

Picturesque Features in Sir John Soane's Museum

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Introduction

In the 18th century in Europe, aesthetics in architecture were connected to the beauty of nature, ornament, Antiquity and their research. The need of representation and interpretation of the visible reality impelled artists and architects to create sceneries with gradation of light, contrasts and “discovery” of nature. They also started to appreciate the value of ruins and to experiment with creating “temporary ones.”¹ The concept that emerged and incorporated all these features was called “picturesque” and was explored mainly in England, Scotland and Wales. One of the architects that examined this domain to a great extent was the English architect Sir John Soane (1753-1837). In the works and lectures he delivered as a Professor of Architecture at the Royal Academy of Arts, he demonstrated that beautiful architecture is interwoven with Antiquity. This relationship blossomed when Soane created “narratives” in his buildings that represented *picturesque* landscapes.

One of his works that has been of particular interest for the study of architecture until today is Sir John Soane's Museum. Using it as a case study, this paper investigates how Soane conceived the “*picturesque*” and transferred it to his design, developing the aforementioned “narratives.” To do so, the paper first defines this notion, and later analyses Soane's profile and thinking. Afterwards, moving beyond a historical study of the building, it focuses on two specific spaces of it, where the picturesque is remarkable. The description that follows is based not only on writings, but also on a personal visit and interpretation. Examining the relationship between the “*picturesque*” and each room sheds a new light both the purpose of the building and Soane's design principles .

The Term “Picturesque”

“*Picturesque*” was, along with “beautiful” and “sublime,” one of the most typical expressions of Romanticism, an era when art becomes a means of expression of artists' individual concerns. It renews the importance of religious faith in art production, exemplifying and disengaging from classical standards. Moreover, the search for an exotic element was reinforced, as well as contact with nature, as a reaction to urbanization. It was cultivated in an educated and prosperous society, where aesthetic experience was developed by appreciating not only nature and art, but also travelling.

The term first appeared as a topic in the late Renaissance in Italy, as “*pittresco*,” which referred to a landscape, place or costume that was characterized by expressive beauty of originality and richness of color,² “after the manner of painters.”³ In English, the word “*picturesque*” meant

1 David Watkin, *A History of Western Architecture* (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1986), 373.

2 *Educalingo* dictionary, “Pittresco,” accessed June 10, 2020, <https://educalingo.com/en/dic-it/pittresco>.

3 Laurent Châtel, “‘Getting the Picture’ of the Picturesque: Some Thoughts on the Greatest British Aesthetic Middle of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries,” accessed June 10, 2020, https://www.persee.fr/doc/xvii_0291-3798_2000_num_51_1_1525, 233.

literally “in the manner of a picture” and flourished in the 18th century. William Gilpin (1724–1804), who was a writer and artist, in his *Essay on Prints* (1768), defined “*picturesque*” as “a term expressive of that peculiar kind of beauty, which is agreeable in a picture.”⁴

As David Watkin describes in the *History of Western Architecture*, the travels started with the Grand Tour of the continent and ended with the pursuit of *picturesque* sceneries in England, Scotland and Wales.⁵ As advocated in 1770 by the connoisseur Horace Walpole, because of the development of landscape gardening, England was perceived as a country where “every journey is made through a succession of pictures.” These explorations of taste were intellectual as well as physical and encouraged people to think sympathetically about cultures other than their own. It was the century that gave birth to archaeology and the preoccupation with Greek Antiquity. The picturesque landscape gardens reflected these thoughts as references.

Picturesque Features

According to Christopher Hussey, “sublime” in England was used to express vastness and grandeur, “beautiful” to express smoothness and gentleness, while “*picturesque*” is mostly a combination of the qualities of the two and is depicted through a “roughness and sudden variation joined to irregularity of form, color, lighting, and even sound.”⁶ Moreover, *picturesque* precepts imply “mix,” “variety,” the blend between buildings and vegetation, which was called “gothic” at that time.⁷ Furthermore, very noticeable characteristics are the motion and the contrast between light and shade, in order to increase the intensity of emotions. In paintings, mostly tautness dominates. The *picturesque* represents the nature not influenced by cultural impact — ideal nature. It could be considered as the imitation of nature, or “an affinity between painting and gardening.”⁸

It is remarkable that the pictorial techniques gave an important meaning to the notion of “environment” and placed buildings in a historical context. Architecture became part of an environment that was characterized by physical, rural or urban and historical settings.⁹ Since this era was connected to the appreciation of Antiquity and nature, a new approach of architecture emerged. Classical and gothic forms coexisted and the precepts that were followed were ornament, repetition of elements and the depiction of ruins, as well as the creation of “temporary” ruins.

