



WADDESDON



***Sleeping Beauty* to cast its spell on Waddesdon Manor this Christmas**

Friday 15 November 2024 – Sunday 5 January 2025

Inspired by the tale of *Sleeping Beauty*, Waddesdon is set to be transformed for a magical festive experience. Enjoy beautifully decorated interiors, new light projections on the Manor façade, a glittering light trail in the gardens and the return of the ever-popular Christmas Fair.

Successive generations have grown up with the tale of the beautiful princess who, cursed by a wicked fairy, falls into a 100-year slumber from which only the kiss of true love will wake her. The original story, as told by Charles Perrault (1628-1703) and the Brothers Grimm (1785-1859) has inspired countless artists over the years, from Tchaikovsky's celebrated ballet to Walt Disney's animated film, *Sleeping Beauty* is now a cherished classic.

The story also has a special significance for the Rothschild family – who originally built Waddesdon Manor – for very personal reasons. In 1913, James (1878-1957) and Dorothy de Rothschild (1895-1988) commissioned the renowned Belarusian artist and stage designer, Léon Bakst (1866-1924) to paint a set of seven panels depicting scenes from *Sleeping Beauty* for the dining room of their London townhouse. Bakst had settled in Paris and came to fame as a designer for Sergei Diaghilev's legendary Ballets Russes, and the paintings, which reflect all his visual brilliance, are a rare example made for a private client in Britain. Uniquely, James asked Bakst to use members of the Rothschild family, their friends and staff as models for the characters. Prince Charming was modelled on James, the Princess on his brother Maurice's wife, Noémie, whilst Dorothy appeared as a lady-in-waiting. Even the animals were Rothschild pets, with Dorothy's spaniel, Muffin, featuring in the *Awakening*.

These panels are now found in the eponymous Bakst Room, appropriately located in one of the Manor's fairytale round towers. However, for the Christmas season - and for the first time since they were installed here - four of them will be moved to the Red Ante Room.

Taking this magical story as inspiration, a team of designers and artists are creating Waddesdon's most enchanting Christmas experience to date with theatrical installations, projections and soundscapes bringing the much-loved fairytale to life in some of the Manor's grandest rooms.

Following in Bakst's theatrical footsteps, **Tom Piper MBE**, one of Britain's foremost theatre designers, is reimagining the White Drawing Room with an installation which evokes the famous story. Tom has worked internationally with some of the greatest names in theatre and museums, including the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) and the V&A, and became a household name after co-designing the major art installation *Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red* at the Tower of London in 2014, commemorating Remembrance Day. Together with fellow artist Paul Cummins, he installed 888,246 ceramic poppies cascading down the walls of the Tower and filling the moat.

Visitors will follow the tale and trail of *Sleeping Beauty* throughout the magnificent house, with something to surprise and delight in every room.

Fans of the 1959 Disney movie will remember the wonderfully wicked character of Maleficent, the self-styled '*Mistress of All Evil*' who transforms into a dragon. Drawing on both this and Bakst's imagining of the episode, paper artist **Andy Singleton** returns to Waddesdon with an extraordinary paper sculpture of a dragon for the Smoking Room.

Fellow returnees **Jane Le Bon** and **BOSUN** are once again working on selected rooms in the house, evoking the magic and wonder of *Sleeping Beauty*, while BOSUN's accompanying light and sound installations will bring immersive elements as you explore the magnificent interior.

Outside the *Sleeping Beauty* story is continued with bespoke projections on the Manor façade, courtesy of motion graphics designer **Jamie Shiels**, who is known for his work at Buckingham Palace and the 2012 London Olympics. Drawing his inspiration from the Bakst paintings, objects from Waddesdon's collections, and the building itself – which with its turrets and towers is truly a fairy-tale castle – Jamie will transform the way visitors experience the architecture and setting.

