



Installed by...

vebroflex at
Wedding Cake,
Waddesdon, UK

vebro

PROJECT SHOWCASE

a three tier tower of love in the English countryside

Amongst a sea of otherwise grey industrial coating projects, it's not often that an installation like Wedding Cake, Waddesdon comes along for either a manufacturer or specialist flooring applicator.

Standing at 12 metres tall within a grove of trees on the estate of the famed Waddesdon Manor, a historic party house in the heart of Buckinghamshire, this ceramic sculptural pavilion – in the form of a three-tiered wedding cake – is the latest Rothschild Foundation commission from celebrated Portuguese artist Joana Vasconcelos.

Aptly named Wedding Cake, over 25,000 gleaming, icing-like ceramic tiles decorate the cake – all made in a traditional Portuguese manufactory – glazed in pale pinks, greens, and blues.

Cupids balance playfully on pedestals, water spurts from the mouths of dolphins and little statues of St Anthony bless newlyweds all around the tiled circumference of this weirdly spectacular folly. Kitsch and beautiful, absurd, and captivating, this wholeheartedly joyful artistic masterpiece is to serve as both a tourist attraction and exclusive-use events venue.

Visitors are invited inside, passing between the electric candles and ceramic mermaids, to find a domed circular wedding chapel that pulses with bright colours, twisty columns, and even more jaunty figures.

Climbing the stairs to the higher tiers of the pavilion one can find themselves above the trees immersed into an impossibly light and heady place. This is a building with the irresponsibility of a work of art.

Wedding Cake is described a playful swansong to the history of placing fanciful buildings in gardens and landscapes, which at Waddesdon already includes the ornamental Dairy and gilded Rococo-style Aviary.

In a nod to the famed Estate's legacy, Wedding Cake is now being used as an exclusive-use party or conference venue. You can even get married in it. And the carnival frolics of its teeming surfaces promise all kinds of weddings, far from convention or tradition. It's a temple to human joy, a tower of love.

When it comes to quirky uses of seamless resin flooring in inspiring commercial spaces, this one really takes the cake. Joana Vasconcelos has spent the past five years cooking up an almost 12-metre-high, three-tiered woodland gâteau in the English countryside, and although it shouldn't work on every single level, it is quite simply spectacular.

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Client: Rothschild Foundation

Location: Waddesdon, Buckinghamshire, UK

Designer: Joana Vasconcelos



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I want people to have three different approaches to it: looking from the outside, enjoying the surroundings from the different levels or balconies and rising to the top, finally completing the artwork with their presence. Above all, I always thought of it as a temple to love.

—
Joana Vasconcelos
Designer of Wedding Cake, Waddesdon



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spotlight on the floor

They say some of the best things come in small packages, and this could not be truer when it comes to Wedding Cake.

The project involved the installation of just 100 square metres of Vebro Polymers' **vebroflex** Comfort UV Plus system in two colours, RAL 6019 Pastel Green in the central area atrium with RAL 9010 Pure White around the perimeter of the folly's lower floor.

vebroflex Comfort UV Plus is a solid-coloured, UV-stable, elasticised, polyurethane liquid-vinyl resin that achieves up to 200% elongation at break. Once cured, the material delivers a smooth, matt-finish surface that deadens sound transfer between floors by up to 4Db. Additional sound absorption can be achieved with a liquid membrane or rubber matting.

Formulated from natural biopolymers, the system is based on a primed aliphatic body coat sealed with a transparent, matt-finish aliphatic PU sealer.

The surface preparation method used – outside of the typical sand blasting and cleaning of the slab – involved the reinforcement of the cementitious screed using the **vebro**screed R&S (Repair & Strengthen) material to improve the compressive strength of the sand / cement screed.

vebroscreed R&S is a transparent, solvent free, two component epoxy material that is used to penetrate fine crack and fissures in cement-based semi-dry cementitious levelling screeds – injecting additional strength and reinforcement prior to the installation of floor coverings.

This was carried out by pouring the mixed material across the slab and spread using a rubber squeegee blade before finishing with a short pile mohair roller. Priming ahead of applying the polyurethane comfort resin could be carried out after 15 hours.

