

## OMA co-founder Madelon Vriesendorp wins 2025 Soane Medal for architecture

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Dutch artist and OMA co-founder Madelon Vriesendorp has been awarded this year's Soane Medal for her surrealist artworks that "continue to influence the architects of today and tomorrow".

Vriesendorp, who founded OMA with Rem Koolhaas, Elia Zenghelis and Zoe Zenghelis in 1975, was awarded the eighth Soane Medal.

She is known for her influential artwork including *Flagrant Delit*, a painting depicting the Empire State Building and the Chrysler Building in bed together, which was used as the front cover of Koolhaas's *Delirious New York*.

"Vriesendorp was one of the founders of OMA in 1975, and many of her surrealist, mystical and comedic images have become iconic and continue to influence the architects of today and tomorrow," read the Soane Medal citation.

"Over the decades, her work has given architectural theories playful and memorable identities, helping to explain complex ideas behind modern and postmodern architecture through visuals fuelled by her own unique imagination, where buildings have human characteristics and inner lives."

The annual Soane Medal award was established by the Sir John Soane's Museum in 2017 to celebrate the museum's founder and his ambition to raise awareness of the importance of architecture in people's lives.

Born in the Netherlands in 1945, Vriesendorp studied at Amsterdam's Rietveld Academy and London's Central Saint Martins before moving to New York in 1972.

She returned to London in 1976, where she worked on numerous OMA competitions including paintings supporting the studio's projects that featured on book and magazine covers.

Vriesendorp is the first UK-based woman to be awarded the Soane Medal.

"Rightly or wrongly, artists and architects are often regarded as the 'legitimate' arbiters of beauty," said Vriesendorp.

"Classical forms and ancient objects found in the ruins of earlier civilisations traditionally provide our inspiration — these connections often feel more personal than material, we are inspired less by the objects themselves than by the inspirations of others."

“When I first visited the Soane Museum at 19, I found true inspiration, maybe even a kindred spirit,” she continued. “Soane has influenced my work as an artist, my method, and my approach to creative collaborations.”

Beyond artworks appearing in print media, Vriesendorp created a mural for OMA's now demolished Netherlands Dance Theatre in the Hague. The *Flagrant Delit* painting was also developed into an animated film by Vriesendorp and filmmaker Teri Wehn-Damisch.

Vriesendorp collaborated with architecture historian and landscape architect Charles Jencks, creating illustrations and models that featured in several of Jencks's books.

An exhibition of her works titled *World of Madelon Vriesendorp* opened at the Architectural Association in 2008, and has since been shown at Aedes Berlin, Venice Art Biennale and the Swiss Architectural Museum, among others.

“As Sir John Soane had Joseph Gandy as an architect-cum-artist to help determine his creations through Gandy's atmospheric watercolours, so architects Rem Koolhaas and Charles Jencks have collaborated with Madelon to draw on her visionary creativity to bring an added dimension to their practice,” said Sir John Soane's Museum director Will Gompertz.

“The fact that students today are inspired by Madelon's art and approach — a combination of humour and intellectual rigour — is a mark of the continued relevance and resonance of her work.”

Vriesendorp will be presented with the award at London's Royal Academy on 18 November, where she will give a lecture on the role of artists in architecture.

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