

# SIR JOHN SOANE'S MUSEUM FOUNDATION

1040 FIRST AVENUE NO. 311 NEW YORK NY 10022

FALL 2014

NEW YORKERS WELCOME NEW SOANE MUSEUM DIRECTOR ABRAHAM THOMAS



Sir John Soane's Museum has a rich history of teaching and, of course, a museum. This lecture explores these four characteristic qualities of Soane's great house museum and examines the embedded layers of adaptive experimentation and performed a number of functions - private home, the site of a busy architectural office, a

Join us on Monday, 17 November 2014, when Mr. Thomas presents a new talk: *Live/Work/Play - The Evolving Functions of Sir John Soane's House, Museum And Academy*

6pm lecture (Doors open at 5:45 pm). Reception to follow. The Union Club, 101 East 69th Street, northeast corner of Park Avenue

Business attire (jacket tie required for men. Advance Reservation Required - Lecture Pattern \$100, Members \$55, Non-Members \$85, Students \$10). Tickets are available online at [www.soanefoundation.com/news.html](http://www.soanefoundation.com/news.html)

## SOANE FOUNDATION HONORS

*Phyllis Lambert, Eminence-Grise of Modernism, Talks About the Soane*

*David Adjaye, London-based Architect on the Global Stage*

The Sir John Soane's Museum Foundation recently celebrated the singular contributions of the architect David Adjaye and the author, educator, and architect Phyllis Lambert in the newly refurbished Rainbow Room atop Rockefeller Center. Both received Soane Foundation Honors during a sparkling international gathering of nearly 300 friends of architecture in general and the Soane Museum in particular.

During the summer the Foundation had the pleasure of an email chat with Ms. Lambert. It was an honor to speak to someone who had played such a central role in the rise of Modernism in America. Thanks to her, New York has Mies van der Rohe's Seagram Building, and Montreal, the Canadian Centre for Architecture. A 2007 documentary about her purposeful life playfully dubbed her 'Joan of Architecture' for her gallant efforts in the cause of preservation.

Here are extracts from the conversation:

**Can you share some details of your first visit to Sir John Soane's Museum?**

I was working on the Seagram Building and somewhat bemused by what was, to a Modernist, cluttered Romanticism.

**And what is your assessment now?**

I have found many affinities between the Soane, the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum and the Canadian Centre for Architecture. An overriding similarity unites all three: The founder of each museum personally established the idea of collections; each was in some way the architect of the building that houses the collections; and each was intimately involved in the way the collections and the architecture of their purpose-built structures relate.

**If you were trying to persuade someone to visit the Soane, what would you tell them?**

I'd emphasize drama and experimentation in light, richness and differentiation of rooms that include the integration of object and architecture. This especially so in the double-height Plaster Room.

**What do you think Soane would have to say about the Seagram Building?**

He'd appreciate its fine materials, articulation of surface, the noble space it carves out on Park Avenue, the program of sculpture on the plaza, and the choreography of public space.

**What sort of group would you gather if you were hosting a dinner party with Sir John Soane?**

I can imagine Soane and Philip Johnson discussing the architectural traditions of all periods in the Grand Tour and Philip's debt to his elder peer as he turned from the International Style to Postmodernism. But a conversation between Soane and Frank Gehry would be infinitely richer. I'd ask them about finding inspiration in the works of art of their contemporaries, about their break from the past, their friendships with artists, the role of decoration, form, culture. This would be delicious.



Phyllis Lambert in Mies van der Rohe's office, Chicago, 1960. Photographer: Ed Darken



Photographer: Ed Reeve

The Soane Foundation 2014 honoree David Adjaye is in the news these days for his dramatic design of the future home of the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of African American History and Culture on the National Mall in Washington D.C. Mr. Adjaye has also just completed an affordable housing complex in the Sugar Hill section of Harlem and rolled out a line of furniture for Knoll. The architect's first great success in this country was the Museum of Contemporary Art in Denver, which opened in 2007.

<i>John Soane</i>	<i>David Adjaye</i>
Sept. 10, 1753	Born Sept. 22, 1966
Royal Academy	Education Royal College of Art
Levett Hall, Norfolk, at age 30	Early Commission Soho No. 6 Bar, Soho, London, at age 28
Builder and bricklayer	Father's profession Ghanaian diplomat
Complex lighting arrangements	Trademark Showcasing and sculpting light
Unexpected spatial interplay and constant reinventing of the rules of Neoclassicism	Reputation as rule-breaker "Adjaye has broken all the rules about what houses are meant to be like."
William Pitt the Younger, Britain's prime minister; Sir Francis Bourgeois, artist	Celebrated clients Ewan McGregor, actor; Alexander McQueen, fashion designer; Chris Ofili, artist
Coiling of the Hall of Mirrors at the Villa Palagonia in Sicily, which Soane introduced to similar effect at his own home in Lincoln's Fields Inn	Offbeat inspiration Wrought iron designed and fashioned by slaves in pre-Civil War Charleston, which Adjaye reworked for the panels that will clad his National Museum of African American History and Culture.