The system build-up at Wedding Cake incorporated, **vebro** EP DPM, a solvent-free, clear, moisture mitigating epoxy primer with a full sand scatter applied whilst still wet.

After roughly 12 hours, a bodycoat layer of **vebroflex** PU SL UV Plus, a flexible, aliphatic polyurethane self-leveller was applied using a notched steel trowel and spike rolled to release trapped air twice.

Within 24 hours, an even layer of the transparent, water-based, matt-finish seal coat, **vebroflex** PU WB Seal (Matt) was applied using a short-pile or foam roller.

The system is AgBB certified low emissions in compliance with both BREAM and LEED regulations.

Originally ceramic tiles were considered, but a resin floor was ultimately chosen by the artist to ensure a seamless transition between the floors and walls, and to colour match perfectly to the vibrant pastel pallet of the tiles and sculptures adorning the exterior façade.

Major benefits of opting for a comfort resin included the reduced risk of cracking due to the increased flexibility of the polyurethane resin and a reduction in noise transmission caused by footfall in multi-level spaces.

Comfort resin flooring is also extremely hygienic and very easy to clean given their seamless and smooth finish – plus comfort resin flooring comes in a vast (virtually limitless) range of colours, decorative effects, and bold patterns.

The durability of resin flooring makes it more cost-effective when compared with other flooring systems such as tiles, sheet vinyl and linoleum, it's more resilient, prone to wear and tear and therefore generally lasts a lot longer – a must in this public venue.

The sealer was also highly attractive to the main contractor supervising Joana's vision, as the aliphatic water-based clear matt sealer offers excellent scratch and wear resistance properties – perfect for preventing damage and scratches from high-heels!

It is imperative that comfort floors be installed by experienced applicators in the field of resin flooring. Any cracks in the substrate should be bandaged or a levelling screed should be used to ensure a smooth, level surface prior to the installation of polyurethane comfort flooring. Comfort resin floors act like a skim and will highlight any imperfections in the substrate when cured if preparation isn't taken seriously.

The area needs to be sealed prior to installation, with all windows and doors firmly closed, as well as free from any moisture or dust particles. Most resin comfort floors are two to three-layer systems and typically a day is recommended between each coat.

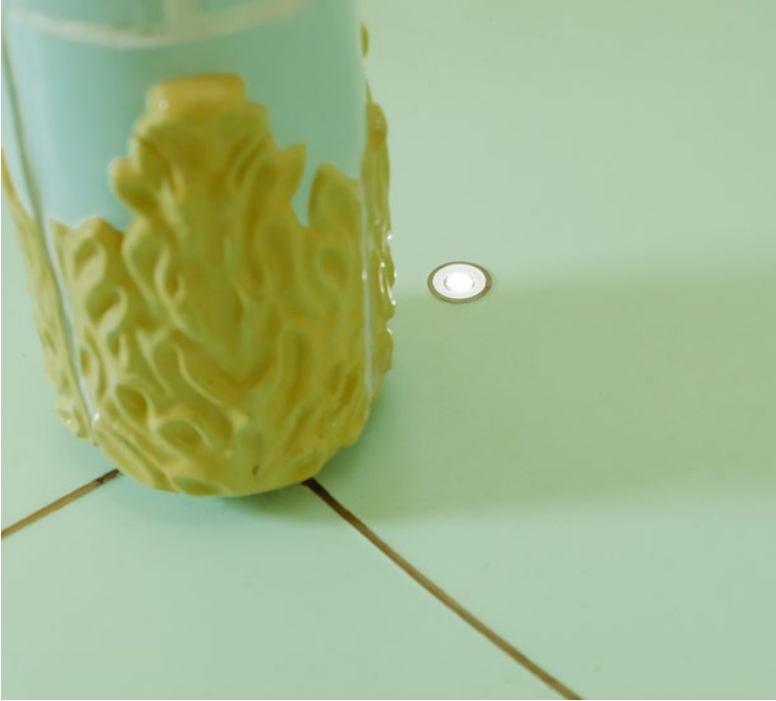
RFS (Resin Flooring Specialists) expertly project managed and installed the flooring package at the Wedding Cake development – this included all surface preparation work, the reinforcement of the existing screed, and the installation of the **vebroflex** Comfort UV system. The entire project was delivered in six days and involved just three RFS operatives.

