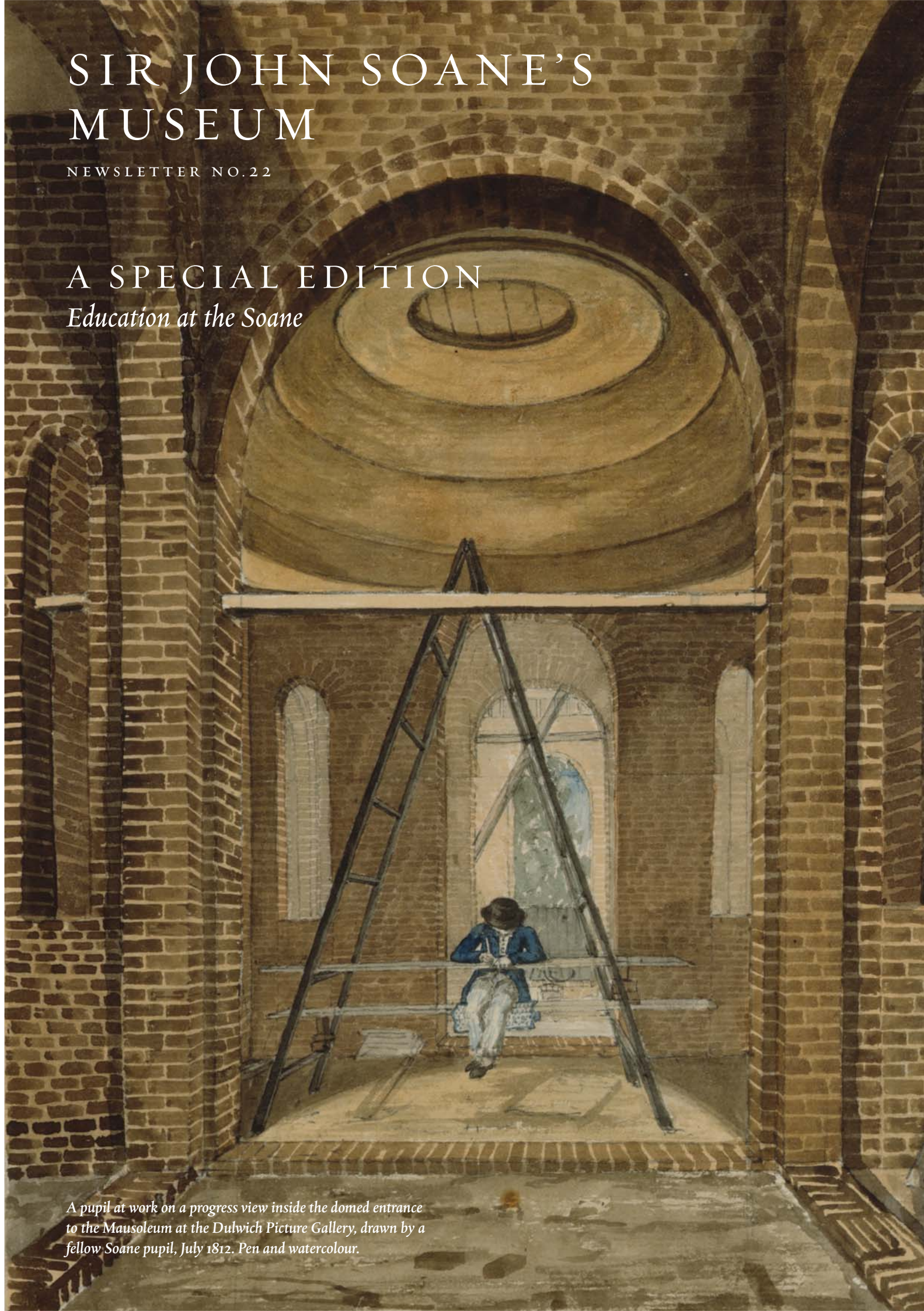


# SIR JOHN SOANE'S MUSEUM

NEWSLETTER NO. 22

A SPECIAL EDITION  
*Education at the Soane*

*A pupil at work on a progress view inside the domed entrance to the Mausoleum at the Dulwich Picture Gallery, drawn by a fellow Soane pupil, July 1812. Pen and watercolour.*



## Letter from the Director

This edition of the Soane Museum *Newsletter* is dedicated to Education at the Soane, which reminds us that John Soane was passionately interested in education and self improvement and saw his Museum as a place where people could learn about architecture and its relationship to the sister arts

### Sir John Soane's Museum: a place of learning

The son of a bricklayer, Soane was extremely fortunate in his own education. Somehow his family found the means to send the young John Soane to a private school in Reading, which instilled in him a love of reading and books. Another stroke of luck came when the architect James Peacock, a family friend, spotted in Soane a talent for drawing, so took him to London and apprenticed him to the rising City architect, George Dance the Younger. Here Soane learnt the business of architecture, but he also came to appreciate the finer things in life living in Dance's cultured and artistic household. It must have been Dance who encouraged Soane to enrol at the Architectural Schools of the Royal Academy of Arts, then established in Somerset House off the Strand. Here, Soane attended lectures and made use of the architectural books in the Academy's Library. He also participated in the Academy's competitions, exhibiting carefully finished drawings to compete for prizes and medals. These culminated in the King's Travelling Scholarship, which Soane won in 1778, enabling him to travel to Italy to study the great monuments of classical antiquity.

Soane worked hard on his Grand Tour. Based in Rome, he travelled the length and breadth of Italy, visiting and recording ancient and recent structures, and filling his

notebooks with his observations. He also took time to cultivate artists, architects and wealthy Grand Tourists, and it is interesting how many of the people he met were later to become his patrons and supporters. Soane returned to London in 1780 and at first struggled to establish himself as an independent architect. Small commissions eventually trickled in, but it was only in 1784 that Soane won financial security with an advantageous marriage to Eliza Smith, the niece and ward of an opulent City building contractor. The couple had two sons, John and George. Meanwhile, Soane finally began to prosper as an architect, being appointed Architect to the Bank of England in 1788, and Clerk of Works to the Houses of Parliament and other public buildings in Whitehall in 1790. In that year Mrs Soane's uncle died, leaving the young couple a substantial fortune – an event which was celebrated by the purchase of the site for a new townhouse in Lincoln's Inn Fields in 1792. A few years later, in 1800, Soane bought a small country house, Pitzhanger Manor in Ealing, and fitted it up as, in his own words, 'a residence for myself and my family, and afterward for my eldest son, who . . . [had] shewn [sic] a decided passion for . . . architecture, which he wished to pursue as a profession . . . I wished to make Pitzhanger Manor-house as complete as possible for the future residence

of painting and sculpture. Indeed, education is central to Soane's vision for his Museum; in his Act of Parliament of 1833, No 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields was specifically set up to be an 'Academy of Architecture', freely available for the use and enjoyment of 'amateurs' and 'students' alike.

of the young architect.' A self-made man, by now a rich and successful architect, Soane dreamed of establishing there an architectural dynasty of Soanes, a family firm that would rival the Adams, the Wyatts, and his enemies, the Smirkes.

