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Sir John Soane's Museum: Changelessness and Change

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Introduction

It is a tale well known in our circles. Sir John Soane, the 'romantic artist',¹ 'difficult'² in the way of romantic artists. When 'nothing tended to ruffle his mind, his manner was animated and presupposing in an eminent degree',³ but his 'excessive reaction to any form of criticism'⁴ made him a 'captive to his own self-torturing mind'.⁵ Possessing many 'personal idiosyncrasies',⁶ he nonetheless 'felt with the utmost acuteness those unsparing reflections upon his peculiarities'.⁷ 'He was not, in the ordinary sense, a happy man',⁸ for 'his happiness was only such as he could ring from a jealous and hostile world'.⁹ Given his 'complex character',¹⁰ 'he was irritable, impetuous and intractable'¹¹ and given to 'petulant wrangles'.¹² With his 'terse notebooks'¹³ and 'self-justifying pamphlets',¹⁴ which featured 'occasional explosions of anger or self-pity',¹⁵ he gave into 'inner conflicts'¹⁶ that 'a better disciplined mind would have disregarded'.¹⁷ Always 'impatient of criticism',¹⁸ his 'complex character',¹⁹ almost 'paranoiac',²⁰ displayed 'edginess and vanity',²¹ and 'he could not bear a contradiction'.²² 'In curiously unimportant ways Soane could be mean',²³ and his 'persecution complex and unyielding Old Testament morality'²⁴ fuelled 'his inability to weigh his misfortunes against his blessings'.²⁵

1 Watkin, David, 'Soane & His Contemporaries,' *John Soane*, Frank Russell (ed), Architectural Monographs series, Academy/St Martins Press, 1983: 40.

2 Summerson, *John, Sir John Soane 1753-1837*, London, Art & Technics, 1952: 14.

3 Donaldson, Thomas Leverton, *A Review of the Architectural Life of Sir John Soane, Architect*, John Williams, 1837: 25.

4 Stroud, Dorothy, *Sir John Soane, Architect*, Faber & Faber, 1984: 50.

5 Summerson, *Sir John Soane 1753-1837*: 14.

6 Hitchcock, Henry-Russell, 'Introduction,' in Stroud, Dorothy, *The Architecture of Sir John Soane*, Studio Books, 1961: 13.

7 Donaldson 26.

8 Summerson, *Sir John Soane 1753-1837*: 46.

9 Summerson, *Sir John Soane 1753-1837*: 14.

10 Stroud, Dorothy, *The Architecture of Sir John Soane*, Studio Books, 1961: 27.

11 Donaldson 25.

12 Summerson, *Sir John Soane 1753-1837*: 14.

13 Darley, Gillian, 'Soane: The Man & His Circle,' *John Soane Architect: Master of Space & Light*, Margaret Richardson & MaryAnne Stevens (eds), accompanying Royal Academy of Arts London exhibition, 9 September-3 December 1999, Royal Academy, 1999: 18.

14 Darley, Gillian, *John Soane: An Accidental Romantic*, Yale University Press, 1999: 214.

15 Darley, 'Soane: The Man & His Circle,' 18.

16 Watkin 40.

17 Donaldson 26.

18 Donaldson 26.

19 Stroud, *The Architecture of Sir John Soane*: 27.

20 Summerson, *Sir John Soane 1753-1837*: 14.

21 Watkin 40.

22 Donaldson 25.

23 Summerson, *Sir John Soane 1753-1837*: 14.

24 Watkin 40.

25 Stroud, *Sir John Soane, Architect*: 49.

Stuck by a pronounced 'trait of melancholia',²⁶ he was given to 'intrigues',²⁷ 'addicted to mystification'²⁸ and 'a bit of rebel'.²⁹ As one of the most colourful comments on his character asserts:

the narrow passages and the small openings which in Soane's later work see to be related to his escape from hostility and disappointment. It may be appropriate to leave Soane in Lincoln Inn's Fields, nursing resentments within his marble mouse-trap.³⁰

From the time of his demise to the present, the flaws rightly or wrongly ascribed to Soane's character flow through almost every discussion of him. Moreover, this assigation is essential, as his personality and architecture are linked, for, as the renowned former Curator John Summerson asserts, that 'the strangeness of the one reflects the abnormality of the other seems, on the face of it, likely'.³¹ And this is reason he is still alluring to the contemporary world, as Henry-Russell Hitchcock claims, because the difficulties of his disposition 'make it possible for him to appeal so strongly to us across a century of incomprehension'.³²

This particular tale transcends the mere salaciousness of characterization. It was his 'conviction bordering on megalomania that his great abilities would be transmitted to his stock'³³ that led to his most profound grief. 'His belief that they would become inheritors of his genius, in fact the dream of an architectural dynasty, was the source of his greatest and deepest disappointment'.³⁴ Undoubtedly influenced by the early demise of John, his elder son,³⁵ and the increasing questionable behaviour of his younger son George,³⁶ Soane moved beyond his family as the inheritors to his architectural legacy. This 'failure of his dynastic plans'³⁷ gave rise the transformation of 13 Lincolns Inn Fields (LIF) from a residence to the Sir John Soane Museum, where 'no changes of consequences have been made to the building'³⁸ since his death on 20 January 1837.

Yet, like most tales, the telling is only the beginning.

26 Buzas, Stefan, *Sir John Soane's Museum*, Tubingen/Berlin, London, 1994: 7.

27 Darley, *John Soane: An Accidental Romantic*: 171.

28 'Sir John Soane's Museum,' *The Builder* 51, no. 2287 (4 Dec 1886): 828.

29 Margaret Richardson, Curator of Sir John Soane's Museum,' *Country Life* 190, no. 12 (21 Mar 1996): 83.

30 Watkin 57.

31 Summerson, *Sir John Soane 1753-1837*: 15.

32 Hitchcock 13.

33 Buzas 7.

34 Summerson, *Sir John Soane 1753-1837*: 14.

35 Darley, 'Soane: The Man & His Circle': 24.

36 Iozaki, Arata, 'Sir John Soane's Museum: A Conversation Piece without a Family,' *Apollo* 81 (April 1990): 227.

37 Darley, *John Soane: An Accidental Romantic*: 310.

38 Stroud, *The Architecture of Sir John Soane*: 111.

'Salvaging this hoarded cargo from the shipwrecked dream'³⁹

There is no doubt that Soane's latter years were marred by bad relations with his younger son and his elder son's widow. Shortly after Soane's death, Professor Thomas Donaldson, a Museum Trustee,⁴⁰ pronounced in a speech dedicated to the recently departed architect:

I regard him only so much as respects his conduct as a public man. I would not disturb the solemn repose of the tomb, in which his remains have just been deposited, by allusions to those various sources of joy or sorrow, which chequered his domestic life.⁴¹

This magnanimous (and very public) gesture would have been entirely unnecessary had Soane's "domestic life" been anything approaching affable or private. However, there is more to his bequest than the partial motivation of personal disappointments and pettiness. Soane moved from a living legacy of future architects to the presentation of himself through the architecture, collections and arrangement of 13 LIF, and did everything in his power to preserve those elements as he left them..

Soane began investigating the possibility of bequeathing 13 LIF and its contents to the public in 1824, when Timothy Tyrrell, a long-time advisor, wrote Soane on 16 April of that year to give advice on potential future Trustees.⁴² Believing the official approval of the government was the only way to safeguard his wishes, eventually he sought a private Act of Parliament. George's petition to block its passage, lodged via William Cobbett MP, was eventually rejected,⁴³ and the bill passed on 20 April 1833.

The Museum,

comprising, among other valuable effects, the Belzoni Sarcophagus, a Library of Books and Manuscripts, Prints, Drawings, Pictures, Models, and various Works of Art, all of which are deposited and arranged in a house and offices in the occupation of the said Sir John Soane, built and expressly adapted for the purposes of the said Museum⁴⁴

was limited to the premises of 13 LIF, which, as the above passage aptly noted, was a house that was 'specifically altered' to become a museum. Along with the interest from a £30,000 bank annuity, the rents from 12 LIF would support the museum⁴⁵ and

³⁹ Summerson, *Sir John Soane 1753-1837*: 44.

⁴⁰ 'Sir John Soane's Museum,' *The Builder* 38, no. 1934 (28 Feb 1880): 261.

⁴¹ Donaldson 8.

⁴² Letter, Soane Museum, 16/15/22, 16 April 1824, TT to JS from the Guildhall.

⁴³ Darley, *John Soane: An Accidental Romantic*: 302.

⁴⁴ An Act for Settling & Preserving Sir John Soane's Museum, Library & Works of Art, in Lincoln's Inn Fields, in the County of Middlesex, for the Benefit of the Public & for Establishing a Sufficient Endowment for the Maintenance of the Same, Act of Parliament, 20 April 1833: Section I.

⁴⁵ Act, Section I.

pay the Curator and Inspectress £300 and £100 per year respectively.⁴⁶ Yet this generosity was not unfettered, as it came with conditions:

whereas the said Sir John Soane is desirous that such Museum and Library and Works of Art should be kept together... but he is unable, without the aid of Parliament, to carry such his intentions into effect: therefore, to the end that the said Museum or Collection, Library, and Works of Art, may be preserved and maintained for the public benefit, according to the intention of Sir John Soane.⁴⁷

His collection would remain as he intended. 13 LIF remained in Soane's possession until his death, when the Trustees named in the Act would become vested with both of 13 LIF and 12 LIF, the latter only to be rented out to support the venture, never conceived as part of the Museum proper. Meanwhile, the Curator was charged with keeping 'the said house, offices, and Museum, at all times, as nearly as circumstances will admit, in the state and condition in which the same shall be left at the decease of the said Sir John Soane'.⁴⁸

Investigating the contemporary meanings of the words so specifically chosen for the Act further highlights the protective and restrictive trust Soane cemented with the signature of the King. Each Trustee was 'one to whom something is committed for the use of another'⁴⁹ and 'one to who any thing is made over or bequeathed for the use and benefit of another; a guardian',⁵⁰ while the Curator was 'a guardian by law'⁵¹ and 'one who has the care and superintendance of a thing, place, or person'.⁵² Charged to preserve, 'to save; to defend from destruction or any evil'⁵³ and 'to keep from danger, corruption or destruction',⁵⁴ as well as maintain, 'to not suffer to change'⁵⁵ and 'to support; to assert as a tenet',⁵⁶ there is no question that this Act was meant to tie those in charge of LIF with leaving it precisely in the condition Soane left it.

Architect Arata Isozaki held that 13 LIF was 'a family portrait, yet without the family',⁵⁷ but this sentiment does not quite fit the circumstances. Soane was a man in control of his career and the presentation of himself to his peers. That his later experience of his sons was, at best, difficult spurred him to transform particular circumstances of his own life. For instance, ^hpromulgated the fantasy that George

46 Act, Section II.

47 Act, Section I.

48 Act, Section III.

49 Johnson, Samuel, *A Dictionary of the English Language*, Vol. 2, Thomas Tegg, 1831: 891.

50 Barclay, James, *Barclay's Universal English Dictionary*, J. McGowan, 1832: 865.

51 Fulton, G. & G. Knight, *A Dictionary of the English Language, Greatly Improved*, Whittaker, Treacher & Arnot, 1833: 81.