## THOROUGHLY MODERN, REALLY?

*He may not have been the first Modern architect, but that hasn't stopped some Soane devotees from saying he was.*

Starting about 100 years ago, on the cusp of the Modern movement, tastemakers began to proclaim their admiration for Sir John Soane's brand of stark, lucid design, asserting that the early 19th-century architect was the first Modernist. The Soane's Deputy Director and Inspector, Helen Dorey, comments that "some scholars would argue that his apparently modern style was actually the result of financial constraints and had nothing to do with breaking barriers," she says, adding "I think the key thing to ask is not so much whether Soane was the first Modernist but why he is perceived as such." Here are her eight reasons:

*continued inside...*

# SOANE'S SUPER MODELS

*The Soane has an impressive stable of beauties, with some needing a lift or two*

Sir John Soane's Museum holds the largest collection of architectural models in the United Kingdom and one of the most representative in the world. Come spring, 41 models—out of 120 or so—will be on view in the Soane's storied Model Room when it re-opens to the public for the first time since 1850, just as Soane always intended. Outside the Model Room, another 67 of the models will grace other spaces around the museum. We spoke to the Soane's director, Abraham Thomas, about the models and the Adopt-A-Model initiative now underway to keep them in model shape.

## What did Soane have in mind by collecting these models?

The models bring about an architecture museum in miniature, allowing today's visitors, and students in Soane's time, to embark on their very own Grand Tour without leaving the building.

## Besides an educative purpose, do the models serve other roles?

Lots. Why, some models in our collection that have even been used as legal evidence in court hearings! In the 21st century, models are still important and widely used by engineers, set designers, developers, planners and architects—anyone who wants to visualize architectural ideas.

## Why was the Adopt-A-Model program implemented?

Just like anything that has lasted nearly two centuries, the Soane's historic models, particularly those made of cork, have suffered from the depredations of time and deviations in environment. They need some



*Clockwise from center:* The Choragic Monument of Lysicrates, Athens 1300-1830, François Fouquet, Plaster Wood stand designed by Jonathan Burden. Photo: Robin Forster; Temple of Vesta, Tivoli, Giovanni Alinari (signed, dated 1775), Cork, Photo: Hugh Kelly; Rotunda, Bank of England, London Henry Trost, 1794, Painted wood, Photo: Robin Forster

"TLC" so that we can ensure that they can safely be displayed for another 200 years.

## Okay, how can one Adopt-A-Model?

Get in touch with Charlotte Bassadone in the Development Department at [cbassadone@soane.org.uk](mailto:cbassadone@soane.org.uk). Adoption donations range from \$850 to \$85,500 and are tax deductible, less any benefits derived from the donation. Since the campaign was launched in London in June 2014, 31 models have been adopted, and there are still plenty of other models available for adoption for a period of 10 years, including some of the real treasures in the collection. You can even arrange to get recognition on a special Model Donor board near the Model Room. And a model adoption might even be tempting as a gift for that special someone!



(In his Royal Academy Lecture XI, Soane commented: *The great beauty of architectural composition consists more in...proportion, symmetry and propriety of form...and in appropriate decoration than in a great profusion of ornaments.*)

## MODERN (continued from first page)

1. His omission of elements usually found in classical buildings, such as cornices and entablatures, to remove all projections from interior walls.
2. His astyler or stripped-down classicism.
3. His linear decoration, often only using incised lines or grooves have been praised by modern commentators for their simplicity and refinement. In Soane's day, though, the lines were criticized for looking like "scored loins of pork."



above: Drawing: Joseph Michael Gandy, Breakfast Parlor at No. 12, watercolor 1796  
right: Philip Johnson's bedroom at the Brick House, New Canaan, CT. Photo: Julius Shulman



4. His innovative handling of light to create what Henry Russell Hitchcock described as "effects of abstract form."
5. His overall handling of space—in particular, small spaces where he created spatial fragmentation and ambiguity.
6. His breaking apart of motifs and recombining them to create new effects, such as segmental and semicircular arches, the saucer dome and the "star-fish" ceiling.
7. His innovative use of fire-resistant materials and introduction of central heating, and the precision with which he used materials.
8. His quest for originality and invention. Soane once said that "Architecture is an art purely of Invention, as opposed to Imitation in painting and sculpture, and Invention is the most painful and the most difficult exercise of the human mind." Helen Dorey comments: "This is as close as Soane ever got to an analysis of his own style!"

