

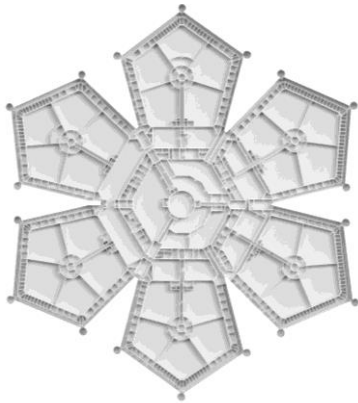
Langlands & Bell: Degrees of Truth

4 March 2020 – 31 May 2020

Sir John Soane's Museum

www.soane.org/langlands-bell

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Millbank Penitentiary (Detail), 1994



Langlands & Bell, 2019



Artist's Maquette for *Grand Tour*, 2020

Contemporary society's relationship with architecture is to be explored in a major solo exhibition by the artists Ben Langlands and Nikki Bell, opening at Sir John Soane's Museum in March 2020.

- **Sir John Soane's Museum's most ambitious partnership with a contemporary artist to date will include new works created specially for the exhibition.**
- **Artworks spanning the career of Langlands & Bell will be brought into conversation with the historic Soane Museum, exploring views on architecture across the centuries.**
- **The exhibition will consider the ability of architecture to bear witness to contemporary society and to shape its inhabitants, through its capacities for truth-telling and control.**

Langlands & Bell: Degrees of Truth (4 March – 31 May 2020) will be Sir John Soane's Museum's most ambitious partnership with a contemporary artist to date. Taking place at a moment when some commentators contend we have entered a 'post-truth' era, *Langlands &*

Bell: Degrees of Truth will reflect on the capacities of architecture to bear witness to the technological, political, economic and cultural relationships that define contemporary society.

Ranging from the found objects Langlands & Bell gathered from the rubble and detritus of Whitechapel in the early 1980s, to their recent explorations of the slick hyper-determined buildings of Silicon Valley's tech giants, the exhibition will explore the disconnects that exist between the narratives that buildings, objects and images are intended to convey and those they inadvertently reveal.

This major show, bringing together over four decades of work by Langlands & Bell, will take place throughout the Museum's iconic spaces. New works and pieces borrowed from collections across the country will create a dialogue with architect Sir John Soane's collection of art and antiquities. Works featured will range from *Traces of Living* (first made in 1986), an installation in which the refuse and relics of everyday life are embedded into tables and chairs, to the Turner prize-nominated *The House of Osama bin Laden* (2003), a multimedia installation in which visitors use a joystick to navigate a digital recreation of Osama bin Laden's former home. The points where individual experiences meet architecture will be considered in recent works exploring the headquarters of tech giants, including *Apple, Sunny Vale* (2017), and in early works including *Interlocking Chair* (1995).

The exhibition will also include a major new artwork conceived for Soane's iconic Library-Dining Room. *Grand Tour* is an installation that explores the cultural resonances of the eighteenth-century tradition from which it draws its name. Featuring a series of white lacquered hand-made chairs containing models under glass of historic buildings we know were visited by Soane on the grand tour, or notable contemporary buildings that he would surely visit were he making the tour today. A new sculpture of a globe featuring the air routes of the world will also be installed in the Breakfast Room. Requiring visitors to turn the globe, the piece will consider the importance of travel to Sir John Soane, as well as the place of international travel and communication today.

Langlands & Bell's work explores the complex web of relationships linking people, architecture and the coded systems of communication we use to negotiate a fast-changing technological world. Their art ranges from film, video and digital media projects to sculpture, installation, and full-scale architecture.

Langlands & Bell say: 'Nearly all of our art, one way or another, is about spaces, structures, networks and the human and social relationships they embody. We find evidence of the relationships between people, from the personal to the political, everywhere. Our interest is in revealing the poetry and beauty in our surroundings and distilling them to their essence'.

Exhibition curator, Owen Hopkins, says: 'Across their career Langlands & Bell have consistently sought to unpick the interrelationship of ideas, forms and histories through which architecture is conceived and experienced. In this they have much in common with Sir John Soane's own conception of architecture, embodied in his house and collection with which their exhibition will create a powerful synthesis across time and space'.

This exhibition has been made possible thanks to the support of Pomellato and Christian & Florence Levett.

Press enquiries

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About Sir John Soane's Museum

Sir John Soane's house, museum and library at No. 13 Lincoln's Inn Fields has been a National Museum since the early 19th 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 collection after his death for the benefit of 'amateurs and students' in architecture, painting and sculpture. Today, the Museum is one of the country's most unusual and significant museums with a continuing and developing commitment to education and creative inspiration.

Visitor Information

The Museum is free and open on Wednesday to Sunday inclusive, 10am–5pm.

www.soane.org

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

About Langlands & Bell

London-based artists Ben Langlands & Nikki Bell began collaborating in 1978 after meeting at art school. Working across sculpture, installation, film and video, interactive digital media, and full-scale architecture, they have exhibited widely internationally since the early 1980s including exhibitions at Tate Britain and Tate Modern in London, the Venice Biennale, State Hermitage Museum, MoMA and CCA, Kitakyushu, Japan.

In 2002, Langlands & Bell were commissioned as War Artists to visit Afghanistan and won a Bafta for the trilogy of art works that resulted from their visit, *The House of Osama bin Laden*. The same work was also shortlisted for the Turner Prize. In 2016, they unveiled *Beauty < Immortality*, a permanent installation at Piccadilly Circus Underground station. Other upcoming exhibitions include “The Past is Never Dead...” a major solo exhibition exploring the architecture of the Slave Castles of the Ghanaian ‘Gold Coast’ at Gallery 1957, Accra, Ghana, from 16 May 2020 – 5 July 2020.