

Press Release

Emily Allchurch: Visions of Architectural Fancy

16 May – 26 August 2018

Foyle Space, Sir John Soane's Museum

@soanemuseum



Emily Allchurch *Grand Tour II Homage to Soane (after Gandy) 2017*

In 2018, Sir John Soane's Museum will host a striking presentation of three works by the artist Emily Allchurch in the Foyle Space. Her practice involves the contemporary re-creation of historic artworks using a complex technique of digital collage of her own original photography.

For this display, Allchurch will exhibit pieces closely inspired by significant works in the Museum's collections: *Public and Private Buildings Executed by Sir John Soane between 1780 and 1815* (1818) and *Architectural Visions of Early Fancy* (1820), both by J.M. Gandy; as well as Piranesi's *Imaginary View of the Ancient Intersection of the Via Appia and Via Ardentina, Rome* (1756).

Emily Allchurch's *Grand Tour: In Search of Soane (after Gandy) 2012*, and *Grand Tour II: Homage to Soane after Gandy (2017)* will be shown together for the first time, and celebrate the legacy of Sir John Soane. Each is a reworking of Soane's 'built' and 'unbuilt' projects by his architectural illustrator Joseph Gandy.



In *Grand Tour: In Search of Soane (after Gandy)* 2012, Allchurch toured England to photograph Soane's buildings. Grouped together as though models in a room, the scale is distorted and sense suspended. An interior space surrounds exterior facades, in which a red telephone box - Gilbert Scott's iconic design inspired by the Soane family tomb in St Pancras churchyard - stands next to small buildings, and Soane's characteristic skylights appear in the frames. In the right-hand corner Allchurch displays the tools of her trade, just as Gandy depicts Soane at his drafting table with his architectural instruments, creating a comparison between creative tools and processes across the centuries. The piece was initially created for the exhibition *Sense of Soane* at Pitzhanger Manor, Soane's former country home in Ealing in 2012.

To create the companion piece, *Grand Tour II: Homage to Soane (after Gandy)*, Allchurch toured Britain with the support of an a-n Travel Bursary, to photograph examples of neo-classical architecture. Using the architectural elements as a 'kit of parts' she digitally constructed Soane's 'unbuilt' projects to appear as though they had in fact been built. These composite buildings have been set into a landscape combining numerous English gardens, with the rugged mountains of Arthur's Seat in Edinburgh and Scafell Pike in the Lake District.

Both of the 'Grand Tour' pieces by Allchurch have been exhibited at the RA Summer Exhibition, as were the original Gandy paintings two centuries ago.

The final work to be displayed in the Foyle Space, *Sic Transit Gloria Mundi (after Piranesi)* (2016), is inspired by Giovanni Battista Piranesi's fantasy composition of the Appian Way in Rome, *Imaginary View of the Ancient Intersection of the Via Appia and Via Ardentina, Rome* (1756). The work is a tale of two cities, constructed from architectural fragments of antiquity that Allchurch photographed in Rome, intermingled with those of London's past, present and future. The artwork is a reminder that empires can collapse, and is both a celebration of, and a warning about, architectural hubris in London today.

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Notes to editors:

About 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.

Emily Allchurch

Emily Allchurch, born in the Channel Islands in 1974, divides her time between London and her home in Hastings, East Sussex. She trained as a sculptor, receiving a First Class (Hons.) degree in Fine Art from the Kent Institute of Art & Design – Canterbury in 1996, and an MA from the Royal College of Art in 1999.

Since then, she has established an international reputation for her complex photographic images output as backlit transparency works. Her practice creates a dialogue between historical artworks and the present day, using hundreds of photographs, always taken herself, and a seamless digital collage technique to re-create the original old master painting or print in a contemporary idiom. The resulting photographic images have a resonance with place, history and culture and deal with the passage of time and the changes to a landscape, fusing contemporary life with a sense of history.

Allchurch has exhibited regularly in solo and group shows in the UK and internationally, including the USA, Canada, Japan, Singapore, Hong Kong, Italy and Germany. In 2015, she had a solo show *Emily Allchurch: In the Footsteps of a Master* at Manchester Art Gallery, supported by the Art Fund's Art Happens initiative, which toured to the Djanogly Art Gallery in Nottingham. In 2017, she was awarded a grant from Arts Council England and the British



Council's Artists' International Development Fund to support her 'Hong Kong Babel' project, launched with Karin Weber Gallery at Art Central, Hong Kong, in March 2018.

In February 2018 she was selected as a Finalist in the Columbia Threadneedle Prize for Figurative Art Today, and won the Visitors' Choice Award.

Her works are held in private collections worldwide, with a complete set of her 'Tokyo Story' series in the permanent collection of the Minneapolis Institute of Arts. She is an Honorary Fellow of the Society of Architectural Illustration.

The exhibition is generously supported by The Bern Schwartz Family Foundation

The museum is open free: Wednesday to Sunday inclusive, 10am-5pm. www.soane.org

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