

**For Immediate Release**

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**THE MOST IMPORTANT COLLECTION OF PERIOD JEWELS  
TO BE OFFERED AT CHRISTIE'S NEW YORK**

**Rare Jewels and Gemstones: *The Eye of a Connoisseur*  
15 April 2008**

**New York** — Christie's is honored to announce the most spectacular and comprehensive collection of period jewels from the 17<sup>th</sup> century through modern day in the April 15<sup>th</sup> evening sale in New York, *Rare Jewels and Gemstones: The Eye of a Connoisseur*. With 115 lots, this extraordinary collection expects to realize record prices for historical jewels, iconic emblems of the Art Nouveau and Art Deco periods and also one of the most important pink diamonds ever to be offered for sale at auction.

**François Curiel, Christie's Chairman of Jewellery, commented,** "When I reflect upon all that I have seen during my 40-year Christie's career, both at auction and privately, this collection strikes me as unparalleled to virtually any other in the world for its provenance, breadth, size and rarity. Never before have I seen assembled together such a great number of quintessential jewels from the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, all the way to the Art Nouveau and Art Deco periods, and into the 21st century. This unique ensemble represents a walk through some of history's most prominent figures and their jewels."



**Empress Eugénie's Brooch**

Leading the historically prominent works offered in this collection is a sensational antique diamond bow brooch, by François Kramer which was made for Empress Eugénie and later owned by the Astor family of New York (estimate: \$4-6 million). A Spanish countess, Eugénie de Montijo—Doña María Eugénia de Guzmán Portocarrero, Countess of Tèba—was born in Granada, Spain in 1826, and married Louis Napoleon in 1853 at Notre Dame. Eugénie was one of the most beautiful consorts of her time, and she was also considered a *fashionista*, commanding Europe's attention.

In 1887, the French Government decided that the once exclusive property of French queens and kings would be made available to the highest bidder in a public auction. The Empress Eugénie bow brooch was bought by the jeweler Emile Schlesinger. Made in 1855 by the Parisian jeweler François Kramer, the large and impressive diamond bow was originally intended as a buckle for a diamond belt. Later, Eugénie asked one of her jewelers to make it more elaborate, and thus five diamond *pampilles* and a pair of diamond tassels were added. The rich style of the jewel was in accordance with the taste of the Empress and was transformed into a magnificent stomacher, a decoration pinned to the chest, extending down to the waist.

Schlesinger acquired the brooch for Mrs. William B. Astor, the undisputed queen of American society. Caroline Astor insisted upon being called "The Mrs. Astor" by family and friends and also devised the famous "400," a list of 213 families and individuals whose lineage could be traced back to at least three generations. The Eugénie brooch, known as one of the most famous jewels of the Gilded Age, became commonly referred to as "Mrs. Astor's diamond stomacher" and remained in the Astor family for over a hundred years.

On April 15<sup>th</sup>, Christie's will allow another one of the world's great collectors the opportunity to own a fabulous piece of history.

### **Important Diamonds**

Gem connoisseurs have long considered pink diamonds to be among the most beautiful of gemstones since they were first discovered in the ancient mines of India. They are seldom found today and only eight pink diamonds over three carats have been offered by the Australian tender since the mine was discovered. Larger specimens rarely come up for auction and their scarcity makes the sale of this 14.23 carat fancy intense pink diamond an extraordinary event (estimate: \$10-15 million). This exquisite gem has a pure pink coloration that is even and consistent and has been awarded the color grade of "Fancy Intense Pink" by the Gemological Institute of America. The diamond is truly magnificent for both its size and absence of inclusions within its crystal. Further emphasizing its rarity is the elegant and classic rectangular cut of the diamond which is so intensely saturated with color that no additional facets were required to intensify its tone.



Unlike blue or yellow diamonds, the natural pink color is not caused by a chemical component. Although researchers disagree on what actually causes the color of natural pink diamonds, studies in the gemological field have concluded that there are two types of pink diamonds, each having a slightly different cause of color. One group, designated Type IIa, has a very pure pink color, even coloration and lack of inclusions. Type IIa diamonds are rare gems of the diamond family, which have no traces of the colorant nitrogen. The

absence of this element, seen in 98% of diamonds, gives the stone a purity of color and degree of transparency that is observed only in the finest stones originating from the mines of Golconda, Brazil and South Africa.

