

# PITZHANGER

MANOR & GALLERY

## SOANE RESTORED

27 May 2021 – 5 June 2022



*Soane Restored* reveals the fascinating story of how Pitzhanger – special as an almost intact example of Sir John Soane’s work - was returned to its original vision. It examines how this unique building was conserved and restored and includes details of graffiti written by a farsighted builder in 1832, an unassuming toothbrush used for the specialist decorations, a cannonball discovered as a chimney cleaner and a 1900 photograph that became vital evidence in the reconstruction of the conservatory. This small exhibition is on display for a year in Pitzhanger’s Soane Galleries.

Pitzhanger was radically remodelled in 1800-1804 by Soane, one of Britain’s most influential architects, as his dream country home and is particularly notable as a building he designed, built and lived in. He used it as an advertisement for his talents, experimenting with an array of architectural styles and ideas. With much regret, Soane sold Pitzhanger in 1810. The building was later extended by subsequent owners and his dramatic interior design schemes were painted over. When the ambitious restoration project began prior to Pitzhanger’s reopening in 2019, it was hard to detect much of Soane’s original design at all, hidden under layers of paint, new brickwork and alterations.

*Soane Restored* considers the meticulous research and analysis and the skills and techniques deployed by master craftsmen to peel back the layers of Pitzhanger’s history and reinstate the key interior and architectural elements lost for over a century. Using imagery and archive materials, the exhibition focuses on the recreation of Soane’s intricate decorative paint effects, the rebuilding of the conservatory and the restoration of the original stone features.

Clare Gough, Director of Pitzhanger Manor & Gallery, said *“This display is a tribute to the hard work, skill and determination of the broad team that enabled Pitzhanger, once again, to become an inspiration - as Soane had always intended – to new generations in art, architecture and design.”*

Much of Soane’s interior decoration including featured faux-marble effects, intense paint colours, trompe l’oeil ceilings and Chinese wallpaper, had been concealed with white paint for nearly 200 years. When removing the plasterboards that were blocking internal windows in the Tribune entrance, a dramatic discovery was made when the original marbling paintwork commissioned by Soane was revealed alongside contemporary graffiti by the

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builder who had encased the windows, who had signed his name, date, trade and employer: *D. L. Flack, 1832, Plasterer, in the employ of Mr [Boal] of Hammersmith.* Using detailed paint analysis and archival research, the project's conservation architects and specialist decoration consultants identified and recreated the exact decorative schemes of each room. This included using a toothbrush to apply the technically-challenging 'porphyry' paint effect that Soane had introduced after seeing this igneous rock containing flecks of quartz within ancient Roman ruins on his Grand Tour.

Much of Soane's original stone decoration at Pitzhanger had disappeared by the time of the conservation project and the distinctive cube-like form of the Manor had been lost as a result of the Victorian building extensions. Brick by brick, the later building work was removed and specialist stoneworkers created replacements for long-lost stone ornaments including two 400kg roundels, decorated with the classical motif of acanthus leaves. For the first time in 175 years, visitors approaching the Manor now get the oblique view of the house that Soane intended.

Known as a 'Master of Light', Soane used light to create impact across Pitzhanger including roof lights and a spectacular conservatory which used blue and primrose-stained glass panels to create magical light effects. Using painstaking research, including Soane's plans, watercolours of the house and most usefully, a photograph of how the conservatory looked before being dismantled in 1901, the design team reinstated this complex structure to once again enable long vistas over the Serpentine lake to the Regency parkland beyond.

*Soane Restored* is funded by a grant from Historic England's Covid-19 Emergency Response Fund.

Pitzhanger Manor & Gallery opened to the public in March 2019 following a three-year, £12 million project led by Jestico + Whiles with Julian Harrap Architects. The large project team included historic paint research and specialist paint decorations by Hare & Humphreys and specialist stonework by AVV Solutions Ltd and stone carving by London Stone Carving.

## ENDS

## NOTES TO EDITORS

For all media enquiries, please contact [pitzhanger@pitzhanger.org.uk](mailto:pitzhanger@pitzhanger.org.uk)

To be kept up to date with the latest news, sign-up to the Pitzhanger newsletter at [pitzhanger.org.uk](http://pitzhanger.org.uk)

## Social Media

Instagram | Twitter | Facebook: @pitzhanger

## Listings Information

- Address: Pitzhanger Manor & Gallery, Walpole Park, Ealing, London, W5 5EQ
- Nearest Station: Ealing Broadway (Central & District lines, plus Great Western Main Line from Paddington. Elizabeth line tba.)

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- Open Wednesday to Sunday 10am-5pm (late opening Thursday: 10am-7pm)
- Pre-booking is essential and available in advance from [pitzhanger.org.uk](http://pitzhanger.org.uk). Tickets allow access to Pitzhanger Manor and the exhibition. Full price £7, concessions (including visitors with access needs and students) £4.50; National Art Pass £3.50; free entry for under 18s; Pitzhanger Members; and Ealing residents (11:00 – 14:30 on Wednesdays and Sunday mornings)
- Some Covid-19 precautions apply to visits. Full details are set out on the website [here](#)

## 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 in spring 2019 following a major £12-million conservation and restoration project to return the Manor to his original design, with support from HLF, ACE, Ealing Council and other generous donors.

Alongside *Soane Restored* in the Soane Galleries, Pitzhanger Gallery will be showing *This is Ealing* (27 May – 6 June), an exhibition of photography reflecting the lives and experiences of Ealing residents during the pandemic, and *Julian Opie* (25 June – 24 October), a solo exhibition of new work by the contemporary British artist focusing on people, buildings and animals.

## 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 as his country estate sitting in 28 acres of parkland. The legacy of Soane's distinctive buildings, teachings and collections has influenced generations of artists, architects and designers.

*This exhibition is funded by a grant from Historic England's Covid-19 Emergency Response Fund.*



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*Exhibition sponsors:*

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