R. B. Beckett English artist research files: Finding Aid

Finding aid prepared by Diann Benti.
The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens
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Overview of the Collection
Title: R. B. Beckett English artist research files
Dates (inclusive): approximately 1880s-1967
Bulk dates: late 1940s-early 1960s
Collection Number: mssBeckett
Creator: Beckett, R. B. (Ronald Brymer), 1891-1970
Extent: 6.5 linear feet (16 boxes)
Repository: The Huntington Library, Art Collections, and Botanical Gardens. Manuscripts Department
1151 Oxford Road
San Marino, California 91108
Phone: (626) 405-2129
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URL: http://www.huntington.org
Abstract: This collection contains research files of English art historian R. B. Beckett (1891-1970), chiefly consisting of study photographs collected from the late 1940s to early 1960s documenting the works of John Constable and other English artists.
Language: English.
Access
Open to qualified researchers by prior application through the Reader Services Department. For more information, contact Reader Services.
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Preferred Citation
Provenance
Biographical Note
Ronald Brymer Beckett (1891-1970) was an art historian and English administrator in India. Beckett was born in Yorkshire, England, on January 17, 1891, and studied at Lincoln College, Oxford, before joining the Indian Civil Service and serving in India until returning to England in 1917. In England, he joined the Middle Temple before returning to India in 1918, where he served as city magistrate of Amritsar before being transferred to other government positions. In 1946, Beckett retired from service in India and moved back to England where he studied English artists and published catalogues of the works of William Hogarth (1949) and Peter Lely (1951) and the edited correspondence of John Constable (London : H.M.S.O., 1962-1975), as well as Constable and the Fishers: the Record of a Friendship (1952). Beckett died on December 1, 1970.
Bibliography
Scope and Content
This collection contains research files of English art historian R. B. Beckett, chiefly consisting of study photographs and clippings collected from the late 1940s to early 1960s documenting the works of John Constable and other English artists including William Blake, Thomas Gainsborough, Thomas Rowlandson, J. M. W. Turner, and Richard Wilson. In addition there are also images and clippings related to English portraiture, as well as sporting and comic images. The artist research files contain study art photographs and clippings, with some occasional correspondence and notes by Beckett. Six artists (Blake, Constable, Gainsborough, Rowlandson, Turner, and Wilson) are distinguished as their own subseries, and their files typically contain study photographs, article clippings, some scattered manuscripts and correspondence, and exhibition catalogues. The largest of these are the John Constable files (Boxes 3-10), which includes seven boxes of study images organized into four groups: by county; by year; by subject; and portraits. Other art images in the collection are arranged either in the "Artists (various)" subseries (Box 13) or in the "Portrait artists" subseries (Boxes 14-15). In some cases, there may be images of works by the same artist in both of these subseries.
The files generally retain Beckett's presumed original order, though some miscellaneous and loose images were reintegrated with similar images or included in various folders of "miscellaneous" materials. While some of the images are professional photographs acquired from museums, most of the images are clippings from British magazines such as The Connoisseur and Burlington. Most of the images are not annotated or only contain brief handwritten identifications typically of the artist, painting title, date, dimensions, etc.

Overall there are very few manuscripts by Beckett in the collection. Exceptions consist of a sketchbook from the late 1920s containing pencil sketches of landscapes by Beckett and a few documents. The correspondence is chiefly from galleries, museums, and publishers related to Beckett's research and publications. Copies of seven published articles, chiefly related to Constable, by Beckett are included in Box 1, Folder 3.

