

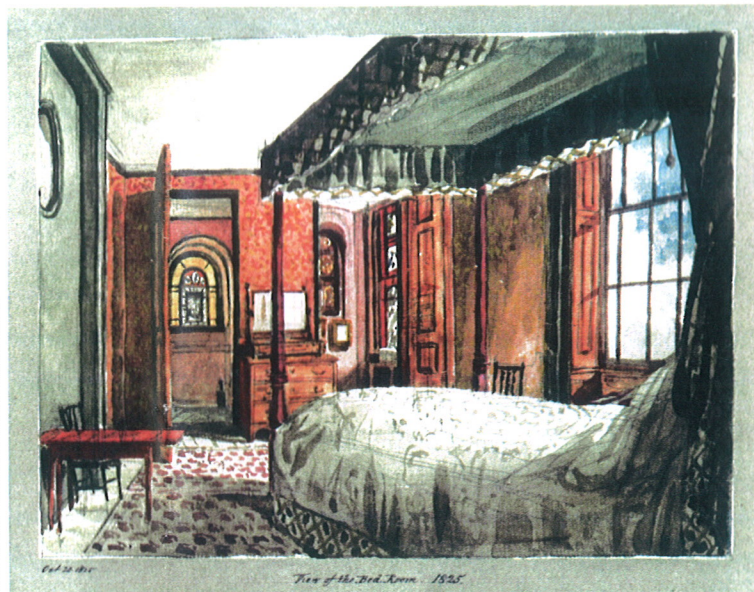


## SIMON TAIT'S DIARY

### Naughty curators

At the end of the year for craft curators is *Collect*, the Crafts Council's annual show now domiciled at the Crafts Council Gallery. It's the showcase for the best work, and if you think there is any real difference between "craft" and "art", come along in a state prepared to be disabused. A part of its evolution is *Art Fund Collect*, sponsored by the Art Fund of course, in which £10,000 is offered to UK curators to buy an outstanding piece of temporary international work for their museum or gallery. Curators have to apply by March 9, and then they get an exclusive one-day preview – before prospective buyers and VIPs – to pick what they want; they then have to justify their choice before the winners are announced. So get your application in.  
<http://www.artfund.org/grants/application-for-funding/art-fund-collect>.

Can't wait for next



### Soane alone

It used to be called "London's best kept secret", but with 120,000 visitors a year there's nothing very secretive about the Sir John Soane Museum. Or so I thought till Monday when the new director Tim Knox unveiled the £7m restoration which will reveal, for the first time since he died in 1837, Sir John's bedroom, bathroom and, um, oratory – personal chapel. This was the house that the architect built, or rather the three next to each other as he acquired property. He left it to the nation on the proviso that it was

opened to the public as a museum, but on the first house only and it has taken until quite recently to acquire the other two and make it possible to return as much as possible to the way it looked when he died.

Simon Jervis, the former director of the Fitzwilliam Museum who is now the Soane's chairman, tells me that they've even found a lost passage that they can incorporate into the museum as a basement link. "Everything is going back as nearly as possible to the way Soane had it" he says. "The place is full of discoveries, little light inlets or recesses that Soane had a need for,

### Mirror image

There is something about clubbable men that their memberships seem to reach unintentionally down through the generations, and it seems to be particularly true of artists. The Federation of British Artists has one of those stories in its fabulous *Pure Gold* exhibition at the Mall Galleries celebrating its 50th birthday. There are eight societies in the fed, and one of them is the New English Art Club, founded in 1885. An early member was William Orpen, later Sir William, and the Mall have been able to borrow this picture, *The Mirror*, for it from the Tate. It couldn't have done this until recently when the security and air conditioning