Dealers and Collectors

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Thomas Agnew

Art dealer. Agnew's was founded by Thomas Agnew (1794-1871), who joined the firm of Vittore Zanetti as an apprentice at the age of sixteen. The firm later became Zanetti and Agnew and dealt in a wide variety of stock. From the 1850s onward, they became known as painting specialists and moved to premises at 5 Waterloo Place in London. In 1860, Agnew's opened a shop in Dale Street in Liverpool. The firm's great period of expansion was between 1861 and 1895, under the direction of Thomas' son, William, when it gained an international reputation.

Literature


James Orrock

James Orrock (1829-1913), born in Edinburgh, originally trained as a dentist, like his father, but gave this up to devote his life to painting and art dealing and collecting. He moved to London in 1866 and quickly became established as a member of the New Watercolour Society, building it a new building in Piccadilly and gaining it a royal charter – it became the Royal Institute of Painters in Watercolours. His activities as a successful dealer were only matched by his zeal in promoting British art and particularly a British School of painting, filling his house at 48 Bedford Square in London with a number of collections, including Chinese porcelain. He was hugely influential in shaping William Lever's taste in both British painting and Chinese porcelain and in the way in which Lever displayed his collections. Lever bought porcelains, furniture and paintings from Orrock on three separate occasions.
Duveen Brothers

Art dealers. Founded by Henry Duveen (1854-1919) and his brother, Joseph Joel (1843-1908), in 1871, in Oxford Street London, they were initially dealers in furniture and objects of virtu. The family were originally from Meppel in Holland and were sent to England by their mother to sell Delftware. The two brothers were so successful that they opened a new shop at 21 Old Bond Street and Henry established premises in New York, winning clients such as John Pierpont Morgan, Benjamin Altman and Henry Clay Frick. Both Henry and Joseph Joel were dealers in Chinese porcelains. Joseph Joel’s son Joseph (1869-1939) joined the firm in 1887, becoming President of the firm (1909-39), and being raised to the Peerage as Lord Duveen of Millbank. He was the most flamboyant and successful member of the family and dealt mostly in Old Master paintings.

Literature

- S N Behrmann, *Duveen*, London 1952;

James Henry Duveen

Art dealer and author. James Henry Duveen (b.1873), known as Jack, or Jacques, was the cousin of Joseph Duveen (Lord Duveen of Millbank). He ran the family’s Liverpool gallery before moving to 38 Dover Street in London in 1906 and then to 9 Old Bond Street in 1908. He initiated a lawsuit for slander against his cousin Joseph in 1910, when the latter tried to
compromise a number of sales to clients Sir William Bennett and William Lever. James Henry was author of *Collections and Recollections. A century and a half of art deals*, London 1935.

**Literature**


**Edgar Gorer**

Art dealer. S. Gorer & Son was founded by Solomon Lewis Gorer (1840-1907), and had premises at 170 New Bond Street, London. The company's agent in New York was the jeweller Dreicer & Co., at 560 Fifth Avenue. It was in the hands of Solomon's son, Edgar Ezekiel Gorer (1872-1915), that 'Gorer', as it became known, became an international dealer in Chinese art, particularly Chinese ceramics, boasting major clients in Britain and across the Atlantic. Edgar Gorer was ambitious and gained a reputation for buying up important collections, such as that formed by Richard Bennett, Sir William Bennett, George R. Davies and Alfred Trapnell, and promoting them through exhibition and privately printed catalogues, often with colour plates. Gerald Reitlinger, in his 'Economics of Taste', aptly described Gorer as being 'the meteoric rival of the Duveens'. He entered into two lawsuits as a result of his high profile activities, one with William Hesketh Lever over the purchase of the Richard Bennett Collection and Duveen over a Kangxi vase, which Gorer had offered to Frick but which Duveen had claimed was a fake. The latter lawsuit was never heard in court. On the day of its announcement, 7th May 1915, Gorer was crossing the Atlantic on the Lusitania which was torpedoed and he lost his life. He was 43. Edgar Gorer married Rachel Alice Cohen (1873-1954) in 1902 and lived in some elegance at 45 Netherhall Gardens in South Hampstead. Their three sons were the writer and social anthropologist, Geoffrey Gorer, geneticist, Peter Gorer and the horticulturalist, Richard Gorer.