Within the collection there are also approximately 60 exhibition catalogs. Those related to Blake, Constable, Gainsborough, Rowlandson, Turner, and Wilson are filed within their subseries; approximately 15 additional miscellaneous exhibition catalogs are housed in box 16. The collection also includes ten travel maps for English areas (Box 1, Folders 5-6) and 5 printed volumes:

- Charles Holme, ed. Modern Etching and Engraving (London: Offices of "The Studio", 1902) (Box 16, Folder 7)
- Charles Holme, ed. Modern Pen and Drawings: European and American (London: Offices of "The Studio", 1901) (Box 16, Folder 6)
- Ralph Nevill. Old Sporting Prints (London: The Connoisseur Magazine, 1908) (Box 16, Folder 2)

Arrangement

The collection is arranged in the following series:

- Beckett documents and travel ephemera (Box 1)
  Sketchbook
  Miscellaneous correspondence and documents
  Published articles by Beckett
  Travel maps and ephemera
- Artist research files (Boxes 2-16)
  William Blake (Box 2)
  John Constable (Box 3-10)
  Thomas Gainsborough (Box 11, Folders 1-4)
  Thomas Rowlandson (Box 11, Folders 5-9)
  J. M. W. Turner (Box 12, Folders 1-6)
  Richard Wilson (Box 12, Folders 7-11)
  Artists (various) (Box 13)
  Portrait artists (Boxes 14-15)
  Sporting and comic images (Box 16, Folders 1-2)
  Exhibition catalogs and misc. printed volumes (Box 16, Folders 3-7)

Indexing Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Huntington Library's Online Catalog.

Subjects

Blake, William, 1757-1827.
Blake, William, 1757-1827 -- Exhibitions.
Constable, John, 1776-1837.
Constable, John, 1776-1837 -- Exhibitions.
Gainsborough, Thomas, 1727-1788.
Reynolds, Joshua, Sir, 1723-1792.
Rowlandson, Thomas, 1756-1827.
Art, English.
Portrait painting, British.

**Forms/Genres**
Exhibition catalogs -- Great Britain -- 20th century.
Letters (correspondence) -- Great Britain -- 20th century.
Photographs -- Great Britain -- 20th century.

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**Box 1**  
**Beckett documents and travel ephemera**

**Folder 1**  
**Sketchbook. 1927-1928**
Small sketchbook with approximately 20 drawings chiefly of landscapes, mainly in pencil with two watercolors.

**Folder 2**  
**Miscellaneous correspondence and documents [10 items]. 1944-1967**

**Folder 3**  
**Published articles by Beckett. 1947-1959**
Consists of 7 clipped articles and 2 reprints of published articles from periodicals by R.B. Beckett, chiefly related to John Constable.
- "" Kilgarran Castle" A link between Turner and Wilson." Connoisseur, CXX, no. 505 (September 1947)
- "Notes on Greenhill." Burlington, XCII, no. 571 (October 1950)
- "Constable's Honeymoon." Connoisseur, CXXIX, No. 525 (March 1952)
- "Constable at Leydenhall." Burlington, XCVI, no. 598 (April 1952)
- "Constable as an Illustrator." Connoisseur (October 1954)
- "Notes on Old Drawings and Modern Drawings: Constable's Early Drawings," reprinted from The Art Quarterly (Winter 1954) [2 copies]
- "Constable in the Lake District." Country Life (March 10, 1955)
- "Constable's 'Salisbury Cathedral from the Bishop's Grounds'" reprinted from The Art Quarterly (Summer 1957) [2 copies]
- "Constable at Malvern Hall." The Connoisseur Yearbook, 1959

**Folder 4**  
**Travel ephemera.**
Consists of ten miscellaneous pieces of travel ephemera presumably collected while Beckett was doing field research in England, chiefly in the 1950s.

**Folder 5**  
**Maps "About Britain."**
Wessex: About Britain No. 2 [with second cover]. 1951  
Home Counties: About Britain No. 3. 1951  
The Lakes to Tyneside: About Britain No. 10. 1951

**Folder 6**  
**Maps of Dorset, Bournemouth, etc.**
Johnston's New 2 miles to 1 inch map : Bournemouth Sheet.

**Folder 7**  
**Maps of London and environs.**
Bacon's Map of the Environ of London, S.E., for Cyclists & Tourists.  
Bacon's New Large-Scale Map of South London and Suburbs.  
"Geographia" Large Scale Street Plan of Central London.
Beckett documents and travel ephemera

**W.H. Smith & Son's Maps of London and its Environs. Approximately 1883?**

**Artist research files**

**Box 2**

**William Blake**

Folder 1  
Correspondence about William Blake [10 items]. 1947, 1952-1953

Folder 2  
Articles [newspaper/periodical clippings]. 1952-1957 and undated

Folder 3  
Exhibition catalogs and pamphlets. 1913-1947
    Laid in: fragment (page 3) of typescript text by Archibald G.B. Russell.