52 Barclay 231. The word 'superintendance' was spelled that way in this dictionary.

53 Johnson, *Dictionary*, Vol. 2: 383.

54 Barclay 701.

55 Johnson, *Dictionary*, Vol. 2: 89.

56 Fulton 193.

was not his biological child, but a changeling, an allegation George later unsuccessfully used to challenge his father's will.⁵⁸ Ostensibly, the bequest was for 'the public benefit',⁵⁹ yet during his lifetime Soane made no real use of any part of his collection for educational purposes, not even while he was the Professor of Architecture at the Royal Academy.⁶⁰ Though his passionate hopes for the professional within him to live on as the founder of an architectural dynasty expired, his quest to continue in another way (which he could control) did not, for 'his death, at a great age, was part of an orderly transfer. The house and museum, its collections and endowment secure, and, finally, published as he wished, would speak for him after his departure. Family affairs apart, there were no loose ends'.⁶¹

Except his "family affairs" were resolved, for these surviving relatives were not vested as the standard-bearers for Soane. Had his sons or even grandsons successfully followed him into architecture, the property would have entered the hands of his descendents.⁶² In the 1832 edition of *Description* Soane declared,

At my death, the property will descend to my Grandson, the son of the late John Soane, with sufficient funds to enable him to maintain and use the House, the Museum, and the Library, in the same manner as during my lifetime, including the salary of a Curator.⁶³

Yet circumstances had changed by the time of the Act's passage. 13 LIF and its contents were completely left in the control of Trustees. His grandson is mentioned only in Section XIV, which allowed John Soane to apply to the trustees to reside in his grandfather's house once he reached twenty-five, if he provided a bond and agreed to the conditions as it 'is now arranged and is to be preserved'.⁶⁴ Although he could live there, he would not be the Curator, and could only consult the Library and manuscripts if he was an architect. However, he died before the Trustees formerly considered his request,⁶⁵ and the final prospect of a living Soane participating in this form of continuation died with it.

Another Soane construction designed for personal use, the Soane Mausoleum in Old St Pancras Churchyard, constructed in 1816,⁶⁶ shows both the

57 Isozaki 227.

58 Darley, *John Soane: An Accidental Romantic*: 320.

59 Act, Section I.

60 Davey, Peter, 'Architecture & Remembrance: The Soane Museum & the Continuity of Tradition,' *Architectural Review* 175, no. 1044 (Feb 1984): 49.

61 Darley, *John Soane: An Accidental Romantic*: 316.

62 Summerson, John, 'Change, Decay & the Soane Museum,' *Architectural Association Journal*, Oct 1949: 50.

63 Soane, John, *Description of the House & Museum on the North Side of Lincoln's-Inn Fields, the Residence of John Soane*, James Moyes, 1832: 26-27.

64 Act, Section XIV.

65 *A New Description of Sir John Soane's Museum*, 10th ed, Sir John Soane Museum, 2001: 99.

66 Jones, Edward & Christopher Woodward, *A Guide to the Architecture of London*, 3rd ed., Seven Dials, 2000: 113.

specificity of Soane's selections and his lack of investment in his family in his final years. In 1827 sixteen year old Charlotte fell seriously ill, but Soane would offer no assistance. Upon her death on 29 November of that year, Soane would not even respond to George's request that she be buried in the family vault.⁶⁷ In the end, only Soane, his wife and his son John, whose protected illness and early death of tuberculosis⁶⁸ somewhat mitigated his father's conception of his failings were laid to rest in that small but still admired tomb. Soane's propensity to acknowledge in a constructed selective reality that he found more palpable is evidenced by who he selected and did not select for the official Soane resting place, a family tomb that excluded all but one of his blood relatives.

What Soane had quite effectively resolved by his death in 1837 was protecting the Act, his will and insuring that 13 LIF, its contents and their all-important arrangement would remain as he stipulated. He went to great lengths to have his bequest ratified by Parliament and signed by the King, and didn't stop with that. In the last years of his life he also produced two documents, *Details Respecting the Conduct & Connexions of George Soane, also of Frederick Soane* and *Memoirs of Mr. and Mrs. John Soane, Miss Soane and Captain Chamier*, which detailed at great length the failures and misdeeds of his children, their spouses and grandchildren. Described as 'a tedious catalogue' by a man who 'unleashed his resentment',⁶⁹ it had a far more practical purpose—as evidence gathered, organized and printed, ready for use in case his family challenged his wishes. Predictably, George and John's children combined forces to do just that, and it was the veracity of the document concerning George that led to the Judge upholding the bequest.⁷⁰ Soane's investment, energy and consuming yearning to survive in some manner after his death focused on 13 LIF.

67 Darley, *John Soane: An Accidental Romantic*: 285.

68 Darley, 'Soane: The Man & His Circle': 24.

69 Darley, *John Soane: An Accidental Romantic*: 310.

70 Darley, *John Soane: An Accidental Romantic*: 320.

Theory of Collection

While ruminating on the possible motivations Soane might have had in collecting, organizing and eventually bequeathing the building and contents of 13 LIF to the British public, Peter Davey dismisses the role of personal memorial relatively quickly:

Soane's own work—drawings, projects, models and, of course, the building itself—is an important element of the composition of the museum. No doubt the idea of a personal memorial formed a part of Soane's conception of his museum, but this interpretation does not explain the presence of so many ancient and contemporary objects which have no direct relevance to Soane's life.⁷¹

However, this short dismissal shows no contemplation for the role of the collector and the collections formed. Davey mistakenly emphasizes the origin of the objects, seeing them as a part of the thousands of divergent contexts from which they were taken.

These items, no matter how different they might appear, were all selected, and it is this selection over countless other possibilities open to Soane that is significant, as the 'very act of collection endows the work presented with a heightened sense of significance'.⁷² As former Curator Arthur Bolton noted in his Introduction to the 10th edition of the *Description*, 'Soane had a very clear idea of what he wanted, and refused many things that would have been of value, because he did not feel that they were really within the limits of his objective'.⁷³ The items included in 13 LIF were there to the exclusion of all that was available to Soane, and these choices were purposeful. Since the 16th century, Western European collectors assembled a wide variety of objects in order to convey meanings and ideas via their arrangement,⁷⁴ communicating the desired aims through placement and emphasis in relation to the other elements of the collection as opposed to considering an individual object in isolation. From the drawings to the paintings to the models to the manuscripts, each item within Soane's surroundings, by its selection and organization, was removed from its previous contexts and re-emerged as his museum piece. For in 'acquiring objects, the collector replaces production with

71 Davey 50.

72 Putnam, James, *Art & Artefact: The Museum as Medium*, Thames & Hudson, 2001: 34.

73 Bolton, Arthur T., 'Introduction by the Editor,' *Description of the House & Museum on the North Side of Lincoln's Inn Fields*, Arthur T. Bolton (ed), Soane Museum/University Press, 1920: 13. The *New Description*, organised by Summerson, is a distinct publication with distinct editions.

74 Schulz, Eva, 'Notes on the History of Collecting & of Museums,' *Interpreting Objects & Collections*, Susan M. Pearce (ed), Leicester Readers in Museum Studies, Routledge, 1994: 175.

consumption: objects are naturalised into the landscape of the collection itself'.⁷⁵

And that landscape was the designed environment of Soane's 13 LIF.

For this is the case despite whatever level of function these items might have had before their consumption by Soane, because as museum pieces they cease to function in any way other than as museum pieces.⁷⁶ The individual temporal and geographical origins and history of each item is overwhelmingly secondary the synchronous self-contained microchasm of the collection's world. 'The collection does not displace attention to the past; rather, the past is at the service of the collection, for whereas the souvenir lends authenticity to the past, the past lends authenticity to the collection'.⁷⁷ In Soane's epoch, a museum was defined as 'a repository of learned curiosities',⁷⁸ and each curiosity, 'a rarity',⁷⁹ was made even rarer and more select by the modifier learned meaning, 'skilled; skillful; knowing, with *in*; skilled in scholastick, as distinct from other knowledge'.⁸⁰ The collector, 'a gatherer',⁸¹ built a collection, 'an assemblage of things in the same place',⁸² with an assemblage being 'the collecting of a number of individuals together so as to form a whole'.⁸³ By the process of selection, organization, placement and emphasis, Soane was creating his own visual history, using these diverse physical fragments of the past to form narratives of his own making.

To say that Soane was obsessed with the exact placement of the objects in 13 LIF is an understatement. As former curator Peter Thornton succinctly put, 'He took an immense amount of trouble over every detail of their structure, decoration, furnishing and arrangement'.⁸⁴ The Act's formal requirement for the collection's arrangement to remain as unchanged as possible was a purposeful one, as John Britton noted:

To preserve these in there entireness within the walls which were purposefully raised for their reception, and display, and in union with the numerous architectural forms and effects which belong to the house, the most prudent and strict clauses were introduced into the act.⁸⁵

75 Stewart, Susan, 'Objects of Desire,' *Interpreting Objects & Collections*, Susan M. Pearce (ed), Leicester Readers in Museum Studies, Routledge, 1994: 256.

76 Pomian, Krzysztof, 'The Collection: Between the Visible & the Invisible,' *Interpreting Objects & Collections*, Susan M. Pearce (ed), Leicester Readers in Museum Studies, Routledge, 1994: 160.

77 Stewart 254.

78 Johnson, *Dictionary*, Vol. 2: 177.

79 Barclay 231.

80 Johnson, *Dictionary*, Vol. 2: 33. "Scholastick" was spelt as such in this dictionary.

81 Fulton 62.

82 Barclay 180.

83 Barclay 56.

84 Thornton, Peter, 'Lit Up with Gorgeous Hues,' *Country Life* 178, no. 4609 (19 Dec 1985): 1978.

85 Britton, John, *Brief Memoir of Sir John Soane*, from Fisher's National Portrait Gallery series, 1834: 10.

He was vested in a composition that took years to develop. Beginning in 1808 and continuing until 1837, his office produced numerous detailed and gorgeously executed watercolours, far too many to ever be used for exhibition or publication. For in Soane's architectural office, 'always if there was nothing else to do the Museum was there to be drawn, or its "ornaments," i.e., the casts that enliven its walls'.⁸⁶ The student sketches and drawings within the Museum archive is filled with detailed interior views of proposed and executed item placements.⁸⁷ This task occupied not only pupils and junior staff members such as James Adams,⁸⁸ R. D. Chantrell⁸⁹ and Frank Copland,⁹⁰ but his chief clerk George Bailey.⁹¹ This represents a significant outlay of office time and effort, and literally illustrates how much Soane cared about the minute positioning of each item in his ever-expanding collection. Some of the most extraordinary of these watercolours, most notable by Bailey and Joseph Gandy (Figures 1, 2 and 3), whose collaboration with Soane as his chief draughtsman was 'almost a true partnership between equals',⁹² are reproduced as postcards,⁹³ on sale in the entry hall to this day. Not only did he concern himself with the actual spaces, objects and display, but how they were represented in two-dimensional form.

As Summerson noted in 1949, 'Over-riding the individual units is the increasing interest of the institution as a whole',⁹⁴ and that arrangement and the spaces built for that placement was (originally) Soane's. When University College London Professor T. Roger Smith suggested on 15 November 1892 that 13 LIF be

⁸⁶ Bolton, Arthur T., *Architectural Education a Century Ago*, Sir John Soane Museum, 1926: 3.

⁸⁷ For instance: 12/13 LIF, Design for the Dome Area, entitled 'Design for Part of the Museum,' 13 June 1808, perspective at floor level, ink & watercolour, 52 x 43.5 cm (SJSJM PSA 30, 12/13 L.I.F.); 12/13 LIF, Design for Dome Area, perspective looking west, entitled 'Design for Crypt of the Museum,' 25 June 1808, ink & watercolour, 52 x 43.5 cm (SJSJM PSA 3F, 12/13 L.I.F.); 12/13 LIF, Design for Dome Area, perspective looking east, entitled 'Design for the Museum,' 25 June 1808, sectional ink & watercolour, 61 x 41.5 cm (SJSJM PSA 37, 12/13 L.I.F.) and 12/13 LIF, View from Dome into Old Picture Room, entitled 'View in the Museum 13 L.I.F. Looking into the "Picture Room",' 25 June 1819, watercolour, 38.5 x 28.5 cm (SJSJM PSA, 23. 12/13 L.I.F.).

⁸⁸ For instance, 12/13 LIF, Design for the 'Dome' Area, perspective looking east, entitled 'Design for Part of the Museum,' 6 July 1808, James Adams, ink & watercolour, 42 x 33 cm (SJSJM PSA 30, 12/13 L.I.F.) and 12/13 LIF, Design for the 'Dome' Area, perspective looking south, entitled 'View of Part of the Museum,' 8 July 1808, James Adams, ink & watercolour, 33 x 40 cm (SJSJM PSA 31, 12/13 L.I.F.).