By becoming a ruin, the building obtained its “fulfilment.” Sir Uvedale Price, who supported the expansion of the meaning of picturesque to “objects” other than paintings, mentioned that, “time converts the object to picturesque.”¹⁰ So, the view of an old cathedral that is getting lost through nature, or the view of the ruins of ancient Rome are picturesque points of interest. What followed was that artists and architects began to draw and imagine ruins.¹¹

Therefore, what one would call picturesque in the 18th century would probably be a scene characterized by a careful contrast of shade and lights, illustrating nature, and sometimes ruins that show the passage of time and create a disposition. The result resembles a landscape of a directed film frame.

4 Jessica Fay, “What is the picturesque?,” accessed June 10, 2020, <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/features/what-is-the-picturesque->.

5 Watkin, *A History of Western Architecture*, 373.

6 Christopher Hussey, *The picturesque: studies in a point of view* (London and New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1927), 16.

7 Châtel, “*Getting the Picture*,” 233.

8 *Ibid.*, 235.

9 Watkin, *A History of Western Architecture*, 373.

10 Uvedale Price, *An Essay on the Picturesque as Compared with the Sublime and the Beautiful* (London: Forgotten Books, 2017), 62.

11 One of them was Giovanni Battista Piranesi, an artist who was most preoccupied with ruins and imagined new situations that they could create. Watkin, *A History of Western Architecture*, 373.

The Relationship Between “Picturesque” and Sir John Soane’s Museum

Some Brief Information About Sir John Soane

Sir John Soane’s Museum was initially the house of Sir John Soane (1753-1837), who designed it himself and later turned it into a museum. He was an architect, theorist, historian and Professor of Architecture at the Royal Academy of Arts. Before being appointed a Professor in 1806, Soane was well known as an architect who had worked on more than eighty country houses.¹² From 1788, he had also held the important post of surveyor at the Bank of England, owing to William Pitt’s patronage.

As a student, he had been awarded the Royal Academy’s prestigious Gold Medal for Architecture and received a stipend that helped him undertake a Grand Tour of Europe. Afterwards, he became a collector of paintings, sculptures, ruined fragments, models, books and drawings, inspired by his travels to Athens, Rome, Paestum and Pompeii. After travelling to cities of the ancient world and those of modern Europe, Soane started envisioning London as a place with civic public buildings, which he thought London was lacking. He didn’t show much interest in functional and industrial architecture.¹³ Rather, his drawings referred to monuments of the ancient world.¹⁴ His references relied on ancient Greek architecture, *Encyclopedistes*, and the French Enlightenment. As a consequence, he also studied the Picturesque movement in Britain.¹⁵ Like William Turner, Soane was also preoccupied with light, shadow and color when creating his works.¹⁶

By studying the origins of language and architecture, Soane realized that architecture was “an essentially intellectual art,” with a “poetic” character that creates “sensations in the mind.”¹⁷ Besides Greek architecture, he also studied the classical roots in the ethical writings of Aristotle, the classical rhetoric, and writings of Horace and Longinus.¹⁸ He supported the communicative power of architecture and demonstrated that through the representation of the past. By referring to the spirit that directed the minds that produced great works, Soane taught through his work and lectures that architects should learn from the past by also thinking critically, which means that they should not merely copy, but rather imitate the ancestors.¹⁹

His mentality is incorporated in Sir John Soane’s Museum. Initially it was his home, but later he repurposed it to a museum for his architecture students after becoming a Professor.²⁰ His house then became a setting where students could learn about architecture through casts, models, books, and drawings.

