

For Immediate Release

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THE ROYAL SPLENDOUR OF MARIE ANTOINETTE'S PEARLS AT CHRISTIE'S IN DECEMBER



Magnificent Jewellery

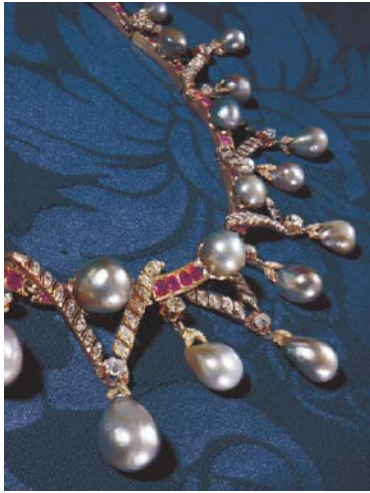
Christie's King Street, Wednesday, 12 December 2007

London - Christie's is proud to present an historically important natural pearl, diamond and ruby necklace, the pearls of which belonged to Marie Antoinette (1755-1793), in the London **Magnificent Jewellery** sale on Wednesday 12 December 2007. *The Property of a Nobleman*, this exquisite necklace of extraordinary provenance has never been offered at auction before and the pearls have been in the same family for over 200 years. It is estimated to realise between £350,000 and £400,000 and is one of the leading jewellery highlights of the winter season.

"It is exceptionally rare to be able to offer jewels that belonged to Marie Antoinette and which are completely fresh to the market. The story behind the pearls and their integral incorporation into this necklace for the Sutherland-Leveson-Gower family wedding in 1849 adds to the fascinating history of this necklace," said Raymond Sancroft-Baker, Senior Director of Christie's Jewellery, London.

This elegant necklace which was made in 1849 has a fringe of twenty one graduated drop-shaped grey natural pearls, each suspended from an old-cut diamond collet surmount to the diamond ribbon which intertwines the ruby collar. The collar is set with twelve button-shaped grey natural pearls which are mounted in gold. The pearls, which date to *circa* 1780, belonged to

Marie Antoinette, the last Queen of France whose name is synonymous with extreme extravagance, the height of the French Revolution and death by guillotine in 1793 on the precept of treason.



These sumptuous pearls were given by Marie-Antoinette to Lady Sutherland, Elizabeth Leveson-Gower, the wife of the British ambassador (1790-92) Lord George Leveson-Gower for safekeeping. Lady Elizabeth, Countess of Sutherland, is believed to have aided King Louis XVI and his family's failed flight from France on 20 June 1791, during the French Revolution (1789-1799). While Marie Antoinette was imprisoned in the convent of the Feuillants, *'Without clothes or money, for everything even to her purse and watch had been lost in the Tuileries, she had to depend on the charity of friends. The British ambassadress Lady Sutherland, who had a son of the same age as the Dauphin, had sent them clothes and linen.'* (Joan Haslip, *Marie Antoinette* (London 1987), p. 265). This was reportedly the last gesture of kindness shown to the doomed Queen.

Prior to Lady Sutherland's departure, as part of the embassy's hurried withdrawal in August 1792, Marie Antoinette gave Lady Sutherland a bag of pearls and diamonds for safe keeping. Anyone caught in possession of this jewellery risked severe punishment. However, the wife of the British Ambassador had diplomatic immunity and was one of the few who could be trusted to return the jewels when the Queen escaped; a plan which was never to be realised. The diamonds were subsequently fashioned into the Sutherland diamond necklace, whilst the pearls were mounted, on the occasion of the marriage between Lady Elizabeth's grandson, George Granville William Sutherland-Leveson-Gower and Anne Hay-McKenzie on 20 June 1849. This exceptional necklace will be offered at Christie's London in December.

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Visit Christie's on the web at www.christies.com
A selection of images is available on request

Notes to Editors:

Auction: Magnificent Jewellery, Christie's King Street on Wednesday 12 December 2007

Public Viewing: Christie's London, 8 King Street, St James's SW1Y 6QT

CHRISTIE'S – JEWELLERY MARKET LEADERS SINCE 1994

Christie's has been the world market leader in jewellery for over 13 years, with sales totalling a record \$355 million in 2006, a 27% increase from 2005 and the highest sales total ever realised. Christie's jewellery auctions take place in Amsterdam, Geneva, Hong Kong, London, Milan, New York, Paris and St Moritz, and cater to a vast audience of international collectors looking to buy a range of magnificent jewellery, from a single pair of ruby-inlaid cufflinks to a 100 carat diamond. Christie's has led the market with expanded initiatives in emerging markets, including the inaugural jewellery sale in the Middle East in January 2007 in Dubai.