

For Immediate Release

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THE ROTHSCHILD FABERGÉ EGG TO BE OFFERED AT CHRISTIE'S LONDON IN NOVEMBER 2007

- A landmark discovery, this exceptional and unrecorded work of art is expected to realise £6 million to £9 million



King Street – Christie's announce that they will offer at auction a remarkable discovery, *The Rothschild Fabergé Egg*. Previously unrecorded and an addition to no more than 12 documented examples known to have been made to Imperial standards for anyone other than the Russian Imperial Family, this exceptional work of craftsmanship is expected to realise £6 million to £9 million (\$12 to \$18 million) and potentially establish a new world record price for a Russian object. *The Rothschild Fabergé Egg* will be offered at the auction of *Russian Works of Art* on 28 November 2007, and will highlight *Russian Art Week*, a series of auctions dedicated to Russian Pictures, Works of Art, Books, Manuscripts and Icons which will take place in London from 26 to 29 November 2007.

Anthony Philips, International Director of Silver and Russian Works of Art at Christie's: "*The discovery of this masterpiece is the most exciting of my 40 year career. Although few examples exist, The Fabergé Egg is known around the world as one of the most impressive and exclusive works of art ever made. The Rothschild Fabergé Egg, signed and dated by Karl Fabergé in 1902, encapsulates every characteristic that defines a true masterpiece; authorship, craftsmanship, provenance, condition and rarity, and we expect this remarkable object to be of profound interest to private collectors and institutions from around the world.*"

Alexis de Tiesenhausen, International Head of Russian Art at Christie's: "*Over recent years, Russian works of art have flourished on the international platform which Christie's provides, and the interest and value in this category has increased considerably. The Rothschild Fabergé Egg presents superlative Russian craftsmanship to the international collecting community, and we expect to attract the interest of clients from around the world during its forthcoming tour of New York, Moscow, Paris and Geneva, and at the auction in November at Christie's in London. The Rothschild Fabergé Egg highlights a week of sales when we will offer a series of auctions dedicated to Russian works of art and we look forward to capturing the interest of the international collecting community during what promises to be a landmark week of sales in London.*"

The Rothschild Fabergé Egg has never been published and has only ever been recorded in private family records. The egg was a gift from Beatrice Ephrussi (1864-1934) (née de Rothschild) to Germaine Halphen (1884-1975) on the occasion of the latter's engagement to Beatrice's younger brother, Baron Edouard de Rothschild (1868-1949). They married in 1905 and it has remained in the family ever since. Beatrice's husband Maurice Ephrussi (1849-1916) was born in Odessa, Russia, and worked for the Rothschild family's oil interests in Baku. He went on to become a banker, helping to establish the Ephrussi Bank in Paris. It is possible that Maurice ordered the egg whilst in St. Petersburg, or during one of Fabergé's selling trips to Paris at the turn of the 20th century.

The Rothschild Fabergé Egg is a superlative masterpiece by a master-craftsman. Exceptionally large with



brilliantly chased vari-coloured gold work and enamelled in Fabergé's most exciting and lively colour – a lovely translucent pink – its face is a clock and it contains an automaton cockerel. Every hour, the diamond-set cockerel pops up from inside the egg, flaps his wings four times and then nods his head three times while opening and shutting his beak and crowing. Each performance lasts approximately 15 seconds, before the clock strikes the hour on a bell. The egg is hallmarked under the enamel by Fabergé's leading workmaster, Michael Perchin, and is further signed and dated, *K. Fabergé, 1902*. This is one of only three known examples with both a clock and an automaton, the others being the Imperial Cockerel Egg of 1900 and the Chanticleer Egg of 1904.

In 1885 Tsar Alexander III commissioned an Easter gift for his wife, the Empress Maria Fedorovna. The Tsar asked Peter Carl Fabergé, a craftsman whose work was admired by the Empress, to create an object of spectacular beauty. Fabergé concentrated all his efforts on a creation which would impress the Imperial family and on the morning of Easter day in 1885, he delivered a spectacular enamelled egg with a golden yoke, inside of which was a golden hen, inside of which was a miniature crown of diamonds and a ruby egg. The Tsar and Empress were so taken by the gift that he instructed Fabergé to make a unique egg for his wife every Easter day, insisting that each must contain a surprise befitting of an Empress. The Tsar died unexpectedly in 1894 and was succeeded by his son, Nicholas II, who continued the tradition, ensuring that both his wife and his mother received an annual gift of a Fabergé egg every Easter. The tradition lasted until 1917 when the Tsar abdicated among civil unrest and was taken hostage with his family, all of whom were executed on 17 July 1918. In total, 50 eggs were made and delivered to the Imperial Family but not all survive.

There are no more than 12 recorded examples which are known to have been created to Imperial standards for private clients, to which the *Rothschild Fabergé Egg* is an exciting addition. The most renowned are those commissioned by the Duke and Duchess of Marlborough, Emmanuel Nobel, seven eggs made for the industrialist Alexander Kelkh and his wife, who took delivery of an egg every year from 1898 and 1904, and an example commissioned by Prince Felix Feliksovich Iusupov, who was married to the Czar's niece and assassinated Rasputin.

Fabergé is synonymous with luxury and superlative craftsmanship and the Fabergé Egg remains the rarest, most impressive and most desirable of all his creations. *The Rothschild Fabergé Egg* is a wonderful and exciting addition to Fabergé's finest masterpiece.

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Images available on request
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Notes to editors:

Auction

Russian Works of Art, Wednesday 28 November 2007 at 10am

Viewing

Saturday 24 November 12 noon - 5pm

Sunday 25 November 12 noon - 5pm

Monday 26 November 9am - 4.30pm

Tuesday 27 November 9am - 8.00pm

Russian Art Week - calendar of sales:

26 November 2007	<i>Icons and Artefacts from the Orthodox World</i>
27 November 2007	<i>Miniatures including an Important Russian Collection</i>
28 November 2007	<i>Important Russian Pictures</i>
28 November 2007	<i>Russian Works of Art</i>
29 November 2007	<i>Russian Books and Manuscripts</i>
29 November 2007	<i>Russian Icons and Pictures including Works by Non Conformist Artists (South Kensington)</i>

- The current record for a Russian object was established when *The Fabergé Winter Egg* sold at Christie's New York on 19 April 2002 for \$9,579,500 / £6,620,249.

About Christie's

Christie's is the world's leading art business with global auction sales in 2006 that totalled £2.51 billion / \$4.67 billion. Worldwide sales for the first half of 2007 totalled £1.63 billion / \$3.25 billion, an increase of 32% by £ and 45% by \$ from the same period last year and highest half year sales ever in art market history. Christie's is a name and place that speaks of extraordinary art, unparalleled service, and 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 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 markets such as China, India and the United Arab Emirates, with successful sales and exhibitions in Beijing, Dubai, Mumbai and Russia. Christie's also offers its clients worldwide access to its sales through Christie's LIVE™, its unique, real-time online bidding service.