The History of the Building

Sir John Soane’s Museum is located at 12-14 Lincoln’s Inn Fields in the area of Holborn in London. The building complex today consists of the buildings: No. 12, No. 13, and No. 14 Lincoln’s Inn Fields. The establishment of this complex is a historical process that began in 1792.

First, Soane bought No. 12, demolished the existing Georgian building and rebuilt it as his home and office. Its location was convenient for him, due to its proximity to Royal Academy. In 1802 he expanded his office to No. 13 and filled the space which today is the Dome with

¹² David Watkin, *Sir John Soane: The Royal Academy Lectures* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 2.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 5.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 22.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

²⁰ “Sir John Soane’s Museum London, Our History,” accessed June 10, 2020, <https://www.soane.org/about/our-history>.

his collection. Later, in 1823, he acquired No. 14; he rebuilt it and designed the new Picture Room for his collection of paintings. No. 13's "loggia" was originally open, but in 1834 Soane converted it as part of the internal space. The top floor was originally a garret with slated roof at the front, but Soane raised the front façade to complete the floor, modifying the proportions of the whole façade. At the same time, he added a fourth floor to No. 12.

In this way, the scale of the buildings increased and the Georgian style was enriched with neoclassical and gothic features. Soane's references from the Classical, the Roman, the Palladian and Georgian eras are obvious and create this mixture that the "picturesque" concept refers to.

Picturesque Features at 12-14 Lincoln's Inn Fields

In his design of 12-14 Lincoln's Inn Fields, Soane applied to architecture the *picturesque* principles of Kent, Adam, Laugier and others.²¹ He was aware of the *picturesque* gardens of France and Le Camus de Mézières, according to whom, "the architect should learn from the garden designer, and a house and a garden can be designed according to similar principles."²² De Mézières recognized that optical effects can induce physical sensations, including those associated with weather conditions.²³ Therefore, Soane studied his book *Le génie de l'architecture, ou L'analogie de cet art avec nos sensations* (1780) and established his personal style by cultivating the "lumière mystérieuse" in his interiors.²⁴

These interiors of Sir John Soane's Museum host an archive of ruins, fragments and objects from Egyptian, Greek, Roman, Pompeian and Gothic design, which Soane obtained during his travels, and now decorate his interiors. The collections represent the history of varied cultures and its transformations in time.²⁵ By using them as ornaments, Soane gave a different meaning to this environment by resembling other cultures' environments, and at the same time supported the symbolism of decoration, something very common in ancient times. Indeed, they did with great propriety in temples for their ceremonies, but when such symbolism was introduced for an English house, the result looked "puerile and disgusting."²⁶ However, he placed his collections in a way that organized exhibition spaces.

In this way, Soane demonstrated his argument about the comparative dimension of architecture and also acted remembering his educational role: like preparing his home to educate the future visitors and students that he would teach there. It is noteworthy to mention here David Watkin's words: "Soane's reluctance to show visitors around his house and museum on dark days not only indicates the extent to which lighting effects were integral to his architecture, but also suggests that he almost saw the building as a kind of garden."²⁷ Actually, it is not clear whether Soane perceived his museum as a metaphor for a garden.²⁸ Yet, the emphasis on perceptual effects are connected strongly to the Romantic era, moving away from the order of the plan to valuable and informal experiences.²⁹

Hittorf described how the different architectural qualities of each object represented the particular principles of the era they belonged to.³⁰ A visual demonstration of the history

21 Jonathan Hill, *The Architecture of Ruins: Designs on the Past, Present and Future* (London: Routledge, 2019), 174.

22 Hill, *The Architecture of Ruins*, 174.

23 Ibid.

24 Watkin, *Sir John Soane: The Royal Academy Lectures*, 2.

25 Dalibor Veselý, "Surrealism and the Latent World of Creativity," *Umni / Art* 59 (2011), 269.

26 Watkin, *Sir John Soane: The Royal Academy Lectures*, 2.

27 David Watkin, *Sir John Soane: Enlightenment Thought and the Royal Academy Lectures* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 9.

28 Sophia Psarra, *Architecture and narrative: the formation of space and cultural meaning in buildings* (London: Routledge, 2009), 119.

