



WADDESDON
Rothschild Collections

**BARON FERDINAND DE ROTHSCHILD'S
'RENAISSANCE MUSEUM'
Treasures from the Smoking Room at Waddesdon
25 March – 25 October 2015**



The Smoking Room in Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild's *The Red Book*, 1897;
Waddesdon, The Rothschild Collection (The National Trust) Gift of Dorothy de Rothschild, 1971;
acc. no. 54 © The National Trust, Waddesdon Manor

In the late 1880s Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild ordered the creation of a 'New Smoking Room' in the Bachelors' Wing at Waddesdon. The room would contain the 'Renaissance Museum', Ferdinand's collection of objects made of precious materials in the manner of princely collections of the 16th and 17th centuries, the core of which he had inherited from his father, Anselm. The collection was displayed in the Tower Drawing Room on the ground floor at Waddesdon, though no photographs survive of the room before it was redecorated following the removal of the objects to the Smoking Room.

The Smoking Room, Billiard Room and corridor in between were decorated in the French Renaissance style, in contrast to the 18th-century French character of the rest of the house. The glass cases containing the 'Renaissance Museum' were surrounded by textiles, furniture, and other fixtures and furnishings which complemented the richness of Ferdinand's collection of treasures. Many of these objects are still at Waddesdon, although they have been in store for a long time because of the fragility of the textiles, and changes in display and use of the rooms.

On Ferdinand's death in 1898 he bequeathed the bulk of his 'Renaissance Museum' to the British Museum where it remains as the Waddesdon Bequest. To celebrate a new display of the



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Bequest at the British Museum supported by the Rothschild Foundation and opening in June, this exhibition at Waddesdon will examine the furnishings that surrounded the precious objects in the 1890s and Ferdinand's very conscious decision to decorate this part of the Bachelors' Wing in Renaissance style. Changes made to the Smoking Room by Alice de Rothschild and its subsequent use and display will also be explored.

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Visitor information and opening times: www.waddesdon.org.uk
Waddesdon Manor, Waddesdon, Near Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire HP18 0JH

NOTES TO EDITORS

1. Waddesdon Manor was built from 1874 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, The Rothschild Foundation, 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.
3. In recent years, Waddesdon has hosted a vibrant and varied exhibitions programme which both reflects and complements the collections, history of the house and the Rothschild family. Recent highlights include *Predators and Prey: A Roman mosaic from Lod, Israel* (in partnership with the Israel Antiquities Authority and the British Museum), *Fame and Friendship: Pope, Roubiliac and the Portrait Bust in 18th-Century Britain* (in partnership with the Yale Center for British Art, New Haven), and *Waddesdon at War* (all 2014); *Sacred Stitches: Ecclesiastical Textiles in the Rothschild Collection at Waddesdon Manor* (2013); *Taking Time: Chardin's Boy Building a House of Cards and Other Paintings* (2012); *Playing, Learning, Flirting: French 18th-Century Board Games* (2012) and *Fantasy from the Fire: Sixteenth-Century Maiolica in the Waddesdon Collection* (2011-2013). The developing programme of contemporary art has encouraged artist responses to the historic collections and interiors as well as to the gardens at Waddesdon. In 2012, **Edmund de Waal** made new works for the historic ground floor rooms, including two large-scale vitrines, which have been acquired by The Rothschild Foundation for Windmill Hill. In 2013, Catalan artist **Joan Sallas** created *Folded Beauty: Masterpieces in Linen*, reviving designs for magnificent Baroque table centrepieces, but including his own contemporary versions. The 2013 carpet bedding and a contemporary wild flower planting scheme were designed by artist **Philippa Lawrence**, inspired by the collection of historic lace and textiles at Waddesdon, and in 2014 we worked with artist **Jan Dunning** on a trail inspired by the experiences of evacuee children and a collaboration with contemporary lace-makers, *Imagine...Lace at Waddesdon*.