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CONTACT: The Portsmouth Group, Dubai – Eileen Wallis (eileen.wallis@theportsmouthgroup.com) or Shawn Stephens (shawn.stephens@theportsmouthgroup.com) + 971 4 369 3575

Christie's London - Clare Roberts (croberts@christies.com) or Hannah Schmidt (hschmidt@christies.com) +44 207 389 2664

CHRISTIE'S TO AUCTION UM KULTHUM'S PEARL NECKLACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST IN APRIL 2008

Magnificent necklace, gifted to Um Kulthum by His Highness Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan, the late President of the UAE, to be sold by family descendents

Necklace is expected to fetch \$80,000-120,000 when it is sold as part of the *Contemporary Jewels and Watches* sale in Dubai on 29 April 2008



A previously unpublished photo of Um Kulthum wearing the necklace



Um Kulthum's magnificent natural pearl necklace (estimate: \$80,000-120,000)

Dubai/London: Christie's is proud to announce the sale of a magnificent natural pearl necklace that belonged to Um Kulthum (1904-1975). Unquestionably the greatest Arab singer of the 20th century, Um Kulthum was known as 'The Shining Star of the Middle East' (Kawkab El Sharq), and her importance in the Arab countries was so great that she was received with the same ceremony as heads of state. The necklace, which was gifted to Um Kulthum by His Highness Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan, the late ruler of the UAE, is being sold by family descendents. It is expected to fetch \$80,000-120,000 when it is sold as a star lot in the forthcoming auction of *Contemporary Jewels and Watches* to be staged by Christie's in Dubai on 29 April 2008.

“Christie’s is thrilled to be offering this historic jewel from one of the greatest icons of the twentieth century”, said David Warren, Director of Jewellery Middle East.

The antique nine-row pearl necklace with multi-coloured enamel and white stone details, in the style of a traditional Indian *Satlada* necklace, was created *circa* 1880 (estimate: \$80,000-120,000), and consists of approximately 1,888 pearls. It was gifted to Um Kulthum by His Highness Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan, the late ruler of the UAE and is being offered for sale at Christie’s by family descendents. “She used to treat the pearl necklace with absolute care and it was one of her favourites because it was given to her by the late Sheikh Zayed Al Nahyan, the



founder of the UAE”, remembers a family member of the late star. This magnificent necklace is one of the highlights of a 33 lot strong selection of natural pearls to be offered in the forthcoming sale of *Contemporary Jewels and Watches*, one of the most significant offerings of natural pearls to the market for decades, and expected to fetch in the region of \$7 million (*please see separate press release*).

A previously unpublished photo of Um Kulthum with His Highness Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan

Um Kulthum's repertoire included more than 300 songs with themes ranging from love to nationalism to religion. The majority were sung in colloquial Arabic; although some were in classical Arabic, written by famous poets. She was extremely selective in the choice of verses and frequently had the authors change words if their resonance for her was not perfect.

Um Kulthum was relentless in her charitable work and was the spokeswoman for numerous good causes. She advocated governmental support of Arabic music and musicians, she endowed a charitable foundation and, most importantly, after the Egyptian defeat in the 1967 war, she began a series of domestic and international concerts for Egypt. She traveled throughout the Arab world, collecting contributions and donating the proceeds of her performances to the government of Egypt. Um Kulthum was entertained by heads of state, she toured cultural monuments, and, in interviews, repeated her views concerning the importance of support for indigenous Arab culture.

When on February 4th, 1975, Egyptian radio aired the chanting of the Qur’an, it was the sign that someone important has died. Um Kulthum’s funeral drew more than four million people to the streets of Cairo to publicly mourn her passing. In her honour the Egyptian government opened the Kawkab al-Sharq Museum at the Manesterli Palace (Star of the East), dedicated to

the life and work of Um Kulthum. The museum contains many of her personal items as well as her dresses and even her famous eye glasses.

Almost 33 years to the day after her death, she is still heard daily on the radio and her albums are top sellers. Described as 'The Incomparable Voice' by Maria Callas, Um Kulthum was more than a musician - she became the voice and face of Egypt. Today Um Kulthum's memory and image is widely celebrated; Egyptian artist Chant Avedissian, whose works regularly feature in Christie's auctions of *International Modern and Contemporary Art*, is represented in the current 'Word into Art' Exhibition at the DIFC, Dubai with his homage to *Um Kulthum*

"Christie's is proud to be offering for sale Um Kulthum's necklace, one of the most famous Arab women in history, and we look forward with great excitement to our 29th April sale which will contain some of the finest natural pearls in the world" concluded Michael Jeha, Managing Director, Middle East

Notes to Editors

The necklace will go on public exhibition in Christie's New York from 11 to 14 April 2008, and will be on public display in the Jumeirah Emirates Towers Hotel, Dubai from 2pm on 27 April until 4.30pm on 29 April 2008

About Christie's Middle East

- ❖ Christie's commitment to the Middle East is unrivalled. Christie's was the first international auction house to have established a permanent presence in the Middle East when a representative office was opened in Dubai in April 2005, and have staged five auctions to date in the Middle East.
- ❖ Christie's auctions in the Middle East have achieved over \$61 million, and have each witnessed approximately 50% of buying from the Middle East, demonstrating the strong demand from clients in the region for this new platform in the international art market.
- ❖ In addition to auctions, Christie's have staged five international public art exhibitions in the region to date, bringing over \$60 million/AED 180 million worth of Art, objects, Jewellery and watches from Christie's most important sales worldwide direct to clients in the Middle East.
- ❖ Christie's has organized a number of charity events in the region. Most recently, Christie's conducted the charity auction for His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Al Maktoum's *Dubai Cares* charity which raised \$10 million /31 million AED for a number of worthy causes. This event established a record for the amount of money raised during a charity auction in the region. The total sum achieved by charity sales which Christie's have conducted in the region to date stands at over \$16 million.

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Images available on request

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