In fact, Soane's two sons, John and George, showed little interest in and aptitude for following their father's architectural career, and even from an early age showed worrying signs of the laziness, extravagance and bad temper that were to exasperate their father in later years. Indeed, it was the lack of interest shown in architecture and Pitzhanger and its amenities by both boys that eventually caused John Soane to sell the house and move his family and collections back to London. This necessitated the acquisition of larger premises, the next-door house, No. 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields, which Soane demolished and rebuilt as his principal residence and as a setting for his growing collections of paintings and sculpture, architectural books, plaster casts and models. These were arranged for his own use, and were consulted by his pupils or articulated clerks, but the house was also opened to Soane's students from the Royal Academy of Arts Architectural Schools. Keenly involved with the Academy since his election as an Associate in 1795, Soane had been Professor of Architecture to the Academy since 1806, and took his duties extremely seriously, laboriously preparing courses of illustrated lectures for the instruction of his pupils.

Soane threw open his house and collections to his students before and after these lectures, and this was doubtless the germ of Soane's later idea for opening his house-museum to the general public, a wish finally realised in 1833 with the passing of a private Act of Parliament for the establishment of the Soane Museum – Soane's 'Academy of Architecture'. By this time John Soane junior had died and Soane was utterly estranged from his surviving son, George. Soane's last



Portrait of Soane's two sons, John (right) and George (left) painted by William Owen in 1805. John is wearing his Cambridge University gown. The painting now hangs in the South Drawing Room.

years were busied with the preparation of a new edition of his *Description* of the house and collection, a privately printed, self justificatory *Memoir*, and of an *Inventory* of the contents of the house – giving us an incredibly clear picture of his arrangements, what he thought everything was, and how he wanted visitors to experience the Museum.



Elevation of the winning competition design for a Triumphal Bridge, in Soane's hand, 1777



Royal Academy lecture drawing prepared by one of Soane's pupils in 1807, showing the origin of the Doric order

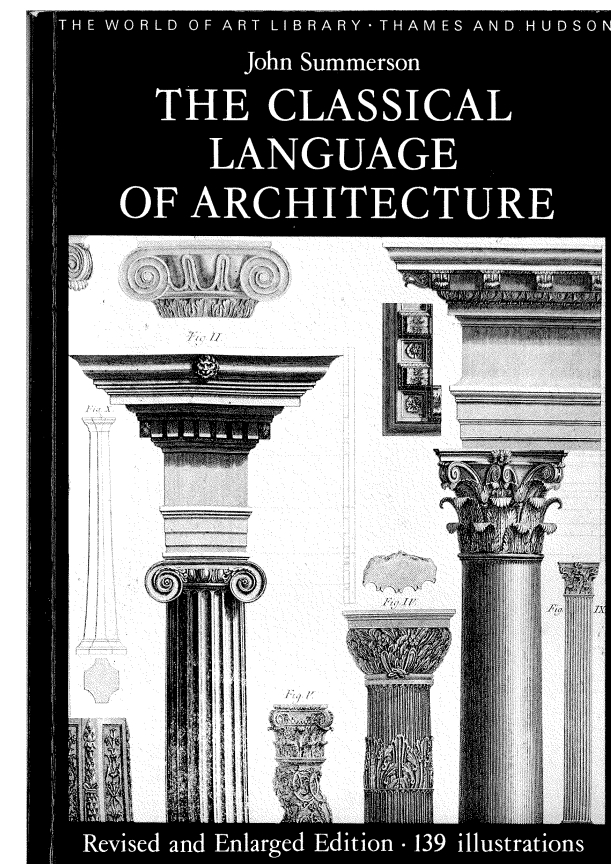
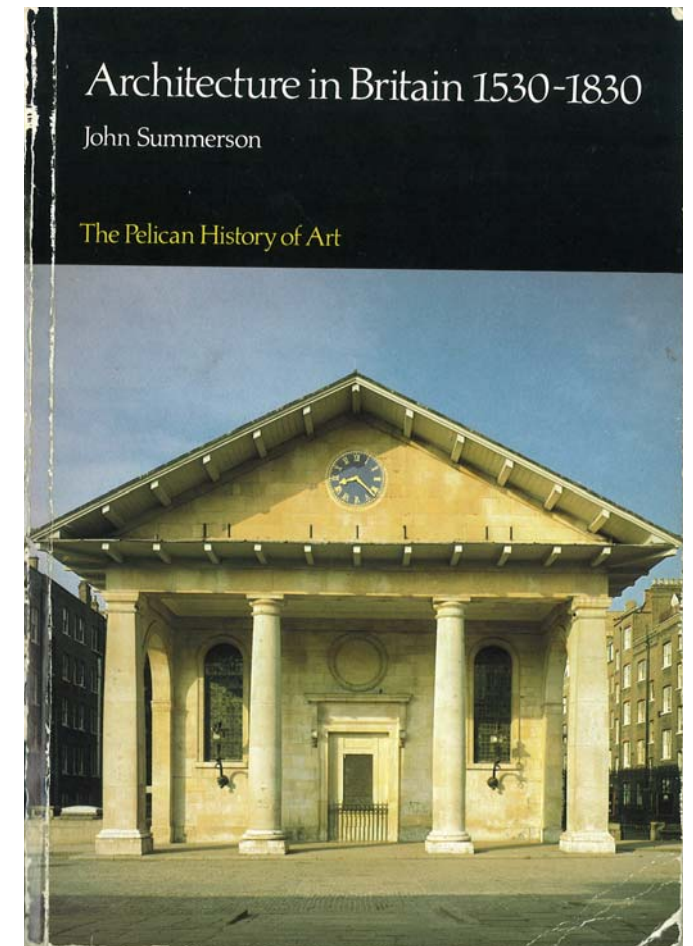
Even after Soane's death the founder's original educational impulse was still, by and large, respected, even though the Museum was only open on certain days of the week a few months of the year. Indeed, many of the Museum's Curators – George Bailey (Soane's former Chief Assistant), Joseph Bonomi, and A T Bolton – were scholarly men, while the Research Library, which was established by Bolton in the former Drawing Rooms between 1919 and 1923, provided a worthy setting for the study of books and drawings in the collection. The great architectural historian, Sir John Summerson, who presided over the Soane from 1945 to 1984, wrote many of his most celebrated books here, and was an inspiring lecturer and tutor. Many senior architectural historians today still remember interviews with Sir John, an urbane and commanding figure, while the Library downstairs was strictly run by Miss Dorothy Stroud, who herself produced important monographs on Soane, Henry Holland and Capability Brown. Summerson's successor, Peter Thornton, was a widely published authority on the history of interior decoration and inaugurated the restoration of the interiors of the Museum. Thornton's scholarly brand of showmanship restored much of the original drama and meaning to Soane's creation.

