

PITZHANGER

MANOR & GALLERY

PITZHANGER PRESENTS NEW SCULPTURE BY ES DEVLIN
26 September 2019 – 12 January 2020



Photograph by Peter Mallet

Pitzhanger Manor & Gallery presents *Memory Palace*, a new commission by interdisciplinary artist and designer Es Devlin OBE, celebrated for her ambitious sculptures and environments across art, theatre and music. Devlin has filled the gallery space with a vast chronological landscape which maps pivotal shifts in human perspective over 75 millennia.

From the caves in southern Africa where *homo sapiens* first left their mark, to the tower in Frombork, Poland, where Nicolaus Copernicus drew the first heliocentric map of the universe in 1543, to the rooms in Clarendon Square, London, where Mary Wollstonecraft wrote *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* in 1792, to the street in Montgomery, Alabama where Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on the segregated bus in 1955, to the study where the world wide web was conceived in 1989, to the steps of the Riksdaghuset in Stockholm where Greta Thunberg began her School Strike for Climate in 2018, the locations and moments represent a personal and subjective cartography and have been chosen by Devlin and her studio team to invoke our collective memories/history, and also to provoke dialogue and debate.

Memory Palace is named after the classical mnemonic technique, originating in Ancient Greece, which catalogues memories within familiar locations. Devlin identifies the rooms in which significant shifts in human thinking took place and plots them within identifiable fragments of cities and buildings to create a personal atlas of the evolution of thought.

The 18-metre-wide sculptural work, carved from bamboo, features mirrored planes that multiply its dimensions to enable a reimagining of time and space. The public will enter individually or in small groups.

In this second exhibition at Pitzhanger, Sir John Soane's country home, Es Devlin's topographical modelling echoes Soane's prolific use of models within his architectural practice and classical collections. She has transformed Soane's library space at Pitzhanger into a reading room filled with the books that informed her creation.

Es Devlin said: "*When I was a child I lived next door to a 1:100 scale model of my town which performed a 'son et lumiere' show. The windows of individual buildings would illuminate to locate stories told in voiceover. In a way it was a memory palace in action: ideas, words and*

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sounds indexed within physical architecture: I never forgot any of those stories as each was indelibly etched into the buildings I passed daily.

Arguably the most profound and urgent shift in thinking is located at the far edge of the chronological atlas, in the present: it's the shift we are now beginning to undertake as we re-evaluate all of our practices in the light of the climate crisis. It's my hope that, surrounded by the traces of our historical leaps of imagination, the viewer will feel a sense of possibility that our species can achieve another momentous collective shift of perspective."

Clare Gough, Director of Pitzhanger Manor & Gallery said: *"Es Devlin's immense talent in fusing artistic genres would have appealed to John Soane, who highlighted the poetry of architecture and was himself a passionate collector and creator of architectural models and plaster casts. Upon walking into Memory Palace, we hope visitors will be inspired to engage with Devlin's own take on the transformative moments of thought and action across human history."*

From 1800 to 1804, Sir John Soane designed and built Pitzhanger Manor as his dream country home. Pitzhanger reopened this spring following a major £12-million HLF and ACE-supported conservation and restoration project to return it to his original design. *Memory Palace* follows the inaugural Anish Kapoor exhibition at Pitzhanger.

Es Devlin OBE (b. 1971) lives and works in London. She has pioneered an artistically and technically ambitious methodology to her practice which bridges the gap between audience and performance, often using surface, light, projection and reflection to create dramatic and ambiguous spatial and psychological environments.

Her major public installations have included *Please Feed the Lions*, a fluorescent red fifth lion sculpture which roared poetry powered by artificial intelligence (Trafalgar Square, 2018); *The Singing Tree*, a collective choral installation which merged machine-learning with sound and light (V&A, 2017); and *Mirror Maze* (Copeland Park, Peckham, 2016) and *ROOM 2022* (Miami Art Basel, 2017) which both explored reflective labyrinthine narratives and geometries.

Devlin's large-scale kinetic sculptures and environments include stage sets for Beyoncé, U2, Adele, The Weeknd and Kanye West as well as a collaboration with the theoretical physicist Carlo Rovelli and the actor Benedict Cumberbatch on a collective reading of Rovelli's *'The Order of Time'* at the rooftop arts space BOLD Tendencies in 2018. Recent work in theatre includes *The Lehman Trilogy* (National Theatre 2018-19) and *The Hunt* (Almeida, 2019).

Most recently Devlin has developed a series of sculptural works which explore the cartography of the Anthropocene. *MASK* (Somerset House 2017) and *Mask in Motion* (Kunsthall Charlottenburg, Copenhagen 2018) both address the geography of the earth as shaped by human activity.

Her practice was the subject of the Netflix documentary series *Abstract: the Art of Design*, and in October she will design the UK Pavilion at the World Expo 2020.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

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To be kept up to date with the latest news, sign-up to the Pitzhanger newsletter at pitzhanger.org.uk

Memory Palace by Es Devlin will run from 26 September 2019 – 12 January 2020.

Social Media

Instagram: @pitzhanger

Twitter: @pitzhanger

Facebook: Pitzhanger Manor & Gallery

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Listings Information

- Pitzhanger Manor & Gallery, Mattock Lane, Ealing, London, W5 5EQ, 020 3985 8888
- Nearest Station: Ealing Broadway (Central & District lines, plus Great Western Main Line from Paddington).
- Open Tuesday to Sunday plus Bank Holidays (Tuesday-Friday / Sunday 10am – 4.30pm; Saturday 10am – 3pm)
- Tickets allow access to the Manor and Gallery and can be purchased in advance from pitzhanger.org.uk. Full price £7.70 (including 10% voluntary donation to enable Pitzhanger to reclaim Gift Aid); concessions (including students and visitors with disabilities); free entry for under 18s, Members and Ealing residents (on Tuesdays and Sunday mornings).

ABOUT PITZHANGER MANOR & GALLERY

Pitzhanger Manor & Gallery's objective is to promote Sir John Soane's legacy, inspiring visitors with art, architecture and design and nurturing creativity for all within an extensive outreach and events programme. It celebrates Sir John Soane's genius and influence as a designer, juxtaposing his architecture with a programme of ambitious contemporary art exhibitions. Pitzhanger reopened to the public in March 2019, following a 3-year conservation and renewal project, generously supported by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, Ealing Council and Arts Council England as well as other donors.

ABOUT SIR JOHN SOANE

Sir John Soane (1753-1837) is one of Britain's most visionary architects, celebrated for his idiosyncratic take on the neoclassical style and mastery of natural light. Soane bought Pitzhanger in 1800. He demolished most of the existing manor house apart from the Dance Wing and from 1800-1804, designed and built a new house sitting in 28 acres of parkland as his country estate. The legacy of Soane's distinctive buildings, teachings and collections has influenced generations of artists, architects and designers.



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