



Light as art, the remarkable life of Alice de Rothschild and a monumental wedding cake – there is much to celebrate at Waddesdon Manor in 2022

2022 gets underway with plenty of sparkle and bright lights, as Waddesdon extends its dazzling *Illumination* display by artist Leo Villareal, celebrates the life and legacy of “the all-powerful” Alice de Rothschild and unveils Joana Vasconcelos’ astonishing, architectural Wedding Cake. As befits a French Renaissance chateau in rural Buckinghamshire, there is plenty more to surprise and delight throughout the year ahead.

Illumination: Works by Leo Villareal

Until 28 February

Coach House Gallery

Part of what began as *Illuminated River* in July 2019 - a multi-award-winning art installation that has transformed the capital at night with an orchestrated series of light works on the nine bridges that span the central London stretch of the Thames - now forms a focused exhibition at Waddesdon.

Illumination showcases three works; *Empyrean Tide*, 2018, *Blossom*, 2003 and *Radiant Wheel*, 2016, by American light artist Leo Villareal and marks the completion of *Illuminated River* which, at 3.2 miles in length, is the longest public art commission in the world. Beginning with London, Cannon Street, Southwark, and Millennium bridges in July 2019, Villareal and his team then placed light installations on Blackfriars, Waterloo, Golden Jubilee, Westminster, and Lambeth bridges in April 2021, revealing the architecture and celebrating the history of each of the bridges. The complete artwork is now able to be seen every evening from sunset to 2am.



At Waddesdon, visitors will be able to enjoy the effect of the *Illuminated River* through a specially commissioned film with music by the Guildhall School of Music and Drama plus insights into how the project was initiated by the Rothschild Foundation, alongside a showreel of Villareal’s impressive creations.

Celebrating Alice de Rothschild (1847-1922) (title TBC)

March – October

The Manor, the Coach House Gallery and Eythrope Walled Garden

2022 is the centenary of Alice de Rothschild’s death, and to celebrate her life, collections and legacy, Waddesdon will host a series of exhibitions and displays that highlight her key role in its history.

As the sister of Ferdinand de Rothschild (1839-1898), who built the Manor, she inherited it after his death and began to put her own stamp upon the house and grounds as its new chatelaine. A passionate and expert gardener and great collector of Renaissance and 18th-century art, Alice’s influence has often been overshadowed by that of her brother. But not anymore.

Alice was a determined and strong-minded woman, who lived through a turbulent period of history and whose generosity, individualism, kindness and sense of humour inspired loyalty in her friends and employees. It was said that Queen Victoria referred to her as “*The All-Powerful One*” (apparently after the monarch was ordered not to walk on the grass whilst staying at Alice’s villa in Grasse). Such were her preventative conservation methods, “Miss Alice’s Rules” are still recognised as good practice 100 years after her death and many of them are still observed today at Waddesdon.

Alice’s astonishing horticultural legacy will be explored in an exhibition in the Coach House. This will bring to life the principal gardens she created, in particular at her own house on the Waddesdon Estate at Eythrope, at the Manor and at Grasse in the South of France, all of which embody her vision of productivity and beauty. It will also look at the innovative way she ran her estate, and her relationships with staff and tenants.

In the Manor, Waddesdon will highlight objects she collected, from rare works of art and delicate textiles to gold boxes and fine French Sèvres porcelain to early English earthenware, Renaissance enamels and maiolica.

A trail will spotlight Alice’s contribution to the Manor, with a part-recreation of her own sitting room, an interior which no longer exists, having been repurposed following her death in 1922. This will be a unique opportunity to experience a specific moment in time at Waddesdon, based on rare early colour photographs from 1909-10. Alice’s sitting room was where she gathered her favourite objects and the recreation will include treasures from her collection, such as a chest of drawers by Jean-Henri Riesener, Sèvres porcelain and one of the 17th-century Savonnerie carpets, originally commissioned by Louis XIV for the Long Gallery at the Louvre and on display for the first time in almost 30 years.

The Exhibition Room will explore Alice as a collector – bringing together in one space the breadth and variety of her interests – featuring paintings, textiles, ceramics, arms and armour, objets de vertu (luxury items that are not jewelry but worn or carried on the person), from the Renaissance to the 18th century.

