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Defining Femininity through Magnificent Shoes: *The Charm of Rococo Opens at the Bata Shoe Museum*

TORONTO, ON, June 27, 2006 - The Bata Shoe Museum is pleased to present *The Charm of Rococo: Femininity and Footwear in the 18th Century*, a lavish exhibition featuring some of the Museum's most magnificent shoes from the age of Louis XV.

Emanating from the French Court, the Rococo aesthetic infused a sensuous charm and delicate grace into 18th century fashion. It also defined femininity in new ways. Upper-class women's footwear reflected this trend through the use of exquisite silks, elegant heels and curvilinear rhinestone buckles which framed the foot with eye-catching sparkle.

"The connections between femininity and footwear established in the 18th century continue to inform the cultural meanings of women's footwear today," said Elizabeth Semmelhack, Curator of *The Charm of Rococo*. "Because of these connections, we are able to immediately appreciate these marvelous shoes despite 300 years of history separating us."

As visitors enter the exhibition, they are immediately transported into a world of elegant opulence. Flickering candlelight chandeliers show off portraits, including one of Madame de Pompadour, who epitomized Rococo elegance in the 18th century. In the centre of the room, artifacts are showcased which highlight the variety, remarkable quality, exquisite craftsmanship and eclectic imagination of the period.

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Visitors will leave the exhibition with an increased understanding of the cultural, political and historical currents in the 18th century which informed the meaning of femininity, which in turn impacted women's footwear: the emergence of the English silk industry; the new market represented by the American colonies; the shift from the grandeur of the Baroque court spectacle to an appreciation for intimate gatherings and the celebration of affection; the beginnings of Neo-Classical restraint; the increase in social unrest portending the French Revolution; and the change to Rousseauian ideals of motherhood and female domesticity embraced by the emergent bourgeoisie as the 18th century drew to a close.

The Charm of Rococo: Femininity and Footwear in the 18th Century will be on view until February 2008.

About the Bata Shoe Museum

The Bata Shoe Museum is a centre of knowledge about the role of footwear in the social and cultural life of humanity. The Museum's growing international collection of over 12,000 objects touches on 4,500 years of history. A varied programme of events and exhibitions lets visitors discover the stories behind footwear from many lands and cultures. Current exhibitions include: *Watched by Heaven, Tied to Earth: Summoning Animal Protection for Chinese Children*, *The Charm of Rococo: Femininity and Footwear in the 18th Century*, *All About Shoes: Footwear Through the Ages* (semi-permanent) and *Chronicles of Riches: Treasures from the Bata Shoe Museum*. Online exhibitions include *All About Shoes* and *On Canadian Ground: Stories of Footwear in Early Canada*. The Bata Shoe Museum is located in downtown Toronto at the southwest corner of Bloor and St. George Streets. For more information about the Museum, please visit www.batashoemuseum.ca.