



# WADDESDON

Rothschild Collections



## **Discovering Jewish Country Houses: Photographs by Hélène Binet**

**26 March – 22 June 2025**

Hélène Binet (b.1959) is one of the world's leading photographers. This exhibition showcases a new body of work, capturing an extraordinary group of houses, owned, built or renovated by Jews.

The display of more than 27 works takes as its inspiration the new book *The Jewish Country Houses* (edited by Juliet Carey and Abigail Green, Profile Books, 2024), which sheds new light on a previously overlooked category of country houses owned, renovated, and at times built by Jews and individuals of Jewish descent.

Binet was commissioned to create photographic essays about nine houses, two mausoleums and a synagogue, to capture their extraordinary and varied exteriors, gardens and interiors. This exhibition also includes new prints of images captured at Waddesdon, including ceiling details, floral arrangements and rooftop views.

The properties featured encompass a remarkable stylistic range, from the playful historicism of Waddesdon Manor in Buckinghamshire and the gothic castle of Strawberry Hill House in Twickenham to a reinvention of an ancient Greek villa with Villa Kérylos on the Côte d'Azur and the modernist masterpiece that is the Villa Tugendhat in the Czech city of Brno. Some of the houses are celebrated tourist destinations, others are little known.

Waddesdon Manor was built at the end of the 19th century by Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild (1839-1898) in the style of a French 16th-century château. Baron Ferdinand was an inspired collector, and the house was designed to showcase his exceptional collection of English portraits and Dutch 17th-century paintings, French 18th-century furniture, Sèvres porcelain and other decorative arts.

Country houses are powerful symbols of national identity, evoking the glamorous world of the landowning aristocracy. Jewish country houses tell a more complex story of prejudice and integration, difference and connection. Many had spectacular art collections and gardens. Some were stages for lavish entertaining, while others provided inspiration to the European avant garde. A few are now museums of international importance; many more are hidden treasures: all were beloved homes that bear witness to the remarkable achievements of newly emancipated Jews across Europe - and to a dream of belonging that mostly came to a brutal end with the Holocaust.

Binet's photographs, offer an alternative to familiar, celebratory conventions of country-house photography, and help to establish these places as sites of Jewish memory.

Binet says, *"Photography can do something that architecture cannot: it can be displaced; it can be brought together on a wall or in a book, creating a dialogue that is imaginary and personal. These photographs explore the meeting point between the early dream for the house, and the literal vision of that house shaped by inhabiting. Through photography, I work to combine these two visions and to communicate this to an audience."*

Waddesdon Curator and *The Jewish Country Houses* co-editor Juliet Carey says *"Binet recaptures something of a world now distant from our own and teases out the identity and material nature of each place in searching and beautiful ways."*

Hélène Binet's Jewish Country Houses photography was created in cooperation with urKultur, and the project has been made possible thanks to the support of the Martin J. Gross Family Foundation, the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council, Brasenose College, The Montefiore Endowment, the Rothschild Foundation, and The Oxford Research Centre in the Humanities.

A version of the exhibition was first seen at Strawberry Hill House in 2024.

## **NOTES FOR EDITORS**

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

**Hélène Binet** is a Swiss and French photographer, who studied in Rome, is based in London and is internationally acclaimed for her photographs of both historic and contemporary architecture. She is a fervent advocate of analogue photography, working exclusively with film and believes that *'the soul of photography is its relationship with the instant.'* In the words of Daniel Liebeskind, *'every time Hélène Binet takes a photograph, she exposes architecture's achievements, strength, pathos and fragility.'* More at [www.helenebinet.com/info](http://www.helenebinet.com/info)

**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 also was 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 Waddesdon through a family charitable trust, the Rothschild Foundation. Until February 2024, it was under the chairmanship of Jacob, 4<sup>th</sup> Lord Rothschild. His eldest daughter, Hannah Rothschild, is now the Chair. More at <https://waddesdon.org.uk/about-us/press/notes-for-editors/>

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, INTERVIEWS AND IMAGES**

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