Folder 4  
Exhibition catalogs and pamphlets. 1948-1953 and updated
  - Christie, Manson & Woods. *Catalogue of original works by William Blake, the property of the late Graham Robertson, Esq.* 1949
  - Fogg Art Museum. *Blake’s Illustrations for Dante : selections from the originals in the National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne, Australia and the Fogg Art Museum, Cambridge, Massachusetts* [Fogg Picture Book No. 2] 1953
  - “Beatrice addressing Dante from the Car, William Blake 1757-1827” [fragment of pamphlet]. Undated
  - “The Simoniac Pope, William Blake 1757-1827” [fragment of pamphlet]. Undated

Folder 5  
Images by date: 1773-1799.

Folder 6  
Images by date: 1800-1809.

Folder 7  
Images by date: 1820-1827.

Folder 8  
Images by date: undated.

Folder 9  
Images and notes related to Dante.

Folder 10  
Images related to Job.

Folder 11  
Images and notes related to Milton.

**John Constable**

**Box 3**

**Documents and exhibition catalogs, reprints, etc. 1929-1962**

Folder 1  
Correspondence about Constable [approximately 30 items]. 1951-1967
  - Related Material
  - Some correspondence is also integrated into the image files.

Folder 2  
Notes and lists of Constable’s work.
  - Various notes and lists of Constable's work, as well as a set of handwritten indexes reflecting the general filing organization of the Constable study photos, presumably created by Beckett.

Folder 3  
Exhibition catalogs. 1929-1946
Albert Hall & Art Gallery, Colchester. *Exhibition of Collection of Paintings and Drawings by John Constable, R.A. (1776-1837)*, the property of Cecil B. Morgan ... September 1929

Tate Gallery, Millbank. *Centenary Exhibition of Paintings and Water-Colours by John Constable, R.A. (1776-1837).* May 4-August 31, 1937


**Folder 4**

Exhibition catalogs. 1949-1954

- Arts Council of Great Britain. *An Exhibition of Sketches & Drawings by John Constable from the Collection of Dr. H.A.C. Gregory, M.C.* 1949
- Victoria & Albert Museum. *Constable.* 1950
- Guildhall Art Gallery. *Exhibition of paintings by John Constable, 1776-1837.* July 8-August 30, 1952
- [Legatt Brothers]. *Summer Exhibition, Coronation Year.* 1953
- P. & D. Conaghi & Co. *Paintings by Old masters.* April 1954

**Folder 5**

Exhibition catalogs and reprints. 1956-1962

- City of Manchester Art Gallery. *John Constable, 1776-1837.* April 26-June 3, 1956
- Legatt Brothers. 1956 *Summer Exhibition of English Pictures including the Collection of H. L. Fison, Esq.* 1956

**Box 4**

Images by county, Berkshire-Essex

Folder 1 Berkshire: East Berkshire.
Folder 2 Berkshire: West Berkshire.
Folder 3 Berkshire: Windsor.
Folder 4 Buckinghamshire: Stokes Poges.
Folder 5 Cumberland: Borrowdale, Keswick, etc.
Folder 6 Dorset: Gillingham, Osmington, Osmington Mills, Preston, Portland Harbour, Weymouth Bay.
Folder 7 Essex.
Folder 8 Essex: East Anglia.