One of the most interesting aspects of the install involved an intricate mandala formed in brass, which was positioned in the centre of the lower atrium floor, creating a stunning central focal point underfoot for visitors.

A mandala is a complex abstract design that is usually circular in form and often considered to be sacred. Mandalas represent harmony, unity and the connection between our inner worlds and outer reality.

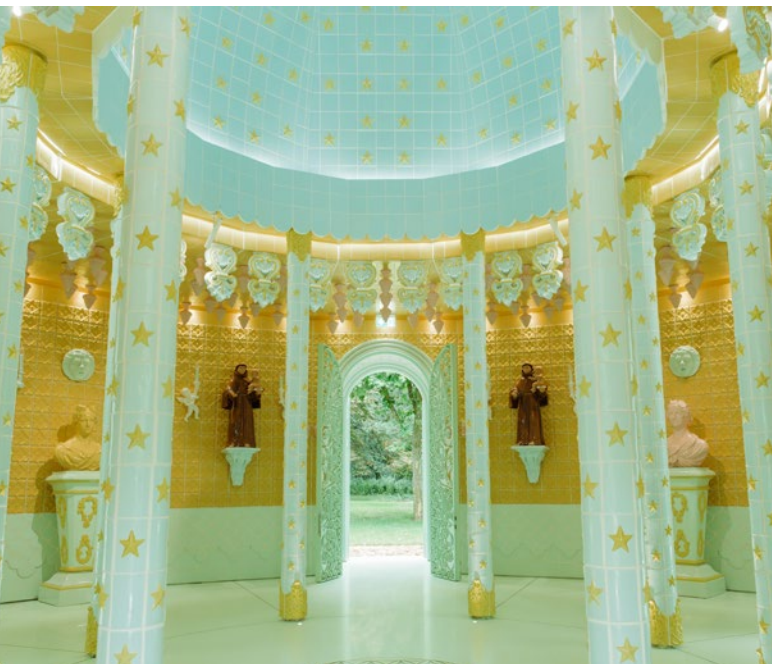
Having been fixed in-situ by previous trades, RFS used the pigmented aliphatic comfort resin to infill each of the brass trim petals using a large syringe. Each petal was meticulously injected one by one, taking a whole day to complete - making it very much a labour of love for the RFS team. Once cured, the remaining **vebroflex** body coat was installed before the mandala was sealed with an aliphatic transparent matt sealer along with the rest of the floor.

Resin applicator: Resin Flooring Specialists
Material supplier: Vebro Polymers
Total floor area: 100 m²



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through the eyes of the designer

Joana Vasconcelos

Wedding Cake is not Vasconcelos' first work at Waddesdon or in collaboration with Lord Rothschild, as his appreciation for her work spans several decades.

Just steps away you'll find Lafite, two candlestick-shaped sculptures composed of illuminated Chateau Lafite Rothschild magnum bottles, which the Rothschild Foundation commissioned in 2015 as an homage to the family's Bordeaux wine estate.

In 2012, Vasconcelos' Pavillon de Thé teapot was featured in a contemporary sculpture exhibition in partnership with Christie's at Waddesdon Manor, and her work was displayed on site again in 2016.

"It's difficult to find somebody who can dream at the same level that you do," says Vasconcelos. Known for her playful monumental sculpture, laden with messages about love, femininity, and domesticity, the Lisbon-based artist's oeuvre spans art, design, and fashion.

In this instance, the 'dream' is what she also calls her 'impossible project', or more notably a towering wedding cake entirely swathed in Portuguese ceramics.

Luckily when it comes to dreaming big, Vasconcelos found a kindred spirit in Lord Jacob Rothschild. 'Lord R,' as he is affectionately known – with whom she has previously collaborated.