Peter Thornton was succeeded by Margaret Richardson, who, as Assistant Curator, had established the system for cataloguing the collections, especially the 30,000 architectural drawings and Soane's valuable architectural library. These initiatives led to the publication of catalogues of the collections during her time as Curator of the Museum, notably those on the drawings of George Dance and the Italian Renaissance masters. She also established the exhibitions programme in the newly-created Soane Gallery, showcasing the hidden collections of the Museum and responding to the increasing admiration for Soane with a series of shows dedicated to architects and artists who claim Soane as a source of inspiration. The Museum was therefore the first British institution to dedicate exhibitions to the work of Daniel Libeskind and Frank Gehry, and Hans Ulrich Obrist's *Retrace your Steps* (1999–2000) showed works by Gilbert and George, Anish Kapoor and Richard Hamilton in the setting of the Museum. These initiatives brought new audiences to the Soane and helped reinterpret the Museum's architecture and collections. The exhibition *John Soane: Master of Space and Light*, shown in London in 1999, galvanised public attention on Soane's work as never before.

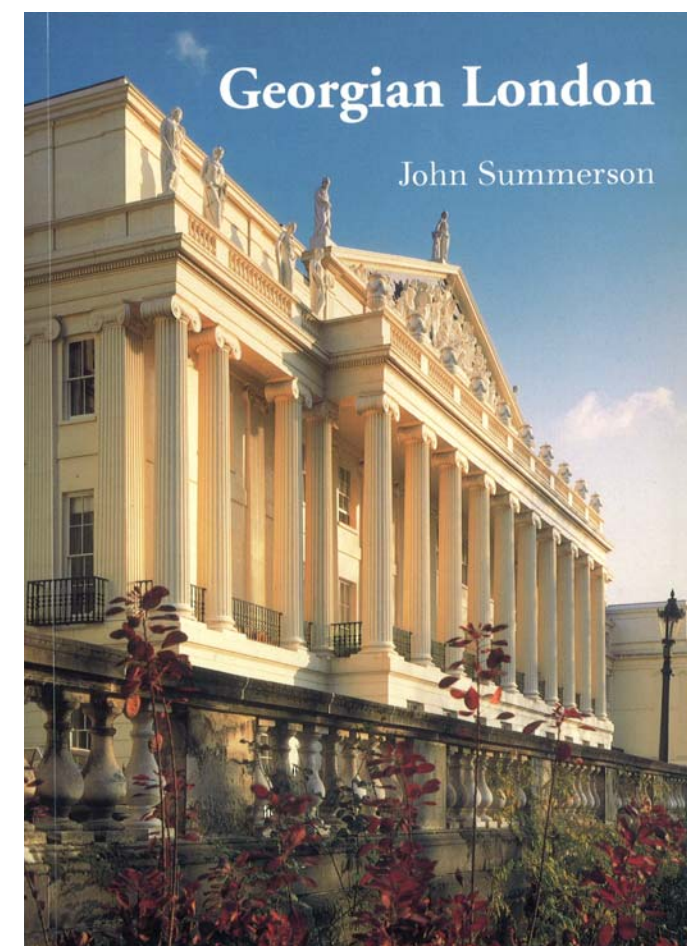
It was against this lively background that, in 2000, Janey

Monahan – herself a practising architect – was asked to carry out a six-month feasibility study into education for children and families in the newly acquired (but, as yet, unrestored or occupied) No. 14 Lincoln's Inn Fields. For seven years Janey worked with schools and community groups, establishing a thriving programme of workshops, visits and tours, not to mention 'Concrete Crushathons' and 'Spaghetti Bridges' sessions, which have put the Museum on the map as having one of the liveliest and most unusual education programmes in any Museum – all achieved on a shoestring budget and without dedicated classroom facilities.

Thanks to Janey's work and Margaret's support, when I arrived at the Soane Museum as Director just over four years ago, I discovered a thriving and much appreciated Children and Families Education Programme already well established, run by Janey from her tiny *oubliette* off the staircase of No. 12 (a segment of a disused liftshaft), with the support of an enthusiastic band of freelance educators and assistants. But there were still no permanent facilities for classes and workshops, and even the Old Kitchen – which was much in demand – was often commandeered for storage or even temporary exhibitions. The completion of the restoration of No. 14 Lincoln's Inn Fields was eagerly awaited, as this would, at last, provide properly equipped rooms for education of all kinds. It was in preparation for this new era for



Classic books written by architectural historian John Summerson, curator of the Museum, 1945–84





Janey Monahan taking school children on a tour of the Museum

education that in June 2007 we appointed Beth Kingston (now Mrs Beth Walker!) as Head of Education, to work alongside Janey to plan the future programme in its new home. Recent successes include the launch of podcast tours of the Museum for adults and children, the participation of the Museum in the National Museums Online Learning Project, new promotional material about the Education Programmes at the Museum, a series of Manga-Hogarth Workshops held both in the Museum and out in the field, the development of the Young Architects' Club and, just the other day, the launch of a new Education section on the Museum's website, the latter funded by the MLA Audience Development Fund.

The Education Team moved into their new quarters in No. 14 in early 2008, and the basement now hums with classes and workshops – the handy link to the Museum via the Monk's Yard proving particularly useful. Janey Monahan took her well earned retirement in July this year and Lucy Grace Trotman has been appointed as her successor – a decent overlap allowed Lucy to learn from Janey herself the mysteries of Education at the Soane!

In July this year, the culmination of the development of varied and inspirational schools and families programmes, together with the completed dedicated facilities for education, resulted in the Education Department receiving the Sandford Award, a Quality Mark for education in museums, which sets a seal of approval on what has been achieved so far at the Museum.

