

# **Pitzhanger Gallery & House: Culture At Its Best In West London**

By: ITM London



**PM Gallery & House, is a magnificent cultural venue in Ealing, West London. It is made up of Pitzhanger Manor-House, designed by the architect John Soane in 1800 and the PM Gallery, where the best contemporary art is displayed. This feast of culture in Walpole Park, Mattock Lane, is easily accessible by bus, train and railway.**

It is also home to the largest collection of Martinware in the country. The four Martin brothers, Wallace, Walter, Edwin and Charles, were pioneers in the production of studio pottery, some beautifully formed and expertly decorated, some eccentric, such as their famous bird jars. They specialised in salt-glazed stoneware, a strong, non-porous

pottery with a distinctive «orange-peel» texture. Having trained as a sculptor, Wallace Martin started producing pottery in Fulham in 1873. In 1877, the brothers moved to a disused soapworks on the canal in Southall. The family continued making pottery until Wallace's death in 1923.

A large house has stood on the

Gates and entrance to the park





Lavish interior

site at least since the late seventeenth century, when the smaller Pitzhanger Manor (variously spelled) stood a mile or so to its north.

Between 1664 and 1674 a Richard

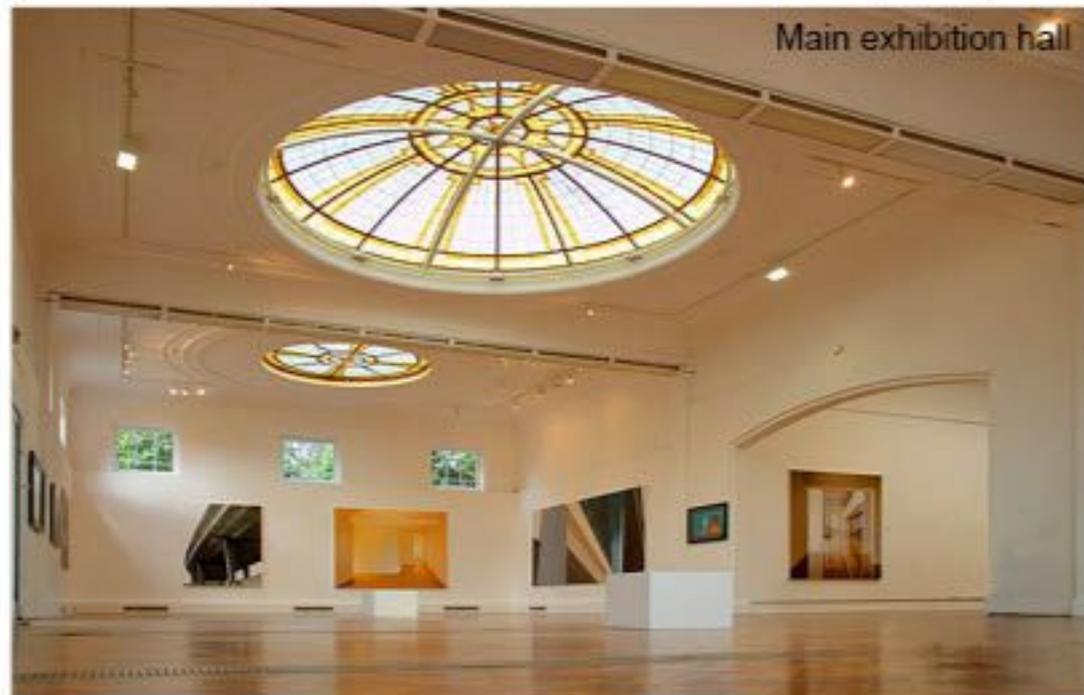
Slaney paid hearth tax on a building on the site of the present-day Pitzhanger Manor for 16 hearths.

In 1711, the occupants John and Mary Wilmer gave away their

eldest daughter Grizell to be married to Johnathan Gurnell. He went on to make his fortune, first as a merchant and later as a co-founder of the city bank Gurnell, Hoare and Harman. It was through this marriage that the house then passed to his only surviving son Thomas Gurnell, who bought the manor in 1765. With the plainer (manor house) of Pits Hanger (Farm) Manor standing near the centre of the modern Meadvale Road in the present suburb of Pitshanger (often referred to locally as Pitshanger Village, his grander existing house, a mile to

the south in Ealing, became known as Pitshanger Place.

Upon the death of Thomas Gurnell, his son Johnathan II inherited the house. On his death in 1791, ownership passed to his young daughter (but was held in trust). The house was let out until 1799, and the trustees decided to sell it. By the 1790s John Soane had a successful architectural practice in London, holding the post of architect to the Bank of England. In 1794 he, his wife and their two young sons moved into 12 Lincoln's Inn Fields, now part of



Pitshanger lane in days goneby



John Soane Museum, in central London, which doubled as an architecture office for him and his staff.

In early 1800 Soane decided to

acquire a family home to the west of London. At first he planned to have it purpose built, but on 21

July 1800 he visited Pitshanger, which he heard was available, and

The garden from the west side of the house



seeing its potential offered the trustees £4,500 for the whole estate of 28 acres. This was accepted on the first day of the following month. Soane referred to it as Pitzhanger Manor-house.

He worked vigorously on the designs of the new house, and over a hundred designs for it still exist and are held by the museum. He planned for the demolition of the older part of the house and many of the outbuildings; however, he retained the two-storey south

wing designed by George Dance in part, because of admiration for their interiors and in part in respect for Dance, his first employer. Demolition work started in 1800 and most of the rebuilding was complete by late 1803.

Completed in 1804, the central section of the house uses many typical Soane features: curved ceilings, inset mirrors, false doors, and wooden paneling with many cupboards. Soane continued the building to the east with a servants

Pitshanger park in winter



## Pitzhanger Manor



wing (perhaps an adaptation of existing buildings) and romantic ruins. (All the buildings in this eastern part of the site were demolished in or around 1901.) The building is remarkably similar to his main London home at Lincoln's Inn Fields. Much of his collection of paintings and classical antiquities now at the museum was housed in Pitzhanger Manor. Soane sold the house in 1810 and it then passed through several hands until in 1843 it became

home to the daughters of Britain's only assassinated Prime Minister Spencer Perceval.

In 1901, the building was sold to Ealing District Council and, with some extensions added, became the public library. The ornamental gardens and adjoining parkland became Walpole Park which still has the original bridge, entrance arch and lodge.

In 1985 the library was relocated

to the Ealing Broadway Shopping Centre. The house was restored and renovated according to its original design. Extensive documentation at the Soane Museum, including bills, correspondence with contractors, diaries and drawings enabled the restorers to recreate the house as it was in Soane's time. The colour scheme was recreated by analysing paint samples and the rooms have been furnished with

items like those which once belonged to the Soanes.

The entire venue has now been turned into a major cultural centre and the largest public gallery in West London. The authentic period look makes it ideal for hire as a film location.

The current exhibition deals with.....



The drawing room