The Family Room will offer an overview of her life, her relationships with family and friends and management of her various properties, drawn from surviving documents and photographs including correspondence, catalogues, estate management records and photographs.

The Pink Boy Conserved

Opening Spring 2022

Red Ante Room

Thomas Gainsborough’s *Pink Boy*, one of the most popular paintings at Waddesdon, is being cleaned this winter. A special display will reveal it anew, freed from a discoloured varnish, alongside three other Waddesdon Gainsboroughs that depict boys in so-called ‘Vandyke’ dress.

The Pink Boy is a more youthful counterpart of the famous *Blue Boy* (on exceptional loan to The National Gallery, London 25 January – 15 May 2022 from the Huntington Library, Art Museum, and Botanical Gardens in San Marino, California) like him, wearing an 18th-century fancy-dress version of 17th-century clothes. *The Pink Boy* is as much a showpiece of Gainsborough’s skill, demonstrating its relationship to the art of the past and to modernity, as it is a portrait of the particular sitter, Master Francis Nicholls.

Portraits of Lord Alexander Douglas-Hamilton and Lord Archibald Hamilton demonstrate how Gainsborough used different types of ‘Vandyke’ costume and contrasting painting techniques to differentiate the relative rank and age of two aristocratic brothers. The portrait of the artist’s nephew and pupil Gainsborough



Dupont is among his most intimate and scintillating works, conjuring the teenager's individuality and inner consciousness as much as the shimmer of light on silk.

Joana Vasconcelos: Wedding Cake

Opening summer 2022

The Dairy

Wedding Cake is a major new commission by the Portuguese artist Joana Vasconcelos (b 1971) and is a 12-metre-high sculptural pavilion, clad in ceramic tiles, in the form of a three-tiered wedding cake that has been 5 years in the making.

Part sculpture, part architectural garden folly, it is an extraordinary structure which celebrates festivity and marriage. The exuberant Baroque buildings and highly decorative ceramic traditions of Lisbon, where Vasconcelos lives and works also inspired the design of *Wedding Cake*.

Gleaming and icing-like, inside and out, the *Wedding Cake* is an intricate and richly sensory experience – glazed in pale pinks, greens and blues, with sculptural ornament and complete with the sounds of trickling water and twinkling lights. At Waddesdon, it will stand in a grove of trees alongside the 19th-century Dairy, built by Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild to entertain and charm guests at his famous house parties.



NOTES FOR EDITORS

Waddesdon Manor was built at the end of the 19th century by Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild in the style of a French early 16th-century château. Baron Ferdinand was an inspired collector and the house was designed to showcase his exceptional collection of French 18th-century furniture, Sèvres porcelain, English portraits and other decorative arts. When Ferdinand died in 1898, he left Waddesdon to his sister, Alice. Upon her death the house passed to her great-nephew, James de Rothschild, who inherited a substantial part of his father Baron Edmond's great collection. In 1957, in order to ensure its future in perpetuity, Waddesdon was bequeathed to the National Trust. The Rothschild family continues to run Waddesdon through a family charitable trust under the chairmanship of Lord Rothschild. More at <https://waddesdon.org.uk/about-us/press/notes-for-editors/>

For more information on Waddesdon Manor and its exhibitions, visit www.waddesdon.org.uk, like WaddesdonManor on Facebook, follow @WaddesdonManor on Twitter and waddesdonmanor_nt on Instagram.

HIGH RESOLUTION IMAGES CAN BE DOWNLOADED BY CLICKING ON THIS LINK

- *Empyrean Tide*, 2020 LEDs, acrylic, aluminium, custom software & electronic hardware © Leo Villareal. Photo courtesy of the Waddesdon Image Library
- Photograph of Miss Alice de Rothschild, 1860. Photo © Waddesdon Image Library
- Thomas Gainsborough, *Francis Nicholls 'The Pink Boy'*, 1782 (before cleaning); oil on canvas; Waddesdon (National Trust) Bequest of James de Rothschild, 1957. Photo: Waddesdon Image Library, The Public Catalogue Foundation, Art UK
- Joana Vasconcelos, *Wedding Cake*, artist's visualisation Nov 2019

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Please contact Tracy Jones at Brera PR - tracy@brera-london.com / 01702 216658 / 07887 514984 / www.brera-london.com