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Sotheby's To Auction A diamond of supreme historical importance

THE BEAU SANCY

-- Passed down through four royal families,
Worn by Marie de Medici in her crown at her coronation
as Queen Consort of Henri IV in 1610,
this celebrated gem is testament to over
400 years of European history –



The Beau Sancy, A modified pear double rose cut diamond weighing 34.98 carats (est. \$2-4 million)

28 February 2012 - SOTHEBY'S GENEVA is delighted to announce that its sale of Magnificent Jewels and Noble Jewels on 15 May 2012 will be led by the **Beau Sancy**, one of the most important historic diamonds ever to come to auction. Passed down through the Royal Families of France, England, Prussia and the House of Orange, the celebrated diamond has been the privileged witness of 400 years of European history. Weighing 34.98 carats, the modified pear double rose cut diamond comes to the market with an estimate of \$2-4 million*.

Commenting on the forthcoming sale of the Beau Sancy, **David Bennett, Chairman of Sotheby's Jewellery Department in Europe and the Middle East and Co-Chairman of Sotheby's Switzerland** said: "*The Beau Sancy is one of the most fascinating and romantic gems ever to appear at auction and it is an immense privilege for Sotheby's to handle the sale*".

Acquired by Nicolas de Harlay, Lord of Sancy (1546-1629), in Constantinople in the mid to late 1500's, the Beau Sancy is most likely to have originated from the mines in south-central India near the city of Golconda, the source of history's best-known diamonds, including the Hope, the Koh-i-Noor and the Regent. In 1604, the Beau Sancy was bought for 75 000 livres (25 000 écus) by Henri IV and gifted to his wife, Marie de Medici. The Queen of France had long desired the stone, particularly after learning that de Sancy had sold a larger stone, today known as the "Sancy", to King James I of England¹. Testament to the importance her Majesty placed on the diamond, the Beau Sancy was mounted atop the crown she wore at her coronation in 1610, as shown in a magnificent portrait by Frans II Pourbus, the Younger, now in the Louvre (illustrated right and p.3).



Marie de Medici in coronation dress, Frans II Pourbus the Younger, 1610
© RMN-GP (Musée du Louvre) / Thierry Le Mage

¹ The history of the "Sancy" (or "Grand Sancy") and the "Beau Sancy" have long been intertwined. The Sancy - a 55.23 carat diamond - is now part of the Louvre Collection.



Detail of Marie de Medici's coronation crown

Following Henri IV's assassination by Ravaillac, the Queen was exiled in disgrace and escaped to the Netherlands. Heavily in debt, her possessions were sold and the Beau Sancy was acquired by Prince Frederick Hendrick of Orange-Nassau (1584-1647) for 80 000 *florins* - the most important expenditure in the state's budget in 1641. In the same year, in an attempt to reinforce the alliances of the United Provinces of Holland with the great European powers, the diamond was used to seal the arrangement of the wedding of

Frederick Hendrick's son, Willem, later Willem II of Orange Nassau (1631-1660), to Mary Stuart, daughter of Charles I of England and Henriette-Marie of France, and grand-daughter of Marie de Medici.

After the death of her husband, Mary Stuart embarked for England with her jewels in order to support her brother Charles II in his fight for the throne. In 1662, the Beau Sancy was pawned to settle her debts and it was only in 1677, on the occasion of the wedding of Willem III of Orange-Nassau (1650-1702) to Mary II Stuart, daughter of the King of England James II, that the diamond reentered the Treasure of the House of Orange-Nassau. In 1689, the couple ascended the throne of England and thus the Beau Sancy now joined the collection of the Queen of England. However, as the monarchs were childless at their death, the diamond went back to the House of Orange-Nassau.

In 1702, following the settlement of a dispute between the heirs to the House of Orange, Friedrich I who had just been crowned the first King of Prussia, gave up the jewels of his legacy to obtain the Beau Sancy. The symbolic value and the prestige of the celebrated gem were such that the King made it the principal ornament of the new royal crown of Prussia and associated it with the first order of Prussia, the Order of the Black Eagle.

The largest gemstone within the House of Prussia's collection, the Beau Sancy passed down to each successive generation until today. Worn by the women of the family on important royal occasions, the diamond adorned the costume of each successive bride on the day of her princely wedding, much like it had in the past. When the last German Emperor and King of Prussia fled to exile in Holland, in November 1918, the crown jewels remained at the Kaiser's palace in Berlin. At the end of World War II, the collection was transferred to a bricked-up crypt for safe keeping in Bückeburg, where it was later found by British troops and returned to the estate of the House of Prussia.

After the war, the diamond was subsequently passed down to the eldest son of the Kaiser, *Kronprinz* Wilhelm (1882-1951) and his son, Prince Louis Ferdinand (1907-1994). After the death of Prince Louis Ferdinand, the diamond was inherited as part of the estate by his grandson, Georg Friedrich (1976-), Prince of Prussia and current head of the Royal House of Prussia.

The Beau Sancy has been shown publicly only four times in the last 50 years: first in 1972, alongside the Grand Sancy in Helsinki, in 1985, in Hamburg at the *Schmuck aus dem Hause Hohenzollern* exhibition, in 2001, in Paris again alongside the Grand Sancy at the Musée National d'Histoire Naturelle, and finally in 2004, in Munich at the *Schatzhäuser Deutschlands* exhibition.

Notes to editors:

The Beau Sancy will be showcased in an international tour before its auction in Geneva on 15 May 2012.

Public exhibition:

Hong Kong	30 March - 2 April 2012
New York	14-16 April 2012
Rome	19 April 2012
Paris	24-25 April 2012
London	27 April and 29 April-1 st May 2012
Zurich	2-3 May 2012
Geneva	11-15 May 2012

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* Pre-sale estimates do not include buyer's premium