29 Ibid.

30 Watkin, *Sir John Soane: The Royal Academy Lectures*, 17.

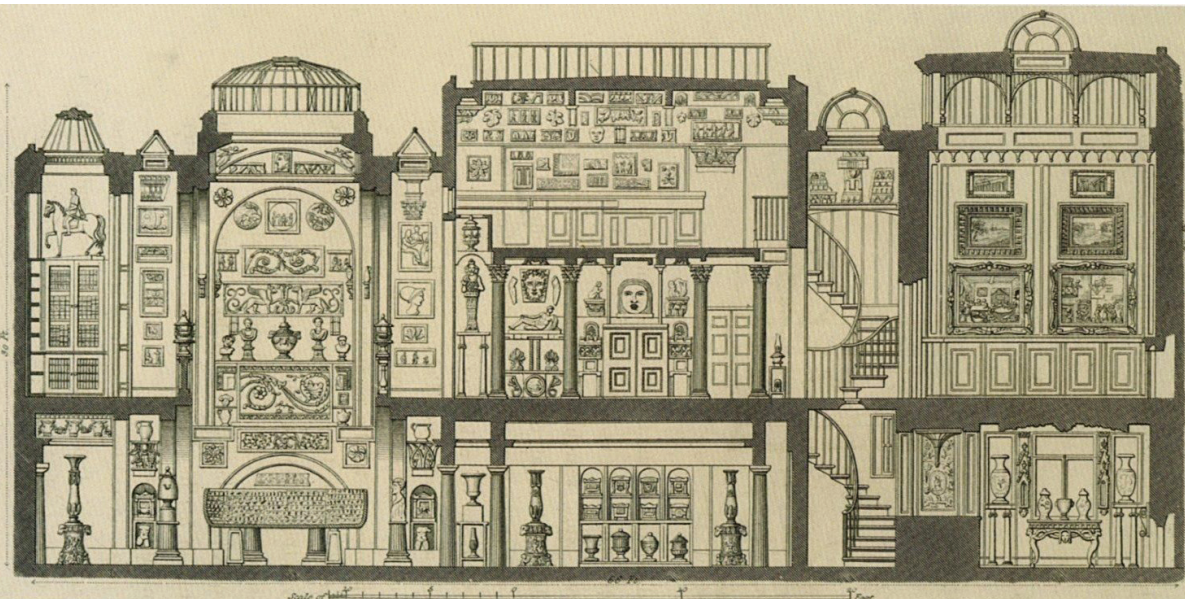


Fig. 1: A Cross-Section Through Sir John Soane's Museum, 1835

of architecture is offered by the various pathways that Soane created in the rooms. Also, a significant feature of the English landscape tradition that he followed was the organization of the *vistas* along a path that formed a succession of visual relations.³¹

Furthermore, it is very interesting to read the building through its section (Fig. 1). In this drawing someone can recognize the variety of the aforementioned qualities through the mixture of different elements, yards next to the main rooms, double-height spaces, rooms within rooms, lights that permeate through roofs and windows and spread throughout the house, contrasts with shades, which induce theatrical effects and provoke the sensations of the visitor. This composition of indoor and outdoor spaces combined with collections give the sense of a continuous romantic garden, where someone can wander around. These sequences of spaces as a *picturesque* journey demonstrate the ability of Soane to create a continuous narrative. In addition to that, Soane had mentioned in "Crude Hints Towards a History of my House" (1812) that he saw his house as a "future ruin inspected by visitors speculating on its origins and functions,"³² confirming this intention to create lines of unfinished storytelling.

Furthermore, Helen Furjan makes another connection between Soane's house and the *picturesque*. In particular, she associates the convex mirrors that Soane used with the "Claude Glass," a small convex mirror that painters and tourists carried when traveling in order to frame and "rearrange" the landscape. In the building it is mostly the *optical* characteristics that recall the lack of boundaries in the English garden and show the museum as a part of a larger world that combines architecture and arts, the past with the present, and the inside with the outside.³³

Soane expressed an architectural "language" that included all these optical effects. He placed mirrors at the periphery of the rooms, over frames in order to make vistas to extend and furniture to seem detached from the walls. Through these reflections, the views could expand

31 Psarra, *Architecture and narrative*, 122.

32 Helen Dorey, "Crude Hints Towards a History of my House," in *Visions of Ruin, Sir John Soane's Museum* (exhibition catalogue), Sir John Soane's Museum, 1999, 53-77.