The development in education for children does not mean that adult education has been forgotten. For several years now artist James Willis has run his highly acclaimed course of art classes and workshops from the Soane, and these now have something of a cult following. The Museum has also developed an excellent partnership with St John's Church in Bethnal Green – a building designed by Soane himself – encouraging people who use the local Community Centre to participate in activities in the Museum. Art Classes have also been arranged for a range of adult audiences, from a watercolour workshop for adults with disabilities in Earls Court to regular workshops for homeless people held in the Museum. The Soane Study Group still meets several times a year for talks on in-progress research on aspects of architectural history, and now uses the new Seminar Room in No. 14. Indeed, the Museum is keen on encouraging like-minded societies and amenity groups to hire the room for meetings and lectures – it is fully equipped and can seat about 30 people. These activities, coordinated by Beth Walker, are still expanding and this year sees the advent of monthly lunchtime 'Curator's Choice' talks and a Saturday drawing course for young adults (15–18). Meanwhile our exhibitions programme continues to explore our collections, or bring in exhibitions which celebrate Soane's influence or era – recent exhibitions on David Chipperfield's restoration of the Neues Museum in Berlin, or of Soane's contemporary, the artist, George Scharf, show the range and quality of what we offer. Catalogues or leaflets are always produced, and wherever possible lectures, trails and other educational activities are laid on to complement these shows. Indeed, our next show, *Order: Myth, Meaning and Beauty in Architecture*, opens on 16 October and runs until the end of January 2010. The exhibition, drawn almost wholly from the Museum's collection and Library, explores the origins and meaning of the classical orders of architecture – Doric, Ionic, Corinthian – as well as the less familiar but no less fascinating Tuscan, Composite, Britannic and even Ammonite orders.

Finally, the Museum's major capital project, *Opening up the Soane*, for which we are currently still fundraising, will provide yet more opportunities for learning and engagement. As well as reinstating a host of lost historic features and arrangements, *Opening up the Soane* will provide the Museum with a bigger, better, Gallery for exhibitions, new conservation studios where visitors can see, and occasionally participate in, work in progress, an exhibition about Soane and an introductory film, as well as a redesigned website and enhanced facilities to help us welcome more visitors, including people with disabilities. Mike Nicholson describes these developments and aspirations in more detail below. Most of all, *Opening up the Soane* will encourage us to celebrate and share the Soane, which is after all a monument to the thirst for knowledge of its creator.

TIM KNOX  
September 2009

## An Exciting Future for Education at the Soane

Regular readers of the *Newsletter* will know that the Museum is in the process of developing a major new restoration project called *Opening up the Soane*. The project will start in 2011 and will take two years to complete. The two major aims of the project are

- to reinstate and open more of Soane's original house-museum to the public

- to encourage more and wider audiences to visit the Museum where they will find better interpretation, a larger Exhibition Gallery and full access for people with disabilities

All this will be achieved while preserving the Museum's unique atmosphere.

As with the recent acquisition and refurbishment of No. 14 Lincoln's Inn Fields, *Opening up the Soane* is designed with the Museum's education programme at the forefront. It will provide a platform on which to expand our education services and offer new activities and attract audiences who are new to the Soane. In total we hope to be able to work with 25% more schools, families and other groups as a result of the *Opening up the Soane* project.

In particular, *Opening up the Soane* will see the opening of two extra floors to the public – Sir John Soane's Private Apartments and Model Room and the new exhibition Gallery. This will have the effect of increasing visitor capacity by up to 33% but at the same time the Museum should feel less crowded. A suggested visitor route should mean less wear and tear on the fabric of the building, which will be a great advantage.

Allowing visitors to see Soane's private apartments will present wider opportunities to develop educational activities that will, for example, focus on the domestic life of the house. Visitors will also have the opportunity to see an introductory film in the Old Kitchen or take a virtual tour. In the heart of the Museum, there will be a new Interpretation Room (where there will be explanatory panels, a children's zone, online access to Soane information, podcasts, catalogues and publications and special displays of objects in the collection that have no permanent home). This Interpretation Room is directly behind No. 12 and is where Soane encouraged his Royal Academy students to come and study and draw and learn from the collections; so it will be good to see it reinstated



Soane's Model Room, watercolor painted in c.1835. British Library, London.

for education purposes, as Soane always intended.

The reinstated historical model collection – the largest in the UK – will be a superb addition for educational activities at all levels, particularly for schools, FE and HE institutions, as the Museum will be able to explore new themes. This will be available for all visitors to see on the second floor of No. 13. On the first floor of No. 12, there will be a new Exhibition Gallery, which will be at least 60% bigger than our present gallery space. At last, we will have adequate space to give talks about exhibitions *in situ* that will allow different levels of interpretation to be offered for different groups. We also hope to create a children's area in the Gallery that will help younger visitors to engage with exhibitions and the hidden collections. The doubled-in-size conservation studios on the second floor of No. 12 will also provide exciting new opportunities for practical demonstrations and talks about this essential work, which is often unseen by visitors.

At the same time as all this work is going on in the Museum, we will be redesigning and developing our website so that it offers more services online. Virtual access will be improved at all levels and we aim to create an exemplar quality virtual tour that will make use of interactive 360° photography, watercolours and drawings of the house and archive material.

*Opening up the Soane* includes new staff for the Museum. An Outreach Officer will help to attract under-represented audiences, using relationships already built up by the Education Department such as with members of community groups from St John's Church in Bethnal Green and the Dragon Hall in Camden, to create projects and activities that suit the interests and abilities of new target audiences.

## New Exhibition

ORDER: MYTH, BEAUTY AND MEANING IN ARCHITECTURE

16 October 2009 – 30 January 2010

Among the 30,000 drawings held in the Museum's collection are some 1,000 lecture drawings that were produced by Sir John Soane's pupils. These magnificent examples of architectural draughtsmanship were used to illustrate Soane's lectures at the Royal Academy (given by Soane from 1809 to 1820 and then read on his behalf by his friend the painter Henry Howard from 1832 to 1836) and at the Royal Institution from 1817 to 1820. The drawings were produced by such pupils of Soane as Henry Parke (1790–1835), George Basevi (1794–1845), George Underwood (c. 1793–1829) and George Bailey (1792–1860), who was first a pupil in the Soane office and after Soane's death, the first Curator of the Museum. The drawings, which are large-scale, would have been held aloft at the front of the lecture theatre in Somerset House by

The appointment of a Volunteer Co-ordinator will help the Education Department offer more regular placements and make better use of volunteers, as well as ensure training is provided for them. One key aspect of Education where volunteers will play a vital role is in the proposed Oral History Project, which aims to collect the reminiscences of past Curators, warders, visitors, neighbours, architects and other people who have been involved with, or inspired by, the Soane over the years. Volunteers will be trained to collect the oral history and the results will become an audio archive accessible to visitors, probably via the new website. If you would like to register your interest in becoming involved with the Soane Museum as a Volunteer – then please contact Satinder Bhatti (sbhatti@soane.org.uk) for more details. In due course we are looking forward to a wide range of volunteer roles becoming available.

