



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

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

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Max Beckmann papers
Identifier:	AAA.beckmax
Date:	1917-1954
Extent:	1.4 Linear feet
Language:	The collection is in English, French and German.
Summary:	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.

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.

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.

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.

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)

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.
Beckmann, Max, 1884-1950

Occupations:

Painters -- Germany

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	Correspondence, 1922
Box 1, Folder 9-13	Correspondence, 1925
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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