SIR JOHN SOANE'S MUSEUM
LONDON

Recreation of Lost Stained Glass Window

Barley Studio has recreated a nineteenth-century window for Sir John Soane's Museum in London which was destroyed in World War II. The 1830 window, by Collins of the Strand, was based on Jervais' and Reynolds' famous figure of 'Charity' in New College Oxford.

Following a landmine explosion in October 1940, the window was almost completely destroyed. Only two sections of the classical base of the window survived, along with inventory sketches and watercolour and photographic partial images of the window. The replica window was created and installed as part of the multimillion pound 'Opening up the Soane' project to restore, refurbish and improve Sir John Soane's Museum.

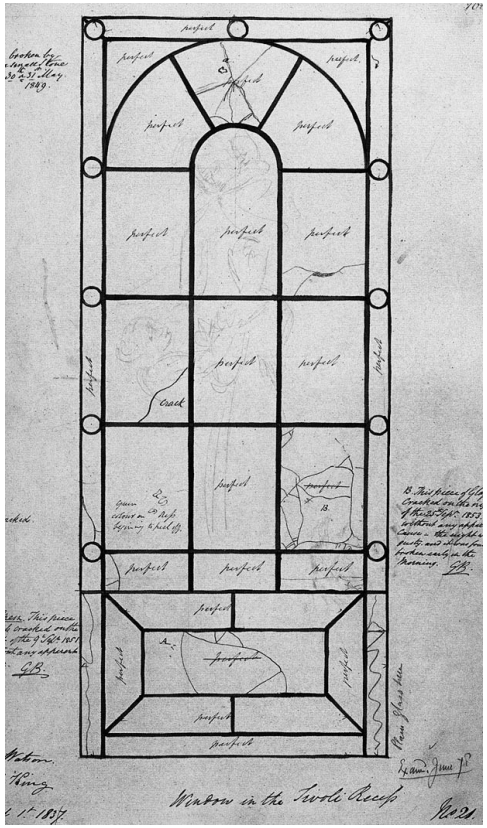
The surviving piece of the window showed that the glass was glazed into a metal framework, constructed of an inner face lead soldered on to a tinned flat steel bar down the central line to form a T section glazing bar. The lead profile, having a centred triangular ridge which is rounded at its peak, was originally painted black.

A full-size cutline for the recreated window was developed by scaling up the inventory sketch to the size of the surviving pieces and the window opening within the building. A photograph of Reynolds' original cartoon (held in a private collection at Somerley House, Hampshire) was suitably enlarged to act as a guide for the cartoon of the newly recreated window; comparison showed that the positions of the figures were altered only slightly from the Reynolds original in order to fit within the framework used in the Soane window. Barley Studio entrusted glasspainter Jonathan Cooke with the task of replicating Collins' painting style, applying glass paint, enamels and stain onto large pieces of thin float glass.

The glazing system was recreated using a 10 mm (3/8") U-section lead with an 18 mm (3/4") tinned brass strip soldered into the lead groove. The prepared T-section bar was then cut to length, bent to shape, put together over the cutline and joints soldered into place. The outer edges were screwed directly into the solid oak frame. Finally, an additional lead detail was attached to the front face using neutral curing black silicone, and the complete lead section painted black.

Once the metal framework and oak outer frame had been installed into the original window opening, the individual painted glass pieces were dry glazed into the framework and pointed in using blackened linseed oil putty. The new window is protected by a secondary glazing layer, installed in a separate frame to the exterior, of laminated sheet, with Pilkington ActivTM Clear self-cleaning glass to the outside.

Replica metal framework



Historic drawing of the window framework

Detail of the replica window