You can learn more about all these plans by visiting the current special exhibition on *Opening up the Soane* in the old Research Library, to which visitors can gain access via the Drawing Room on the first floor. During the project there will be explanatory materials available and – subject to safety – hard hat site visits.

You can help – we are actively fundraising for *Opening up the Soane* and would be happy to receive donations specifically for our Education proposals. For further information, please contact Mike Nicholson, Development Director (mnicholson@soane.org.uk, 020 7440 4241).

KENNETH GRAY  
Development Adviser

Soane's pupils. However, for Soane's first lecture at the Royal Academy, his great friend J M W Turner requested that he be given the honour of holding up the lecture drawings. The drawings also quite often show a bold use of contrasting light and shade. This, together with their scale, would have made them visually legible from the back row of the theatre. Unfortunately, Soane, as a lecturer, had a tendency to rush. This resulted in his assistants having trouble in keeping pace with the images.

The forthcoming exhibition, *Order: Myth, Beauty and Meaning in Architecture*, is drawn primarily from this body of lecture drawings. Most in fact were used to illustrate Soane's second lecture where he described the origins, development and specific characteristics of the five classical orders of

architecture: Tuscan, Doric, Ionic, Corinthian and Composite. Soane considered the lecture drawings to be just as important a didactic tool as the lectures themselves. As he stated, at the start of the second lecture: 'Drawings of buildings, however slight, give clearer and more permanent ideas than can be obtained from the most detailed, correct, and elaborate descriptions; on most occasions drawings of the objects are as much superior even to the best descriptions as models are superior to drawings.'

The exhibition starts by looking at the mythical origins of the orders before addressing more archaeologically sound attempts to explain their origins, such as claiming they derived from Egyptian prototypes. Soane was wary of both these methods of accounting for the development of the orders; he saw them as arising out of natural forms. However, the most important part is devoted to the individual orders themselves: Tuscan, Doric, Ionic, Corinthian, Composite and 'fancy' orders.

Amongst the more beautiful lecture drawings that are being shown is one of the Corinthian order based on the Choric Monument of Lysicrates in Athens. For Sir John Soane, the Corinthian order was the pinnacle in the development of the architectural orders. It combined what was best in its proportions and sculptural decoration, as Soane stated in his second lecture:

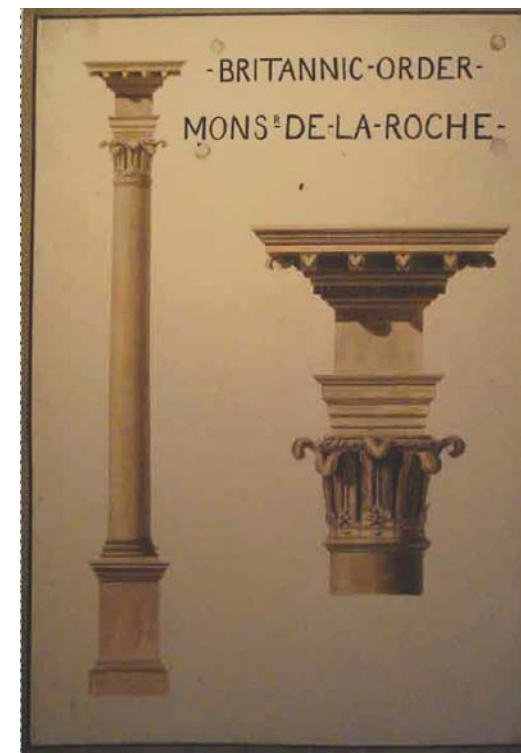
'The Corinthian Order makes the Grecian architecture complete. The Doric and Ionic convey correct ideas of masculine strength and female gracefulness, and in the Corinthian we trace the highest degree

of elegant decoration that architecture can produce. It is delicate, gay, and impressive.

Art cannot go beyond the Corinthian order: the whole composition is of the most correct proportions and of the greatest variety, its members are enriched with ornaments of the most exquisite fancy and chaste selection.'

Soane was usually scathing of the so-called 'fancy' orders – orders of architecture that contemporary architects invented to vie with antiquity – such as the Britannic order proposed by the obscure Windsor carpenter, Henry Emlyn (c. 1729–1815) and published in his book, *A proposition for a New Order of Architecture*, (London, 1781), a copy of which Soane owned. The order, also described as the British Order of St George, is highly unusual in that its column splits in two one quarter of the way up which Emlyn says was inspired by nature, specifically the sight of what he called 'twin trees' in Windsor Forest.

In spite of his disapproval of 'fancy' orders, Soane did admit admiration for one example – the Ammonite order named after the fossil shells which form the volutes of the order's capital. It had been proposed by George Dance the Younger (1742–1825) who used it on the façade of the Shakespeare Gallery, Pall Mall, (1788–89). Perhaps out of deference to his former teacher, Soane spoke approvingly of Dance's unusual invention: 'The beautiful capital in the drawing before you is so well conceived in all its parts, and so truly in the grand style of antiquity that it is impossible for any man with the least spark of the knowledge of architecture, or



Royal Academy Lecture Drawing,  
The British Order

Royal Academy Lecture Drawing,  
The Ammonite Order

with any love for the art, not to feel highly gratified with this production of successful genius.'

Most of the drawings that will be exhibited in *Order* have never been displayed before. This accounts for the excellent state of their preservation including the often subtle use of watercolour. By focusing on this relatively under-explored area of the Soane's drawing collection a 'hidden' treasure of the Museum will once more be made available to the public. The exhibition is designed to be informative to the lay

## The Soane Annual Lecture

NOW YOU SEE IT – NOW YOU DON'T: ON THE HARMONIC ORDER  
by Professor Joseph Rykwert

Thursday 10 December 2009 at 6.30pm

At the Royal College of Surgeons, 35–43 Lincoln's Inn Fields, London WC2

Joseph Rykwert was born in Warsaw, but educated in Britain. He was the Librarian of the Royal College of Art and held posts at the Universities of Essex and Cambridge where he was Slade Professor. He is currently Professor of Architecture Emeritus in the University of Pennsylvania, and has lectured or taught at most major universities throughout the world. His book *The Dancing Column* (MIT, 1996) is about to appear in Italian and Portuguese, while his latest work, *The Judicious Eye*, was published in 2008. All his books have been translated into several languages.