33 Psarra, *Architecture and narrative*, 126.

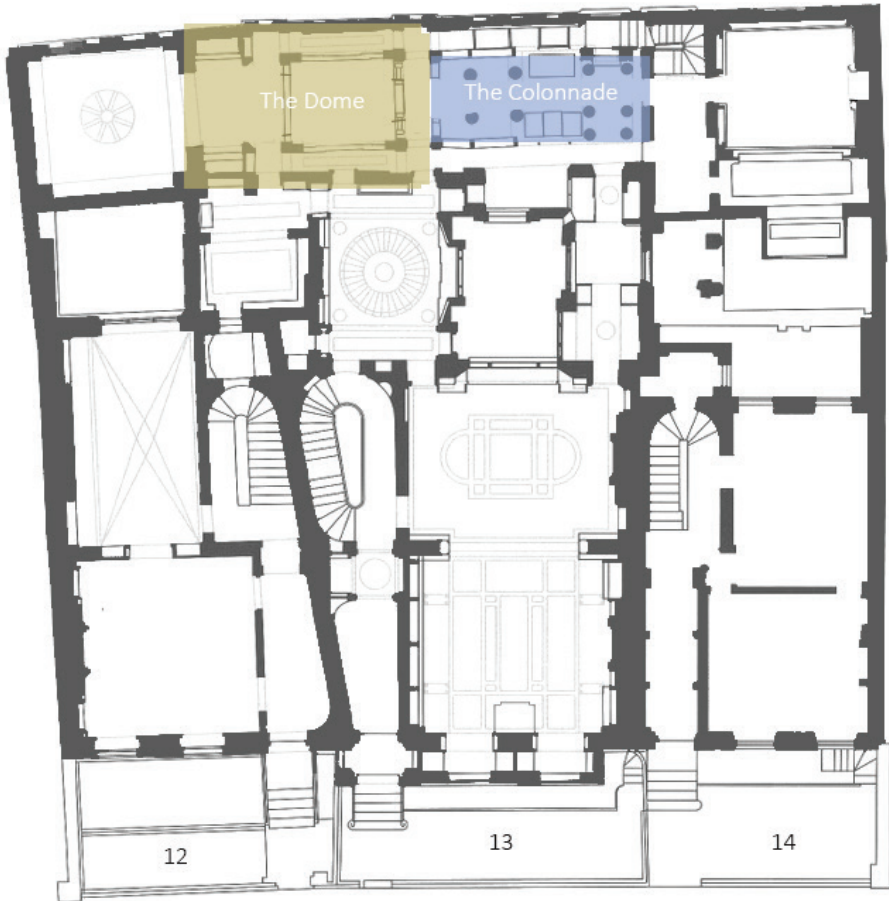


Fig. 2: Key of picturesque rooms that were analyzed

Fig. 3: The vista from the Colonnade towards the "Picture Room" (opposite page)

in different directions and lead the eye to the center of each space.³⁴ Through such reflections also other views can be provoked, dependent on the interpretation of each visitor. Soane blurred the difference between reality and representation³⁵ so that varied visual and spatial relationships could be produced.

Therefore, we can say that the *picturesque* in Soane's Museum lies in the optical effects, namely in this expansion of space through openings and mirrors in a landscape or a garden. Also, the lighting, the careful juxtaposition of ruins and objects from different eras, the organization of movement in the rooms subserved this and, in this way, Soane created spaces that would "tell their own story." While the concept of the whole building provides *picturesque* qualities, this essay is focusing on two rooms in the interior of the museum that accentuate these qualities the most: The "Dome" area and the "Colonnade" as can be seen in Fig. 2.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid., 130.



