

# SIR JOHN SOANE'S MUSEUM

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***From: Sir John Soane's Museum, 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields, London WC2A 3BP***

**The Trustees of Sir John Soane's Museum are pleased to announce the appointment of Abraham Thomas as the next Director of the Museum. He will take up the appointment on 3 December 2013.**



to credit: Peter-Kellehe

Announcing the appointment, Guy Elliott, Chairman of the Trustees, said, "The Trustees have appointed Abraham Thomas to be their next Director on the unanimous recommendation of their search committee, which included senior external members, as well as four Trustees. The decision has been endorsed by the Royal Academy of Arts, as required by our governing legislation.

"Mr Thomas comes to us from The Victoria and Albert Museum, where, as Curator of Designs, he was responsible for, amongst other exhibitions, the brilliant and much praised Heatherwick Studio: Designing the Extraordinary. He joins the Soane Museum at a particularly creative and challenging time in its history. The immediate priority is to complete the museum's acclaimed *Opening up the Soane* project, which has already delivered a new exhibition gallery, conservation studios, disability access, and shop. Sir John Soane's private apartments, not seen since 1837, will feature prominently once the current phase concludes in 2014.

The new Director will build upon recent successes to lead The Soane's talented staff and volunteer force in realizing the fullest potential of the museum as an 'academy', as Soane described it, that is, a centre of learning. The work and reputation of Sir John Soane

himself, the unique atmosphere of his former home and its unparalleled collections have the 'permanently magical' power to inspire and inform all those who seek knowledge and understanding of the story of architecture."

Responding, Mr Thomas said "I am delighted to be appointed the next Director of Sir John Soane's Museum. It's a great honour to be invited to lead this unique institution, and I look forward to building upon the fantastic work carried out by my predecessor, Tim Knox, and the staff, in order to create an exciting future for the Museum. I have always considered the Soane to be an extraordinary container of ideas, and I'm thrilled at the prospect of working closely with the staff and Trustees to explore boldly Sir John Soane's original vision for his building and wide-ranging collections – a legacy which I believe can offer immeasurable relevance for today's world."

**For further information please contact Theresa or Athina at Theresa Simon & Partners**

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### **Notes to Editors**

**Abraham Thomas** is Curator of Designs, and lead curator for architecture, at the V&A. During his eight years at the Museum he has made an outstanding contribution to the public programme, working across historical and contemporary architecture and design with responsibility for the V&A's collection of approximately 200,000 design drawings, maquettes and models. This collection ranges in scope from the 16th century to the present day and across disciplines such as architecture, furniture, sculpture, metalwork and ceramics, all of which are represented at the Soane.

Thomas has played a key role as lead curator in the V&A + RIBA Architecture Partnership. In addition to curating such acclaimed exhibitions as 'Heatherwick Studio: Designing the Extraordinary' and '1:1 - Architects Build Small Spaces', he was the curator of the V&A's bicentenary retrospective on the 19th century designer, Owen Jones, 'A Higher Ambition' and co-curator of an expanded version which later toured internationally. He has subsequently published related research on Owen Jones, who, like Soane, broke the mould by proposing a modern style unique to the nineteenth century, as well as on James Wild (curator of Sir John Soane's Museum from 1878 to his death in 1892) and other key 19th-century artists working in the Middle East.

Thomas succeeds Tim Knox, who was with the Soane for almost eight years before being appointed Director and Marlay Curator of the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge.

**Sir John Soane's Museum** is the smallest of the national museums and galleries sponsored by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and was founded by the architect Sir John Soane in 1837. It receives over 100,000 visitors per annum and is Designated, all of its collections being recognized as pre-eminent. Phases 2 and 3 of the Opening up the Soane project (OUTS) deliver an additional public floor comprising Sir John Soane's richly hung private apartment and his Model Room and other benefits. OUTS is funded by the Monument Trust, the Heritage Lottery Fund and many donors, trusts and individuals in the UK and the USA. Sir John Soane's vision of the Museum as an 'academy of architecture' reflected his intention that his house and collections be used to inform and inspire students for generations to come and it is today one of the Trustees' six principal objectives.