Edgar Gorer's publications include: (with J.F. Blacker), 'Chinese Porcelain and Hardstones', 2 volumes, London 1911 (this was a limited edition of 1000) and catalogues of exhibitions including Alfred Trapnell (S. Gorer, 1906), Sir William Henry Bennett (Edgar Gorer & Sir William Henry Bennett, 1910), Richard Bennett (Edgar Gorer, 1911) and George R. Davies (G.R. Davies and Gorer, 1913). He also published 'A catalogue of rare specimens of Ming and early Kang-He porcelain' (S. Gorer, 1907) and 'Old Chinese Porcelain', (Edgar Gorer, 1910).

**Literature**

- Website: www.rmslusitania.info.
Frank Partridge

Art dealer. Frank Partridge (1875-1953), was a dealer in Chinese art with offices at 26 King Street, London, SW1 and 741 Fifth Avenue, New York. After bombing in 1944, the company relocated to 144-146 New Bond Street. The son of Robert and Eliza Partridge who owned a bootmaking business in Hertfordshire, Frank founded Partridges in 1900. He was a respected and trusted dealer to many eminent collectors, not least William Hesketh Lever and was fortunate to survive the sinking of the Lusitania on 7th May 1915, unlike his friend and companion, Edgar Gorer. Partridge lent to the 1935-36 International Exhibition of Chinese Art at the Royal Academy.

Literature
- Archive location: Partridge Fine Arts Ltd.
- Illustrated Catalogue of an exhibition of old Chinese Porcelain, Summer 1933.
- Website: www.rmslusitania.info.
- UK 1881 Census On-line.

John Sparks

Art dealers. The firm was established in the 1888 by John Sparks (1854-1914), who was a captain in the merchant navy and who spent most of his life in the Far East. The business was expanded by his son, Peter (1896-1970), who joined the firm in 1910, when it was situated at 37 Duke Street, Manchester Square, London. Queen Mary awarded Sparks her Royal Warrant in 1926 and in 1927 the firm moved to premises at 128 Mount Street, which remained its address until it was wound up in 1990. Sometime in the late-1920s, Sparks established premises in Shanghai, at 103 Chiao Tung Road, which allowed it to source objects directly from China. Along with Bluetts, Sparks were among the longest established
and most respected London dealers in Chinese art.

**Literature**

- Times, 6 November 1934, p.19.
- Archive location: SOAS Library, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.

**Richard Bennett**

Richard Bennett (b. 1849) was from Horwich, near Bolton, in Lancashire. Despite being a major collector of books and manuscripts, as well as Chinese porcelain, Bennett is somewhat an obscure figure. By 1881 he was living at Great Lever Hall and was owner or manager of John Smith Junior & Co., a bleaching and chemical manufacturing company in Great Lever. During 1890/91, Bennett moved to Southport and then to Manchester and by 1902 he was living at Thornby Hall in Northamptonshire, his residence when, in 1911, his collection was sold to William Hesketh Lever by Gorer for £275,000.

**Literature**


**Sir William Bennett**

Sir William Henry Bennett, KCVO (1852 - 1931), was an eminent surgeon, of 3 Hyde Park Place, London. He was elected Fellow of several learned societies (RCS England, Royal Society of Medicine, the Zoological and Horticultural Societies). He published on surgical subjects and his appointments included Examiner in Surgery at Cambridge University,
Lecturer on Anatomy and Surgery at St George’s Hospital, and Surgeon-in-Chief for St John’s Ambulance Brigade. For his services to sick & wounded of Boer War, he was made a KCVO in 1901.

He collected paintings, furniture, Chinese porcelain (from Duveen, 1905-1906) & bronzes. The major part of his Chinese collections was sold in 1906. Gorer is said to have been instrumental in taking the best of this collection to the U.S. where it formed the nucleus of some of the finest American collections.

Literature

- Metropolitan Museum of Art, Duveen Client Summary Books 1894-1918 (copy at the Getty Research Institute)
- American Art Association, Sir William Bennett, ‘Distinguished Paintings…Rare Bronzes, etc’, Sale no.5971, Friday 29 & Sat 30 April 1932, by order of Lady Bennett, Anderson Galleries, 30 East 57th Street, New York. Lots 77-125 are Chinese works of art.