⁸⁹ For instance, 13 LIF, Section through Dome, looking east, entitled 'Section of Museum,' 1810, R. D. Chantrell, ink & wash, 56.5 x 44.5 cm (SJSJM PSA 17, 13 L.I.F.).

⁹⁰ 13 LIF, Section of the Museum & Breakfast Room, 10 June 1818, pen, ink & watercolour, 54.5 x 64 cm (SJSJM PSA, 13 LIF).

⁹¹ 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields, Section through Dome, looking east, entitled 'View of Various Architectural Subjects Belonging to John Soane, Esqre., R.A. as Arranged in May MDCCCX,' George Bailey, 1810, watercolour, 96 x 62.5 cm (SJSJM 14/6, 3. 13 L.I.F.).

⁹² de la Ruffiniere du Prey, Pierre, *Sir John Soane: Architectural Drawings in the Victoria & Albert Museum*, Victoria & Albert Museum: 15.

⁹³ For instance: Bailey, George, Sectional Perspective through the 'Dome' at 13 LIF, May 1810, postcard reproduction of said watercolour, Sir John Soane's Museum; Gandy, Joseph, perspective of the Dome Area at 13 LIF by Lamplight, 1811, postcard reproduction of the said pen and watercolour, Sir John Soane's Museum and Gandy, Joseph, View of the Dome Area in Sir John Soane's Museum, Seen from the Crypt, 9 September 1825, postcard reproduction of said watercolour, Sir John Soane's Museum.

shattered and the collection split across a number of other public institutions,⁹⁴ the editorial staff of *The Nation*, although publishing his letter, vigorously opposed the restoration, because

...it is not only a gift to the nation, but as a kind of gift to the public, part of the interest of the nation in the house itself, and the special and the Museum consists in the house and its contents, and would be destroyed if they were

...were not from Soane's epoch, by the presence of the objects of his own work,⁹⁵ and these items relate

...directly to the physical manifestations to a piece of architecture in its original form, as it is displayed in the National Picture Gallery



...between 1818 and 1825, never published, and a copy of the original 1818 composition

⁹⁴ See, for example, 'The National Picture Gallery', *The Nation*, 1825, p. 10. See also 'The National Picture Gallery', *The Nation*, 1825, p. 10. See also 'The National Picture Gallery', *The Nation*, 1825, p. 10. See also 'The National Picture Gallery', *The Nation*, 1825, p. 10.

⁹⁵ Summerson, 'Change', 53.

abandoned and the collection split across a number of other public institutions,⁹⁵ the editorial staff of *The Builder*, although publishing his letter, vigorously opposed the proposition, because

Sir John Soane evidently wished his very originally-planned house, with its collections, to remain not only as a gift to the nation, but as a kind of monument to himself, and it would be, to our thinking, unjustifiable to frustrate this intention; while to the public, part of the interest of the Museum consists undoubtedly in the house itself, and the special and individual character of the Museum consists in the house and its contents taken together, and would be destroyed if they were separated.⁹⁶

Although many of these items were not from Soane's epoch, by the process of collection he ascribed to them the qualities of his own world,⁹⁷ and these items relate very much to him.

That Soane would connect such physical manifestations to a piece of architecture and what was contained in is illustrated by the Dulwich Picture Gallery. Almost a labour of love, Soane never billed fees for this project and at one point even offered to pay for part of its construction.⁹⁸ Eventually encompassing an art gallery, a mausoleum devoted to the possessor and collector of the pictures as well as six almshouses,⁹⁹ Soane created a cohesive combination of these elements of legacy, death and continued life. It was Soane who decided that the Mausoleum would be combined so thoroughly with the gallery, as the benefactor wished for his tomb to be adjacent to the nearby Chapel.¹⁰⁰ What Soane produced was a series of spaces where the 'founders are immortalized by the juxtaposition of their lifework with their tombs, by gallery-cum-mausoleum'.¹⁰¹ Although the only burial at 13 LIF was his wife's dog Fanny, it is clear Soane strongly connected the outcome of the process of collection with the memory of the person who compiled and owned those collections.

Between 30 August and 22 September 1812, Soane penned a manuscript he never published entitled *Crude Hints towards a History of My House in LI Fields*, an extraordinarily odd composition written in the guise of a scholar, identified only as 'An

95 Smith, T. Roger, 'The Soane Museum,' Letter to the Editor, *The Builder* 63, no. 2598 (19 Nov 1892): 401.

96 'Notes,' *The Builder* 63, no. 2598, (19 Nov 1892): 391.

97 Vogel, Susan, 'Always True to the Object, in Our Fashion,' *Exhibiting Cultures: The Poetics & Politics of Museum Display*, Ivan Karp & Steven D. Lavine (eds), Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991: 192.

98 Mellinghoff, G. Tilman, 'Soane's Dulwich Picture Gallery Revisited,' Russell, Frank(ed), *John Soane*, Architectural Monographs series, Academy/St Martins Press, 1983: 93.

99 Summerson, John, 'Soane: The Man & the Style,' Russell, Frank (ed), *John Soane*, Architectural Monographs series, Academy/St Martins Press, 1983: 18.

100 Mellinghoff 87-88.

101 Mellinghoff 88.

Antiquary',¹⁰² ruminating on the ruins of 13 LIF, which was still under construction in 1812. Imagining 13 LIF discovered in ruins, Soane held that 'so much notice has been taken of the ruins and very extensive assemblage of fragments of ancient works partly buried and in some degree attached to a building',¹⁰³ that his combined efforts would survive enough to illustrate his character and self-professed role as a architect and professor, for

do we not account most satisfactorily for that great assemblage of ancient fragments in the interior of the building which must have been placed there for the advancement and knowledge of ancient Arts and may not these varieties in the Cavedium evidently the work of different artists have been fixed there in like manner to exemplify later changes in Architecture and to lay the foundation of a History of the Art itself—its origin—progress—meridian splendour and decline!—all this seems most clear and if further evidence was necessarily to establish this last portion of the premises having appertained to an Architect.¹⁰⁴

The relics are not considered to be less or more revealing of Soane's character by the fact they were not produced by him, since

he omitted no opportunity of expressing his opinion on the works of all ages, not because he thought highly of his own discernment and acquired knowledge (for he was humble and modest, at the same time said to be of lively fancy) but in order to call forth the better and more useful observations of others, and thereby to provoke discussion on his favourite Art.¹⁰⁵

Even in a romantic imagined state of ruin, Soane envisioned that his union of architecture, collection and arrangement would still speak to his person, and it was his selection, possession and placement of these objects within the spaces of his design that gave them this power, even in such a deteriorated state. Be it his own creation or influences upon what he created, upon entering Soane's collection each item became part of Soane's apparatus.

102 Soane, John, *Crude Hints towards a History of My House in LI Fields*, originally unpublished manuscript, 30 August-22 Sept 1812, published in *Visions of Ruin: Architectural Fantasies & Designs for Garden Follies*, Sir John Soane Museum, 1999: 73.

103 Soane, *Crude Hints*: 61.

104 Soane, *Crude Hints*: 70.

105 Soane, *Crude Hints*: 70-71.

Before Soane's Death¹⁰⁶

Despite his convictions that not even the crumbling passage of time would completely dismantle his physical manifestations, Soane was obviously concerned with the integrity and remaining completeness of the collection, so the Act required that each newly appointed Curator,

before he shall enter upon the said office of Curator, give satisfactory security to the said Trustees, by a joint and several bond from himself and two sufficient sureties, in the sum of One Thousand Pounds, that no part of the said Museum, or any of the Books, Manuscripts, Paintings, Drawings, Pictures, Models, Works of Art, or effects in the said Museum or offices, shall be taken away from the said Museum, or lost or embezzled.¹⁰⁷

Unfortunately, this fear of purposeful misappropriation was fulfilled before the Act came into effect.

Charles James Richardson was Soane's final pupil, one so fond of his master that he remained in his service after his terms of articles expired in 1830.¹⁰⁸ This affection was mutual, as in his will Soane left him a small monetary legacy and even suggested he be made an assistant curator,¹⁰⁹ a position he was never offered due to lack of funds¹¹⁰ or because it did not conform to the specifics of the Act.¹¹¹

Richardson's legacy would prove quite different than what Soane's anticipated.

Although the vast majority of drawings and paperwork of architectural practices from this period were not preserved, Soane was scrupulously fastidious in conserving everything, including daybooks, account journals and drawings from the imagined schemes of his youth to the realized projects of his final years. This massive archive, consisting of well over 10,000 items, was fully open to Richardson. Between 1824 and 1837, Richardson purloined at least 1,200 articles from Soane,¹¹² whose selected carefully and across Soane's career,¹¹³ perhaps removing them from

¹⁰⁶ I rely heavily on two sources in this section simply because Darley's admirable biography of Soane and de la Ruffiniere du Prey's catalogue of the Soane drawings in the V&A collection are the only places that deal with the over 1,200 drawings that left Soane's possession before his death. This episode is not mentioned in any of the other biographies of Soane, including those of Summerson and Stroud, even though Richardson is occasionally briefly mentioned in passing. Not even Margaret Richardson, when asserting, 'The survival of such a complete range of drawings, 'such a complete range of drawings, with their archival backing, makes it possible to catalogue them with far greater accuracy than is normally the case with eighteenth century drawings, and to establish what the RIBA Drawings Catalogue has called the 'stage of realization': that is the exact purpose of each sheet' (Richardson, Margaret, 'Soane's Use of Drawings,' *Apollo* 81 (April 1990): 235).

¹⁰⁷ Act, Section IV.

¹⁰⁸ Darley, *John Soane: An Accidental Romantic*: 303.

¹⁰⁹ de la Ruffiniere du Prey 11.

¹¹⁰ Darley, *John Soane: An Accidental Romantic*: 304.

¹¹¹ de la Ruffiniere du Prey 11.

¹¹² de la Ruffiniere du Prey 12.

¹¹³ de la Ruffiniere du Prey 19.

the property under the pretext of making copies for study.¹¹⁴ All that is known with certainty is that they were once within 13 LIF and their exit from that premises was permanent.

That Soane authorized this substantial pruning of his decades of accumulation is doubtful. Firstly, his drawings are mentioned specifically in the Act ten times—they were clearly intrinsic to the bequest. A number of the drawings from the Richardson collection were removed from what were once complete sets within the Soane collection,¹¹⁵ fracturing series in a manner completely inconsistent with a man who consistently and painstakingly preserved the remnants of his own work for a half of a century. That he valued the drawings produced by the architectural offices of others is demonstrated by the £200 he paid for fifty-four volumes of drawings by John and Robert Adam in 1833, when that office closed.¹¹⁶ A few of these Adam drawings made their way into Richardson's hands as well,¹¹⁷ works Soane went to great lengths and expense to acquire.

That this removal was a result of a wrongly trusted employee taking advantage of the disorganization stemming from Soane's decline is further supported by the subsequent actions of George Bailey, Soane's appointee as first Curator. As the Act specifically called upon him to 'make out and subscribe with his own name a full and complete catalogue or schedule of all such Books, Manuscripts, Prints, drawings, Pictures, Models and various Works of Art, and other things, as shall be placed under his charge',¹¹⁸ he would have noticed that some of these drawings were gone, especially as he entered Soane's office in 1806 and remained for another 31 years.¹¹⁹ Contemporary accounts clearly reflect how zealously Bailey managed and guarded the Museum's library and drawings, often provoking the criticism of those who access was limited by his zealousness:

No: the Museum, as we have said before now, is visited by hundreds instead of thousands,—the books and drawings are "safe,—and untouched,"—carefully locked up,—and useless. There is a whole locked-up air, indeed, about the whole house; visitors, when they have obtained a card and gained admittance, feel that they are on sufferance'.¹²⁰

Even *The Builder* obituary for Bailey used the forum as an opportunity to lobby for a change in his resolute policies:

114 Darley, *John Soane: An Accidental Romantic*: 303-04.

115 de la Ruffiniere du Prey 12-13.

116 *New Description* 97.