This lecture will complement the Museum's *Order* exhibition and is being held in December to tie in with the celebrations for the Royal Society's 350-year anniversary (2009–10), as a mark of the enduring link that still exists between the Society and the Soane today.

Susan Palmer, Archivist, reminds us that Soane regarded his election to the Royal Society as a great honour. He was elected a member of the Royal Society on 15 November 1821, and there are regular mentions in his diary of attending meetings of the Society at Somerset House, where it was then based, and of dining afterwards at the Crown and Anchor Tavern in the Strand. When, in 1833, he turned his attention to the constitution of the board of Trustees who would run his Museum after his death, he included a representative of the Royal Society amongst their number, to serve with four Life Trustees and four other representative Trustees to be elected by the Court of Alderman of the City of London, the Royal Academy of Arts, the Society of Antiquaries and the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, now the Royal Society of Arts. The first Trustee to be elected by the Royal Society in 1837 was the Duke of Hamilton,

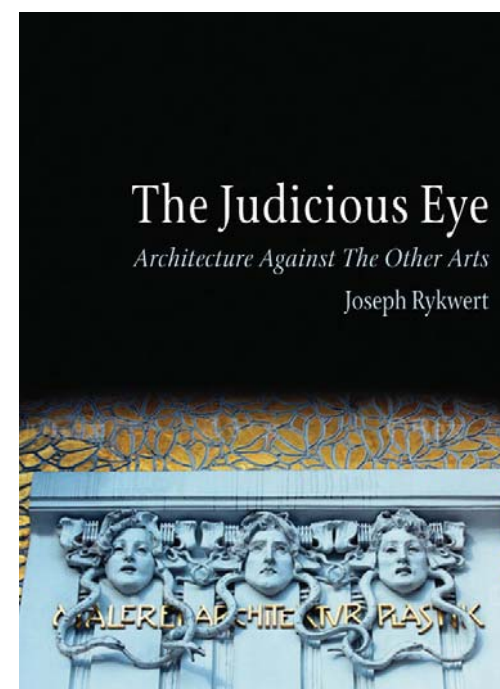
person – someone who perhaps has not looked at Classical architecture before and has not had the opportunity to understand its vocabulary of *metopes*, *triglyphs*, *modillions* and *cymas*. Through this, *Order* will continue in the spirit of Sir John Soane – the great propagator and teacher of Classical architecture.

DR JERZY KIERKUC-BIELINSKI  
Exhibitions Curator

and recently we have been pleased to welcome Professor Uta Frith on to the Board.

More information about the Soane Annual Lecture will be available on the Soane website soon.

For further details of the year-long calendar of events celebrating the Royal Society's 350-year anniversary, visit their website, <http://royalsociety.org/>



This year's Annual Lecture will be delivered by Joseph Rykwert, whose latest book is *The Judicious Eye*. Its publication caused the *Sunday Telegraph* to describe Rykwert as 'the year's most original historian'.

## Inspired by Soane

THREE ACCOUNTS OF EDUCATION WORK IN THE MUSEUM

There is no doubt that Sir John Soane's Museum is a very inspiring place. The Museum's Education Department is in the enviable position of introducing people to the Museum in a range of ways, from giving tours to school groups and running extended projects for students to running an active art workshop programme for adults. Below are accounts by three people who have been inspired by the Museum: James Willis, our art workshop tutor; Naomi Howarth, a student from the London College of Fashion; and Lucy Grace Trotman, the new Schools and Families Education Officer – who was so inspired by a school visit with her class that she applied to work here!

JAMES WILLIS,  
Artist and Freelance Tutor

One of the most rewarding aspects of working with the Education Department at the Soane is having the opportunity to introduce the Museum to new visitors through the art workshop programme. From the outset the aim of the programme was to help participants discover and develop their creative skills through exploring the life and times of Soane, his style as an educator, and his magnificent collection.

The Soane collection continually provides inspiration for the workshops, throwing up themes as diverse as book-making, picturesque watercolour painting, drawing in dark

places and plaster carving. The more the programme develops, the more possibilities seem to appear and it is always great fun planning the year ahead in response to the opportunities provided by the temporary exhibitions.

Sometimes the fine art skills taught in the workshops derive from the academic or professional practice of Soane's time; drawing from casts and sculpture is one example. This was not only the training students at the Royal Academy would receive but also the first tasks his pupils would be expected to undertake on their arrival in the office.

On other occasions the Museum itself is the inspiration for the activity and often small huddles of artists can be found lurking in corners drawing the dramatic dark spaces in the Crypt or complex reflections in the Breakfast Room. Facing the challenge of drawing at the Soane for the first time provokes very mixed reactions: at times delight and enthusiasm, and at others sheer terror! No doubt Soane's own pupils felt the same and, like them, today's visitors rise to the challenge. I remember only too well my first attempts at drawing in the Museum, the Dome Area. In at the deep end, why not? However a strange thing happens once you start drawing: the Museum seems to encourage you along by throwing out surprising patches of coloured light or deep shadows to keep you on your toes and slowly, by subtle variations like these throughout the day, turns your interest



Watercolour of the Upper Drawing Office by James Willis, painted from several sketches and a photograph made by James over the last couple of years. 'I was especially interested in the way the sunlight highlights the pieces of sculpture on the walls. This room for me, more than any other, sums up the creative inspiration and education established by Soane in his Museum.'

into an addiction which leaves you wanting to come back for more.

Working in this way, you begin to realise how painterly Soane's architecture is; the way he arranges space with contrasts of light and dark, colour and enticing views into other areas all lend themselves to being drawn or painted. Indeed, his approach was to combine painting, sculpture and architecture as one and in many ways it is hard to separate the three when trying to represent them on paper.

In the Museum only pencil drawings are made but the recent opening of the art rooms in No. 14 has ensured that creativity knows no bounds. Drawings made on location are transformed into watercolour paintings, lino prints and collages, relief carvings and architectural models. Back in the art room there is always a wonderfully creative buzz and I am thrilled that the Museum provides so much inspiration for everyone which they can take away with them and develop outside. We even receive Soane-inspired Christmas cards!

There seems to be no end to the possibilities for artists here, even without factoring in the fascinating visits to the Library to view drawings, prints and books which are a regular feature of the workshops; the expert knowledge of the Library curators adding another layer of inspiration for the group.