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**R. B. Beckett English artist research files: Finding Aid**
Folder 9  Essex: Colchester.
Folder 10 Essex: Dedham.
Folder 11 Essex: Hadleigh Castle.
Folder 12 Essex: Harwich, Kelveden, Langham, Mistley.
Folder 13 Essex: Valley Views.
Folder 14 Essex: Walton and Wivenhoe.
Box 5 Images by county, Hampshire-Oxford
Box 6 Images by county, Suffolk
Box 7 Images by county, Sussex-Worcestershire
Box 8 Images by year
Box 9 Images by subject

R. B. Beckett English artist
research files: Finding Aid
mssBeckett
## Artist research files

### John Constable

| Folder 5 | Illustrations.  
| Folder 6 | Mountains, Rocks, Plants, Rivers and Ponds.  
| Folder 7 | Religious and Histories.  
| Folder 8 | Roads.  
| Folder 9 | Seascapes, coastal.  
| Folder 10 | Sky and Earth, Cloud Studies.  
| Folder 11 | Trees.  
| Folder 12 | Valleys and Woods.  
| Folder 13 | Windmills.  
| Folder 14 | Miscellaneous.  
| Folder 15 | Copies.  

**Box 10**

**Portraits**

| Folder 1 | Figure studies, nudes.  
| Folder 2 | Portraits of children.  
| Folder 3 | Portraits of men.  
| Folder 4 | Portraits of women.  
| Folder 5 | Portraits of groups.  

**Box 11**

**Thomas Gainsborough**

| Folder 1 | Articles [newspaper clippings].  
| 3 items.  
| Folder 2 | Exhibition catalogs. 1949, 1953


| Folder 3 | Images: landscapes, etc.  
| Folder 4 | Images: portraits and figures.  

**Box 11**

**Thomas Rowlandson**

| Folder 5 | Correspondence and notes related to Thomas Rowlandson [approximately 10 items].

- Includes 1923 letter from Charles Sessler to Henry Huntington regarding an edition of Rowlandson’s *English Dance of Death*; two copies of a 1938 inventory of the Rowlandson prints and watercolors held by Charles D. Childs (“from the private collection of Ronald A. Reader”); and some additional notes.

| Folder 6 | Draft of catalog [3 notebooks].

- Three spiral notebooks with penciled text. Handwritten cover titles:
  - Rowlandson. 284 Drawings Vol. I
  - Rowlandson 284 drawings, Vol. II; Cries of London; Costume
  - III. 1. Cries of London (unpublished) (Rowlandson IV); 2. Johnny Quaegenus [most of this notebook is blank]

| Folder 7 | Thomas Rowlandson (1756-1827), Record of a tour in a post chaise, made with Henry Wigstead to Spithead, in 1782. (In two volumes.) [typescript draft with handwritten annotations, 21 pages].

| Folder 8 | W. Combe’s *The Dance of Death* [2 copies of typescript list, each 34 pages].

| Folder 9 | Images.  

**Box 12**

**J. M. W. Turner**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Folder</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Correspondence and notes about J. M. W. Turner. 1962-1963 and undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10 items chiefly related to the oil painting My Kilgarren Castle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>&quot;Kilgarren Castle by J. M. W. Turner, R.A. (1775-1851)&quot; [typescript article].</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Undated [after 1947]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Articles (newspaper clippings, etc.). 1951-1956 and undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>19 items</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Exhibition catalogs. 1931-1963</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National Gallery, Millbank. Exhibition of Turner's Early Oil-Paintings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1796-1815). July to September 1931</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>British Council. Turner, 1775-1851, exposition de peintures organisée par la</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tate Gallery pour le British Council et le Ministere de l'Instruction Publique de Belgique. March-April 1948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tate Gallery. The Turner Collection from Petworth. May-July 1951</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>exhibition of pictures from public and private Collections in Great Britain.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>February 5-March 15, 1953</td>
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<td></td>
<td>John Herron Art Museum (Indianapolis). Turner in America : oils, water colors,</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>drawings and some engraved works of Joseph Mallord William Turner, English,</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1775-1851. November 12-December. 25, 1955</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Art Gallery, University of Notre Dame (Notre Dame, Indiana). Turner in</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Indiana : pencil sketches, watercolor drawings and some oils and engraved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>works of Joseph Mallord William Turner, R.A., P.P., 1775-1851. February 3-24,</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1963.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lane, Offices of “The Studio”). 1903</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 printed volume, lacking cover.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Images.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Box 12</td>
<td>Richard Wilson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Articles [clippings]. 1923, 1941-1954, and undated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12 items</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Exhibition catalogs. 1925, 1936, 1948-1951</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National Gallery, Millbank. Catalogue : Loan exhibition of works by Richard</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wilson. June 26 to September 30, 1925</td>
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<td></td>
<td>City of Manchester Art Gallery. Richard Wilson Loan Exhibition. October 22 to</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>December 5, 1925</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ferns Art Gallery (City and County of Kingston Upon Hull). Exhibition of Works</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>by Richard Wilson, R.A. November-December 1936</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>City Museum &amp; Art Gallery, Birmingham. Catalogue of Pictures by Richard</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wilson and his Circle. November 17-January 9, 1948-9</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tate Gallery. Catalogue of an Exhibition of Pictures by Richard Wilson and his</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Circle, organized by the City Museum and Art Gallery, Birmingham. January</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1949</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>J. A. Tooth's Galleries. Catalogue of an Important Exhibition of Pictures by</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Richard Wilson, Gaspard Poussin, Jacob Ruysdael, Salvator Rosa, etc. May 1951</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Images: English and other landscapes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Images: Italian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Images: Portraits and figures</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Artists (various)