117 Darley, *John Soane: An Accidental Romantic*: 303-04.

118 Act, Section IV.

119 Bolton, *Architectural Education a Century Ago*: 1.

120 'The Soane Museum, & What is to Come of It', *The Builder* 17, no. 852 (4 June 1859): 369.

We would like to express a hope, without meaning the slightest reflection on the course pursued by the late Mr. Bailey (who did what he considered best), that, in appointing his successor, the trustees of the Soane Museum will seek to make such arrangements as will ensure to the public the freest access possible.¹²¹

Perhaps “what he considered best” was to guard the Soane collection from further dispersal. That none of Richardson’s collections publicly entered the market until after Bailey’s death¹²² is telling in and of itself, especially as Richardson was suffering from financial difficulties.¹²³ What the evidence indicates is that Richardson took advantage of Soane’s declining years and trust to surreptitiously amputate this cache without his master’s knowledge.

Just over 8,000 of Soane’s architectural drawings remain within the Museum.¹²⁴ Through gift and purchase, around 1,200 drawings from Soane’s architectural practice entered the Victoria & Albert Museum, all directly or indirectly through C. J. Richardson.¹²⁵ That multiple collections found their way to this one public collection over fifty years is an astonishing amalgamation of luck and accident. However, other fragments of the Richardson collection have appeared for public sale, including 40 items from the estate of Sir Albert Richardson auctioned at Christie’s on 30 November 1983.¹²⁶ How many drawings remain in private hands, or simply haven’t survived the passing years, remains unknown. This testifies to the fact that the Act’s restrictive clauses were violated in principal even before it formally came into effect.

121 ‘The Late Mr. George Bailey, Architect,’ *The Builder* 18, No. 934 (29 Dec 1860): 842.

122 Darley, *John Soane: An Accidental Romantic*: 345.

123 de la Ruffiniere du Prey 12.

124 Richardson, ‘Soane’s Use of Drawings’: 234.

125 de la Ruffiniere du Prey 11.

126 de la Ruffiniere du Prey 13.

Museum as a Time Capsule

Yet, despite the fact that Soane's intention of what actual items were going to be part of his legacy to the British people was already compromised, the myth of the Sir John Soane Museum as changeless remains. It is 'an astonishing time-capsule building. It still manages to feel as though Soane himself has just popped out to see a client but will be back shortly',¹²⁷ and all that surrounds the visitor is how Soane intended, as the placement 'has been done, chiefly by the ingenuity and sense of order of the collector himself, by whom the bulk of the collection was arranged just as it now stands'.¹²⁸ It as if the laws of time have no effect, and, since 'it has survived virtually unaltered for over 150 years',¹²⁹ the contemporary individual is transported into the 1830's. 'The experience of visiting the Soane Museum today is often likened to travelling back in time. Passing furtively into the Dressing Room or Breakfast Parlour, the visitor cannot help but wonder if the architect has just stepped out of the door opposite'.¹³⁰ And this empathetic impression is not without a ghostly response, as the visitor is 'seeing Soane seeing you'.¹³¹ And this fallacy is not reserved to the occasional writer and scholar only touching on an aspect of this Museum in print. Former Curator Peter Thorton imagined that 'general appearance of the [Breakfast] room is one of which Mrs. Soane would not have been ashamed'.¹³² Margaret Richardson, the most recently retired Curator, pronounced, 'When you work closely with Soane, you realise he was a bit of rebel'.¹³³ However, it is impossible to see, be seen, miss in a hallway, gain the approval of or work with someone who is dead.

Although much is understood about the past, believing anyone is capable of approaching a full comprehension of its conditions and contexts is a considerable lapse. 'Our knowledge of the past may increase incrementally, but our understanding of it does not.'¹³⁴ Individual, simplified aspects of the past are still available to the present, but are unavoidably inserted in the homogenising context of the present, into constructed histories. The past and the histories later generations produce are by no means synonymous. Learning about the past through the

127 Pearman, Hugh, 'Soane Rule,' *Museums Journal* 103, no. 8 (Aug 2003): 25.

128 'Sir John Soane's Museum,' *The Builder* 39, no. 1957 (7 Aug 1880): 162-63.

129 Davey 49.

130 Palin, William, 'No. 14,' *The Georgian*, Autumn/Winter 2003: 22.

131 Preziosi, Donald, 'Telling Perspectives: Seeing Soane Seeing You,' *Compelling Visuality: The Work of Art in & out of History* (Claire Farago & Rob Zwijnenberg (eds), Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2003).

132 Cruickshank, Dan, 'The Breakfast Room,' *Architectural Review* 198, no. 1182 (Aug 1995): 78.

133 'Margaret Richardson' 83.

134 White, Hayden, 'The Historical Text As Literary Artifact,' *History & Theory: Contemporary Readings*, ed. by Brian Fay, Philip Pomper & Richard T. Vann, Blackwell Publishing, 1998: 23.

narratives of history and cultural tourism is distinctly separate from experiencing the events as a contemporary person rooted in another epoch.

Archives, buildings, monuments, drawings, photographs, books, articles, newspapers, letters, journals, diaries—these are just a fraction of the myriad of historical evidence available for any given time period or subject. Yet ‘facts do not speak for themselves, but the historian speaks for them, speaks on their behalf, and fashions the fragments of the past into a whole whose integrity, in its representation, a purely discursive one’.¹³⁵ Fragments of evidence are selected and put together, and it is that act of compilation in a linear framework that both creates the particular history and the literary representation.

True historical empathy, this concept of a time capsule with some sort of direct communication back and forth with the past, is impossible because the historian is inextricably a product of her/his present:

Given then that there is no presuppositionless interpretation of the past, and given that interpretations of the past are constructed in the present, the possibility of the historian being able to slough off his [her] present to reach somebody else’s past on their terms looks remote.¹³⁶

This impulse towards empathy is not to enter and begin to approach a comprehension of an alien past, but a mechanism for the past becoming part of the contemporary realm. It is the quest for a mirror to expand the comprehension of the present and how that particular past might have produced it. ‘The only way to bring people in the past (who were so different to us) under our control is to make them the same as us’.¹³⁷ And this is within the realm of contemporary interpretation, not empathy. Historians translate fragments of the past still available into the present, to relate to the present and speak to the present. So, for someone completely tied to the present world, with its technological advances, socio-economic conditions and a innumerable other aspects so tied to current existence, to walk into a building and believe they are almost with Soane is an extraordinary leap.

Yet this empathetic impulse is in keeping with Soane’s own intentions of perpetuating his character and personality in these walls and the array of items placed within them. As early as 1880, 13 LIF was interpreted almost as speaking for the dead Soane. ‘In this rather rambling interior thus formed are found objects of architectural or archaeological interest of the most varied description, showing how

135 White, Hayden, ‘The Fictions of Factual Representation,’ *Grasping the World: The Idea of the Museum*, Donald Preziosi & Claire Farago (eds), Ashgate Publishing, 2004: 26.

136 Jenkins, *Re-Thinking History*, Routledge, 1991 (reprinted 1997): 40.

137 Jenkins 45.

wide were the interests, and how active the mind, of the collector'.¹³⁸ And it was the union of all elements of architecture, art, sculpture and paintings, not to mention furnishings and fixtures, which communicated this impression:

But perhaps the most interesting thing of all is the house and collection taken as a whole, the multifarious nature of its contents and the ingenious and original manner in which they are arranged; the whole giving the impression of being the work of a very vigorous and original mind.¹³⁹

And this translation of items as seen by the casual visitor to the Museum in the present as the "true" John Soane continues to this day, for 'what you are seeing here is the career, the mind and vision of a great architect made manifest in his things'.¹⁴⁰ Soane went to great lengths to translate his efforts at 13 LIF, from commissioning Britton's guide as well as privately publishing three editions of his own *Description* to having multiple interior perspectives drawn at set vantage points of the rooms. Yet when Soane died on 20 January 1837 in a small second floor bedroom,¹⁴¹ the translation of Soane was taken up by a series of Curators. That the translator was also the Curator, with control over the architecture and contents, meant that these shifts in emphasis came with it physical alterations.

138 'Sir John Soane's Museum,' *The Builder* 39: 161.

139 'The Soane Museum,' *The Builder* 73, no. 2864 (25 Dec 1897): 537.

140 Editorial: 'Soane's Brilliant Vision,' *Apollo* 81 (Apr 1990): 224.

141 *New Description* 98.

A Question of the House within the Museum

Pitzhanger Manor, Soane's first grand effort in personal domestic environments, had two distinct functions beside the function of a weekend residence: a training ground for the promulgation of his intended architectural dynasty,¹⁴² and as a 'fitting state' for Soane himself, one that would solidify and confirm his own eminence, both socially and professionally. Like the latter 13 LIF, both properties 'were spaces that had to be *presented*—unveiled and toured'.¹⁴³ That he sold Pitzhanger in 1810 upon belatedly realizing neither of his sons would follow into the profession¹⁴⁴ is telling. However, it clearly demonstrates that, to Soane, a house was far more than a domestic arrangement.

Although the word 'house' is used in regards to 13 LIF, in the Act it is difficult to define this bequest as a house-museum, as the 'absence of bedrooms, bathroom and kitchen',¹⁴⁵ is conspicuous to this day. The only mention of 13 LIF as a house in Section III, as in Section I the term house is qualified as 'built and expressly adapted for the purposes of the said Museum'.¹⁴⁶ As Soane wrote and privately published two of the three editions of *Description of the House & Museum on the North Side of Lincoln's-Inn Fields, the Residence of John Soane* before the passage of the Act,¹⁴⁷ the most effective way to establish what he conceived as his gift to the public is to turn to those volumes.

Of the seventeen plates featured in the 1830 edition of Soane's *Description*, ten are interior perspectives of the areas of 13 LIF he chose to focus on: the Breakfast-Room;¹⁴⁸ the recess behind the Apollo (Figure 4)¹⁴⁹ the parlour of Padre Giovanni¹⁵⁰ (also known as the Monk's Parlour), the room adjoining the Sepulchral Chamber;¹⁵¹ the Picture-Room (Figure 5)¹⁵² the Dining-Room;¹⁵³ the Library;¹⁵⁴ the

142 Stroud, *Sir John Soane, Architect*: 81.

143 Furjan, Helene, 'Scenes from a Museum,' *Grey Room* 17 (Fall 2004): 68.

144 Stroud, *Sir John Soane, Architect*: 83.

145 Arnold, Dana, 'Life Lived Among the Plaster Casts,' *Architects' Journal* 206, no. 19 (20 Nov 1997): 83.

146 Act, Section I.

147 Soane, John, *Description of the House & Museum on the North Side of Lincoln's-Inn Fields, the Residence of John Soane*, James Moyes, 1830 and Soane, John, *Description of the House & Museum on the North Side of Lincoln's-Inn Fields, the Residence of John Soane*, James Moyes, 1832. There is a third edition, Soane, John, *Description of the House & Museum on the North Side of Lincoln's-Inn Fields, the Residence of John Soane*, Levey, Robson & Franklyn, 1835, but as it dates 2 years after the Act it is of less probative value in this matter.

148 Plate III: View of the Breakfast-Room, Soane, *Description*, 1830. This is the Breakfast Room of 13 LIF, not 12 LIF.

149 Plate IV: View of the Recess behind the Apollo, Soane, *Description*, 1830.

150 Plate VI: View of the Parlour of Padre Giovanni, Soane, *Description*, 1830.

151 Plate VII: View of the Room Adjoining the Sepulchral Chamber, Soane, *Description*, 1830.

152 Plate X: View of the Picture-Room, Soane, *Description*, 1830.

153 Plate XI: View of the North End of the Dining-Room, Soane, *Description*, 1830.

154 Plate XII: View of the South End of the Library, Soane, *Description*, 1830.



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Shakespeare Recess;¹⁵⁵ the Tivoli Recess;¹⁵⁶ and the Model-Room.¹⁵⁷ These spaces were designed 'with the observer in mind, combining an eighteenth-century theatricality with this nineteenth-century model of visuality'.¹⁵⁸ None of these are rooms essential to a house—these are all areas designed and arranged for public consumption, spaces frequented by esteemed friends, colleagues and potential clients, and not for private life. Illustrations are included here to show the resolutely professional manner of these engravings, their lack of any sort of domesticity. That there was insufficient space in the volume is difficult to argue, as Plate XVII is Soane's Design for the State Paper Office, which has nothing to do with 13 LIF.¹⁵⁹ Soane's *Description* is a room-by-room visitor's guide, prescribing the order in which they should be viewed and what of interest is contained in them—his desire to control not only the spaces, contents and arrangements but to stipulate exactly how those elements are to be properly seen is astounding. It is an exercise in public presentation, not domestic existence.

