

Bluett and Sons
Active 1884–1992
Dealers in Chinese Art



Bluett and Sons, commonly called Bluetts, was one of the most significant dealers of Chinese art in London during the 1920s and 1930s as well as in the postwar years. It was reputedly founded by Alfred Ernest Bluett (1853–1917) in 1884, although he is listed in the United Kingdom census as a “Salesman Oriental Goods” as early as 1881. William Bluett (1817–1883), Alfred’s father, also spent some time as an art dealer in the 1860s, yet his main profession seems to have been as an insurance agent and accountant. Bluetts remained a family firm for three generations.

Bluett and Sons occupied premises, first at 89 Queen Street, London E.C., during the late 1880s, then at 377 Oxford Street, and from 1922 on, at 48 Davies Street. Alfred’s sons Leonard Buckland Bluett (1884–1963) and Edgar Ernest Bluett (1881–1964) joined the firm in 1907 and 1909, respectively. Following their father’s death, Leonard and Edgar ran the business in a way that combined scholarship with connoisseurship. They

were founding members of the British Antique Dealers’ Association in 1919 and were instrumental in establishing the Oriental Ceramic Society in 1921. When the Society expanded its membership in 1933, the brothers joined, contributing to its publications and serving on its council. Edgar Bluett loaned two bronzes to the international Chinese art exhibition in Berlin in 1929, and the firm loaned three objects to the 1935–36 Chinese International Exhibition held at the Royal Academy in London.

Roger Buckland Bluett (1925–2000), Leonard’s son, joined the firm after serving in the Navy during World War II and working for a time at Sotheby’s. Brian Morgan (born 1930) joined Bluetts as the only non-family partner in 1954. The two men continued the business-scholar-connoisseur tradition, with Roger serving as president of the Antique Dealers’ Association, on the council of the Oriental Ceramic Society, and as chairman of the Museum of East Asian Art in Bath, England.

Bluett’s clients included most of the great collectors of the twentieth century, such as Sir Percival David, George Eumorfopoulos, Sir Alan Barlow, Avery Brundage, Paul and Eugene Bernat, and King Gustav VI Adolf of Sweden, as well as many museum institutions around the world. Roger Bluett and Brian Morgan sold the business in 1988, and Bluett and Sons officially closed in 1992.

Literature

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Bluett records are at CARP (Chinese Art–Research into Provenance); see <http://carp.arts.gla.ac.uk/>

February 29, 2016