



# Smithsonian

*Archives of American Art*

## A Finding Aid to the Max Beckmann papers, 1917-1954, in the Archives of American Art

Rihoko Ueno

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Archives of American Art  
750 9th Street, NW  
Victor Building, Suite 2200  
Washington, D.C. 20001  
<https://www.aaa.si.edu/services/questions>  
<https://www.aaa.si.edu/>

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## Collection Overview

|                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| <b>Repository:</b> | Archives of American Art  |
| <b>Title:</b>      | Max Beckmann papers   |
| <b>Date:</b>       | 1917-1954   |
| <b>Identifier:</b> | AAA.beckmax   |
| <b>Creator:</b>    | Beckmann, Max, 1884-1950  |
| <b>Extent:</b>     | 1.4 Linear feet   |
| <b>Language:</b>   | The collection is in English, French and German.  |
| <b>Summary:</b>    | The papers of painter and educator Max Beckmann measure 1.4 linear feet and date from 1917 to 1954. The collection documents Beckmann's art career in Germany as well as New York and includes biographical material, correspondence, printed material and photographs. |

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## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Information

Mathilde Q. Beckmann, the artist's widow, loaned diaries and notebooks for microfilming in 1977 and donated additional material in 1983.

### Separated Materials

The Archives of American Art also holds microfilm of material lent for microfilming (reels 1213-1214 and 1237) including ten personal diaries of Max Beckmann and three notebooks containing lists of works, sketches, and some daily entries of activities and observations. Loaned materials were returned to the donor and are not described in the collection container inventory.

### Related Materials

The Max Beckmann Archive in Munich, Germany also holds papers of Max Beckmann including correspondence, clippings, photographs and artifacts.

### Available Formats

Portions of the collection and materials lent for microfilming are available on 35mm microfilm reels 1213-1214, 1237, and 1340-1341 at the Archives of American Art offices and through interlibrary loan. Researchers should note that the arrangement of material described in the container inventory does not reflect the arrangement of the collection on microfilm.

### Processing Information

The collection received a preliminary level of arrangement after donation and was microfilmed on reels 1340-1341. The collection was processed and a finding aid prepared by Rihoko Ueno in 2018.

### Preferred Citation

Max Beckmann papers, 1917-1954. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

## Restrictions

Use of original papers requires an appointment and is limited to the Archives' Washington, D.C., Research Center.

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## Biographical / Historical

Max Beckmann (1884-1950) was a painter and educator who was born and educated in Germany and based in New York after World War II.

Max Beckmann was born in 1884 in Leipzig, Germany. He studied art at the Weimar-Saxon Grand Ducal Art Academy from 1900 to 1902 and graduated with honors. During World War I, he volunteered as a medical orderly from 1914 to 1915, an experience that haunted him and deeply impacted his artwork. Beckmann's art is considered part of the German New Objectivity movement.

In 1925, Beckmann's first marriage to Minna Tube ended in divorce, and he married Mathilde von Kaulbach. That same year he began teaching art at the Städelschule Academy of Fine Art in Frankfurt. By the late 1920s he had several major exhibitions in museums and galleries in Germany and Switzerland, had his first exhibition in the US (1926), and his paintings were acquired by the National Gallery in Berlin.

When Hitler was appointed Chancellor of Germany in 1933 and the Nazis came to power, marking the end of the Weimar Republic, modern art was quickly suppressed and derisively referred to as "degenerate art." Consequently, Beckmann lost his teaching job at the Frankfurt Art Academy and several of his paintings were included in the *Degenerate Art* or *Entartete Kunst* exhibition (1937) in Munich. Shortly thereafter, Beckmann left Germany and never returned to the country again.

Beckmann and his wife Mathilde settled in Amsterdam, where they stayed for approximately ten years. Beckmann continued to paint during this time. After the end of World War II, Beckmann immigrated to the United States where he taught, painted, and regularly exhibited his work. He taught art at Washington State University in St. Louis, Missouri, for a time and then became an art professor at the Brooklyn Museum's Art School in New York. Max Beckmann died in 1950.

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## Scope and Contents

The papers of painter and educator Max Beckmann measure 1.4 linear feet and date from 1917 to 1954. The collection documents Beckmann's art career in Germany as well as New York and includes biographical material, correspondence, printed material and photographs.

Biographical material consists of an art class student register, art organization membership card, bibliography, customs forms for a pet, exhibition price lists, and assorted travel identification documents.

Correspondence is with universities, museums and galleries regarding teaching positions, lectures, exhibitions and art sales. There are also numerous letters and telegrams with his wife Mathilde.

Printed material includes clippings, catalogs, postcards, and miscellany.

Photographs are of Max Beckmann, family, friends, exhibition installations, and houses. Most of the series consists of photographic prints, but there are also a few negatives. Many of the photographs are annotated in German.

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## Arrangement

The collection is arranged as four series.

- Series 1: Biographical Material, 1939-1954 (Box 1; 0.2 linear feet)

- Series 2: Correspondence, 1922-1950 (Boxes 1-2; 1 linear foot)
- Series 3: Printed Material, circa 1937-1950 (Box 2; 4 folders)
- Series 4: Photographs, 1917-1950 (Box 2; 7 folders)

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## Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

### Subjects:

Art -- Germany  
Educators -- New York (State) -- New York  
Painters -- New York (State) -- New York  
Painting, Modern -- 20th century -- New York (State) -- New York

### Types of Materials:

Photographs

### Names:

Beckmann, Mathilde Q.