Bringing the 12-meter-high, three-tiered Wedding Cake to life would require engineering feats to withstand outdoor weather conditions and meet Vasconcelos' exacting standards. "The project needed someone brave, someone who possesses the art knowledge and life experience that Lord R has."

Lord Rothschild said, "We are delighted to be collaborating again with Joana Vasconcelos, whose work is already magnificently represented at Waddesdon by her giant candlesticks, Lafite.

The vision, imagination and ambition exemplified in the Wedding Cake is a perfect match for the passion which drove Baron Ferdinand, the creator of Waddesdon, to build the Manor and the Dairy, where he intended that his many friends would be surprised and delighted at every turn. I am sure that the Wedding Cake will have just as great an impact on visitors and wedding guests today."

With the backing of Rothschild, Vasconcelos has been free to turn her 'dream' into reality, with all interiors, building materials and colours left entirely to her creative discretion rather than budgetary restrictions for a change!

the historic Waddesdon Manor: fit for a lord

Set in the beautiful English countryside in Buckinghamshire, equidistant to both London and Birmingham, Waddesdon Manor was built by Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild between 1874 and 1885 to display his collection of arts and to entertain his friends.

Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild's goal was to create an estate where he could escape London and entertain family and friends for weekend house parties.

Not only did this mean the construction of the manor house itself, but also the design and build of its impressive grounds, outhouses and stables, as well as the dairy, an area that is now home to Wedding Cake. The estate was always intended to impress and surprise, and the addition of the three-tiered marvel by Joana Vasconcelos is certainly no exception.