Two Picturesque Rooms in Sir John Soane's Museum

The Colonnade

Situated at the center of the rear ground floor area, the “Colonnade” took its name by the ten columns of Corinthian order that are placed non symmetrically along the room. Soane placed double columns in each row in order to create a sense of grandeur. While they seem to support the floor of the Students' Room, in fact, its weight is distributed to the thin and unobtrusive metal columns.³⁶ In his lectures, Soane supported that poetic capabilities of architecture surpass its functional properties. In particular, he stated that “some architects say (certainly without reason) that the column can never be used for decoration only. If this is admitted, we should lose many of the chief opportunities of delighting the eye or showing the powers of architecture.”³⁷ So, the role of the Colonnade is to give the meanings that Soane wanted to convey.

Moreover, it is remarkable that the Students' Room does not come in contact with the main walls. This allows light to come from above on either side, as well as from the Dome and from the window. “The effect in this part,” wrote Soane, “is rather solemn than gloomy, and the pictorial breaks of light and shade will be fully appreciated by the students and lovers of art.”³⁸

On either side, between the columns, there are cupboards, which in the past housed drawings by Robert and James Adam, but today marble statues and ancient Greek and Roman fragments have been placed upon. These are the fragment of the frieze of the Erechtheion, one of the temple buildings on the Acropolis of Athens (5th century BC), the Roman statue of Asclepius and the Roman marble statue of the Ephesian Diana. On the east, the wall is recessed by the window providing a view of the courtyard (*pasticcio*), where other marble sculptures stand.³⁹

What is noteworthy is the framing that is created in the whole composition of the space of the Colonnade. All the elements have been placed and lightened only from the sides, in a way that the central space stays empty and dark. Thus, what dominates is this striking contrast of shade and light, a picturesque feature. The emphasis is placed on the statues that are lightened, the “Dome,” the space next to the “Colonnade,” and the “Picture Room,” on the other side.

Looking towards the “Picture Room,” the ten columns seem to frame its entrance and the painting of Antonio Canaletto (1697 – 1768) “Riva degli Schiavoni” as well, as it is placed in the background, in the end of the axis of Colonnade. So, standing in the Colonnade room, the visitor is invited to see the view of the Grand Canal of Venice through a “window.” By this visual “play,” Soane gives a new architectural meaning to the openings (Fig. 3). This view of the landscape of the Grand Canal brings the inside closer to the outside. This scene and direction of the visitor's glance towards imaginary spaces reminds us of the sense that *picturesque* paintings provoke, where the viewer imagines wandering to unreal places.

36 Bruce Boucher, *Sir John Soane's Museum: A complete Description* (London: Pimpnel Press, 2018), 65.

37 Watkin, *Sir John Soane: The Royal Academy Lectures*, 13.

38 Boucher, *Sir John Soane's Museum*, 65.

39 *Ibid.*, 66.

The Dome

The “Dome” is one of the most visually accessible places, but at the same time it is the remotest from the other spaces.⁴⁰ It can already be seen diagonally from the Dining Room and the Library, but more clearly from the Colonnade, which is next to it, and the Picture Room. It takes a “core” role, which differentiates it from its surroundings.

This room has been first built as a “model room,” attached to Soane’s office at No. 12. Although there is no real dome above, a conical skylight based on a circle covers the square central space. Soane gave the Dome the status of a “remote center,” which in most religious spaces is attached to the “secular” exterior through a direct axial connection. This area featured in all his plans for expanding the house and was the main motivation of his work from early stages.⁴¹

As Sophia Psarra mentioned in *Architecture and Narratives*, Soane must have perceived the Dome as “an expression of memory in the house, a kind of Pantheon, but also as an expression of the aesthetic quality of the work of art in the historical work of art.”⁴² This can be seen already from the large plaster rosette that is located in the center of the Dome and is illuminated from behind, as the light comes in through small orange and red stained glass panes. Also, there are small yellow triangular skylights above the dome.⁴³ The distribution of light, often from undiscovered sources, sheds beautiful hues and produces strong effects that compete the colors of the objects in the museum.⁴⁴

The Dome is the room where Soane’s position in the world of architecture and arts is expressed the most.⁴⁵ Its central space is a double height area, that also connects to the basement. Both openings are surrounded by a balustrade, on which a variety of objects are positioned, as well as on the piers of the Dome and the surrounding walls. These are mostly vases, busts, antique fragments and casts. Soane used to organize in groups fragments from different eras. These groupings would allow multiple possibilities of interpretation.

