

Worldly Goods

A SOURCEBOOK TO THE UNIQUE AND EXTRAORDINARY

SILVER SWOON

PEOPLE WHO BUY AN elegant new silver service may think that it's handmade, especially if they paid ten thousand dollars for it," says Edward Munves Jr., owner of James Robinson antiques in New York. "Usually they're mistaken. They may be buying hand-finished or hand-forged silver, but completely handmade? Well, no one does that anymore. Except us."

For 70 years, James Robinson has been selling exquisite sterling silver flatware handmade by C.W. Fletcher, a small family firm in Sheffield, England. Last year, after the Fletcher patriarch had died, Munves and his daughter, Joan Boening, bought the 500-year-old company, renaming it Fletcher Robinson. Today, the silver is still made in the traditional way by the same dozen artisans, some of whom have been with the firm for over 40 years.

Most silver companies—even highly respected brands—make their flatware by machine. After the utensil has been stamped out, a silversmith fine-tunes and polishes it. Fletcher Robinson, on the other hand, is stubbornly old-fashioned: They start with a rectangular strip of silver, then forge, hammer, file, shape, and polish it by hand until it's perfect. There are no machines, no trendy new flatware designs; they've made the same 23 patterns for two centuries.



ONE OF A KIND For over two centuries, Fletcher Robinson has made the same 23 gracious patterns, each of them entirely by hand, including (shown from left to right): Trifid, Shield End, Feather Edge, Kings, Scroll, and Fiddle.