



WADDES DON
The Rothschild Collection

Winter Light at Waddesdon: Bruce Munro

13 November 2013 – 1 January 2014

A new exhibition from celebrated artist Bruce Munro, set within the grounds of Waddesdon Manor.

Winter Light at Waddesdon: Bruce Munro, marks the British artist's first solo exhibition of large-scale exterior works in the UK and provides a fitting expression of Waddesdon Manor's focus on the sensual, illusory and aesthetic effects of light.

The exhibition presents **six large-scale, site-specific sculptural installations** - two of which have been specially conceived for Waddesdon - and reflect Munro's ongoing **fascination with light as a way of defining space and creating form**. His passion for light was born from his time spent living in Australia after finishing University, but he only began to experiment with light more formally as an artistic medium upon his return to the UK. Munro first came to wide public attention in 2004 with his seminal work, *Field of Light* and is now regarded as one of the leading exponents of artists working with light.

The selection and placement of works for this exhibition was made in close collaboration with the creative team at Waddesdon and represent pieces that not only reflect Munro's practice but also compliment and enhance this particular landscape for which several pieces have been reconfigured.

Visitors will be led on a rich sensory trail that offers up new ways of seeing and exploring the gardens: ***Brass Monkeys*** (2012-2013) takes its name from the brass triangles that supported stacks of iron cannon-balls on 18th century war ships (hence the saying 'cold enough to freeze the balls of a Brass Monkey') and is a visually arresting free-standing sculpture comprised of large, clear spheres stacked in a 2.5m pyramid form. Inside these are smaller spheres containing colour-changing fibre-optics that radiate varying shades of blue and white light. ***Water Towers*** (2010-2013), was first shown in the cloister of Salisbury Cathedral and has been re-imagined for



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Waddesdon. Inspired by Munro's interest in colour synaesthesia, where colours are perceived as sound, this version of *Water Towers* presents a range of 2 metre high structures constructed from 2-litre recycled plastic bottles illuminated with optical fibres. These fibres change colour in time to a musical soundtrack and create a corridor of light and sound which entice visitors into their midst. *Tepees* (2013), consists of an array of simple illuminated tent-like structures, created from brightly coloured fluorescent tubes that pulse with flashes of light. Originally conceived whilst trying to invent a device to keep foxes away from his wife's chickens, *Tepees* manifests itself here as a kind of mystical settlement reminiscent of the Wild West films, which inspired Munro as a boy, as the forms appear and disappear amongst the trees.

The two works created specifically for the exhibition at Waddesdon Manor are: *Parliament of Owls* (2013), which features a totemic 'tree' on the branches of which perch 36 pairs of blinking owl-like glass eyes. Illuminated by flickering LED light sources these all knowing, all seeing orbs wink cheekily at passers by; And *Mynah Words* (2013), a similarly bird inspired piece, which is aptly installed in Waddesdon's acclaimed Aviary. Twelve ultra-violet tubes suspended from the grotto ceiling act as perches for a series of laser-cut 'speech bubbles'. The glow cast from the tubes light up coded epithets, which in themselves are a humorous response to the chattering of the famous Rothschild Mynahs, an endangered species named after the naturalist Walter, 2nd Lord Rothschild, which are successfully bred at Waddesdon.

The final installation is the spectacular *River of Light* (2013), is a re-imagining of Munro's iconic earlier work, *Field of Light* (2004-2013), which brought him to international prominence when it was first shown. Around 6,500 glass spheres rising from the ground on slender stems will be arranged in a new serpentine format and, as they shimmer through a range of subtle hues, will appear to flow and ripple like a river, winding its way down Waddesdon's famous 'Daffodil Valley'. Rivers and water are recurring motifs in Munro's work; a fascination inspired by their symbolic potency and transformative force, beautifully articulated in this work.

An integral part of Munro's practice involves the recording of ideas, images and impressions in sketchbooks so that he can capture his immediate responses to the world around him and to specific stimuli such as music, literature science, technology and natural organic forms. These



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references provide a constant source of inspiration when conceiving new work and lend a freshness and spontaneity to his subject matter and processes. Light reshapes and redefines the space that his sculptures inhabit. His work also references natural organic forms as well as drawing on his technical knowledge and design training, but ultimately they are optical explorations that play with ideas and forms of light; experiential works that are both monumental and temporary; spectacular as well as intimate and always bound by a sense of story, place and often, humour.

This presentation (Munro's third project for Waddesdon over the last year) allows audiences to experience his works as a body, and in conversation with each other, cementing his importance as one of our key practitioners in the field of sensual and conceptual power of light.

Accompanying the exhibition is an extensive and beautifully illustrated publication *Catching the Light* (2013, Seahill Press), which explores the work of Bruce Munro through images and text, with a foreword by Lord Rothschild and an essay by eminent art critic, Dr Richard Cork.