John Britton, the antiquarian Soane commissioned to write the first published discussion of 13 LIF, *Union of Art, Architecture, Sculpture and Painting*, contended that, 'Instead of vainly attempting to prognosticate the ruling passion and character by phrenological bumps, or craniological organs, we shall find a better and surer criterion of judging man, by referring to his domestic habits and associations'.¹⁶⁰ And this criterion of judgement was far greater than any based on salacious gossip, for 'he has done more for the advancement of the art, both by his own practice and precepts, than almost any of his contemporaries or predecessors in England'.¹⁶¹ Seven years later, he wrote a brief biography of Soane which emphasizes this concept of being understood through professional output as opposed to personal foibles. As he elucidated, 'The public character of an artist is generally indicated by his professional works, and these are the chief, if not the only, legitimate objects of commentary for the literary essayist and biographer'.¹⁶² 13 LIF is not interpreted as a home, but as a mechanism for translating Soane the man, the constructed and much neater man Soane preferred to present. This structure was not a house, but instead may be regarded as 'an index, epitome, and commentary on the architect's

155 Plate XIV: View in the Shakespeare Recess, Soane, *Description*, 1830.

156 Plate XV: View of the Tivoli Recess, Soane, *Description*, 1830.

157 Plate XVI: View of the Model-Room, Soane, *Description*, 1830.

158 Furjan 70.

159 Few changes occurred in the 1833 edition, most notably the removal of the Paper Office engraving.

160 Britton, John, *The Union of Art, Architecture, Sculpture & Painting; Exemplified by a Series of Illustrations, with Descriptive Accounts of the House & Galleries of John Soane*, London, 1827: vii.

161 Britton, *The Union of Art, Architecture, Sculpture & Painting*: 11.

162 Britton, *Brief Memoir of Sir John Soane*: 4.

professional abilities'.¹⁶³ Perhaps his construction of what was seen and described in print is best thought of as a portrait of a man as he wished he could have been.

In spite of what Soane chose to present in his *Description*, 13 LIF was his house and defined as his residence in the Act. As contemporary definitions attest, a house is 'a place where a man lives; a place of human abode'¹⁶⁴ and 'a building wherein a person or human creature dwells',¹⁶⁵ and a residence is a 'place of abode'.¹⁶⁶ If it is the act of living in a building that predicates, Soane ceased his contribution towards that categorization on 20 January 1837. As George Bailey willingly acknowledged in the 1840 introduction of the abbreviated *Description* produced by the Trustees as a guide book to the Museum,

The peculiar designations given by Sir John Soane in that work to the several rooms and to various portions of the building are, for obvious reasons, retained in this, as are likewise the position of several Works of Art in the Museum, so far as has been found compatible with the arrangements necessary for the accommodation of the greatly increased number of visitors, now it partakes of the character of the Public Institution rather than, as before, the private residence of an individual artist.¹⁶⁷

From the beginning of the Museum as an institution, decisions were made to not only limit what rooms were available to the public, but that those rooms were considered outside the prohibition against unnecessary change. Soane's death marked the end of 13 LIF as the living space of Soane, and the end of any sort of presentation or real preservation of his intimate life through spaces such as bedrooms, bathrooms and kitchens.

Yet the end of this place as Soane's house did not end its role as a residence. The Curator was given a bedroom and a sitting room as he was to live on the premises,¹⁶⁸ which meant that, even within the Act itself, at least two of the upstairs living quarters were not considered essential to preserve. Soane certainly lived and died in 13 LIF, but he was not the only one to do either.

¹⁶³ Britton, *Brief Memoir of Sir John Soane*: 10.

¹⁶⁴ Johnson, Samuel, *A Dictionary of the English Language*, Vol. 1, Thomas Tegg, 1831: 916.

¹⁶⁵ Barclay 462.

¹⁶⁶ Fulton 264.

¹⁶⁷ Bailey, George, 'Sir John Soane's Museum,' *A General Description of Sir John Soane's Museum: With Brief Notices of Some of the More Interesting Works of Art Therein*, Shaw & Sons, 1840: 8.

¹⁶⁸ Act, Section III.

The Curators before World War II

George Bailey, long-time and trusted member of Soane's office, served as Curator from 1837 to 1860. A skilled and respected member of the staff, his contributions to the actual design of 13 LIF might have gone beyond dramatic interior perspectives expressing Soane's intentions, both preliminary and completed. His sectional perspective of the 'Dome' area of 13 LIF from 1810¹⁶⁹ supersedes earlier designs for the area, and Bailey was allowed to exhibit the work under his own name at the Royal Academy.¹⁷⁰ If he authored the solutions for better visual connections between the ground and basement levels of the space or not, his devotion to Soane's office and person is unquestionable. Although 13 LIF was Soane's home, for decades it was George Bailey's place of work, a place he knew extraordinarily well, and upon Soane's death it became his residence.

Two years before this occurred, in 1835, Bailey began the arduous process of inventorying the contents of the Museum,¹⁷¹ a monumental task, as he 'bewailed the collection's disorganized state' at the first Trustees meeting,¹⁷² completed in 1837. Also in the first year of the Museum as a public institution, some of Soane's furniture was sold to raise funds,¹⁷³ and in 1838 the first recorded furniture movement occurred.¹⁷⁴ As mentioned above, by 1840 Bailey easily admitted to altering non-public spaces in 13 LIF in order to accommodate the changing functions of the Museum. Contemporary accounts of his zealousness and protectiveness of the collection explored at length in the Richardson affair attests he was dedicated to Soane's legacy, but day-to-day realities the Museum also had to be considered. Even in the decades immediately after Soane's death, it was impossible to keep to the letter of the Act. Dying in 13 LIF on 17 December 1860,¹⁷⁵ Bailey truly set the tone of change within the framework of changelessness, a time capsule altering with time.

Difficulties surrounding the appointment of the next Curator further illustrate the care and respect those charged in preserving and maintaining the Museum truly had despite the alterations already underway. With an annual salary of £300, in addition to free board and a full time servant,¹⁷⁶ this post was a desirable one,

169 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields, Section through Dome, looking east, entitled 'View of Various Architectural Subjects Belonging to John Soane, Esqre., R.A. as Arranged in May MDCCCX,' George Bailey, 1810, watercolour, 96 x 62.5 cm (SJSJ 14/6, 3. 13 L.I.F.).

170 Buzas 16.

171 *New Description* 98.

172 de la Ruffiniere du Prey 11.

173 *New Description* 99.

174 *New Description* 99.

175 'The Late Mr. George Bailey, Architect,' 842.

176 'The Soane Museum,' *The Builder* 19, no. 936 (12 Jan 1861): 23.



Figure 6:
Bailey's sectional perspective
through The Dome, 13 LIF, May 1810

especially for a man approaching the end of his career. Although the Royal Academy appointed Joseph Bonomi to replace Bailey in March 1861,¹⁷⁷ the Trustees refused to accept him, as they believed he did not meet the qualifications set by the Act,¹⁷⁸ which required the Curator to be 'an English Architect who may have distinguished himself or gained any Academic Prize'.¹⁷⁹ As an anonymous letter published in *The Builder* charged,

But is he an architect in the sense of the Act of Parliament, which limits that choice? ... Mr. Bonomi is the son of an architect and brother of one; but was a pupil of Nollekens, and was educated and practised professionally as a sculptor.¹⁸⁰

As Bonomi trained as an architect in Egypt and only practiced in a limited capacity,¹⁸¹ the trustees required further evidence of his qualifications and the Royal Academy refused to appoint anyone else. Only upon the resignation of two Trustees, Mr. Tidd Pratt and Mr. Jones, in March 1862, did the remaining Trustees decide 'unanimously on appointing Mr. Bonomi curator, *pro tem.*, and he has already entered on his duties. The appointment, we are glad to hear, is understood to be permanent'.¹⁸² This sort of resolution, of refusing an appointee rigorously defended by the Royal Academy, strongly demonstrates that even in the 1860's the Act and honouring it was taken seriously. Whatever physical changes that had taken place to this point were not done out of lack of respect, but changes nonetheless took place.

As an Orientalist who went to Egypt and 'adopted the Arab dress, and assimilated himself to their mode of life',¹⁸³ Bonomi focused much of his efforts on reproducing the hieroglyphs on the Belzoni Sarcophagus. Other than that, his primary contribution was making the library and collections more available to the public than under Bailey's tenure, to the delight of many.¹⁸⁴ His fourteen years at 13 LIF were a calm period compared to those of his successor, James William Wild (Curator 1878-1892), whose appointment over Wyatt Papworth, the published favoured candidate of¹⁸⁵ (and credited contributor to¹⁸⁶) *The Builder*, earned him the briefest published announcement of any Curator: 'Mr. James Wild has been elected

177 'The Curatorship of Sir John Soane's Museum,' *The Builder* 19, no. 944 (Mar 1861): 165.

178 'The Curatorship of the Soane Museum: Royal Institute of British Architects,' *The Builder* 19, no. 947 (30 Mar 1861): 211.

179 Act, Section IX.

180 'The Curatorship of Sir John Soane's Museum,' 165.

181 'The Curatorship of the Soane Museum: Royal Institute of British Architects,' 211.

182 'The Soane Museum,' *The Builder* 20, no. 996 (8 Mar 1862): 165.

183 'The Late Joseph Bonomi,' *The Builder* 36, no. 1831 (9 Mar 1878): 248.

184 Cunningham, Peter, 'The Latest about Sir John Soane,' *The Builder* 25, no. 1251 (26 Jan 1867): 64.

185 'The Soane Museum,' *The Builder* 5, no. 1831 (9 March 1878): 251.

186 For instance: Papworth, Wyatt, 'The History of Freemasonry,' *The Builder* 46, no. 2203 (25 Apr 1885): 574-575; Papworth, Wyatt, 'The History of Freemasonry,' *The Builder* 46, no. 2204 (2 May 1885): 608-609; Papworth, Wyatt, 'Masonic Reprints,' *The Builder* 57, no. 2434 (28 Sept 1889): 218-219 and a number of letters to the editor.

Curator of Sir John Soane's Museum'.¹⁸⁷ The changes in the Museum escalated during his tenure, and when Summerson states that the 'Victorians strained hard against the veto and it is open to doubt whether they did not, on several occasions, actually infringe it',¹⁸⁸ Wild would be the foremost of those transgressors.

Unlike Bailey, who dedicated his professional career to Soane, and Bonomi, whose lack of practice caused such many problems, Wild was a fairly prolific architect in his own right. Before his tenure as Curator, he designed a number of churches, including Christ Church, Streatham, in addition to St. Martin's Schools, the architectural courts of the South Kensington (now Victoria and Albert) Museum and the Bethnal Green Museum (Now the Victoria and Albert Museum of Childhood).¹⁸⁹ Although he, like Bonomi, also lived in Egypt and adopted local dress and customs during that time,¹⁹⁰ his career went beyond primarily antiquarian interests—he was an active architect. Therefore it is hardly astonishing that he altered the physical framework of 13 LIF. In 1889, Wild re-integrated a room from 12 LIF, Soane's original Picture Room, and created a new room off the Ante-room,¹⁹¹ which obviously came with further re-arrangement of Soane's collections. His structural alterations did not end there, as 'the basement rooms have been re-arranged',¹⁹² by 1891. This was done with the full knowledge and support of those vested with the Museum by the Act, for 'the present Trustees undertook the enlargement of the Museum, which has been carried out under the direction and from the designs of Mr. Wild'.¹⁹³ Yet, despite this published acknowledgement of alterations, in 1897 *The Builder* asserted that 13 LIF was in 'original' condition.¹⁹⁴ Wild's contributions fell to the pervasive myth of 13 LIF as Soane's time capsule.

