

AUCTIONS – Christie's to auction The Winter Egg and Important Works by Fabergé from a Princely Collection on December 2, during Classic Week in London

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Image courtesy of Christie's

LONDON – Christie's auction of *The Winter Egg and Important Works by Fabergé from a Princely Collection* will present a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity on 2 December, 2025, during *Classic Week* in London.

The Winter Egg (estimate on request; in excess of £20 million) was commissioned by Emperor Nicholas II as an Easter gift to his mother Dowager Empress Maria Feodorovna in 1913, the year of the 300th anniversary of the Romanov Dynasty.

The creative genius of Fabergé's most celebrated female designer Alma Theresia Pihl – exquisitely executed by her uncle workmaster Albert Holmström – it is among the most



lavish of Fabergé's Imperial creations and widely regarded as one of the most original and artistically inventive Easter eggs that the house created for the Imperial family.

Believed lost for almost two decades, between 1975 and 1994, *The Winter Egg* has previously set the world record for a work by Fabergé not once but twice: when it was offered by Christie's in 1994, upon being rediscovered, and again in 2002.

Elsewhere in the Collection, the group of Fabergé – comprising almost 50 lots spanning hardstone figures, animals, *objets de vertu* and furniture – has estimates from £2,000 to £2 million.

Margo Oganessian, Christie's Head of Department, Fabergé and Russian Works of Art, said: *"It is a privilege for Christie's to be entrusted with the sale of the exquisite 'Winter Egg' by Fabergé for the third time in its history.*

"With only six other Imperial Easter Eggs remaining in private collections, this is an extraordinary chance for collectors to acquire what is arguably one of Fabergé's finest creations, both technically and artistically. It would undoubtedly enhance the most distinguished collection."

The Winter Egg

The Winter Egg presents the viewer with an ethereal vision of beauty and tranquil wonder, achieved through exceptional design and exquisite [craftsmanship](#).

The egg is finely carved in rock crystal, delicately engraved on the interior with a frost design, while the exterior is applied with rose-cut diamond-set platinum snowflake motifs, with two vertical diamond-set platinum borders concealing a hinge on the side and a cabochon moonstone dated 1913.

The egg is on a rock-crystal base formed as a block of melting ice, applied with rose-cut diamond-set platinum rivulets, centring a platinum pin in the middle to support the egg, and opens to reveal the 'surprise' suspended from a platinum hook.

This comprises a double-handled trelliswork platinum basket, set throughout with rose-cut [diamonds](#), full of finely carved white quartz wood anemones, each spring flower with gold wire stem and stamens, the centre set with a demantoid garnet, the leaves delicately carved in nephrite, emerging from a bed of gold moss.

The base of the basket is engraved 'FABERGÉ 1913'. It was commissioned at an extraordinary cost of 24,600 roubles.

A masterpiece of both technical skill and artistic beauty, *The Winter Egg* is richly imbued with clear Easter symbolism. It represents the idea of resurrection, capturing the shift from winter's harshness to the vibrant renewal of spring.

The Designer

The designer, Alma Pihl (1888–1976), was one of very few female designers at the House of Fabergé. A shining star, she was largely self-taught and exceptionally talented.



She was born into a family of Finnish jewellers, working for Fabergé. Her mother, Fanny Holmström, was the daughter of Fabergé's workmaster, August Holmström, and her father, Oscar Pihl, headed Fabergé's jewellery workshop in Moscow.

In 1908, at the age of twenty, Alma began working for her uncle Albert Holmström – who executed *The Winter Egg* – creating life-size watercolour designs to serve as archival records of the workshop's creations.

In her spare time, she sketched her own designs; her uncle recognized Alma's talent and ordered some of her designs to be made for the store's stock. This marked the beginning of her career.

Whilst working as designer in Holmström's workshop Alma created her two most celebrated designs – Snowflake and Mosaic – which were realised in two of the most remarkable Imperial Easter Eggs: the present lot, *The Winter Egg* of 1913, and *The Mosaic Egg* of 1914 which is now in The Royal Collection, England.

The snowflake design famously came to life when Alma, seeking inspiration, gazed out of her frost-covered workshop window and saw ice crystals forming 'like a garden of exquisite frozen flowers'. This moment sparked the idea to recreate these delicate frost patterns in rock crystal, platinum, and rose-cut diamonds.

Fabergé and Imperial Eggs

Fabergé's global reputation is synonymous with the unparalleled series of Imperial Easter Eggs, produced by the House between 1885 and 1916. Only fifty of these exquisite eggs were completed: ten were created during the reign of Emperor Alexander III between 1885–1894, all of which were gifts from the tsar to his wife, Empress Maria Feodorovna. From 1895 onward, Nicholas II continued the tradition, presenting forty more to both his mother and his wife, Empress Alexandra Feodorovna. From the imperial series, forty-three eggs still exist, most now housed in major [museums](#) around the world, with only seven (including *The Winter Egg*) remaining in private hands. The tradition was documented by Franz Birbaum, Fabergé's chief designer in his 1919 memoirs: '*The designs of the Easter eggs did not have to be approved by Court and Fabergé was given complete freedom in design and execution[...] Most Imperial Easter eggs took almost a year to complete. Work began soon after Easter and was hardly finished by Holy Week of the following year.*'

Provenance

The Winter Egg is among the best documented of all the Imperial Easter Eggs. Following the 1917 Revolution, it was transferred from St Petersburg to the Kremlin Armoury in Moscow along with many other valuable possessions of the Imperial family. In the 1920s, the newly established Soviet government began selling art treasures from the Hermitage and other national collections, including personal belongings of the Romanovs. In desperate need of money, the regime sold many Imperial Easter Eggs to collectors and dealers in Europe and the United States, often for only a fraction of their value. *The Winter Egg* was acquired by Wartski of London in the late 1920s or early 1930s for £450.



Wartski sold the Egg in 1934 to Napier Sturt, 3rd Baron Alington, a British collector and landowner, for £1,500. It later entered the collection of Sir Bernard Eckstein, a prominent British art collector, subsequently selling at auction in London in 1949, listed as property of Sir Bernard Eckstein, where it was purchased by Mr. Arthur Bryan Ledbrook for £1,700.

The Egg disappeared in 1975 after Ledbrook's death. In 1994 it was rediscovered and sold at a Christie's auction in Geneva the same year, setting a world record for a work by Fabergé at 7,263,500 Swiss francs. Eight years later, on 19 April 2002, the Egg was once again put up for auction at Christie's, this time in New York, where it again set a world record of \$9,579,500.

Christie's and Fabergé

Market leaders in the field, Christie's holds the auction record for Fabergé, set in 2007 when *The Rothschild Egg* sold for £8.9 million in London; more recently selling one of the most important single-owner Fabergé collections at auction, *The Harry Woolf Collection*, which realised £5.2 million in 2021.

