robert Adam, Adam volume 14/116

### A NEW YORK-BASED FOUNDATION HELPS OPEN UP WORLDS ONLINE

Anyone who has visited New York University's Institute for the Study of the Ancient World on East 84th Street will already be enamored of its creator, the Leon Levy Foundation. But few outside of academia know of another side of the Foundation's giving: since 2007, it has awarded more than \$16 million to help 30 cultural institutions catalogue and preserve the drawings, manuscripts, letters, scrapbooks, photographs and other treasures in their valuable archives and make them more accessible to scholars and the public around the world.

The Foundation's lead gift to the Sir John Soane's Museum Adam drawings project will certainly transform the study of the work and life

of the Neoclassical architect. So imagine the benefits multiplied in an array of fields by the other institutions receiving Leon Levy Foundation grants—a group as varied as the Morgan Library and Museum, the New York Philharmonic, and Poets House.

Says Shelby White, founding trustee of the Leon Levy Foundation, "My husband, Leon, always enjoyed visiting Sir John Soane's Museum and very much admired the display of antiquities. He was also a big fan of the Adams' work. Therefore, the Leon Levy Foundation is pleased to support the Adam drawings project, so that these wonderful works will be shared with scholars and with the general public."

# THE SOANE, HOME TO NEW STUDIES

*A Youthful Scholar Investigates an Atypical Aspect of Adam*

David Pullins, a 29-year-old Ph.D. candidate in the History of Art and Architecture at Harvard, began his work on Robert Adam as a Peter Jay Sharp Scholar at the Courtauld Institute of Art in London. With support from a Sir John Soane's Museum Foundation Traveling Fellowship, Pullins was able to return to work for his M.A. and complete his archival research in London and Edinburgh. In January, Pullins used resources at the Soane to study Adam designs that carried forward Rococo England's taste for things in a Chinese style known as chinoiserie. We asked him to tell us about the experience.



You have said that Adam's foray into chinoiserie was aberrant. Why do you think he made that step? *It was made less of his own initiative than in response to clients' persistent taste for chinoiserie despite the rise of classicism in the 1760s. These commissions provide a strong argument against the reassuring stylistic "periodization" historians frequently fall back on.*

In what key aspects do Adam's chinoiserie designs differ from others in the genre? *Expressions of Neoclassical chinoiserie are unusual in England—Adam used a ceiling design from ancient Roman baths, but inserted Chinese figures and pagodas into the roundels, for example—and their development by such a celebrated and learned public figure is remarkable.*

In your study of Adam, what was something unforeseen that you learned about his life and work? *One of the most surprising and exciting discoveries was in the designs themselves, where it became clear that Adam did not keep chinoiserie and classical ornament discrete but deliberately caused visual confusion between them, playfully engaging and challenging our expectations.*

Tell us a little about working at the Soane as a Fellow. *From the moment I arrived everyone rolled out red carpets—I felt so welcome. Daily teas were a highlight. Fran Sands and Tim Knox went beyond the call of duty.*

How do you think Adam would have felt about the Soane? What would



Above Left: David Pullins in Bath  
Above: Robert Adam, drawing for a carpet for Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu, 1766

he have liked the most and the least? *Both Adam and Soane shared a very imaginative relationship with history and the Museum reflects this, so I'm sure Adam would have appreciated the provocative juxtapositions found at each turn—though the value of the number of turns, Soane's appreciation of the labyrinthine, might have eluded Adam's praise.*

How do you think your study of Adam's chinoiserie will help fellow scholars and enhance the experience for visitors to the Soane? *Adam's work has suffered from being treated as uniform and monolithic, something I hope my study complicates. Given the enormity of Adam's production—and the Soane's holdings—points of entry such as this are important for generating the interest not only of the broader public, but also a broader spectrum of scholars.*

If you hosted a dinner with Soane and Adam, what would you serve and where would you serve it? *I would have to serve something that would fit into the epergne Adam designed for the Murray family, an amazing object that looks like a miniature Brighton Pavilion. Adam's designs for table objects are under-appreciated. Dinner at Corbusier's Villa Savoye outside Paris would provide plenty for them to talk about, particularly around ornament.*

## THE SOANE SALUTES THE WMF

In celebration of the World Monuments Fund's 50th anniversary, Sir John Soane's Museum will mount an exhibition that spotlights the many projects that the Fund has undertaken. *The World Monuments Fund: 50 Years of Keeping the World Full of Places Worth Visiting* opens at the Soane on October 26 and runs through January 26, 2013. The wide-ranging exhibition highlights the restoration of Stowe House, a building worked upon by Sir John Soane and Robert Adam, as well as other landmarks the Fund has supported.

# A PAIR OF MONUMENTAL UNDERTAKINGS

*WMF Helps Ensure the Legacies of Adam and Soane Live on*

Over the past decade, the World Monuments Fund has lent its know-how to save two stately houses: Headfort in Kells Co. Meath, Ireland, and Stowe in Buckingham, England.

Headfort House contains a suite of six magnificent state rooms designed by Robert Adam, his only major commission still extant in Ireland. Despite its significance, Headfort was a little known and appreciated site outside the conservation community until its inclusion on the WMF's 2004 Watch list. The Headfort Trust's efforts and WMF support have resulted in conservation of the Adam apartments and upgrading of the fire-protection system.

Shaped by a number of architects, including Sir John Soane and Robert Adam, Stowe House dates to 1677. A WMF grant with matched funding restored the oval-domed Marble Saloon in 2005 and, in partnership with an anonymous benefactor, WMF has since renovated the decaying library roof and plaster ceiling and repaired the crumbling masonry of the south front and pavilion roofs. Next up: Repair and cleaning of the interiors and the creation of a new interpretive facility.