Although Wild was the most active Curator until modern times, changes continued long after his passing. Wyatt Papworth (1893-1894), who many hoped

187 'The Soane Museum,' *The Builder* 26, no. 1837 (20 Apr 1878): 404. This publication's enmity over his appointment did not pass quickly. A letter to the editor inviting those interested in the work of the Adam brothers to visit the Museum was published only under the name 'Curator' (Wild, James (published under Curator), 'Works by the Brothers Adam,' letter to the editor, *The Builder* 39, no. 1877 (25 Dec 1880): 769). It was only six years later that another letter by him was published under his name (Wild, James W., 'Sir John Soane's Museum,' Letter to the Editor, *The Builder* 51, no. 2272 (21 Aug 1886): 289). This is a far cry from the article detailing Bonomi's kindness and likeability from 1877 ('Sir John Soane's Museum: Visit of the Architectural Association,' *The Builder* 25, no. 1790 (26 May 1877): 539).

188 Summerson, 'Change': 50.

189 The most useful discussion of Wild's architectural career is, not surprisingly, Summerson, John, 'An Early Modernist: James Wild & His Work,' *The Architect's Journal*, 9 Jan 1929: 57-62.

190 'Obituary: Mr. J. W. Wild,' *The Builder* 63, no. 2597 (12 Nov 1892): 384.

191 12/13 Lincoln's Inn Fields, Section through Former Picture Room, entitled 'Sir John Soane's Museum, plans at Present Day,' James Wild, May 1889, ink & wash on tracing paper, mounted (SJSMA Archive Box 3, 12/13 L.I.F.).

192 'Notes,' *The Builder* 61, no. 2510 (14 Mar 1891): 205.

193 'Obituary: Mr. J. W. Wild': 384.

194 'Notes: Sir John Soane's Museum,' *The Builder* 72, no. 2825 (5 June 1897): 505.

would have taken office instead of Wild, died after only a brief tenure,¹⁹⁵ and was replaced by Arthur Birch (1894-1904), whose reconstruction of an Old London Street was the highlight of the Health Exhibition of 1884 in South Kensington.¹⁹⁶ Soane, whose exhibition at the Royal Academy in 1999 referred to Soane as the architecture of light, relied on oil lamps for light in 13 LIF,¹⁹⁷ and his artistic legacy was assuredly partly how he addressed the technological realities and developments of his time.¹⁹⁸ Yet when Birch installed electricity in 1897, his main concern was the cost.¹⁹⁹ Better known as an antiquarian than as an architect, it is significant to note that his appointment was seen as appropriate because the 'Museum was then valued mainly as a collection of architectural and archaeological relics, rather than as a specimen of Soane's idiosyncratic architecture'.²⁰⁰ That the Act and Soane's intentions were no longer in the forefront in the Victorian era is no understatement.

Walter Spiers (Curator 1904-1917) had a relatively uneventful tenure, despite the difficulties raised by World War I, but his death at 13 LIF²⁰¹ brought John Bolton (Curator 1917-1945) to the office. In addition to writing many works dedicated to or touching on Soane and his works,²⁰² he further altered 13 LIF. The last curator to live in 13 LIF,²⁰³ he was another architect with little professional practice,²⁰⁴ but his lack of such experience didn't hinder him from converting the Tivoli Recess (despite its prominent place and illustration in Soane's *Description*²⁰⁵) into a bathroom in 1917 or moving Soane's models to another second story room in 1918.²⁰⁶ Outside of his control was the damage imposed by the Blitz of World War II, most notably the destruction of the remaining stained and coloured glass by a bomb exploding nearby in 1941.²⁰⁷ Yet the most prominent and lasting alterations would take place during the tenures of tenures of Summerson, Thornton (1984-1995) and Richardson (1995-2005).

195 'Notes,' *The Builder* 67, no. 2690 (25 Aug 1894): 128.

196 'Notes,' *The Builder* 48, no. 2177 (25 Oct 1884): 550.

197 Palmer, Susan, *The Soanes at Homes: Domestic Life at Lincoln's Inn Fields, Sir John Soane's Museum*, 1998: 15.

198 Willmert, Todd, 'Heating Methods & Their Impact on Soane's Work: Lincoln Inn Fields & Dulwich Picture Gallery,' *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 52, no. 1 (March 1993): 57.

199 Richardson, Margaret, 'Pleasures of Precision,' *Building Design* 2 Sept 1988.

200 Pinney, Mark, 'Picts & Goths: Architectural Drawings & Books from the Collection of George H. Birch, 1842-1904,' guide for the exhibition at Church Farm House Museum, Aug 1988: 2.

201 'Obituary: Mr. W. L. Lewis Spiers, F.S.A.,' *The Builder* 112 (1 June 1917): 358.

202 Godfrey, Walter & Holland W. Hobbiss, 'Obituary: Arthur T. Bolton, F.S.A.,' *RIBA Journal* 52 (Feb 1945): 115.

203 Kerr, Rose, 'Hidden Treasure at Sir John Soane's Museum,' *Apollo* 156, no. 490 (Nov 2002): 27.

204 Godfrey & Hobbiss, 115.

205 Plate XV: View of the Tivoli Recess, Soane, *Description*, 1830.

206 *New Description* 102.

207 Thornton, 'Lit Up with Gorgeous Hues': 1979-80.

An Aura of Changelessness in the Midst of Change

Although the renowned John Summerson (1945-1984) made a number of changes within 13 LIF, the most significant events of his years in service were the end of the Act as the regulating force of Museum and the extension of its facilities beyond 13 LIF. In 1969, 12 LIF was vacated by its tenants,²⁰⁸ and a new scheme replaced Soane's Act, The Charities (Sir John Soane's Museum) Order of 1969. As the explanatory note states, 'Its principal object is to enable the Trustees to take No. 12 Lincoln's Inn Fields... into use as a part of the Museum, in order to amplify the provision already made in No. 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields'.²⁰⁹ Superseding the Act of 1833,²¹⁰ objects were officially allowed to move to 12 LIF²¹¹ and Trustees were given 'absolute discretion'²¹² to remove any object from display at any time, for any reason. These allowances make the following acknowledgement of the original Act rather hollow:

Provided that in taking any action under this clause the Trustees shall have regard to the principle that Number 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields shall be maintained as nearly as circumstances will admit in the state and condition in which it was at the date of the death of the founder, Sir John Soane, in January 1937.²¹³

Seeing as the arrangement, placement and definition of the Museum as 13 LIF was completely overturned, there is very little this apologetic clause effectively governed. Any additional changes could be (and still are) allowed by simple amendments to this new ruling document. Additionally, the Curator was only required to be selected by the Royal Academy²¹⁴—the qualification of being an architect who had won a prize was removed, and Summerson would, in fact, be the last qualified architect to hold the post to date.

'It is hard to remember a time when keyhole-surgery work of some kind or another has not been going on at the Soane Museum'.²¹⁵ Restorations meant to replicate the Museum as Soane left it upon his death in varying degrees of thoroughness were commissioned, such as Summerson's campaign between 1951 and 1953 to restore the original finishes of the Dining Room, Library, Breakfast Room, Study and Dressing Room,²¹⁶ and arduous Five Year Restoration Plan

²⁰⁸ *New Description* 104.

²⁰⁹ The Charities (Sir John Soane's Museum) Order 1969, made 26 Mar 1969, coming into operation 1 April 1969, 1969 No. 468: Explanatory Note.

²¹⁰ Charities Order, 2.

²¹¹ Charities Order, 17 (1).

²¹² Charities Order, 17 (2).

²¹³ Charities Order, 17 (1).

²¹⁴ Charities Order, 18.

²¹⁵ Pearman 25.

²¹⁶ *New Description* 104.

initiated in 1989 and overseen by architect Julian Harrap.²¹⁷ Yet other projects, such as expanding the Museum to 12 LIF, must be distinguished from more conservative programmes.

Upon the incorporation of 12 LIF into the Museum proper, it was decided that the Breakfast Room, made famous by Gandy's watercolour perspective, would be restored, especially as the removal of subsequent layers of paint revealed the 'trompe-l'oeil painted vault'.²¹⁸ In a process that would take over twenty years, the 12 LIF Breakfast Room would, for the first time, become part of the visitor's experience, 'by means of re-opening the door to the yard beyond the stair in 12, which Soane had blocked when he left the house in 1812'.²¹⁹ In the chronology provided in the first appendix to the tenth edition of the *New Description*, the text reads that the 'cleaning and restoration of the No. 12 Breakfast Room ceiling was completed in April [1994]

²¹⁷ *New Description* 107.

²¹⁸ Cruickshank 77.

²¹⁹ Cruickshank 77-78.

and Joy and Wilm Huning then painted the walls, following paint analysis by Dr. Ian Bristow'.²²⁰ But this was not precisely what happened. Bristow did, in fact, analyze the original paint, but as the surviving ceiling decoration had faded Thornton decided the authentic shades 'could have been too bright, so the problem is to strike a balance between the old colours and the new',²²¹ so the walls were not repainted in nearly the objective manner stated. Furniture, fabrics and details were taken from Gandy's perspective,²²² yet, as John Britton succinctly noted in 1827, 'Drawings, however accurate, are inadequate to impart the necessary information'.²²³ When addressing the reliability of watercolours in regards to Soane's use of coloured glass, Summerson himself stated, 'watercolours are of course pale rendering of the real thing'.²²⁴ Yet a single work in this medium was the primary contemporary evidence actually used for the restoration. That the Breakfast Room of 12 LIF is a thorough recreation of that painting is certainly not in doubt.

Although great efforts went into restoring the Breakfast Room, the Dining Room at 12 LIF was a different matter. For the 'adjacent front room, originally Soane's Dining-Room (and painted "Etruscan" red at the time), is now the "Soane Gallery", with showcases designed by Eva Jiricna (1995)'.²²⁵ Although Bristow performed analysis in that room,²²⁶ there is no pretence of restoring the walls, or any other part of it, as it was decided that this space should be used to display drawings Soane bequeathed as part of 13 LIF. 'The display cases are mostly free-standing but they crowd the space so that little of the original character of this distinguished room is now apparent, with no attempt being made to recreate Soane's original scheme'.²²⁷ That one room would receive such active efforts in between restoration and reconstruction and the other would not even get its walls appropriately painted is difficult to comprehend.

Another example of this odd impulse of restoration that doesn't precisely restore is the discovery of seventy-two unique blue and white Chinese tiles, which 'date to the early eighteenth century, during the reign period of Kangxi (1662-1722), and are decorated with floral, figurative and landscape designs'.²²⁸ An account of

220 *New Description* 113.

221 Cruickshank 78.

222 Cruickshank 78.

223 Britton, *The Union of Art, Architecture, Sculpture & Painting*: 10

224 Thornton, 'Lit Up with Gorgeous Hues': 1979-80.

225 *New Description* 67.

226 *New Description* xiii.

227 'Reaping what is Soane,' *Architect's Journal* 201 (13 Apr 1995): 13.

228 Kerr 23.

this “discovery,” published in 2002, emphasizes the changes that have taken place in the areas not in the public eye and outside of contemporary published note. These tiles decorated the fireplaces in two rooms: the Curator’s Office, formerly Soane’s model room, an engraving of which was published in his *Description*,²²⁹ a drastic alteration of function which is hardly justifiable by any reading of the Act; and the Assistant Curator’s office, Soane’s former bathroom.²³⁰ For the private areas, including the spaces moved public to private after the commencement of the Act, were even more susceptible to alteration than those on the tour.

After his appointment in 1878 as curator of Sir John Soane’s Museum, Wild carried out many alterations to the interiors. From the time of Soane’s death until 1947, rooms on the second floor—including those with tiles set into the fireplaces—were the Curator’s private ‘Apartment’, where he resided with his family.²³¹

Indirect archival evidence indicates that Wild brought the tiles into 13 LIF and placed them in 1891,²³² and they were somehow overlooked as part of his personal estate. Like Bailey, Wild also died in the Museum,²³³ yet the obviously extreme alterations he made, especially when seen in light of the restrictions imposed by the Act, are only mentioned in specialty publications.