The combination of theory, example and practice were an important feature of Soane's teaching style and the art workshop programme takes inspiration from this. His pupils would be sent out to draw buildings (sometimes still under construction) and recently workshops have been held in other buildings designed by Soane as far afield as his country house, Pitzhanger Manor in Ealing, and St John's Church at Bethnal Green. Here, under the expert tuition of Matt Caines, a three-day course for beginners in stone carving has been introduced with great success. My own first effort, an attempt at a Roman panther's head from the Museum, is now sitting on my garden wall terrorising the next-door neighbour's cats! Who could have guessed inspiration from the Soane Museum would have such far reaching effects?

**NAOMI HOWARTH,**

*Undergraduate in Costume, Make-Up and Technical Effects at the London College of Fashion*

From the first mention of collaboration with Sir John Soane's Museum, students from the Costume, Make-Up and Technical Effects pathways at London College of Fashion jumped at the chance. We were given the opportunity to mask the guests of the annual Sarcophagus Party. From the first toe through the door, we could all see that this brief was going to be extraordinary.

Ushered into the serene and eerily beautiful interior of the Museum we immediately realised we were working with a very special place. Feverish sketching began, led by James Willis. Weaving through the tight corridors festooned with



*Naomi Howarth's winning Venetian mask design*

an assortment of sculptures, huddling in the Monk's Parlour with the face of many a wicked gargoyle leering out from the shadows and marvelling at the illusion of the endless layers of the mirrored museum, we all found our inspiration.

Over the weeks that followed, we had a series of meetings with various members of the Museum staff. The privilege of viewing the drawing collections with drawings curator Stephen Astley and being given a presentation by Director Tim Knox were seminal to the development of our design work. Relaying the theme of the party, Tim Knox talked to us of the history of the Venetian festival and the merging of the rakish decadence of the aristocracy meeting the seedy underworld in the debauchery of eighteenth-century Venice. Following the presentation, we finalised our ideas in order to pitch them to a Sarcophagus Party panel – an invaluable experience in itself for entering the competitive design world. In response to our pitches, we were assigned groups to mask, mine being all the waiting staff. Due to the diversity of the Museum there was huge variety amongst all our designs, with every student coming from a different angle. We had a few weeks to construct our masks, with the daunting prospect



*Students from the London College of Fashion wearing Venetian-style masks*

that Alexandra Shulman, the editor of *Vogue* UK, would judge our final productions. A drinks party was held for all the competing students and the four winners selected by Alexandra received invitations to the Sarcophagus Party.

It was a night to be remembered, with the Museum glittering in candlelight, the masked party goers being serenaded by a string quartet, and the constant offerings of flowing champagne and canapés. It truly did feel like we had stepped back three centuries.

Working with the Soane on this project was an immense privilege and pleasure. The staff were welcoming and enthusiastic, spurring us on to help create a spectacular array of masks. The Soane was an inspirational haven and I am sure the practice of researching and using to full advantage the facilities that the Museum has to offer will remain in our working practice for our future creative careers. It has certainly been one of the highlights of my degree and I would jump at the opportunity to work again with such a unique and wonderful museum.

**LUCY GRACE TROTMAN,**

*Schools and Families Education Officer at Sir John Soane's Museum*

I hope that Soane would be pleased to know that today his house-museum is perfectly placed to cater to school groups from a diverse cross section of inner-city London schools. When I was teaching at a primary school in Peckham I was surprised by how accessible the Museum is, in more ways than one. With the visits being free and most areas of inner-city London being within one bus route away, the Museum is well placed economically and geographically for teachers. This, coupled with the warm and welcoming reception from all staff at the Soane and the wonder of my class of 7 year olds at Sir John's extraordinary collection, led me to recommend Sir John Soane's Museum to all the other teachers at my school. Now, in my capacity as a member of staff in the Soane Education Department, I intend to ensure that children continue to have their imagination sparked by the tours and activities offered by the schools programme.

Thanks to the hard work of my predecessor, Jane Monahan, and the support of all the staff here at the Soane, currently over 3,000 pupils per year enjoy contact with the Museum and this figure is set to rise further. The Education Department at the Museum is able to offer the invaluable event of experiential learning through one of our workshops to at least 150 children a week, either by a class trip to the Museum or a workshop held at the school itself. My first challenge is to get to grips with the excellent programme Jane created and to maintain the high standards she set.

The outreach sessions are offered to all age groups but are particularly popular with Key Stage 1 classes (children aged 4–7 years). The youngest pupils are best taught by us in the comfort of their own classrooms; the Museum, filled as it is with delicate artefacts, just proves too much of a temptation for little hands (and quite often for big hands too)! Having a session in their school at this age means that they have the visit to look forward to when they reach junior school. The sessions offered in schools, linked to the Science Curriculum, focus either on Light or Bridges. When presented to small children in a tactile, Soane-inspired way, these subjects prove to inspire wonder and awe! The simple but effective Handling Kits that our educators take to schools currently cater to 2,000 children per year.

As the children get older, visits to the Museum, which are offered to Key Stage 2 children (from 7 years old) and upwards, involve a tour of the Museum that can be tailored to the teacher's choice, based on what the pupils are learning in school at the time. For Key Stage 2 classes we offer tours on a range of subjects, from Ancient Rome to Light, Shadow and Reflection, whilst always including the inimitable history of the Museum and the story of Sir John Soane. Key Stage 3 and 4 classes (children aged 11–16) may be given their own tailor-made tour of the Museum or their teacher may book to take part in one of our unique 'Concrete Crushathon'

workshops. My first day of work here, in fact, involved shadowing Jane Monahan and architect Anderson Inge during a Concrete Crushathon workshop that they both led for a very rowdy, but very excited and interested, group of boys who had special educational needs. To see this group so highly engaged with the practical logistics of this hands-on session, which involved using their numeracy skills, science knowledge and ability to work as a team, instantly confirmed to me that I was in the right job. We are hoping to develop the 'Crushathon' programme in 2009–10 by delivering extended outreach projects in collaboration with individual schools.

As a National Museum, and in keeping with Sir John Soane's own wishes that the Museum should be free of charge and used as a source of architectural education, we do not charge school groups for workshops and tours. In order to offer high-quality tours and workshops, we work with a team of freelancers, who lend their expertise and

knowledge of art, architecture and classical civilisation to the education team. Each tour or workshop requires two freelance members of staff, allowing the class to view the Museum in smaller groups and ensuring the safety of the artefacts in the Museum. This arrangement has made the Museum known for its intimate and engaging tours, something of which we are justifiably proud. However, with each half-day workshop costing about £300 to run, and new resources for the very popular Light and Bridges Handling Kits costing between £500 and £1,000, it is quite challenging to meet the increasing demand for workshops. As Tim Knox writes, the department is 'run on a shoe-string', and the Education Department, together with our fundraising colleagues, is always looking for supporters for our programmes. This will help introduce the Museum to even more budding young architects, thereby fulfilling Soane's hopes for his 'Academy of Architecture'.