Above: Headfort House, Eating Parlour, post-conservation, 2010/ Photo: Richard Ireland/World Monuments Fund

# ADAM IN AMERICA

*Though He Never Set Foot in Our Country, Adam Left Fingerprints All Over American Architecture*

Belonging to a Founding Father and the second president, the name Adams conjures the first years of the United States. That same name in the singular form of Adam has equal but somewhat surprising association with the country's establishment.

Robert Adam played a vital role for his contribution to an up-to-date architectural vocabulary for a new nation. During the construction boom that followed the Revolutionary War, architects in the newly formed Republic looked for a style to communicate a look that was different yet dignified, familiar yet fresh. And it wouldn't be a bad idea, either, if that style transmitted the achievements of a glorious and highly developed civilization like Ancient Rome. The Adam style fit the bill.

The White House began as Georgian, but later took on an Adamesque flavor with the addition of an elliptical portico and other Neoclassical—that is to say, Adamesque—enhancements.

(MILESTONE, continued from first page)

Adam drawings, along with the drawings the brothers collected on their Grand Tour.

A small portion of the collection had previously been photographed piecemeal for various exhibitions and publications, but until the online project, a comprehensive record had never been undertaken to photograph all the drawings. The holdings comprise around 85 percent of the extant graphic material from the Adam partnership.

Each year, students, scholars, architects and conservationists come to London from all over the world to study these drawings at the Soane. The digital photography project has allowed those who can't afford the trip to view the collection online. Another advantage of the project: display online obviates wear on a drawing now that it can be viewed without disturbing the folios. The high-resolution images provide even greater detail than can be seen on the originals with the naked eye.

In addition, photographing the collection digitally has proven an invaluable tool for cataloging. Says Frances Sands, catalog editor for the Adam drawings project: "I can now decipher faint or blurred inscriptions." The project has also allowed drawings that had been cut up to be assembled into one seamless digital image.

Last year, 177 images went online and a further 2,000 are planned for the coming year. The online collection currently allows study of the Adams' earliest projects, including the first of the many country houses and the three early funerary monuments. Additions this year will include more country and town houses—Bowood House, Harewood House, Lansdowne House and Syon Park—with many more projects to follow as cataloging proceeds.

"We're doing our level best," pledges Knox, "to ensure that the entire Adam collection is available online by 2015."

Another example of such flourishes can be found in the ornamental dining-room ceiling of Mount Vernon, complete with plaster corn husks. Charles Bulfinch used Adamesque architecture for the Massachusetts State House. Because all the designs were created during the time our Federal system of governance was being forged (roughly 1780-1840), the Adam look is known as the Federal style in the U.S.

Adam does receive clear-cut credit for two creations now in the U.S., both formerly from Lansdowne House in central London. Designed by Adam in 1765, the edifice underwent a drastic alteration in the 1930s because of road work, necessitating the removal of front rooms. The drawing room landed at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, and the dining room at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Although the Adam-designed dining-room furniture no longer survives and has been substituted—depriving the Met's installation, alas, of the full splendor of Adam's intended vision—there's no need to make a Federal case about it.

## PALATIAL ARCHITECTURE

Recently at the Soane Museum Frances Sands, the Adam catalog editor, delivered an address about Robert Adam's contributions to Buckingham House—or, as it is better known these days, Buckingham Palace. Says Sands: "Since my talk was so close to the kickoff of Queen Elizabeth II's Diamond Jubilee, I thought what better time to talk about Adam's royal commissions, especially since interest in Her Majesty is so intense at the moment. Being a fan of the monarchy myself, I was happy to tap into that enthusiasm." Sands was also happy to augment her presentation with illustrations from the Soane collection, two of which she was recently able to attribute authoritatively to Adam.

# GOLDBERGER ON SOANE

In April, Soane Foundation Honors were presented to Michael Bruno, Founder of Istdibs, and to the architecture and design firm Diller Scofidio + Renfro. At the dinner, critic Paul Goldberger described the interrelated themes and approaches he found in two very different looking bodies of architecture: Soane's and Diller Scofidio + Renfro's. His remarks follow.

It gives me particular pleasure to ask the question that hovers over tonight's proceeding: Why are Liz Diller, Ric Scofidio and Charles Renfro, of all people, receiving Soane Honors?

They aren't classicists, like Allan Greenberg or Bob Stern or Jaque Robertson. They aren't philanthropists like Richard Driehaus or publishers like Rizzoli and Monacelli.

In fact, Diller Scofidio + Renfro is a brilliant choice.

The three embody, as much as anyone practicing today, the spirit of Sir John Soane, whose work, to me, has always represented not so much classicism itself as invention, as creative imagination, as pushing the envelope of architecture. Soane wanted to make people see space and feel space as they never had before. He wanted to make

buildings that would make people see the world differently, and that would make them think.

And this, of course, is exactly what Diller Scofidio + Renfro do in our time. When I think of the extraordinary way in which Soane conceived of space almost as a force, as something much more than a static void, and then I think of the amazing way in which Diller Scofidio + Renfro have turned the High Line bridge over Tenth Avenue into something that is at once an amphitheater and a space that cascades down into the avenue below—well, that is the spirit of Soane, reinvented in our time.



Above: Paul Goldberger with Charles Renfro/ Photo: Catty McGill

It is also worth thinking about their wonderful re-do of the Josie Robertson Plaza at Lincoln Center, which they improved by making a staircase grander and the sense of symmetry more powerful—in effect, enhancing the classicism of the original design. So they, like Soane, respect tradition when it is the right moment to respect tradition.

They are in our time as Sir John Soane was in his: architects who continually invent, never as pure novelty but always with the goal of making us feel space and surface and form more intensely. They are interpreters of the spirit of Sir John Soane's restless energy in the 21st century.

## 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 Soane 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.

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