As to these Chinese tiles, in some fashion they are now in the public view. The basement of 13 LIF contains a small, locked closet, with a large plane of glass in the top portion so Soane’s dishes are visible. On the floor on the left side of that space are a number of long, thin plastic storage containers labelled ‘Chinese Tiles’ by hand, removing the Wild contribution from the fireplaces. Yet the Assistant Curator’s room is still not a bathroom and the models are stored in 12 LIF,²³⁴ outside of the room Soane specifically intended for their arranged display. This selective interpretation of what to reconstruct, what to leave in place and what to ignore fuels the untenable dichotomy of a state of changelessness in a place marked by thoroughly documented change down to the present day.

Considering all this, it is extraordinary that the idea of the Museum as fundamentally unchanged remains perpetuated in print by the Curators who, in fact, altered it. Thornton contends that, ‘To a remarkable extent, this request has been upheld by the trustees and successive curators, but some elements have been lost—notably carpets and curtains’,²³⁵ when he was fully aware that the least of the

229 Plate XVI: View of the Model-Room, Soane, *Description*, 1830.

230 Kerr 27.

231 Kerr 27.

232 Kerr 27.

233 ‘Obituary: Mr. J. W. Wild’: 384.

234 ‘Sir John Soane’s Museum: A Short Description,’ Soane Museum Guide, revised April 2005.

235 Thornton, ‘Lit Up with Gorgeous Hues’: 1980.

changes involved rugs and window dressings. Although admitting that earlier Curators had 'actually infringed the act, Summerson goes on to assert that 'the Soane continues with all its quaintness'.²³⁶ Summerson's learned Inspectress, Dorothy Stroud further asserts that, of Soane's works, 13 LIF is 'the best preserved (thanks to his own testamentary provisions and the piety of successive curators)'.²³⁷ That those so intimately aware of the changes within spaces within and beyond the public eye would make such comments is fairly questionable.

However, the most unexpected alteration to the Museum took place in 1996, when the institution was awarded funds to purchase 14 LIF.²³⁸ This building, purchased by Soane in 1823, was rebuilt in 1824 and immediately leased out.²³⁹ Soane never lived in it, no doors or hallways ever connected it with 13 LIF and it was never meant to have any part of the bequest. None of his collections were ever displayed there and none of the rooms were designed with the concept of accommodating them. Never even mentioned in passing by the Act, Soane bequeathed the property to his family. Although this conglomeration is poetically lauded as an act to 'reunite the three houses Soane built here between 1792 and 1823',²⁴⁰ there was nothing to reunite, as Soane never conceived of 12, 13 and 14 LIF as a unified whole outside of their balanced facades. There is no evidence that Soane ever intended 14 LIF to have any part in his bequest to the British public, as either a source of revenue or additional footage for display.

Despite this, 12 LIF is now formally part of the Museum's address, and, for the first time, will be physically connected to 13 LIF. 'Discrete doorways made at two levels from the existing museum next door will tie it in to the visitor circulation loop and make sure all visitors are monitored through Soane's front door'.²⁴¹ After restoration, furniture will be moved from 13 LIF, as well as the Adam drawing portfolios and material for temporary exhibitions,²⁴² to 14 LIF. That additional space is needed for educational purposes and office space is absolutely valid—there is nothing wrong with this institution taking the opportunity to expand its facilities. What is improper is the upholding the idea, whether directly stated or implied by the resounding silence of lack of acknowledgement, that it was within Soane's intentions and in the spirit of the now long defunct Act.

²³⁶ Summerson, 'Change': 50.

²³⁷ Hitchcock 17.

²³⁸ *New Description* 117.

²³⁹ *New Description* 95.

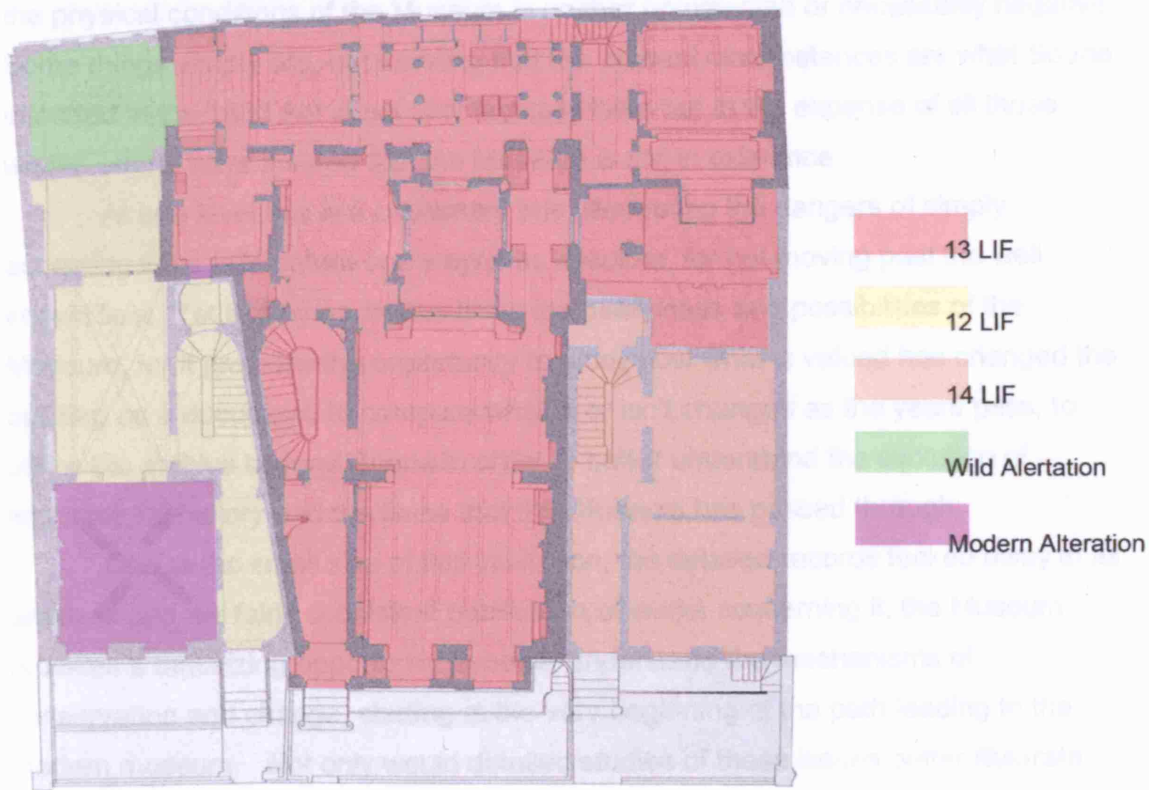
²⁴⁰ Pearman 24.

²⁴¹ Pearman 27.

²⁴² More Space for Soane: Original Architects: Sir John Soane, *Building Design* 1286 (15 Nov 1996): 1.

Conclusion The present Sir John Soane's Museum, consisting of 12, 13 and 14 LIF, with its present collections and as they are presently arranged, is not what John Soane intended, as the analysis of the ground floor below. There are, naturally, strong currents of what Soane intended, but these impressions are largely on superficial levels and dependent on both a limited and prescribed circuit of rooms available to the public and a lack of knowledge of the events of this Museum after Soane's death.

... to the spaces and objects in their bust. Curators and inspectors have not only written books, articles, pamphlets and guides--they and numerous Trustees have devoted themselves to its restoration, and that restoration has necessarily done with a full spectrum of alterations. This Museum transcends Soane, and spans of far more than the period of its initial creation. Legacies, no matter how they are vesting conventions, adjust in time, as do what is valued or ranked in a building or the career of an architect. That these points of value would manifest in the physical conditions of a Museum, or necessarily negative



... a difference between the past and its history, but would give us all a much richer understanding and appreciation of the Museum, its architecture and contents. Focusing almost exclusively on Soane lessens the possibilities of what can be gained from the Museum, for to understand our present translations of that extraordinary building into our history, we need to better grasp how he (and his Museum) was embraced into past generations. Just like the paper in your hands, the Museum in its

Conclusion

There are no time capsules, there is no escape from the steady passage of time. The Sir John Soane's Museum is far more than 'the astrolabe of the Enlightenment',²⁴³ and is certainly not an unmediated trip back to the past, a conduit for a metaphysical conversation with a man long dead. In the 169 years of its existence as a public institution, men have lived and died there, and devoted their lives to the spaces and objects in their trust. Curators and Inspectresses have not only written books, articles, pamphlets and guides—they and numerous Trustees have devoted themselves to its continuation, and that continuation has necessarily come with a full spectrum of alterations. This Museum transcends Soane, and speaks of far more than the period of its initial creation. Legacies, no matter how tied into restraining covenants, adjust in time, as do what is valued or derided in a building or the career of an architect. That these points of value would manifest in the physical conditions of the Museum is neither unexpected or necessarily negative. Some things simply are, but insisting that the present circumstances are what Soane intended in the 1833 Act is not only factually false but at the expense of all those whose efforts have insured that the Museum is still in existence.

At one level this is a cautionary tale, illustrating the dangers of simply accepting what falls before one's eyes as absolute, for not moving past the well known tale. Yet this by no means limits the usefulness and possibilities of the Museum, for it provides the opportunity to study how what is valued has changed the building as a document, to compare what is or isn't changed as the years pass, to utilize the archive beyond Soane in order to better understand the evolution of architectural history and the times that this Museum has passed through.

Due to the small size of this institution, the detailed records tucked away in its archives and the fairly consistent publication of works concerning it, the Museum provides a tantalizing opportunity to better understand the mechanisms of conservation and change, starting at the very beginning of the path leading to the modern museum. Not only would detailed studies of these issues better illustrate the difference between the past and its histories, but would give us all a much richer understanding and appreciation of the Museum, its architecture and contents. Focusing almost exclusively on Soane lessens the possibilities of what can be gained from the Museum, for to understand our present translations of that extraordinary architect into our histories, we need to better grasp how he (and his Museum) was translated into past generations. Just like the paper in your hands, the Museum in its

present state is a construction of Soane, as complicated and messy as Soane's endless construction and alterations to 13 LIF. In ignoring that overlapping series of constructions, both physical and metaphorical, the Museum is limited to its untenable mythology as a time capsule, as a tale often repeated but poorly known. Soane only occupied 13 LIF for twenty-four years; perhaps it is time to focus on what occurred in the subsequent one hundred and sixty-nine.