# INSPIRED BY SOANE: 21ST-CENTURY ARTISTS AND ARTISANS

Exciting new lines of product designs inspired by the architecture and collections of Sir John Soane are being launched in New York. The Soane Foundation is holding events in late September at the showrooms of Chesney's in the D&D Building and at Jonathan Burden in Tribeca. Partners in the Inspired by Soane Collection are:

**Adelphi Paper Hangings** has reproduced Soane's wallpaper from original designs and documentary evidence. [www.adelphi-paperhangings.com](http://www.adelphi-paperhangings.com)

**Chesney's**, the UK's leading supplier of luxury fireplaces and wood-burning stoves, used Soane drawings for the design of Neo-Classical fireplaces. [www.chesneys.co.uk](http://www.chesneys.co.uk)

**Haddonstone**, the foremost manufacturer of garden ornaments and architectural stonework in the UK, has replicated historic works of art and artifacts at the Soane by hand. [www.haddonstone.com](http://www.haddonstone.com)

**Jonathan Burden LLC** has reproduced a number of the museum's model stands. [www.jonathanburden.com](http://www.jonathanburden.com)

**The Odd Chair Company**, which prides itself on fine furniture made in workshops in the North West of England, has developed a line of armchairs and sofas based on museum furnishings. [www.theoddchaircompany.com](http://www.theoddchaircompany.com)

**Osowski** has licensed a selection of mirror designs by Robert Adam from the museum's collection and developed a range of highly decorative examples that are made to order. [www.osowski.co.uk](http://www.osowski.co.uk)

**Surface View**, which creates bespoke prints, murals and blinds, has licensed a selection of the Soane drawings for wall coverings and fabric designs. [www.surfaceview.co.uk](http://www.surfaceview.co.uk)



left: Romilly Saumaez Smith, Gold and Antique Garnet earrings; center: Haddonstone, cast stone Caryatid; right: Surface View wall mural, Courtesy of the Trustees of Sir John Soane's Museum. Photo: Hugh Kelly

"The fact that these partnerships with leading manufacturers generate income for the museum to continue its mission is a hugely valuable bonus," says Xanthe Arvanitakis, Managing Director of Soane Museum Enterprises. Noting that the Soane collection is rich, with 500 paintings, 1,000 sculptures and 30,000 drawings, she adds, "We look forward to welcoming many more partners to the *Inspired by Soane* family in the coming years."

*Inspired by Soane* has also commissioned new work from some of the most accomplished talents working today, including Romilly Saumaez Smith, who has created a line of contemporary jewelry, and Carina Ciscato, who fashioned a work that was recently exhibited at the museum.

# MR. DE MONTEBELLO KICKS OFF NEW LECTURE SERIES



The Soane Foundation is proud to inaugurate the Samuel C. Miller Memorial Lecture Series as a tribute to Sam and his invaluable contribution to the Foundation and to the museum world. The first talk will take place at The Century Association in New York City on Wednesday, November 5, 2014. Charles E. Pierce, Jr., former Director of the Morgan Library and a close friend of Sam's will make some opening remarks and will introduce Philippe de Montebello, Director Emeritus of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and now an educator at NYU's Institute of Fine Arts. In his lecture, entitled "The Museum

as Medium," de Montebello plans to use Sir John Soane's Museum as an archetype to illustrate how museums are anything but neutral environments for the display of works of art. The lecture will also illuminate how various museum installation styles create narratives that alter context, meaning, and effect. To make a reservation, contact the Soane Foundation office or go online to purchase tickets.

## BOOK YOUR TOUR TODAY

Over the next year, the Soane Museum plans to offer new focused tours exploring subjects like architectural models, portraiture, antiquities and the work of Soane's architectural office. The museum may even offer a behind-the-scenes experience. "We held a special event for our patrons this summer that included a visit to the conservation studios," says Abraham. "Our guests found it fascinating to glimpse ongoing conservation work, like the gilding of picture frames about to be rehung in the North Drawing Room."

**PRE-BOOKED TOURS:** Once a day, Tuesdays through Fridays, an hour-long tour at £10 per person. Book online: [www.soane.org/your\\_visit/tours/](http://www.soane.org/your_visit/tours/)

**BESPOKE OFFERINGS:** Special private tours with curators may be arranged with a special donation. For further information, please contact Diana West at [dwest@soane.org.uk](mailto:dwest@soane.org.uk).



Visitors to Sir John Soane's Museum in London

## 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.Soane-Foundation.com](http://www.Soane-Foundation.com).

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

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