

## FRENCH CROWN JEWEL TO BE SOLD AT SOTHEBY'S



Important diamond bow devant de corsage

A SPECTACULAR bow brooch of extraordinary size and formerly in the collection of the French crown jewels, will be offered in a summer sale of antique jewels at Sotheby's, London on Wednesday June 20, 2001.

The brooch was commissioned by Napoleon III for the Empress Eugénie and was created by Parisien jeweller Kramer in 1855. It was worn by the Empress as the central piece of a girdle, together with a pair of similarly designed shoulder brooches connected by four chains of cushioned-shaped diamonds. Designed as a ribbon bow, it has five supporting pampilles and two cords of diamonds in three rows which culminate in two large tassels with rose and cushion-shaped diamonds throughout.

The French crown jewels were sold at auction in Paris in 1887 by order of the French Republic Government's instruction following the fall of the French Second Empire. Many jewels were broken up into smaller pieces, the brooch being offered on 20th June was separated from the diamond belt and matching shoulder knots and auctioned with an estimated value of 35,000 French francs.

The page detailing the entry in the 1887 catalogue, a copy of which is being offered in the same sale, states that the bow was set with 2,438 brilliants weighing 140.51ct. It sold for 42,200 French francs to a dealer listed as Schlessinger, who bought it for Mrs. William B. Astor, a prominent figure in New York society at the time. The brooch soon became known as 'Mrs. Astor's diamond stomacher' and remained in the Astor family until the early 1990s.

It is estimated to fetch £120,000-150,000.

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