

## Julius Spier

1848–1923

Dealer and Manager of S. M. Franck Ltd.



A dealer in Chinese art, Julius Spier served as a manager of the wholesale firm S. M. Franck and Company, situated at 25 Camomile Street near the East India Docks in East London. The firm was begun in the early 1880s by Solomon Mark Franck (1849–1922), who imported goods from India, the Middle East, China, and Japan, but it gained a reputation for the high quality and

quantity of objects it imported from China after Spier assumed management in 1909.

Born in Alsfeld, Hessen, Spier probably moved to London in the late 1860s. In his early years he was described as a button merchant, but by 1881 he was listed in the census records as a China merchant and an associate of Franck. After Spier took control of S. M. Franck in 1909, the company began to supply archaeological material, early ceramics, sculpture, and architectural features to international museums and collectors, including George Eumorfopoulos, Oscar Raphael, Charles Seligman, the Victoria and Albert Museum, and the British Museum as well as institutions in North America, especially the Royal Ontario Museum. In addition to supplying other dealers with goods, S. M. Franck was at the forefront of filling the demand for early Chinese art during the 1920s and 1930s.

After Spier died, S. M. Franck was managed by his widow, Constance (1873–1958). A successful business woman who had worked for the company for many years, she saw the firm through to its closure prior to World War II.

### Literature

1871 Census, RG10, folio 86: 51, and 1881 Census, RG11, folio 0320/97: 16; access census at [http://search.findmypast.co.uk/search-world-records/census-land-and-surveys?\\_ga=1.182792480.721353569.1455120317](http://search.findmypast.co.uk/search-world-records/census-land-and-surveys?_ga=1.182792480.721353569.1455120317)

“Obituary of Mr. Julius Spier,” *Times* (London), (September 29, 1923), p. 12.

Nick Pearce, “CARP-ON: Further Thoughts on Chinese Art Provenance Research,” in Jason Steuber and Guolong Lai, eds., *Collectors, Collections and Collecting the Arts of China: Histories and Challenges* (Gainesville, FL, 2014), pp. 295–312.

S M Franck and Co. 1910–12, Victoria and Albert Museum Archive MA/1/F1203 25 Camomile St, EC.