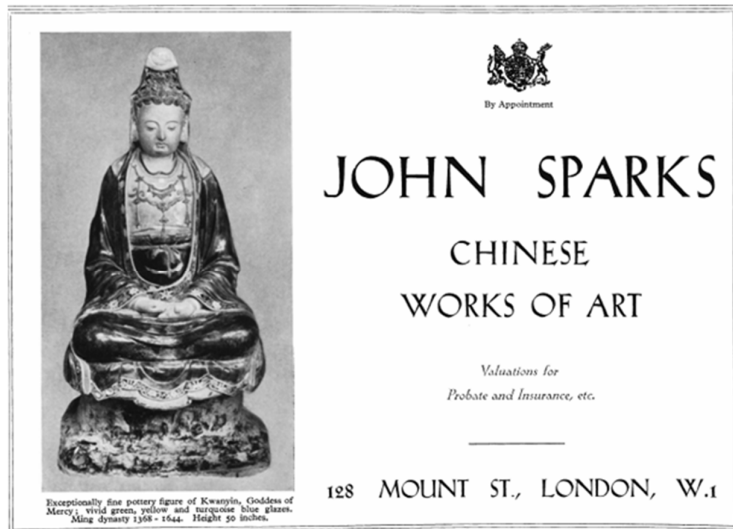


**John Sparks Ltd.
Active 1890–1992
Dealer in Chinese Art**



John Sparks began trading as the Japanese Fine Art Depot in 1890, when its premises were at 15 Duke Street, Manchester Square, London. It was founded by John Sparks (1854–1914), a former merchant mariner who served on ships on the Far Eastern routes. In 1899 the Japanese Fine Art Depot moved to 17 Duke Street and in 1901 changed its name to the Oriental Art Gallery, dealing in both Chinese and Japanese

works of art. John Sparks Ltd. was established as a limited company in 1906, with debenture holders that included the collector S. E. (Sydney Ernest) Kennedy (1855–1933) and Julius Spier (1848–1923), who was manager at the wholesale Chinese art dealer S. M. Franck.

Ernest (Peter) Sparks (1894–1970), the youngest son of John Sparks, joined the firm in 1910 and the next year moved the business to 37a Duke Street. Following his father's death, Peter Sparks took over the company and expanded John Sparks into New York City. He leased gallery space at 707 Fifth Avenue, near 55th Street, from 1915 to 1919, when focus turned to China. During the 1920s and 1930s the company had a shop in Shanghai at 103 Chiao Tung Road in the heart of the Book Market, or Wenhuaajie (Culture and Education Street).

Recognized as one of the most respected London dealers in Chinese art, John Sparks supplied an international clientele of collectors, including Queen Mary, from whom the company received the Royal Warrant of Antiquary of Chinese Art in 1926. The next year John Sparks moved to larger premises at 128 Mount Street in Mayfair, London, where it remained until it closed in 1990. Following Peter Sparks's death in 1970, the company was managed by Michael Gillingham (1933–1999), who was responsible for preserving the business archive. The John Sparks Archive is now held in the Library Special Collections at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.

Literature

"Death of Captain Sparks," *West London Gazette* (April 25, 1914), p. 5.

"Personalities of the World of Art and Antiques: Mr. Peter Sparks," *Antique Collector* 6, no. 12 (January 1936), p. 368.

Ching-Yi Huang, "John Sparks, the Dealer and Chinese Art in England, 1902–1936," PhD diss., School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 2012.

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.

Liz Hancock, *John Sparks, Sea Captain and Dealer in Chinese and Japanese Art*, Chinese Art Research into Provenance, University of Glasgow; see

<http://carp.arts.gla.ac.uk/essay1.php?enum=1370358740>

"John Sparks and Pitt-Rivers," *Rethinking Pitt-Rivers, analysing the activities of a nineteenth-century collector*; see <http://web.prm.ox.ac.uk/rpr/index.php/primary-documents-index/16-second-collection-1880-1900/652-john-sparks-and-pitt-rivers/>

February 29, 2016