When someone enters the room from the “Colonnade,” on the opposite side of the Dome, the greatest attention is attracted by the cast of the statue of Apollo Belvedere. The skylight of the Dome shines on the Apollo, making it appear to be bathing in golden light, an effect which emphasizes his role as the Sun God.⁴⁶ A large part of the external wall was taken down by Soane to install it there. Not only the skylight, but also the mirrors on the diagonal of the piers frame the Apollo and highlight it.⁴⁷ Also, these reflections connect the Dome visually to other spaces of the house. On the other side is placed the white marble bust of Sir John Soane which the Apollo Belvedere confabulates with. It is made by Soane’s friend and sculptor Sir Francis Chantrey in 1829. The bust is standing on the balustrades among statuettes by Flaxman, Michelangelo and Raphael.

Other classical antiquities stand on the balustrades as well, like cinerary vases that have been restored in the 18th century, Roman heads on the north balustrade, a Roman Sarcophagus panel on the west, festoon between the pilasters on the outside of the Pantheon below the south balustrade.⁴⁸ Various Roman fragments are also annexed to the piers, among them two pieces of sculpted marble sarcophagus attached on the eastern side, while on the walls there are plasters and other cast models.

40 Psarra, *Architecture and narrative*, 124.

41 Ibid.

42 Ibid., 125.

43 Boucher, *Sir John Soane’s Museum*, 69.

44 Ibid., 70.

45 Psarra, *Architecture and narrative*, 121.

46 Boucher, *Sir John Soane’s Museum*, 72.

47 Psarra, *Architecture and narrative*, 125.

48 Boucher, *Sir John Soane’s Museum*, 72.



Fig. 4: The lighting of Sarcophagus in the “Dome” and table in the “Breakfast Room”

Between the Dome, which is surrounded by the balustrades, and the walls, Soane has designed in-between spaces for motion and tight spaces for the installation of his collection, by lighting them appropriately.

As light plays an important role in his composition, Soane put gratings on the floor that allow light to penetrate into the basement. Moreover, he made an opening on the northern, so that he could bring in the Sarcophagus in 1824. The four screws that have been bolted through the corner columns of the Dome may relate to its installation.

The “Sarcophagus of Egyptian King Seti I” is placed in the basement, under the main skylight of the Dome. It is a monolithic block of limestone, covered both internally and externally with hieroglyphs. Its length is 2.85m, its width 1.12m, and its height varies from 0.81m at the shoulders to 0.68 at the foot.⁴⁹ It was excavated by Giovanni Battista Belzoni in 1817 in the Valley of the Kings. He brought it to England and deposited in the British Museum in 1821. On 12 May 1824 Soane bought it and brought it to his house.⁵⁰

The part of the basement where the Sarcophagus is located is called the Sepulchral Chamber and was constructed in 1809. Around there are arches, plaster models and Roman urns that display Soane’s fascination with ruins. The entire basement symbolizes death.⁵¹ Under the arch leading to the main room, there are large antique vases, raised on columns: one clay amphora from the Roman Imperial period and one alabaster cinerary urn. Instead of supporting a roof or a floor, the columns support the objects that are related to the cinerary space. So, once more, Soane does not focus only on the function, but rather, he reverses the architectural meanings and emphasizes the symbolism of the space by positioning Sarcophagus of Egyptian King Seti I, which is the main element, in the center of the double height room and shedding light over it.

Respectively, at a smaller scale, and thus, giving less value, he created a skylight in the “Breakfast room,” which is next to the “Dome,” and placed the table underneath (Fig. 4).

