



[www.museumclausum.org](http://www.museumclausum.org)

[mail@museumclausum.org](mailto:mail@museumclausum.org)

*Museum Clausum: Soane Mania* is a collection of photographs devoted to Sir John Soane's Museum, London. A selection of these images will be shown at Riflemaker as part of 'Light Years' together with Liliane Lijn from 7 November 2011. The exhibition will extend the juxtaposition of Lijn's work to the Soane spaces which will happen concurrently as Lijn exhibits at the Soane.

The series juxtaposes two photographically distinct approaches, each in their own way corresponding to and complementing the unique Soane 'interiors'. The sumptuous all-sharp, crisp colour images allow for studying intricate details of the historic spaces yet, many images also feature more or less faint, ghost-like traces of visitors as a distinct vestige of the moment of the 'taking' of the photograph. The grainy black and white images show partial views of visitors on a par with the displayed object fragments. As a direct echo of Soane's collection, often aided by views that are additionally broken up through the architect's theatrical use of real and illusory spaces, the Museum Clausum photographs repeat fragmentation. The added focus on the fleeting presence of visitor's bodies emphasises the contemporary photographic moment in tension with the stillness of the preserved historic spaces.

Soane died just before the advent of photographic image technologies. He spent great efforts to preserve detailed views of the rooms in his house through commissioned watercolours. Always distinctly open to new technology, we can be almost certain that he would have been fast to embrace photography as a new medium to mechanically record his house and museum. The fact that these spaces remain largely unchanged means that contemporary photographs could actually be 'historic' photographs, yet the *Museum Clausum* image titles 'stamp' a recent date on each image.

As a collection this presents 'a museum of a museum', which consciously extends the hall of mirrors effect that is inherent in all photographic re-presentation of museum spaces: a self-reflective mediation of what is already another mediation. Yet still, *Museum Clausum: Soane Mania* is far from an emphasis on 'institutional critique'. Instead, the images are clearly to be seen as homage not only to the uniquely idiosyncratic *Gesamtkunstwerk* created by a passionate individual but also to fact that as a society, generations have preserved and visited these spaces for some 180 years.