



Caption: Hubert Martinet

**Musical Automaton** 1768?-1772

chased bronze, with gilt-bronze, patinated bronze, and polychrome oil paint, ornamented with white, red, green, blue and yellow paste, mother of pearl and glass covers, carved oak base

Waddesdon (National Trust) Bequest of James de Rothschild, 1957

acc no: 2202

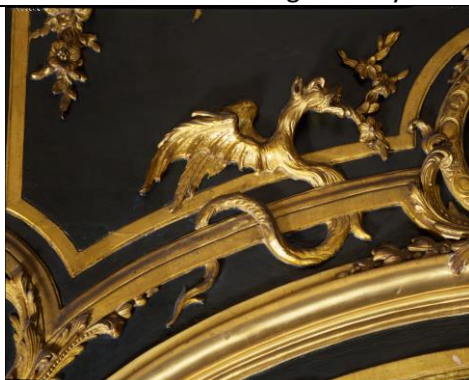
Photo: Waddesdon Image Library

**Musical Automaton, Hubert Martinet, c. 1768-1772**

**What is it?** The elephant automaton was one of Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild's most admired treasures. It is operated by two keys inserted in the belly of the elephant and the base. The base plays a musical tune. The triumphal Emperor riding the elephant and the four musicians on the base move to and fro, while the paste flowers, made to look like diamonds, rotate and open and close. The elephant's ears flap, tail and eyeballs swivel and he waves his trunk.

**Where did it come from?** The automaton was made in London, rumoured to have been ordered as a gift for an Indian official, though this would seem unlikely. It was exhibited several times in London, the Netherlands and Paris before it was bought by Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild. It was mentioned in an 1889 issue of the Bucks Herald newspaper describing the visit of the Shah of Persia to Waddesdon, who asked to see it perform again and again.

**Where can you find it?** The elephant automaton is on display in the East Gallery at Waddesdon, and is wound up for some bookable tours. It even has its own twitter account... @wmelephant



Caption: Detail: **Overdoor panel** 1725-1730

oak, paint, varnish and gold

Waddesdon (National Trust) Bequest of James de Rothschild, 1957

acc no: 3588

Photo: Waddesdon Image Library, Eost and Macdonald

**Panelling in the Green Boudoir, originally from the hôtel Dodun in Paris, c.1725-30**

**What is it?** This dragon features in the *chinoiserie* panelling in the Green Boudoir at Waddesdon. He sits alongside various other fabulous creatures, including a smoking monkey and a tea-drinking cat.

**Where did it come from?** A Parisian town house called the hôtel Dodun. The panels were bought by Baron Ferdinand, who created the Green Boudoir to fit the panels.

**Where can you find it?** This dragon is flying high above the doors.



Caption: **Pierre Giffart**

**Le magnifique carousel** 1664

Waddesdon (National Trust) Bequest of James de Rothschild, 1957

acc no: 4558

Photo: Waddesdon Image Library

**Floats on the River Arne in Florence, published by Pierre Giffart, Paris, c.1664**

**What is it?** These prints depict fantastical beasts that are actually floats from the wedding festivities of Cosimo II Duke of Tuscany in 1608.

**Where did it come from?** Land and water floats, chariots and machines were popular from the 16th to the 18th centuries, appearing in many festivals, including royal entrances, carousels, marriage festivities and even theatrical performances. The moving platforms were elaborately decorated to express the theme of the event; a perfect combination of ingenuity and fantasy.

**Where can you find it?** This specific print can be found in *Le magnifique carousel*, a series of prints, from Waddesdon's book collection. The Christmas decorations of one of the bathrooms in the manor is inspired by these floats.



Caption: **Lion candlestick and inkstand**  
stoneware

Waddesdon (National Trust) Gift of Dorothy de Rothschild, 1971

acc no: 844

Photo: Waddesdon Image Library, East and Macdonald

**Inkstand in the shape of a lion, salt-glazed stoneware, c.1750**

**What is it?** This fierce and fantastic lion is actually an inkstand. He leans on the candle-holder, whilst an inkwell, a pounce-pot (for holding sand to sprinkle on wet ink) and holes for quill pens sit by his feet.

**Where did it come from?** He was made in the Rhineland, now in Germany, renowned for its stoneware, which in the 18th century was exported all over Europe.

**Where can you find it?** He usually lives in the Armoury Corridor, alongside several other (equally fabulous) ceramic creations.



Caption: **Kakiemon fish mounted as a perfume fountain** 1675-1725  
porcelain and gilt bronze  
Waddesdon (National Trust) Bequest of James de Rothschild, 1957  
acc no: 2677  
Photo: Waddesdon Image Library, Eost and Macdonald

**Perfume fountain, Kakiemon porcelain 1680-90 with French gilt-bronze mounts c. 1720**

**What is it?** The original purpose of this fish-shaped porcelain bottle is not known, but it is thought to have arrived in France in the 1700s, where it was turned into a perfume fountain. No other fish-shaped bottle is known in Japanese porcelain of this date.

**Where did it come from?** Japanese porcelain was hugely prized in Europe in the 17th and 18th centuries. The use of metal mounts both transforms the piece's function and shows that the porcelain is being treated as a precious material.