Other examples of colored diamonds in the sale include a colored diamond and demantoid garnet brooch by Carvin French designed as two pave-set intense pink diamond flamingos, with black diamond beaks, standing on a bed of garnet grass (estimate: \$250,000-350,000).

### **The Art Nouveau Master Jewelers**

The Art Nouveau period, a reaction to the Industrial age that preceded it, introduced a brief but remarkably fashionable style from the early 1890s until about 1910, which captured the moral and artistic freedom of the time and produced some of the most evocative jeweled art in the history of jewelry design. Art Nouveau designers embraced romanticism, naturalism and femininity, creating emotive pieces of harmony and beauty. Though short-lived, Art Nouveau jewelry was perhaps the most prolific field of the decorative arts during these times. The collection offers numerous iconic examples from the leading jewelers of the period.

#### **René Lalique (1860-1945)**



Among the many talented jewelers of this period one particular reputation shines above all the others, that of René Lalique. He proved himself the most prolifically inventive and imaginative designer, drawing together Symbolist and Art Nouveau themes into works of exceptional graphic grace and sophistication. The subject—captured by Lalique in the “Narcisse” gold and enamel dog collar plaque — is cleverly depicted by two profiles of a face side by side, one in violet blue enamel and the other in violet blue glass (estimate: \$200,000-300,000).

#### **Henri Vever (1854-1942)**

A striking pendant by Vever, decorated with the profile of a Breton girl wearing a traditional headdress, was exhibited at the 1900 *Exposition*, and earned him the Grand Prix award for this design (estimate: \$500,000-700,000). His presentation revealed exceptional creative power not only in number and in quality but in his unwavering devotion for using precious stones, each set in an outstandingly original and harmonious way. The Breton woman or “Bigoudine” was a favorite subject for writers and artists alike during the second half of the century, and the characteristic white bonnets or *coiffes* were especially popular with certain jewelers of the Art Nouveau movement. “La Bretonne,” an openwork cast gold bust of a girl in Breton costume, is fashioned in opal, enamel and carved amethyst against a



background of a flowering bloom. At least two more pendants with the same motif, shown by Vever at the Paris Exhibition of 1900, are known. One depicts a girl in a full costume in ivory, the second depicts the profile bust of a girl with bonnets and ribbons, surrounded by mistletoe twigs.

### Georges Fouquet (1862-1957)



A highlight from another principal Art Nouveau jeweler of the period, Georges Fouquet, is a sea serpent corsage designed by Charles Desrosiers (estimate: \$200,000-400,000). A key designer for the firm from 1898 to 1914, Charles Desrosiers's jewelry is characterized by a symmetrical arrangement of the parts, with patterns of diamonds accentuating shapes and forms. Desrosiers designed the sea serpent corsage ornament whose winding, coiled body, wide fishtail spray and jagged, soaring wings are depicted in deep, shifting greens and violets of enamel and *plique-à-jour* enamel, enhanced by emeralds. Hanging from the jaws of this almost mythical creature, are fronds of gold seaweed enhanced by misshapen Mississippi pearls, light green enamel and diamond accents, and from which suspends a baroque pearl.

Also offered amongst the Art Nouveau works is an enamel, diamond and sapphire "Juno" pendant by Boucheron (estimate: \$300,000-500,000). Drawing upon mythology as inspiration, Juno, the queen of the gods is portrayed in white jadeite with gold hair and a purple, blue and green enamel headdress, and flanked by peacocks, a favorite Art Nouveau motif.



### Art Deco

Never before did a particular period in art history draw such a wide variety of influences than the Art Deco. Stylistically, it completely broke with the movements that had preceded it and is considered the decorative arts parallel to modernist thought. Their ideas triggered an evolution in architecture, painting and the decorative arts towards a minimal, austere style in which decorative motifs consisted of geometric or stylized ornamentation. Art Deco represented a return to simple and symmetrical style. Bold color played a more important role than ever before, acting no longer as an ornamental afterthought but as a fundamental to the entire design concept.