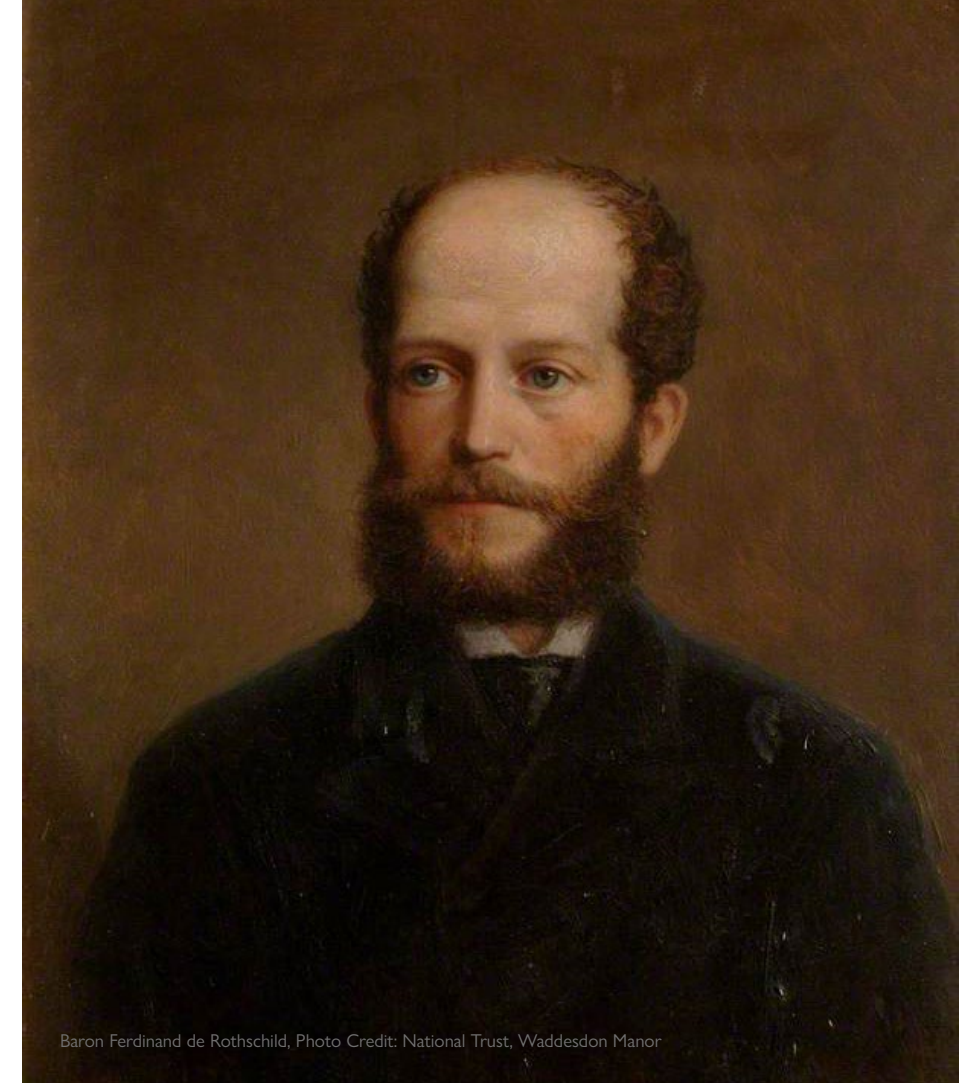
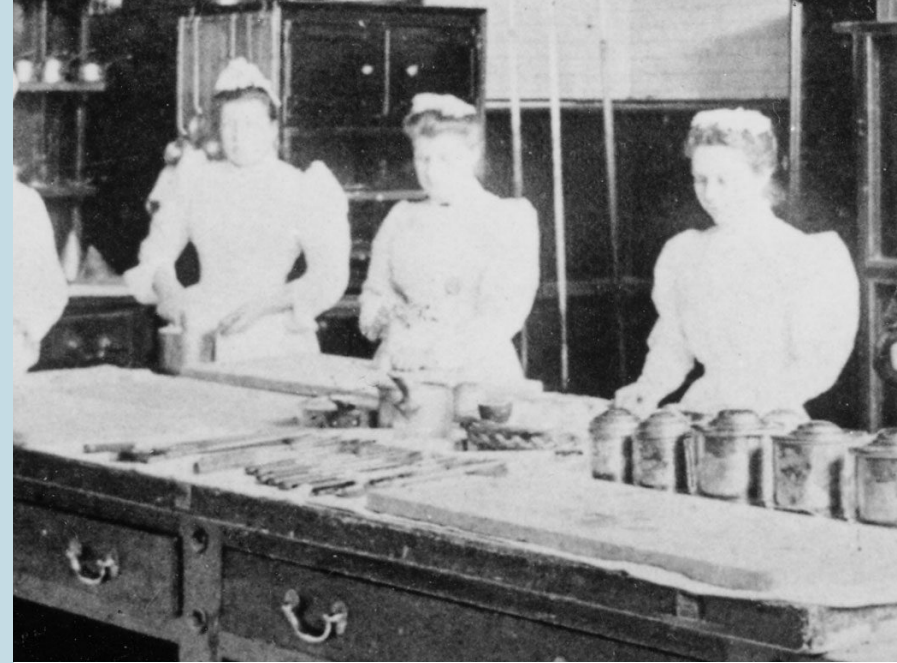
Guests to Baron Ferdinand's exclusive parties – of which there were typically 24 every weekend between May and September – were treated to fresh milk daily during their stay, and were even able to choose the specific cow their milk was sourced from.

Within the manor house itself, its 45 rooms were meticulously designed to combine the highest quality French furniture and decorative arts from the 18th century with superb English portraits and Dutch Old Masters, while its Victorian garden is considered one of the finest in Britain with its parterre, seasonal displays, fountains and statues.

Baron Ferdinand installed a small passenger lift – one of the earliest in English country houses – in anticipation of Queen Victoria's visit in 1890. She declined to ride in it, however, not trusting in the newly-introduced electricity.

Today, the historic 6,000 acre estate is open to the public and welcomes thousands of visitors each year who come to appreciate the exceptional architecture, art collections and gardens.

According to Rothschild Foundation, who manage the house, "The contemporary ethos of the estate looks to ensure all of its assets, (land, forestry, property and people), are cared for holistically and the past, present and future combine and are presented to the highest standard and level of inspection at all times."



Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild, Photo Credit: National Trust, Waddesdon Manor



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