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- 12/13 LIF, Design for the Dome Area, entitled 'Design for Part of the Museum,' 13 June 1808, perspective at floor level, ink & watercolour, 52 x 43.5 cm (SJSM PSA 30, 12/13 L.I.F.).
- Design for Dome Area, perspective looking east, entitled 'Design for the Museum,' 25 June 1808, sectional ink & watercolour, 61 x 41.5 cm (SJSM PSA 37, 12/13 L.I.F.).
- 12/13 LIF, Design for Dome Area, perspective looking west, entitled 'Design for Crypt of the Museum,' 25 June 1808, ink & watercolour, 52 x 43.5 cm (SJSM PSA 3F, 12/13 L.I.F.).
- 12/13 LIF, Design for the 'Dome' Area, perspective looking east, entitled 'Design for Part of the Museum,' 6 July 1808, James Adams, ink & watercolour, 42 x 33 cm (SJSM PSA 30, 12/13 L.I.F.).
- 12/13 LIF, Design for the 'Dome' Area, perspective looking south, entitled 'View of Part of the Museum,' 8 July 1808, James Adams, ink & watercolour, 33 x 40 cm (SJSM PSA 31, 12/13 L.I.F.).
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- 13 LIF, Section through Dome, looking east, entitled 'Section of Museum,' 1810, R. D. Chantrell, ink & wash, 56.5 x 44.5 cm (SJSM PSA 17, 13 L.I.F.).
- 12/13 LIF, View from Dome into Old Picture Room, entitled 'View in the Museum 13 L.I.F. Looking into the "Picture Room",' 25 June 1819, watercolour, 38.5 x 28.5 cm (SJSM PSA 23. 12/13 L.I.F.).
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- 12 Lincoln's Inn Fields, Ground Floor Plan, 14 August 1792, ink, furniture tinted, 57 x 34 cm (SJSM 32/2A, 12. 12 L.I.F.).
- 12 Lincoln's Inn Fields, Ground Floor Plan, 28 August 1792, ink, furniture tinted, 47 x 29 cm (SJSM 32/2A, 7. 12 L.I.F.).
- 12 Lincoln's Inn Fields, First Floor Plan, 28 August 1792, ink, furniture tinted, 46 x 30 cm (SJSM 32/2A, 5. 12 L.I.F.).
- 12 Lincoln's Inn Fields, Ground Floor Plan, showing carpentry, [1792], ink & wash, 58 x 35.5 cm (SJSM 32/2A, 13. 12 L.I.F.).
- 12 Lincoln's Inn Fields, First Floor Plan, showing carpentry, 16 September 1792, ink & wash, 58 x 34.5 cm (SJSM 32/2A, 15. 12 L.I.F.).
- 12 Lincoln's Inn Fields, Section, looking north, [1792], ink & wash, 47 x 29 cm (SJSM 32/2A, 16. 12 L.I.F.).
- 12 Lincoln's Inn Fields, Ground Floor Plan, as built, [before 1797], ink & wash, 40.5 x 25 cm (SJSM 32/2A, 4. 12 L.I.F.).
- 12 Lincoln's Inn Fields, Plan & Elevations of the Breakfast Room, approximately as executed, ink & grey wash, 64 x 54 cm (SJSM 32/2A, 17. 12 L.I.F.).
- 12 Lincoln's Inn Fields, View of the Breakfast Room, as built, [c. 1795], watercolour, 65 x 65.5 cm (SJSM 14/6, 1. 12 L.I.F.).
- 12/13 Lincoln's Inn Fields, Elevation of Rear Buildings to Whetstone Park, 11 July 1808, ink & wash, four colours, 47.5 x 68.5 cm (SJSM 32/3, 42. 12/13 L.I.F.).
- 12/13 Lincoln's Inn Fields, Elevation of Rear Buildings to Whetstone Park, ink, 45 x 72.5 cm (SJSM 32/3, 43. 12/13 L.I.F.).
- 12/13 Lincoln's Inn Fields, Ground Floor Plan of Rear Buildings, as proposed, 4 July 1808, ink, grey & blue wash, 47.5 x 67.5 cm (SJSM 32/3, 41. 12/13 L.I.F.).
- 12/13 Lincoln's Inn Fields, Section through Rear Buildings, as proposed, looking north, 19 July 1808, ink & wash, 47.5 x 68.5 cm (SJSM 32/3, 44. 12/13 L.I.F.).
- 12/13 Lincoln's Inn Fields, Sections through 'Dome' Area, looking south & west, as proposed, 19 July 1808, ink (SJSM 32/3, 45. 12/13 L.I.F.).
- 12/13 Lincoln's Inn Fields, Section through 'Dome' Area, looking south, as proposed, 24 August 1808, ink & wash, 47.5 x 68.5 cm (SJSM 32/3, 49. 12/13 L.I.F.).
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- 12/13 Lincoln's Inn Fields, Design for Dome Area, perspective looking east, entitled 'Design for the Museum,' 29 July 1808, ink & watercolour, 53.5 x 36 cm (SJSM PSA 36, 12/13 L.I.F.).
- 12/13 Lincoln's Inn Fields, Section through Upper & Lower Offices & 'Dome' Area, looking south, as proposed, ink (SJSM 32/3, 50. 12/13 L.I.F.).

- 12/13 Lincoln's Inn Fields, Ground Floor Plan of Rear Buildings, 18 August 1808, pencil, ink, grey, brow & blue washes, 48 x 70.5 cm (SJSM 32/3, 51. 12/13 L.I.F.).
- 12/13 Lincoln's Inn Fields, Ground Floor Plan of Rear Buildings, as proposed, 16 March 1809, ink & grey wash, 48.5 x 67 cm (SJSM 32/3, 52. 12/13 L.I.F.).
- 12/13 Lincoln's Inn Fields, View in Lower Office, perspective from entry, 13 July 1808, R. D. Chantrell, ink & watercolour, 44.5 x 32.5 cm (SJSM PSA 32, 12/13 L.I.F.).
- 12/13 Lincoln's Inn Fields, Ground Floor Plan of 'Dome' Area, as proposed, [1809], ink & grey wash, 18.75 x 47.5 cm (SJSM 32/3, 40. 12/13 L.I.F.).
- 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields, Section through Dome, looking north, watercolour, 124 x 74 cm (SJSM 14/6, 7. 13 L.I.F.).
- 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields, 'The Plan of the Principle Floor,' before rebuilding, 1810, ink & grey wash, 56 x 34 cm (SJSM 38/10, 32. 13 L.I.F.).
- 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields, Ground Floor Plan, entitled 'L.I. Fields,' 16 July 1812, ink, 66.5 x 46 cm (SJSM 32/3, 34. 13 L.I.F.).
- 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields, Ground Floor Plan, entitled 'L.I.F.,' 22 July 1812, ink & wash, four colours, 68 x 47 cm (SJSM 32/3, 33. 13 L.I.F.).
- 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields, Ground Floor Plan, 26 July 1812, ink & wash, 68 x 47 cm (SJSM 32/3, 30. 13 L.I.F.).
- 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields, Basement Plan, [1812], ink & wash, 68 x 47 cm (SJSM 32/3, 31. 13 L.I.F.).
- 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields, Basement Plan, 30 July 1812, ink & wash, 68 x 47 cm (SJSM 32/3, 32. 13 L.I.F.).
- 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields, First Floor Plan, entitled 'Drawing Room Floor,' 30 July 1812, ink & wash, 66.5 x 46 cm (SJSM 32/3, 29. 13 L.I.F.).
- 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields, Ground Floor Plan, 18 August 1812, ink & wash, 68 x 47.5 cm (SJSM 32/3, 28. 13 L.I.F.).
- 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields, Elevation of South Front, [1812] ink & wash, 67 x 47 cm (SJSM 32/3, 3. 13 L.I.F.).
- 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields, Perspective of South Front, 23 July 1812, ink & wash, 67 x 47 cm (SJSM 32/3, 5. 13 L.I.F.).
- 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields, Perspective of South Front, 8 August 1812, ink & wash, 67 x 47 cm (SJSM 32/3, 7. 13 L.I.F.).
- 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields, Elevation of South Front, 11 August 1812, ink & wash, 67 x 47 cm (SJSM 32/3, 2. 13 L.I.F.).
- 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields, Perspective of South Front, as erected, 1812, watercolour, 78 x 44.5 cm (SJSM 14/6, 2. 13 L.I.F.).
- 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields, The Dome, looking east, entitled 'A View of the Museum,' 1813, 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields, Perspective of South Front, 25 July 1812, ink & wash, 67 x 47 cm (SJSM 32/3, 6. 13 L.I.F.).
- 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields, Elevation of South Front, 3 August 1812, ink & wash, 67 x 47 cm (SJSM 32/3, 1. 13 L.I.F.).
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- 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields, View of the Dome, looking southeast, [c. 1813], watercolour, 105.5 x 74.5 cm (SJSM 14/6, 4. 13 L.I.F.).
- 12/13/14 Lincoln's Inn Fields, Proposed Elevation, 19 January 1813, ink & wash, 48 x 72 cm (SJSM 32/3, 8. 12/13/14 L.I.F.).
- 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields, Section through Dome & Breakfast Room, looking east, June 1817, E. Copeland, watercolour, 54 x 64 cm (SJSM PSA, 1. 13 L.I.F.).
- 12/13 Lincoln's Inn Fields, Rear Buildings, Ground Floor Plan, not executed, [1821], ink & grey wash, 50.5 x 70 cm (SJSM 32/3, 55. 12/13 L.I.F.).

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- 12/13 Lincoln's Inn Fields, Window Passage, First Floor Front, as executed, ink & wash, 38 x 66 cm (SJSM 32/3, 18. 12/13 L.I.F.).
- 12 Lincoln's Inn Fields, Section through Office, entitled 'Section of the Old Picture Room,' ink, sectional parts coloured, 51 x 50 cm (SJSM 32/3, 16. 12 L.I.F.).
- 13/14 Lincoln's Inn Fields, Rear Buildings, Basement Plans, 23 October 1823, ink & wash, 53 x 70.5 cm (SJSM 32/3, 36. 13/14 L.I.F.).
- 14 Lincoln's Inn Fields, Basement Plan, entitled 'Basement Storey,' 30 September 1824, ink, pink & grey wash, 66 x 53.5 cm (SJSM 32/2B, 7. 14 L.I.F.).
- 14 Lincoln's Inn Fields, Ground Floor Plan, entitled 'Principle Floor,' 30 September 1824, ink, pink & grey wash, 65.5 x 53.5 cm (SJSM 32/2B, 6. 14 L.I.F.).
- 14 Lincoln's Inn Fields, First Floor Plan, entitled 'One Pair Floor,' 30 September 1824, ink, pink & grey wash, 65.5 x 53.5 cm (SJSM 32/2B, 5. 14 L.I.F.).
- 14 Lincoln's Inn Fields, Second Floor Plan, entitled 'Two Pair Floor,' 28 September 1824, ink, pink & grey wash, 65.5 x 52.5 cm (SJSM 32/2B, 4. 14 L.I.F.).
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- 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields, Basement Plan, 18 November 1825, ink & wash, 70 x 52.5 cm (SJSM 32/3, 25. 13 L.I.F.).
- 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields, Plan of Sepulchral Chamber, 3 August 1825, ink & pink wash, 33.7 x 48.3 cm (SJSM 32/2C, 8. 13 L.I.F.).
- 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields, Perspective of Open Gallery, First Floor Front, 24 January 1831, watercolour, 42.5 x 25.5 cm (SJSM 32/3, 17. 13 L.I.F.).
- 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields, Plan of Sepulchral Chamber, entitled 'Crypt of Museum ect.,' 27 January 1836, ink & wash, 34 x 28 cm (SJSM 32/2C, 7. 13 L.I.F.).
- 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields, View in the Corridor Adjoining the Monk's Room, (SJSM Sketches & Views, 120. 13 L.I.F.).
- 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields, Basement Plan Survey Drawing, George Bailey, 1837, ink & wash, 66 x 52.5 cm (SJSM 32/2C, 1. 13 L.I.F.).
- 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields, Ground Floor Plan Survey Drawing, George Bailey, 1837, ink & wash, 66 x 52.5 cm (SJSM 32/2C, 2. 13 L.I.F.).
- 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields, First Floor Plan Survey Drawing, George Bailey, 1837, ink & wash, 66 x 52.5 cm (SJSM 32/2C, 3. 13 L.I.F.).
- 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields, Second Floor Plan Survey Drawing, George Bailey, 1837, ink & wash, 66 x 52.5 cm (SJSM 32/2C, 4. 13 L.I.F.).
- 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields, Attic Plan Survey Drawing, George Bailey, 1837, ink & wash, 66 x 52.5 cm (SJSM 32/2C, 5. 13 L.I.F.).
- 12/13 Lincoln's Inn Fields, Ground Floor & Mezzanine at Junction of 12 & 13, James Wild, 1889, ink & grey wash, 38.75 x 54 cm (SJSM Archive Box 3, 12/13 L.I.F.).
- 12/13 Lincoln's Inn Fields, Section through Lobby, James Wild, May 1889, ink & wash on tracing paper, mounted, 33.5 x 52.75 cm (SJSM Archive Box 3, 12/13 L.I.F.).
- 12/13 Lincoln's Inn Fields, Section through Museum, entitled 'Sir John Soane's Museum,' James Wild, May 1889, ink & wash on tracing paper, mounted, 35.5 x 56.5 cm (SJSM Archive Box 3, 12/13 L.I.F.).