School children exploring architecture at the Museum

## Launch of the new Soane Education Website

If you happen to have clicked on to the Soane website over the last few weeks, you may have noticed that the education section has a bran new look.

Website development is very close to the Soane Museum's heart at the moment; in the not-too-distant future, as part of the huge *Opening Up the Soane* project, the current plan is to redevelop the entire Soane Museum website and web consultant Martin Bazley is working with staff at the Museum to create a brief for this. The Education Department, however, is forging ahead and (we like to think) leading the way for the rest of the Museum, by re-organising and re-designing its section of the website first.

These changes came about thanks to the Audience Development Funding received by the Education Department from the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (funding which was dedicated to the website redevelopment and to two projects for schools: the 'Concrete Crushathon' and the 'Hogarth Meets Manga' workshops).

Over the summer, I worked with Simon Baker of *Sorcerer's Apprentice* to create the new mini site, which can be accessed from the main website [www.soane.org](http://www.soane.org), but also has its own URL – [www.soaneeducation.org.uk](http://www.soaneeducation.org.uk). It is something that will benefit the Education Department greatly. When the *OUTS* work is taking place, it is likely that the education section will be redeveloped again, to fit in with the rest of the new site. This will be in one or two years' time which begs the question: why was a new education section so vital now?

Educational activities have long been hidden within the main Soane website, requiring detective skill and persistence to ferret them out. So many people now use the internet as their first port of call when searching for any information and, quirky and simple as the main Soane website is, the education programme was not being shown to its best advantage. For the many people being introduced to the Soane for the first time by word-of-mouth recommendations, from potential adult art workshops participants to primary school teachers (notoriously short of time), all listings and information about the educational activities are easy to locate, beautifully presented and generally more welcoming. Much thought went into how the programmes should be presented and any future changes would still maintain this order.

As the education programme has expanded, so the problems with the website have been compounded. Educational activities now range from the Study Group, set up over 8 years

ago, to the Architectural Drawing classes for 15–18 year olds introduced this year. Each of the different offerings need to be displayed prominently on the website and, vitally, kept up to date – a problem when the Museum does not have a member of staff dedicated to the website. The new education site has been built so that it is incredibly easy to update – something that even I am now able to do!

We now work with many more schools, colleges and HE institutions on extended, creative projects. Teachers, pupils and students are often inspired greatly by a visit to the Soane and a key aim of the new education website was to provide somewhere that could showcase work produced as a result of visits and projects. The 'Gallery' section of the website does just this.

So, what does the future hold? Now that the new site is live, we hope our users and visitors will approve of the changes and that this will be reflected in an increase in bookings for activities. We are very interested in any feedback or comments, which can be directed to me at [bwalker@soane.org.uk](mailto:bwalker@soane.org.uk). Never wanting to rest on our laurels though, the new website is opening up many possibilities and ideas. In the future we hope to develop online activities and resources that can help support a visit to the Soane or that will provide people who are unable to visit the Museum with some idea as to how this 'Academy of Architecture' works. Watch this (virtual) space.

BETH WALKER  
Head of Education



The new Soane Education website homepage

## *New for 2009 – 2010: forthcoming events and activities*

In his piece, 'An Exciting Future for Education at the Soane', Mike Nicholson, set out the many ways that educational activities will be affected positively by the Museum's *Opening Up the Soane* project. However, time is not standing still between now and then and there are many activities taking place over the forthcoming year. Particular highlights are listed below:

### **Adult Art Workshops:**

#### **Illuminating Letters**

Friday 4 December | £35 |

Create a page of illuminated letters and calligraphy inspired by examples from Soane's Library.

*Rosemary Bianchi*

#### **Lino Printing : New Year cards or gifts**

Thursday 17 December | £35 |

Make block-printed cards and gifts inspired by the exhibition *Order!*

*Lucy Brennan*

#### **Sublime Watercolours**

Friday 22 January | £35 |

Inspired by Turner come and paint a 'Sublime' landscape painting using atmospheric painterly effects and handmade paper.

*James Willis*

#### **An Introduction to Stone Carving**

Friday 5, Saturday 20 & Sunday 21 March | £85 |

After an introduction and sketching in the Museum, join sculptor Matt Caines at the Soane-designed St John's Church, Bethnal Green and turn your design into three dimensions.

*James Willis & Matt Caines*

#### **Architectural Drawing 15-18:**

A six-week course, one Saturday per month,

11:00am–3:00pm | £75 |

*Saturdays: 17 October; 21 November; 12 December; 16 January;*

*20 February ; 20 March*

This new course is designed to help you develop and extend your mark-making and observation skills by challenging your approach to drawing. Working with professional artist James Willis, you will explore the Museum and other interesting architectural venues in London. Ideal for students currently studying fine or applied art and wishing to continue into Higher Education.

### **Curator's Choice Talks:**

The last Friday of every month (except December) |

Free – donations welcome!

Starting in October 2009, the Museum is pleased to be offering short lunchtime talks that focus on objects in Soane's wonderful collection.

To attend a Curator's Choice Talk, please come to the front door of No. 14 Lincoln's Inn Fields (next door to the Museum), where the Curator of the day will meet you. Doors open at 1:00pm for a 1:15pm start. There is no need to book.

### **Children's Holiday Workshops:**

#### **Roman 'Arty'facts**

Tuesday 22 December (2 x half day) | £8 |

Investigate Roman objects in Sir John Soane's collection.

Get messy with clay and make your own artefacts to take home. *Rosie Fuller*

#### **Sarcophagus Tales: The Secret Story of Soane's Sarcophagus**

Wednesday 17 February (whole day) | £15 |

Decipher the symbols and make your own version of the hieroglyphics around Soane's Sarcophagus, complete with Mummy Case. *Rosemary Bianchi*

#### **Ceramic Tiles**

Tuesday 10 August (whole day) | £15 |

Using the wonderful variety of patterns in the Museum as inspiration, design and paint your own Sir John Soane's Museum ceramic tiles. *Caroline Dorset*

For more details on the informal education activities at the Soane and to make bookings, please pick up a leaflet, see our wonderful new website or contact Beth Walker on 020 7440 4254.