49 Ibid., 55.

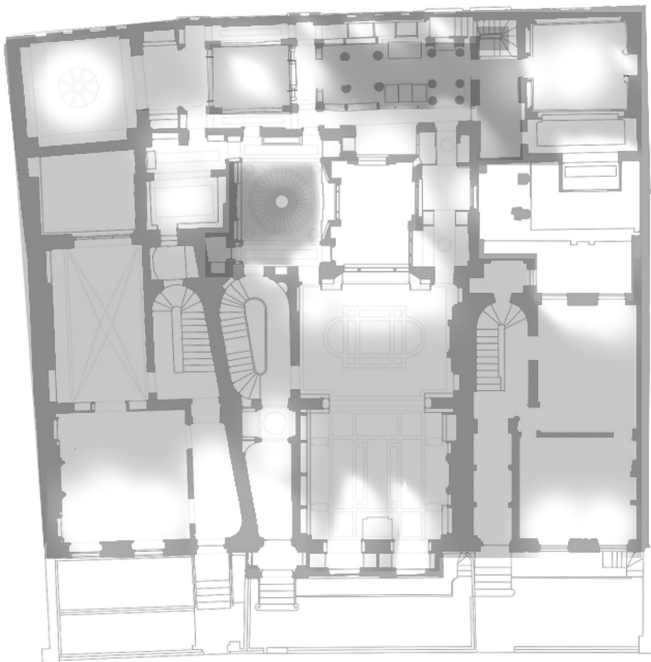
50 Ibid., 53.

51 Psarra, *Architecture and narrative*, 120.



Fig. 5: Diagram showing the visibility from different points

Fig. 6: Diagram showing the lighting



In the end, this strong lighting of the important parts that comes from the main skylight, the arrangement of fragments, their variety of colors and highlights as parts of a coherent whole around a topic (i.e. tomb), the lighting from the lateral light sources, and the reflections from the mirrors give the “Dome” its picturesque ambience. Also, through these optical effects, this space is more visually connected to the whole building. Figure 5 demonstrates this link between the different rooms, whereas Figure 6 illustrates an estimation of the light distribution within the building spaces that is based on the author’s visit. The rooms that are not close to courtyards, are mostly lighted by skylights or other windows.

Conclusion

Sir John Soane was one of the architects that would write, draw, publish, build, as well as curate. He acknowledged interrelated practices that have together stimulated architecture for ages. By “reading” *picturesque* paintings and buildings, and recognizing their qualities, Soane transferred ideas from nature and previous eras that these landscapes included, into his spaces, creating a whole narrative. In Sir John Soane’s Museum, he reformed an old building into a coherent sequence of spaces and offered *picturesque* scenes to the visitors.

Soane’s purpose was to underline the communicative nature of architecture through this sequence to the visitors and his students who would experience the building. Forms, objects, spaces and their relations reflected fundamental ideas that should be compared and continue to new eras.

Picturesque scenes in Soane’s Museum played an important role for Soane who used them to highlight objects and spaces. By collecting ruins or elements that represented nature in a room so that he could create the sense of an endless garden, by shedding the biggest amount of light, or by directing the gaze and the movement towards an important object, he managed to demonstrate significant symbolisms.

Moreover, he gave different hierarchy to different spaces, when designing them: the main rooms are usually detached from the walls, so that light would penetrate and light up the specific objects of the room. Around them he designed spaces for motion and tight spaces to place his collections. On the face of it, someone can follow any way they prefer since Soane did not define any specific route that leads to a space, but, actually, he has organized carefully the items that he wanted to be viewed from any direction.

Whereas in today’s spatial design, architects emphasize the straight functionality, Soane recognized function as a ritual. This can be seen in the way he illuminated the important objects of the rooms by using strong colors such as crimson and yellow on the walls and glasses, by creating contrasts and by framing the vistas of scenes with ruins that give the sense of gardens. Thus, he managed not only to narrate the stories of the items and stimulate emotions, but also to curate an entire exhibition. By involving fragments in his compositions, he showed his perception that architecture is something “unfinished.” Through the collections, the columns and the frames that represent forms and meanings of the past, Soane shows his intention to imitate and incorporate them in the new era. Although architecture speaks every time its own language, it is also self-referential, and architects repeat old principles. Soane’s design principles and emblematic architecture have been values and lessons not only for his students to imitate, but also for visitors, upcoming generations and even today’s architects to learn from.

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ILLUSTRATION CREDITS

Fig. 1: <https://i.pinimg.com/originals/3c/fb/eb/3cfbebb59b090af2b3773631d81ad654.jpg>. Accessed June 6, 2020.

Fig. 2-6: Drawings by the author.