

Diedrich Abbes
1886–1959
Collector of Chinese Art

Diedrich Abbes (1866–1959) was born in Germany and died in Greenwich, Connecticut, at the age of ninety-three. Passenger records from Ellis Island list him as a citizen of the United States in 1904. For much of his professional life Abbes worked for the textile manufacturer C. Bahnsen and Company, based in Paterson, New Jersey.

Abbes was a minor but well-connected collector of ancient Chinese art. He seems to have amassed a collection of Chinese objects by the late 1920s, but little is known about how he became interested in the field of ancient Chinese jades. By 1944 Abbes was a recognized collector, invited to serve on the board of directors of the Chinese Art Society of America. Other founding members of the Society included C. T. Loo, Edgar Bromberger, Horace H. F. Jayne, Warren E. Cox, Alice Getty, Theodore Y. Hobby, Alan Priest, Alfred Salmony, K. M. Semon, George E. Sokolsky, Florance Waterbury, C. Edward Wells, and C. F. Yau. Since the officers and members of the Chinese Art Society were prominent specialists, collectors, and dealers involved in the Chinese art market during the first half of the twentieth century, some of them may be sources or intermediaries for the Abbes jades. Arthur Sackler purchased several of them the year Diedrich Abbes died (1959). They were included in Dr. Sackler's gift to the Smithsonian Institution in 1987.

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