

Aubrey Beardsley:

An Inventory of His Collection at the Harry Ransom Center

Descriptive Summary

Creator	Beardsley, Aubrey, 1872-1898
Title	Aubrey Beardsley Collection
Dates:	1893-1959
Extent	2 boxes
Abstract	Beardsley, an accomplished illustrator despite his short life, inspired a great number of letters. The collection is composed almost exclusively of correspondence. Letters from Beardsley to his patron, André Raffalovich, make up about one-third of the collection while letters from scholar Rainforth Walker to Beardsley collector Dr. Adolphe Severn round out the collection.
Call Number:	Manuscript Collection MS-00287
Language:	English
Access	Open for Research

Administrative Information

Acquisition	Purchase, 1964
Processed by	Deb Shelby, 1994; Bob Taylor, 1997
Repository:	Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin

Biographical Sketch

Aubrey Vincent Beardsley was born in Brighton on 21 August 1872 and early showed artistic ability, acting and playing in concerts with his sister Mabel and producing drawings of recognized merit. The Beardsley family's means were modest, and by 1888 Aubrey had quit school to work as a clerk. At the age of nineteen Aubrey Beardsley embarked on a career as an illustrator, and with the encouragement of Pierre Puvis de Chavannes in France and Joseph Pennell in England he quickly made a name for himself. His fame was ensured with the publication of the Dent edition of Malory's *Le Morte Darthur* in 1892, and by the following year the "Beardsley boom" was in full flower.

In 1894 Beardsley became the art editor of *The Yellow Book* under the general editorship of Oscar Wilde, but his advancing tuberculosis and Wilde's arrest put an end to that satirical periodical before 1895 was out. Beardsley's increasingly poor health forced his move from health resort to health resort, but under the patronage of André Raffalovich he continued, despite severe difficulties, to produce his drawings. In 1896 alone he created numerous illustrations for *The Savoy*, *The Rape of the Lock*, and *Lysistrata*.

During 1897 Aubrey Beardsley's health continued to decline as serious work became increasingly difficult and his creative output dwindled. His death occurred at Menton, France, on 16 March 1898.

Adolphe Gladstone Millott Severn was a British physician as well as a student and collector of Beardsley.

Scope and Contents

The Aubrey Beardsley materials comprise a large group of letters Beardsley wrote to his patron André Raffalovich and others between 1893 and Beardsley's death in 1898, together with a larger body of letters art scholar R. A. Walker wrote to Beardsley collector A. G. M. Severn between 1943 and 1959.

The Beardsley letters to Raffalovich represent virtually the entirety of those transcribed in *The Letters of Aubrey Beardsley*; the correspondence with others number fewer than ten pieces.

The Walker-Severn correspondence deals broadly with Beardsley as an artist and as a subject of collector interest with an occasional aside on the personal lives of the two correspondents.

Series Descriptions

Series I. Beardsley correspondence, 1893-1898 (1 box)

The 165 letters Beardsley wrote to André Raffalovich in the last three years of the artist's life form the core of the series. In these Beardsley discusses his work, health, social life, and religious beliefs. The artist's appreciation of Raffalovich's financial and moral assistance is regularly expressed.

Other recipients of Beardsley's correspondents include T. Dove Keighley, David Nutt, and Leonard Smithers. These men are represented by a half-dozen letters of the years 1893 to 1897 dealing with business matters.

Series II. Severn materials, 1897-1959 (1 box)

A shared interest in the art and person of Aubrey Beardsley was the basis of Dr. Severn's extensive correspondence with Rainforth Walker. The 250-odd letters Walker wrote Severn comprise the majority of the correspondence in the series, supplemented by a small number of letters Severn received from others in the years 1942-52. Also included are a number of third party letters dating from 1908 to 1951 written by Ellen Beardsley, Frederick H. Evans, Robert Ross and others.

The miscellaneous materials present in the series relate to Beardsley and were probably separated from Walker's correspondence to Severn. Included are clippings, dealers' lists, photographic prints and negatives, wax seal impressions, and notes.

Index Terms

Correspondents

Beardsley, Aubrey, 1872-1898.

Evans, Frederick H.

Haworth, Richard.

Muir, Percy H. (Percy Horace), 1894-1979.

Symons, A. J. A. (Alphonse James Albert), 1900-1941.

Walker, R. A. (Rainforth Armitage), 1886-1960.

Subjects

Artists--Great Britain.

English Literature--19th century.

Raffalovich, André--1864-1934.

Series I. Beardsley correspondence, 1893-1898

To André Raffalovich

box 1 folder 1-4

To others

folder 5

Series II. Severn materials, 1897-1959

Correspondence

From various to Severn, 1942-52

box 2 folder 1

From R. A. Walker to Severn, 1943-59

**folder
2-8**

Third parties, 1908-51

folder 9

Miscellaneous materials, 1897-1953

**folder
10**

Aubrey Beardsley collection--Index of Correspondents

- Beardsley, Aubrey, 1872-1898--1.1-5
- Beardsley, Ellen Agnus Pitt--2.9
- Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts (Great Britain) (Joan Rogers)--2.1
- Dash, Lilian C.--2.1
- Evans, Frederick H.--2.9
- Gallatin, Albert Eugene--2.1
- Gannon, Patricio--2.9
- Hatchards (Firm)--2.1
- Haworth, Richard--2.1
- Lambart, Enid--2.1
- Maggs Bros.--2.1
- Muir, Percy H. (Percy Horace), 1894-1979--2.1
- Roland, Browse, and Delbanco--2.1
- Ross, Robert Baldwin, 1869-1918--2.9
- Smyth, W. R.--2.1
- Sotheby & Co. (London, England)--2.1
- Symons, A. J. A. (Alphonse James Albert), 1900-1941--2.9
- Walker, R. A. (Rainforth Armitage), 1886- --2.2-8