Sir Trevor Lawrence

Sir (James John) Trevor Lawrence, the son of Sir William Lawrence (1783-1867), Serjeant-Surgeon to Queen Victoria and Louisa Lawrence (1803-55), a renowned orchid grower, Sir Trevor (1831-1913) was himself trained as a surgeon, before becoming an MP and eventually President of the Royal Horticultural Society. He was a well-known collector of objets d’art, particularly oriental, and especially Japanese art, western porcelain and old lace.

Literature

- Sale, Christie’s, 29 May – 1 June 1916, ‘The collection of porcelain objects of art and decorative furniture of the late Sir Trevor Lawrence, BART’.
Sydney Ernest Kennedy (1855-1933), collected European works of art as well as Chinese porcelain. He was a senior partner in the family firm of Sydney Kennedy & Co., one of the largest dealers in the foreign railway market and, at his death, was a senior trustee of the London Stock Exchange, having been elected a trustee in 1900. He lived at 146 Gloucester Terrace, Hyde Park (noted in the Christie’s 1929 Cumberbatch catalogue as a bidder) and at his death at Upper Brooke Street.

Kennedy sold most of his collection when he disposed of his town house in 1916. The Chinese porcelains were sold over two days, 21-22 June, 1916 and the Catalogue was described as being 'innovative', it including illustrations, some in colour, for the first time. Although consisting largely of late Ming and Kangxi period wares, the collection was considered significant at the time, some having been acquired form earlier notable collectors, such as Trapnell, Stuart, Grandidier, Huth and Revelstoke. Kennedy's label is recognised by a dolphin & SEK monogram on paper.

William Hesketh Lever bought a series of fahua pieces from the 1916 sale, through Frank Partridge.

**Literature**

- The Times, Obituary, 'Mr S E Kennedy Senior Trustee of the Stock Exchange', 11 July 1933, p.16.
- Sale, Christie’s, 21-22 June 1916, 'The well-known collection of Chinese Porcelain formed by Sidney Ernest Kennedy, Esq'.
C S Holberton

This is probably Campbell Scott Holberton (1867-1939), a London Stockbroker and member of the Arts Club. He lived at 15 Talbot Square, Hyde Park, London and lent his collection of snuff bottles to the 1913 Manchester Exhibition of Chinese Applied Art. William Hesketh Lever bought 155 pieces from the 1918 sale, through Frank Partridge.

Literature

- The Times, ‘Obituaries’, 2\textsuperscript{nd} November, 1939, p.1.

R H Benson

Robert Henry Benson (1850-1929), senior partner of Robert Benson & Co., Ltd., merchant bankers, London, was a Trustee of the National Gallery from 1912 and a collector of paintings, mostly early Italian, early Chinese porcelain, and other works of art. His properties included Walpole House, Chiswick Mall, W4, though by 1924 he was living at 16 South Street, Park Lane. His country house was Buckhurst Park, Withyham, Sussex.

He married Evelyn Holford (1857-1943) in 1887 and who was herself a collector of Chinese porcelain and was joint owner of the Benson collection of Renaissance paintings, sold to Joseph Duveen in 1927 for US$2.5 million and dispersed to collectors such as Kress, Frick and Rockefeller.
Robert Benson was a member of the Burlington Fine Arts Club and lent generously to public museums, for instance to the City of Manchester Art Gallery 'Exhibition of Chinese Applied Art', 1913, to the V&A prior to his major Chinese ceramics sale in 1924, and the Benson Collection of paintings loaned to Manchester in 1927, which was subsequently purchased by Duveen. The 1924 Christie’s sale catalogue, for which much of the information came from the collector, has been cited by Oliver Impey (1992 p.231) as the first learned auction house catalogue. The Christie's catalogue refers to a private catalogue produced by Rackham for R.H. Benson some years ago.

**Literature**
- Christie, Manson & Woods, 1 July 1924, Catalogue of a portion of the collection of early Chinese porcelain and pottery formed by Robert H. Benson, Esq, now the property of Major Rex Benson, Guy Benson Esq. and Con Benson Esq.