

TAKING TIME: CHARDIN'S BOY BUILDING A HOUSE OF CARDS AND OTHER PAINTINGS

Waddesdon Manor, 28 March – 15 July 2012

Four great works by Chardin are united for the first time in a new exhibition at Waddesdon Manor, revealing the artist's fascination with themes of play, childhood and adolescence.

Prompted by the recent acquisition of Jean-Siméon Chardin's *Boy Building a House of Cards*, Waddesdon Manor is mounting an exhibition focused on the artist's treatment of the subject, with loans of the other three versions of the painting from the Louvre (Paris), the National Gallery of Art (Washington) and London's National Gallery, alongside a small selection of other key works.

Hung together with seven other works by Chardin and eleven works on paper from leading institutions and private collections, this intense and intimate display will be staged in the Manor's Red Ante-Room and will offer a beautiful, absorbing contrast to the large monographic exhibitions of recent decades.

Taking Time will give the visitor an unparalleled opportunity to experience the work of the artist whom the philosopher and art critic Denis Diderot dubbed the 'great magician.' The exhibition will be dominated by repetition, series and pairs, with the four paintings of *A Boy Building a House of Cards* at its core, offering a chance to explore Chardin's fascination with themes of play, childhood and adolescence.

The show will also demonstrate the shifting meanings that can arise by pairing the paintings with different works. The Waddesdon *Boy building a House of Cards* will be seen with its occasional pendant, *Lady Taking Tea* (Hunterian Museum); the *Washington Boy*, with its one-time pair, *Girl with a Shuttlecock* (private collection). Etchings and engravings after Chardin's works and a single drawing (by Charles-Germain de Saint-Aubin) will illustrate alternative pairings and throw light on eighteenth-century responses to the works, whilst nineteenth-century responses will be a particular focus of the exhibition.

Chardin's representations of servants pausing in their work, will contrast with the boys absorbed in play. Two versions of the *Cellar Boy* and the *Scullery Maid* will be brought together for the first time (from a private collection, the Hunterian Museum, Glasgow and the Corcoran Museum, Washington). Unlike the variations on *Boy building a House of Cards*, these paintings of domestic work are near-exact repetitions of a composition, raising questions about different types of copying and repetition in Chardin's work. His contemporary, Charles-Nicolas Cochin, wrote of how Chardin painted a subject again and again, in order to achieve the tonal effects he sought.

The exhibition will also highlight the changing taste for Chardin's genre painting: amongst previous owners of the paintings on display are Louis XV's mistress, Madame de Pompadour, and Catherine II of Russia. Several works in the exhibition come from the great collection of Chardin's works built by Charlotte de Rothschild (1825-1899) and added to by her grandson Henri (1872-1947). Many of the Rothschild Chardins were destroyed during World War II, although this exhibition will include some of the survivors.

Extending the themes of play and pedagogy, a complementary display of French eighteenth-century board games from Waddesdon's collection will be on show in the Manor's Drawings Rooms: *Playing, learning, flirting: Printed Board Games from 18th Century France* at Waddesdon Manor, will reveal to the public for the first time a surprising and intriguing aspect of the collections at Waddesdon. They provide a fascinating insight into how people lived and played and the role of games in education and leisure, with themes ranging from flirtation to fort-building, from biblical history to the French Revolution. The striking similarities between the forms and principles of these early games and our contemporary equivalents illuminate their enduring qualities and the timelessness of play.

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Notes to Editors

About the Rothschilds' Chardins

The Rothschilds were at the forefront of the rediscovery of Chardin in the nineteenth century, when the artist had a profound impact on Edouard Manet and Paul Cézanne, among many others. The Baroness Nathaniel (Charlotte) built up an important collection of Chardins, both genre subjects and still-lives, in the second half of the nineteenth century. By 1931, her grandson Henri de Rothschild's collection included over thirty works by the artist. Most of these were shown at the Georges Petit Gallery in June 1907 and in October 1929 they were exhibited in the 'Exposition Chardin' at Henri's gallery on the ground floor of his newly opened theatre.

The acquisition of *Boy building a House of Cards* transforms the paintings collection at Waddesdon. It bolsters a small but distinguished group of French eighteenth-century paintings and its quiet introspection counterbalances the more flamboyant portraits that dominate the walls. The associations with seventeenth-century Dutch genre paintings that Chardin's original audiences found in his paintings create resonances between this exhibition, the Netherlandish paintings in the Morning Room and Nicholas Lancret's works in the Tower Drawing Room.

Catalogue

The catalogue accompanying the exhibition includes essays by Pierre Rosenberg about the Rothschilds as collectors of Chardin's paintings and Katie Scott. Pierre Rosenberg is the former director of the Louvre, and the pre-eminent scholar of Chardin's work. Pierre Rosenberg curated major exhibitions on Chardin in 1979, 1999 and most recently Chardin: The Painter of Silence in 2011. Katie Scott is a lecturer at the Courtauld Institute of Art, specialising in French art and architecture of the early modern period and teaches at the Courtauld Institute of Art since 1988. She has published essays on the theme of play in Chardin and on the reproductive prints after his genre paintings.

Waddesdon

1. Waddesdon Manor was built in 1877 by Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild to display his outstanding collection of art treasures and to entertain the fashionable world. It combines the highest quality 18th century French decorative arts, magnificent English portraits and Dutch Old Master paintings with one of the finest Victorian gardens in Britain, famous for its parterre and ornate working Aviary. The house was bequeathed to the National Trust in 1957 and is now managed by a family charitable trust under the chairmanship of Lord Rothschild.
2. Waddesdon is one of the most visited historic houses among England's National Trust properties. The collections are a reflection of the passions of the Rothschilds who created and have cared for Waddesdon, from Ferdinand de Rothschild, who built the Manor in the late 19th-century to Jacob, the present Lord Rothschild, through whom contemporary collecting has been revived. The Coach House opened as a new venue for contemporary art exhibitions in the grounds of the Manor in April 2009 with a retrospective exhibition on the work of Angus Fairhurst, a collaboration with Arnolfini, Bristol and in 2010 showed "Glass Experiences", an exhibition of contemporary chandeliers by Brazilian designers, the Campana brothers and the installation of Jeff Koons' Cracked Egg (Blue) in the Conservatory. 2011 exhibitions focused on Warhol, with a sculpture by Anish Kapoor in the grounds, alongside permanent works by Sarah Lucas and Stephen Cox. 2011 also saw the opening of Windmill Hill, a new bespoke archive by Stephen Marshall Architects to house and offer study space for the Rothschild Family archives and the Rothschild Foundation.
3. Waddesdon also works with design students from the Royal College of Art and art students from the Ruskin School of Art to develop innovative product for Waddesdon's shop