

Alice Boney

1901–1988

Dealer in Chinese Art



Alice Boney was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. By the time she turned six years old, both of her parents were deceased. Raised by relatives, Alice and her younger brother spent their summers with their grandfather, Morris A. Boney, an industrialist in Atlantic City, New Jersey.

After Boney graduated from Mount Saint John Collegiate Institute for Young Ladies in Philadelphia, she preferred to broaden her education by seeing the world. By the age of twenty-two, Boney had not only come into the trust fund set up by her grandfather, but she

had also married Jan Kleykamp, a Dutch art dealer. In 1924 the Kleykamps made a honeymoon tour of European cities. They returned to New York City with a large shipment of Chinese tomb sculptures from the Tang dynasty and opened the Jan Kleykamp Gallery, the first gallery in the city to sell Chinese art.

Boney went into business on her own after her divorce from Kleykamp. She made a significant name for herself in the burgeoning field of Chinese art appreciation and collecting, despite competing in a male-dominated business with C. T. Loo and C. F. Yau. Recognized as a preeminent authority on Chinese art, Boney earned the moniker “Doyenne of Oriental Art Dealers.” Her clients included the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Freer Gallery of Art, Mrs. William H. Morris, and President Herbert Hoover. She mounted several exhibitions of Chinese and Japanese art during her career and influenced some of the greatest Asian art collectors and dealers of the twentieth century, among them, Robert H. Ellsworth, Florence and Herbert Irving, and Giuseppe Eskanazi. In the 1940s Boney began to acquire works by Chinese painter Qi Baishi (1853–1957). Her passion for Qi Baishi prompted greater scholarship of modern Chinese painting in the West.

Boney moved to Japan in 1958, where she remained for the next sixteen years. She returned to New York in 1974 and continued to work from her Park Avenue apartment until her death from cardiac arrest in 1988.

Literature

Margarett Loke, “China’s Modern Masters,” *New York Times* (February 7, 1988).

Susan Heller Anderson, “Alice Boney, Major Dealer of Art from China and Japan Dies at 87,” *New York Times* (December 23, 1988).

Anita Christy, "Alice Boney: The Doyenne of Oriental Art Dealers," *Oriental Art* 19, no. 12 (December 1988), pp. 54–59.

Alice Boney, "Of Qi Baishi," *Oriental Art* 20, no. 4 (April 1989), pp. 80–84.

Xu Beihong, Christie's, Fine Chinese Modern Paintings, Lot Notes, sale on May 31, 2011. See <http://www.christies.com/lotfinder/paintings/xu-beihong-cat-5442466-details.aspx>

February 29, 2016