Study photographs, clippings, etc. for a large number of English artists arranged by surname. Rarely, the images are accompanied by typescript or handwritten notes, as in the cases of Henry Alken (1785-1851), Samuel Howitt (1756/7-1822), and Samuel Scott (1702-1772).

Portrait artists

Clippings, study images, etc. for various artists arranged by surname. Rarely, the images are accompanied by typescript or handwritten notes, as in the cases of Godfrey Kneller.

17th century and earlier, artists A-K
17th century and earlier, artists L-Z
17th century and earlier, artists unidentified and miscellaneous
18th-early 19th century, artists A-D
18th-early 19th century, artists E-H
18th-early 19th century, artists J-P
18th-early 19th century, artists R (except Reynolds)
18th-early 19th century, Joshua Reynolds
18th-early 19th century, artists S-Z
18th-early 19th century, artists unidentified and miscellaneous
Victorian-Edwardian, artists A-F
Victorian-Edwardian, artists G-L
Victorian-Edwardian, artists M-P
Victorian-Edwardian, artists R-Z and unidentified
20th century miscellaneous
Articles (clippings) about Shakespeare portraits. 1906-1913
Articles (clippings) about miniature portraits 1907-1913
Miniatures
Silhouettes

Sporting and comic images

Includes catalog: National Gallery of British Sports and Pastimes ... List of Sports and Pastimes (Hutchinson House, undated)

1 printed volume, lacking cover.

Exhibition catalogs and misc. printed volumes 1941-1963 and undated

Exhibition catalogs. 1941-1953
Arrangement
Exhibition catalogs are arranged chronologically.

Arts Council of Great Britain. An Exhibition of Some Masterpieces from Welsh Houses: Illustrated Catalogue. 1946
Arts Council of Great Britain. *An Exhibition of Paintings by Jack B. Yeats, The Tate Gallery*. August 14-September 15, 1948
California Palace of the Legion of Honor. *After the Hunt* -- *And After* [related to William Harnett exhibit]. [1948?]
Arts Council. *An Exhibition of Watercolours and Drawings by John Harden*. 1951

Folder 4
**Exhibition catalogs. 1954-1963 and undated**

*Rutland Gallery. Aspects of British Marine Painting. March-April 1963*
*Brighton Art Gallery. Exhibition of Pictures from the Collection of James H. Bingham, Esq.* [Undated]
*Walker's Galleries. Walker's Quarterly : John Sell Cotman (The Bulwer Collection) / by C. F. Bell. (Nos. 19-20).* [Undated]

Folder 5
Miscellaneous clipped articles about art.

Folder 6
*Charles Holme, ed. Modern Pen and Drawings: European and American (London: Offices of "The Studio"). 1901*

1 printed volume, lacking cover.

Folder 7
*Charles Holme, ed. Modern Etching and Engraving (London: Offices of "The Studio"). 1902*

1 printed volume, lacking cover.