



SIR JOHN  
SOANE'S  
MUSEUM  
LONDON

Press Release, October 2016

***Robert Adam's London* – a new exhibition uncovering influential architect and designer Robert Adam's vision for London.**

**30 November 2016 – 11 March 2017**



Adam office, Chandos House, drawing room ceiling, 1771. SM Adam volume 13/55

The work of one of the greatest British architects of all time is examined in a new exhibition at Sir John Soane's Museum. *Robert Adam's London* (30 November 2016 – 11 March 2017) takes an in-depth look at some of the Scottish architect's work which helped change the landscape of the capital. Some of the famous buildings looked at in the exhibition include Buckingham Palace, the Admiralty Screen on Whitehall and Portland Place.

*Robert Adam's London* is the first time the architect's work across the city as a whole has been examined in a London museum. It will showcase his ground-breaking neo-classical style and his desire to unify architecture and interior design. It will also feature both completed buildings

alongside those, which were never realised, offering a glimpse into the architect's ambitious vision for London.

On display will be some of Sir John Soane's Museum's most beautiful, influential and rarely seen designs of Adam's projects in London, taken from their 9,000-strong Adam drawing collection. The Museum holds 80% of the world's surviving Adam drawings which are of huge international-significance for our understanding of Georgian architecture and interior design. Projects on show include the famous Admiralty Screen on Whitehall, Portland Place, and six monuments for Westminster Abbey, as well as projects subsequently demolished or never realised, such as the interiors of Buckingham House (before it became Buckingham Palace), 15 Downing Street, Lansdowne House and Adelphi. A large-scale facsimile of an eighteenth-century map of London will form the centrepiece of the show, plotting Adam's various projects across the city, creating an 'in-exhibition' trail for visitors. Alongside this will be a portrait of Robert Adam by George Williamson, on loan from the National Portrait Gallery and a pedestal designed by Adam from Kenwood House.



Adam office, view of the Admiralty Screen, Whitehall, 1759. SM Adam volume 35/4



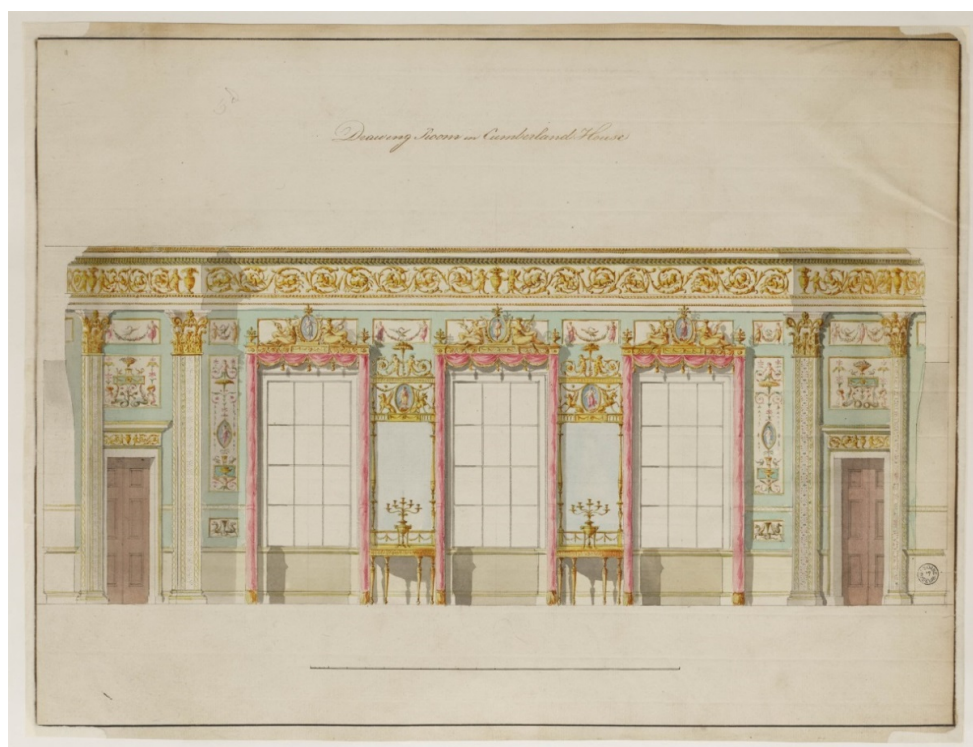
Adam office, Buckingham House, The Mall, clock bracket, c.1761-63. SM Adam volume 25/20