### Occupations:

Painters -- Germany

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## Container Listing

### Series 1: Biographical Material, 1939-1954

#### 0.2 Linear feet (Box 1)

Scope and Contents: Biographical material consists of an art class student register (presumably from Beckmann's time teaching at the Brooklyn Museum Art School), an Artists Equity Foundation membership card, bibliography, customs form for a pet dog, exhibition price lists, French travel identification cards, and assorted Netherlands travel documents.

|                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| Box 1, Folder 1 | Art Class Student Register, 1949                                |
| Box 1, Folder 2 | Artists Equity Association Membership Card, 1951                |
| Box 1, Folder 3 | Bibliography on Max Beckmann, circa 1946                        |
| Box 1, Folder 4 | Customs Form for Pet Dog, 1954                                  |
| Box 1, Folder 5 | Exhibition Price Lists, 1947-1948                               |
| Box 1, Folder 6 | French Identification Cards for Max and Mathilde Beckmann, 1939 |
| Box 1, Folder 7 | Netherlands Travel Documents, 1947                              |

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## Series 2: Correspondence, 1922-1950

### 1 Linear foot (Boxes 1-2)

Scope and Contents: Correspondences includes letters with art schools, universities, museums and galleries regarding teaching positions, lectures, exhibitions and sales of artwork. There are also numerous letters from and telegrams to his wife Mathilde, affectionately referred to as "Quappi." Most of the correspondence is in German.

|                     |   |
|---------------------|---|
| Box 1, Folder 8     | <a href="#">Correspondence, 1922</a>                          |
| Box 1, Folder 9     | <a href="#">Correspondence, 1925 January - April, undated</a> |
| Box 1, Folder 10    | <a href="#">Correspondence, 1925 May - June</a>               |
| Box 1, Folder 11    | <a href="#">Correspondence, 1925 July</a>                     |
| Box 1, Folder 12    | <a href="#">Correspondence, 1925 August</a>                   |
| Box 1, Folder 13    | <a href="#">Correspondence, 1925 October - December</a>       |
| Box 1, Folder 14-16 | Correspondence, 1926-1929                                     |
| Box 1, Folder 17    | Correspondence, 1930-1932                                     |
| Box 1, Folder 18    | Correspondence, 1934-1935                                     |
| Box 1, Folder 19-20 | Correspondence, 1936-1939                                     |
| Box 1, Folder 21-23 | Correspondence, 1940-1941                                     |
| Box 1, Folder 24-25 | Correspondence, 1942  |
| Box 1, Folder 26    | Correspondence, 1943  |
| Box 1, Folder 27    | Correspondence, 1944-1945                                     |
| Box 1, Folder 28    | Correspondence, 1946  |
| Box 1, Folder 29-34 | Correspondence, 1947  |
| Box 1, Folder 35-39 | Correspondence, 1948  |
| Box 1, Folder 40-49 | Correspondence, 1949  |
| Box 2, Folder 1-6   | Correspondence, 1950  |
| Box 2, Folder 7     | Telegrams from Max Beckmann to Mathilde Beckmann, 1925-1929   |

Box 2, Folder 8

Telegrams from Max Beckmann to Mathilde Beckmann, 1930-1932

Box 2, Folder 9

Telegrams from Max Beckmann to Mathilde Beckmann, 1934-1939

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## Series 3: Printed Material, circa 1937-1950

### *4 Folders (Box 2)*

Scope and Contents: Printed material includes clippings about Max Beckmann, exhibition catalogs and announcements, blank postcards, and miscellany. Many of the clippings and catalogs are in German.

Arrangement: The printed material is grouped by document type.

|                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| Box 2, Folder 10 | Clippings, 1947-1949                             |
| Box 2, Folder 11 | Exhibition Catalogs and Announcements, 1941-1950 |
| Box 2, Folder 12 | Postcards, circa 1937-circa 1950                 |
| Box 2, Folder 13 | Miscellaneous, circa 1940-circa 1950             |

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## Series 4: Photographs, 1917-1950

### 7 Folders (Box 2)

**Scope and Contents:** Photographs are of Max Beckmann, family and friends, exhibition installations, and houses and studios in Germany. Most of the series consists of photographic prints, but there are also a few negatives. Many of the photographs have annotations on the verso written in German.

**Arrangement:** Photographs of Beckmann are at the beginning of the series. The rest of the photographs are arranged by subject.

|                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| Box 2, Folder 14 | Max Beckmann, 1917-1949                                |
| Box 2, Folder 15 | Max Beckmann Exhibition Installation, 1949             |
| Box 2, Folder 16 | Unidentified Exhibition Installation and Artwork, 1950 |
| Box 2, Folder 17 | Family and Friends, 1924-1950                          |
| Box 2, Folder 18 | Rudolf von Simolin, 1941                               |
| Box 2, Folder 19 | Berlin, Germany Studio Flat, circa 1943                |
| Box 2, Folder 20 | Frankfurt, Germany House, circa 1944                   |

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