## The Art of the Deco Clock



The first quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century produced some of the most spectacular clocks ever seen with the world's leading jewelry houses taking over from the traditional clockmaker. The House of Cartier led the way, with the creation of the *Pendule Mysterieuse* or Mystery Clock, made by the legendary twenty-eight year old clockmaker, Maurice Coüet. From 1922-1931, the collaboration between Cartier and Coüet would produce twelve striking Mystery Clocks—all of Chinese inspiration—that incorporated animals and figurines. Blending exquisite craftsmanship and elegant design with the most technologically advanced mechanisms, Coüet's work resulted in an *objet d'art* that entertained and fascinated the public by captivating them with their "illusion."

The "mystery" of the Mystery Clock is found within the dial where the hands appear to "float" across the face, with no apparent anchor. In reality, they are held in place by transparent disks, usually of rock crystal, citrine, or in one instance, aquamarine and driven by gears that are ingeniously hidden in the frame of the case. The example offered is made of topaz, jade, coral and enamel with rose-cut diamond hands designed as a dragon, circa 1928 (estimate:\$ 500,000-700,000).



From another prominent Parisian house that created designs rivaling those of Cartier, is an Art Deco rock crystal, onyx, diamond and lapis lazuli fountain desk clock by the jeweler Lacloche Frères (estimate: \$300,000-500,000). From Ostertag is an Art Deco multi-gem and diamond "Gazelle" desk clock, depicting a tranquil scene of a gazelle resting amidst ruby and emerald vegetation (estimate: \$ 300,000-500,000).

Other examples of Art Deco design include a diamond and colorful multi-gem "wave" bracelet by Rubel Freres (estimate: \$500,000-700,000); a diamond, mother-of-pearl and enamel waterfall vanity case by Mauboussin (estimate: \$100,000-150,000); and mother-of-pearl, enamel, and multi-gem vanity case by Linzeler-Marchak depicting a Chinese dragon (estimate: \$100,000-150,000).

## Belle Epoque and Antique Jewels

From Cartier, one of the greatest jewelers of all time, is a Belle Époque diamond and rock crystal bow brooch in mint condition suspending a detachable pear-shaped carved rock crystal pendent, circa 1910 (estimate: \$200,000-400,000). Another example of the Belle Époque era is Florence Gould's unique pearl, seed pearl and diamond evening bag, circa 1900 (estimate: \$100,000-150,000).



A range of exquisite antique ivory, enamel and gold objects, by Boucheron comprises a powder case (estimate: \$120,000-150,000); a stamp box (estimate: \$80,000-120,000); an ink well (estimate: \$120,000-150,000); and a perfume bottle (estimate: \$60,000-80,000).

**Auction:** *Rare Jewels and Gemstones: The Eye of a Connoisseur* April 15 at 6:00pm  
**Viewing:** Christie's Rockefeller Galleries April 11 - 15

### **About Christie's**

Christie's is the world's leading art business with global auction sales in 2007 that totaled £3.1 billion/\$6.3 billion. This marks the highest total in company and in art auction history. Christie's is a name and place that speaks of extraordinary art, unparalleled service and expertise, as well as international glamour. Founded in 1766 by James Christie, Christie's conducted the greatest auctions of the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries, and today remains a popular showcase for the unique and the beautiful. Christie's offers over 600 sales annually in over 80 categories, including all areas of fine and decorative arts, jewellery, photographs, collectibles, wine, and more. Prices range from \$200 to over \$80 million. Christie's has 85 offices in 43 countries and 14 salerooms around the world including in London, New York, Los Angeles, Paris, Geneva, Milan, Amsterdam, Tel Aviv, Dubai and Hong Kong. Most recently, Christie's has led the market with expanded initiatives in emerging and new markets such as Russia, China, India and the United Arab Emirates, with successful sales and exhibitions in Beijing, Mumbai and Dubai.

\*Estimates do not include buyer's premium

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*Images available on request*

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More information about Christie's sale of *Jewels* can be found on [www.christies.com](http://www.christies.com). All lots from the sale can be viewed online along with full catalogue descriptions on Lotfinder®, which also allows clients to leave absentee bids. [www.christies.com](http://www.christies.com) provides information on more than 80 sale categories, buying and selling at auction, complete auction results, and Christie's international auction calendar.