Robert Adam had a long and enduring connection to London, establishing his London practice in 1758 and remaining in the city until his death in 1792. There is a greater density of his work for this city than anywhere else, as he focussed on designing complete schemes for the decoration of domestic, public, commercial, speculative and commemorative buildings. His work in London demonstrates how his style evolved past the fashionable Palladian design of the time, into a new,

more flexible style, incorporating influences from Roman, Etruscan and Baroque styles. Adam's radical style was often attributed to a desire to design everything down to the smallest detail.

Adam regularly favoured large-scale and grandiose designs, many of which remained purely speculative as their ambitions – and cost – were often prohibitive. One such project examined in the exhibition in detail is for Portland Place, where he hoped to construct detached aristocratic palaces which might rival noblemen's urban homes in Europe. Palaces for the Earls of Kerry and Findlater were designed, but never came to fruition. If they had, central London would have looked significantly different to how it is today.

Bruce Boucher, Director of Sir John Soane's Museum says: *"The Adam Drawings at the Soane Museum is one of our most important collections. Not only is it an invaluable record of the work of one of this country's most innovative architects, but also a fascinating glimpse into what London could have been had all his projects survived or come to fruition. People have always cared passionately about the architecture of London, as today's fierce debates testify, so it is wonderful to be able to examine this fascinating chapter in the architectural history of this great city, right in the heart of the city itself."*



Adam office, Cumberland House, Pall Mall, drawing room interior, c.1780-85. SM Adam volume 49/19

Dr Frances Sands, Curator of Drawings and Books at Sir John Soane's Museum comments:

*"The Adam office provided designs in deliberate contrast to the more severe neo-Palladian style that had dominated Britain in earlier decades. Adam instigated a fashion for his own recognisable and characteristic style, one not based on dogmatic archaeological accuracy, but rather a creative fusion of all that he had seen abroad. With his distinctive, delicate interior decorative style and bold, rippling architecture, Adam became enormously successful; his practice catered to clients across Britain - and occasionally beyond – but nowhere more heavily than in London. Often remembered as an architect of great country houses, this exhibition celebrates the skill and dexterity of his numerous works here in town."*

*Robert Adam's London* will run from Wednesday 30 November 2016 to Saturday 11 March 2017, in the Soane Gallery at Sir John Soane's Museum. Admission is free. An illustrated catalogue will accompany the show, looking at the full range of Adam projects in London.

**FURTHER IMAGES ARE AVAILABLE TO DOWNLOAD HERE:**

## **CONTACTS**

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## NOTES TO EDITORS

### Sir John Soane's Museum

Sir John Soane's house, museum and library at No.13 Lincoln's Inn Fields has been a public museum since the early nineteenth century. On his appointment as Professor of Architecture at the Royal Academy in 1806, Soane (1753-1837) began to arrange his books, classical antiquities, casts and models so that students of architecture might benefit from access to them. In 1833 he negotiated an Act of Parliament to preserve the house and collection after his death for the benefit of 'amateurs and students' in architecture, painting and sculpture. Today Sir John Soane's Museum is one of the country's most unusual and significant museums with a continuing and developing commitment to education and creative inspiration. The museum is open free: Tuesday to Saturday inclusive, 10am-5pm. It is also open on the first Tuesday evening of each month from 6-9pm. [www.soane.org](http://www.soane.org)

Sir John Soane's Museum is a Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) whose prime sponsor is the Department for Culture, Media and Sport.