Special Late Night Openings: Friday – Sunday, 29 Nov - 29 Dec, 2013

Gardens, 10am – 8pm, House, 11am – 7.30pm. Last admission 6.45pm

To celebrate *Bruce Munro at Waddesdon* and the *Winter Light* season, the gardens will be open until 8pm and the house until 7:30, every Friday, Saturday and Sunday from 29 Nov – 29 Dec so that visitors can best experience the installations in the grounds and the house in all its Christmas glory.

-Ends-

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NOTES TO EDITORS

1. This exhibition constitutes Munro's third project for Waddesdon and forms part of the Manor's on-going commitment to collaborating with contemporary artists as part of a wider arts programme. Previously, Munro launched Waddesdon's *A Year Of Light*, which began at the end of 2012, with two uniquely conceived works: *Blue Moon on a Platter* (2012), in which thousands of used CDs, were spread out in a 28-metre pool on the banks of Waddesdon's amphitheatre to reflect the blue glow from a 1.5 metre 'Moon' of optic fibres radiated; The second piece, *Angel of Light* (2012) was inspired by the music of Finnish composer Einojuhani Rautavaara (b. 1928) and again employed the reflective and light catching potential of CDs. Approximately 50,000 were laid out in a radial pattern creating a 'halo' on the North Front, catching ambient light by day and candle-lit by night. For the March - October season, Munro presented *Cantus Arcticus*, in the Coach House at Waddesdon. This piece, inspired by arctic landscapes and Rautavaara's music of the same name, was composed of abstracted bird forms from which cascaded screens of ethereal harp-like fibre-optic strands which cast soft illuminated pools of light which changed colour in response to the music.
2. Waddesdon Manor was built from 1874 for 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



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Trust in 1957 and is now managed by a family charitable trust, the Rothschild Foundation, under the chairmanship of Lord Rothschild.

3. Waddesdon is one of the most visited historic house 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.
4. Waddesdon is pleased to support *Trust New Art*, a collaboration between Arts Council England and the National Trust aimed at promoting contemporary arts and crafts in historic properties. Arts Council England and the National Trust believe that placing high quality and innovative contemporary art within historic settings can inspire artists and audiences and encourage new ways of looking at the work and the world.
5. 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, **Campana brothers** and the installation of **Jeff Koons' Cracked Egg (Blue)** in the Conservatory. Two of the Campana's light works, "Broken Dreams" are permanently installed at Windmill Hill. In 2011 the Coach House showed **Andy Warhol's Ten Portraits of Jews of the Twentieth Century**. Visitors can also see sculpture in the grounds of the house by **Stephen Cox** and **Xavier Veilhan**, the latest acquisition by the Rothschild Foundation. Veilhan (b. 1963) is a French artist who lives and works in Paris. His work includes photography, sculpture, film, painting and installation art. There is also a growing collection of contemporary art at Windmill Hill, the home of the Waddesdon Archive and the offices of the Rothschild Foundation on the Waddesdon Estate, which includes work by **Anish Kapoor, Richard Long, Sarah Lucas, Angus Fairhurst** and **Michael Craig-Martin**. Contemporary works in the house include



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paintings by **Lucian Freud** and **David Hockney**, as well as a specially commissioned contemporary chandelier by the German lighting designer **Ingo Maurer**.

6. 2013 has been a standout year for Waddesdon's artistic programme. Exhibitions included garden installations inspired by Rothschild textiles, as well as a spectacular display of three-dimensional designs in folded linen and ecclesiastical textiles displayed inside the house. A new permanent piece for the collection was also unveiled this year in a striking position in front of the manor house: **Xavier Veilhan's** striking red horses and carriage, "Le Carosse", a version of which has previously been shown at Château de Versailles. Inside the Manor, **Sacred Stitches** revealed an intriguing and little-seen collection of medieval and later embroideries and textiles made for use in the cathedrals, churches and monasteries of Europe. These were the particular interest of Baron Ferdinand (1839-1898), his sister Miss Alice (1847-1922) and their niece, Baroness Edmond de Rothschild (1853-1935) who appropriated and transformed them into unique interior furnishings. May 2013 saw the remarkable talent of Catalan artist **Joan Sallas** who elevated table presentation to a true art form. In collaboration with the Holburne Museum in Bath, Waddesdon became the setting for historic reconstructions of 17th, 18th and 19th-century folded linen napkins, used to decorate sumptuous banquets. These table sculptures, which employ intricate folding techniques, are immensely impressive with the main centrepiece standing at two metres tall. Sallas, who is also an origami artist, developed other contemporary pieces at Waddesdon to show how the art has evolved.
7. 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. Full details on the Waddesdon website.