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Getty, Sainsbury Trusts Give Soane's Museum 1.1 Million Pounds

By Farah Nayeri



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July 24 (Bloomberg) -- Charitable trusts endowed by the late **Simon Sainsbury** and **Paul Getty** are giving 1.1 million pounds (\$2.2 million) to the Sir **John Soane's** Museum, bringing the London attraction closer to its 6 million pound fundraising goal after the U.K. Lottery refused a grant request.

The **Monument Trust**, funded by Sainsbury, has pledged 1 million pounds toward the museum's planned revamp, which would open up rooms and boost visitor access, the museum said in a release issued for a press presentation. The **J. Paul Getty Jr. Charitable Trust** has given 125,000 pounds for stained-glass refurbishment.

"It may not be large and trendy, but this most British and eccentric of all house museums has a special place in the hearts of all who know it," the Soane's director, **Tim Knox**, said in the press release. "We still need help."

The plan is to open Mr. and Mrs. Soane's bedrooms to the public, and set up a coatroom, shop and revamped exhibition galleries. That would allow a 25 percent increase in the museum's 93,000 annual visitors.

The Heritage Lottery Fund, which committed 161.2 million pounds to the 2012 London Olympics, rejected a 3.3 million pound grant request from the Soane in June. In the past month, the museum has raised a total of 1.615 million pounds, including from the Sainsbury and Getty trusts. More than 4 million pounds are still required.

Footstool, Lunettes

The house at No. 13, Lincoln's Inn Fields, is exactly as Soane left it in 1837, down to the last footstool. The museum is composed of the main house and two others on either side, all by Soane. At present, visitors squeeze in and out, 50 at a time, through the atmospherically dim 19th-century entrance.

Soane was architect of the original Bank of England building and of the Dulwich Picture Gallery as well as a Royal Academy architecture professor. The house -- a small maze of rooms with lunettes, concave mirrors and skylights -- has treasures worthy of the Louvre: the engraved sarcophagus of Egyptian Pharaoh Seti I, Hogarth's "A Rake's Progress" series of paintings and pictures by Canaletto.

When he died a widower in 1837, estranged from his only surviving son, Soane ordered that his house be kept as it was, and opened free of charge to visitors and researchers. Trustees have respected that demand.

Under the new plan, staff offices would be moved over to the restored No. 14, a longtime law office bought by the museum for 700,000 pounds a decade ago.

In recent years, Soane's museum has received about 1.25 million pounds in U.K. lottery money for buying No. 14 and restoring the three courtyards. Another 29,800 pounds were given last August to help the museum draw up plans for the revamp.

To contact the reporter on this story: [Farah Nayeri](#) in London at Farahn@bloomberg.net.

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