Through the grounds, Waddesdon's illuminations invite you to wrap up warm and get ready for another adventure. See the spectacular landscape transformed into a kaleidoscope of colour, lights and music, with highlights including colour-drenched woodland, a tunnel of lights, a giant Christmas bauble, pixel trees and illuminated reindeer.

Another special feature of this year's celebrations will be a walk-through installation at the Stables. Here, visitors can enjoy artworks made by local school children who have been working with artists to create a series of pieces based on the theme 'Once Upon a Christmas Time'. Look out for references to other classic fairytales, including *Rapunzel*, *Humpty Dumpty* and *Three Billy Goats Gruff*.

Waddesdon's popular Christmas Fair (15 Nov – 22 Dec) is also back, guaranteeing a festive shopping experience that's not to be missed. Revel in the sights, scents and sounds of Christmas as you wander amongst specially selected artisan stalls, housed in wooden chalets. Complementing the traditional market, food stalls will be offering visitors a tasty selection of takeaway food and drink to enjoy whilst exploring the grounds.

You can make your experience even more memorable with a very special festive afternoon tea in the Manor Restaurant. There will also be an exclusive assortment of homeware, food, gifts and world-renowned Rothschild wines to purchase in the Waddesdon gift shops, too.

Also new for 2024, visitors are invited to five late-night openings on selected Fridays, giving visitors even more time to enjoy everything on offer. The Grounds will be open from 12–9pm and the House from 12.30–8pm on:

- Friday 22 November
- Friday 29 November
- Friday 6 December
- Friday 13 December
- Friday 20 December

Pippa Shirley, Director of Waddesdon, says: *“The displays this year are truly a homecoming for Waddesdon. Our visitors often say that the Manor reminds them of a fairy-tale castle, and so taking the story of Sleeping Beauty and the genius of Leon Bakst as our starting point seems completely appropriate. I’m particularly excited about the ways in which our contemporary designers and artists are responding to the inspiration of Bakst and Waddesdon, and can’t wait to see what Tom Piper, Andy Singleton, Jamie Shiels, Jane le Bon and BOSUN are creating for us. It promises to be an unforgettable year.”*

NOTES FOR EDITORS

[HIGH RESOLUTION IMAGES FOR MEDIA USE CAN BE DOWNLOADED BY CLICKING ON THIS LINK](#)

OPENING DATES, TIMES AND TICKETS

All visits to the grounds and house must be pre-booked online to avoid disappointment, including for National Trust members.

Christmas at Waddesdon

Wednesday–Sunday, 15 November 2024–5 January 2025 (plus Mon 30 & Tue 31 Dec 2024)

Closed Monday 23–Thursday 26 December 2024

Grounds: 12noon–7pm

House: 12.30pm–7pm

Christmas Fair

Until 22 December 2024, 12noon–7pm

Included with Grounds or House & Grounds admission

Late night openings

Friday 22 & 29 Nov and Friday 6, 13 & 20 Dec 2024

Grounds (including Christmas Fair & Food Village): 12noon–9pm

House: 12.30pm–8pm

Prices from: £22 Adult, £10 Child (Grounds only) | £35.50 Adult, £16.50 Child (House & Grounds)

National Trust member prices from: £11.50 Adult, £5 Child (Grounds only) | £16.50 Adult, £7 Child (House & Grounds)

Full details of prices and online booking information, here: www.waddesdon.org.uk/christmas

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 English and Dutch paintings, French 18th-century furniture, Sèvres porcelain, and other decorative arts. When Ferdinand died in 1898, he left Waddesdon to his sister, Alice, who was also a great collector. 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, to ensure its future in perpetuity, Waddesdon was bequeathed to the National Trust. The Rothschild family continues to run the property through a family charitable trust, the Rothschild Foundation. Until February 2024, it was under the chairmanship of Jacob, 4th Lord Rothschild. His eldest daughter, Hannah Rothschild, is now the chair. [More here.](#)

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

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Tracy Jones, Brera PR - tracy@brera-london.com / 01702 216658 / 07887 514984

Also press@waddesdon.org.uk