**Where can you find it?** Today the bottle is on display in the Morning Room at Waddesdon Manor.





Caption: Cornelius Bellekin  
**Triton with a nautilus shell** c 1700 {nautilus shell}  
c 1810-1830 {Triton and base}  
silver, gold, shell, ivory, ink and marble  
Waddesdon (Rothschild Family)  
acc no: 312.1997  
Photo: Waddesdon Image Library, Mike Fear

**Triton supporting a Nautilus shell, the shell engraved by Cornelius Bellekin c. 1700, the triton c. 1800-30**

**What is it?** This triton (half-man half-fish) and his exquisitely engraved nautilus shell had been separated and were re-discovered in 2000 by one of Waddesdon's curators, who spotted the complete object in a print recording the interiors of William Beckford's house. Shell and figure were subsequently reunited.

**Where did it come from?** It belonged to the famous collector William Beckford, who had nine nautilus cups in his collection in the 18th century. It then belonged to the Duke of Hamilton, and was sold in the famous Hamilton Palace sale in 1882.


**Where can you find it?** Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild displayed this object alongside other curiosities, including a fruit made of amethysts and jade and an automaton of a carriage. Today the piece can be found in the Smoking Room display at Waddesdon Manor.

 <p>Caption: <b>Pendant</b> c 1575 {body} c 1830 {upper sections, tail and chain} gold, enamel and freshwater pearl Waddesdon (National Trust) Accepted by HM Government in lieu of inheritance tax and allocated to the National Trust for display at Waddesdon Manor, 1963 acc no: 3019 Photo: Waddesdon Image Library, Mike Fear</p>	<p><b>Pendant in the form of a reclining centaur</b></p> <p><b>What is it?</b> When this was acquired by Baroness Betty de Rothschild, she believed it to be a Renaissance jewel. We now know that the pendant is actually a skillful 19th-century confection, though the base is likely to be original.</p> <p><b>Where did it come from?</b> Scholars have suggested the Waddesdon centaur was made in Central Europe, England or Italy. Baroque or freshwater pearls ingeniously incorporated into bodies of figures and animals became popular in the late 16th and early 17th centuries. Artists began using misshapen pearls and combined them in intriguing and inventive ways - as heads, stomachs, helmets or bodies. Forgers in the early 19th-century were also attracted to this aesthetic, and this example is likely to be one of these. The first Duke of Buckingham and Chandos is also known to have bought forged Renaissance jewels during a grand tour of Italy in 1829, most probably in Florence.</p> <p><b>Where can you find it?</b> This pendant is currently on display in the Smoking Room at Waddesdon Manor.</p>
 <p>Caption: Attributed to Charles-Germain de Saint-Aubin <b>Voitures du tems de Sanchoniaton</b> c 1740-c 1775</p>	<p><b>Drawing, attributed to Charles-Germain de Saint Aubin, c1740-c1775</b></p> <p><b>What is it?</b> This drawing depicts Sanchuniaton, a semi-mythical Phoenician scholar who lived in the 13th century BC, standing on the back of a green tortoise-like chimera.</p> <p><b>Where did it come from?</b> It is in an album of caricatures and comic drawings by a French artist, Charles-Germain de Saint Aubin. Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild had a large collection of 18th-century books and bought this one in 1893 from the sale of G.-H. Destailleur's collection – Destailleur was also Waddesdon's architect.</p> <p><b>Where can you find it?</b> This album is in the bookcases in the Morning Room, but you can browse through the whole volume online, and discover other fantastic beasts.</p>

# Waddesdon's 'Fantastic Beasts' and where to find them



WADDESDON  
Rothschild Collections

<p>{nd} watercolour, ink and graphite on paper Waddesdon (National Trust) Bequest of James de Rothschild, 1957 acc no: 675.14 Photo: Waddesdon Image Library, Bodleian Imaging Services</p>	
 <p>Caption: Manufacturer Sèvres porcelain manufactory <b>Vase</b> c 1760 soft-paste porcelain Waddesdon (National Trust) Accepted by HM Government in lieu of inheritance tax and allocated to the National Trust for display at Waddesdon Manor, 1990 acc no: 3013 Photo: Waddesdon Image Library, Mike Fear</p>	<p><b>Vase à têtes d'éléphant, Sèvres porcelain manufactory, c. 1760</b></p> <p><b>What is it?</b> The elephant head vase – which originally had candle-holders in the elephants' trunks - is one of the iconic shapes produced by the Sèvres manufactory.</p> <p><b>Where did it come from?</b> It was designed by Jean-Claude Chambellan Duplessis, who was responsible for many of the Sèvres manufactory's most innovative and daring shapes in the rococo style. It was probably part of a set of 5 vases bought by Louis XV in 1760.</p> <p><b>Where can you find it?</b> There are seven different elephant head vases at Waddesdon, and this one will be on display in a new location from next season.</p>



**Lion-shaped Ewer, c.1580-1600 (mounts c.1600-1800)**

**What is it?** It looks completely improbable but this object had a practical function. The lion's tail is in fact a spout.

**Where did it come from?** Glass of this type was invented in Venice. By the 17th century, several commentators noted the fashion for Venetian drinking vessels made in the most elaborate forms: as ships, birds, bells, horses or even as a church. Trick glasses designed to fool drinkers and spectators were also popular. Glass made in this latticino style was quickly made elsewhere in Europe, including the Low Countries and in Spain. This makes it difficult to locate where each piece was manufactured. Baron Ferdinand acquired it for his 'Renaissance Museum' at Waddesdon.

**Where can you find it?** This striking beast can be found perched above the fireplace in the Smoking Room.

Caption: **Ewer** 1580-1600 {mounts c 1600-c 1800}  
clear glass, opaque white glass and silver  
Waddesdon (National Trust) Bequest of Dorothy de Rothschild,1988  
acc no: 3133  
Photo: Waddesdon Image Library, Mike Fear