

Alvin Langdon Coburn:

An Inventory of His Collection at the Harry Ransom Center

Descriptive Summary

Creator:	Coburn, Alvin Langdon, 1882-1966
Title:	Alvin Langdon Coburn Collection,
Dates:	circa 1904-1963 (bulk 1904-1913)
Extent:	58 items in 6 boxes
Abstract:	This collection consists of 58 photographs (photogravures and gelatin silver prints) by Alvin Langdon Coburn (British, 1882-1966). Included are 34 proof copies of photogravures (complete set, including 1 duplicate) for <i>Men of Mark</i> (New York: M. Kennerley, 1913) (964:0065:0001-0034).
Call Number:	Photography Collection PH-00018
Language:	No linguistic materials
Access:	Open for research

Administrative Information

Acquisition:	Purchases, 1964-66
Processed by:	Susan McClellan, 2000
Repository:	Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin

Scope and Contents

Alvin Langdon Coburn was born in Boston in 1882, and his interest in photography began eight years later. In addition to being a founding member of the Photo-Secession in 1902, he became a member of the Linked Ring in 1903. He was also associated with Wyndham Lewis and the Vorticist group in 1917 and 1918. Having emigrated to England in 1912, he became a naturalized British citizen in 1932. He died in Colwyn Bay, Wales in 1966. He is known for the pictorial effects he achieved in his portraits and views, thus helping to confirm the medium's place as an art form.

The collection is subdivided into three lots: I. Portraits from *Men of Mark*, 1904-1913 (34 items), II. Loose Prints (subdivided into portraits, views, abstract), 1904-1950, n.d. (16 items), and III. Portraits of Helmut Gernsheim, 1963 (8 items). The items in the first lot make up a complete set, including one duplicate, of signed and mounted proof prints of photogravures produced by Coburn himself (cf. Gernsheim Inventory #6) for his *Men of Mark* series, published London: Duckworth & Co., 1913. Two printed advertisements for this series are included with these items. The subjects are mainly British and Irish authors and artists, such as G.K. Chesterton, H.G. Wells, and G. Bernard Shaw. Among the six portraits of Americans are Henry James, Mark Twain, and the photographer Clarence H. White. There are also portraits of two French artists, Auguste Rodin and Henri Matisse, as well as one of German sociologist Max Weber. The second lot contains six portraits, including one of Coburn himself by an unidentified photographer. There are also nine views and one abstract photograph. Among the views are scenes of Holland and Bavaria, Germany, as well as cityscapes of London and New York. The abstract photograph is one of Coburn's series of images which he called "vortographs."

The item list which follows gives the accession no., genre, title/description, date, format/process, dimensions in cm. and location of each item. Bracketed titles and dates have been taken either from Gernsheim Inventory #6 or from labels produced in-house. Two exceptions to this are the dates for the portraits of Moore (964:0428:0003) and Coburn, which have been estimated by the cataloger. Unless indicated otherwise, the photogravures are signed, mounted proof prints produced by Coburn himself. In the case of signed images, the dimensions include the border area in which the signature is located. The item list is followed by an index of names of the subjects of the portraits.

I. Portraits from Men of Mark, 1904-1913 (34 items)

964:0065:0001 Portrait. G. Bernard Shaw (bust; shoulders oblique with face turned to right towards camera) [1904] Photogravure. 22.2 × 17.3 **Box**
1

964:0065:0002 Portrait. G. K. Chesterton (bust with right shoulder out of frame; front view; face slightly oblique) [1904] Photogravure. 22.2 × 17.4

964:0065:0003 Portrait. Andrew Lang (bust; oblique view) [1904] Photogravure. 22.5 × 17.6

964:0065:0004 Portrait. Frank Brangwyn (bust; oblique view; holding cup-like object in left hand) [1904] Photogravure. 22.2 × 17.4

964:0065:0005 Portrait. George Meredith (bust; almost full right profile) [1904] Photogravure. 22.7 × 17.1

964:0065:0006 Portrait. H. G. Wells (bust; slightly oblique view with face resting on left hand) [1905] Photogravure. 22.2 × 17.3

964:0065:0007 Portrait. Edward Carpenter (bust; front view; left hand extended, pointing to right with index finger) [1905] Photogravure. 23.1 × 17

964:0065:0008 Portrait. H. Granville Barker (bust; oblique view) [1906] Photogravure. 22.1 × 16.9

964:0065:0009 Portrait. A. Rodin (bust; slightly oblique view; in brimless black hat) [1906] Photogravure. 28.3 × 17.3

964:0065:0010 Portrait. Henry James (bust; right profile; left hand touching chin) [1906] Photogravure. 21.6 × 17.5

964:0065:0011 Portrait. Arthur Symons (bust; front view; holding chin with right hand) [1907] Photogravure. 22.8 × 16.9

964:0065:0012 Portrait. J. S. Sargent (bust with right shoulder outside of frame; front view) [1907] Photogravure. 22.3 × 16.9

964:0065:0013 Portrait. Charles Shannon (bust; left profile) [1907] Photogravure. 22.5 × 17.4 **Box**
2

964:0065:0014 Portrait. Theodore Roosevelt (bust with left shoulder out of frame; front view) [1907] Photogravure. 21.8 × 17.5

964:0065:0015 Portrait. William Orpen (bust; slightly oblique view) [1908] Photogravure. 22.2 × 17.7

964:0065:0016 Portrait. Max Beerbohm (full length; front view, in front of door with right hand on hip and left on doorknob) [1908] Photogravure. 22.1 × 17.5

964:0065:0017 Portrait. H. Belloc (bust; right profile) [1908] Photogravure. 22.1 × 17.1

964:0065:0018 Portrait. George Moore (full length; left side view, in front of window with curtains, leaning slightly over polished table; holding and examining object resembling dead bird) [1908] Photogravure. 23 × 17.6

964:0065:0019 Portrait. W. B. Yeats (bust; front view; lips slightly parted as if speaking) [1908] Photogravure. 22.6 × 17.4

964:0065:0020 Portrait. William Nicholson (bust; right profile) [1908] Photogravure. 22.1 × 17.3

964:0065:0021 Portrait. William De Morgan (bust; front view) [1908] Photogravure. 22.8 × 17.5

964:0065:0022 Portrait. Mark Twain (3/4 length; body slightly oblique with face in almost full right profile; right hand behind back, left slightly extended with cigar between index and middle fingers) [1908] Photogravure. 23 × 16.3

964:0065:0023-0024 Portraits. John Galsworthy (bust; front view) [1909] Photogravure. 22.1 × 17.3

964:0065:0025 Portrait. J. M. Barrie (bust; front view) [1909] Photogravure. 22.8 × 17

964:0065:0026 Portrait. Herbert Trench (bust; front view) [1910] Photogravure. 22.6 × 16.9

964:0065:0027 Portrait. W. D. Howells (bust; oblique view) [1910] Photogravure. 22.3 × 17.3 **Box**
3

964:0065:0028 Portrait. Max Weber (bust; shoulders forward, face oblique) [1911] Photogravure. 23.1 × 16.8

964:0065:0029 Portrait. Clarence H. White (bust; oblique view) [1912] Photogravure. 23.4 × 17.5

964:0065:0030 Portrait. John Masefield (bust; shoulders oblique, face turned towards camera) [1913] Photogravure. 22.4 × 17.5

964:0065:0031 Portrait. Arnold Bennett (bust; face slightly oblique) [1913] Photogravure. 22 × 16.7

964:0065:0032 Portrait. Roger Fry (bust; shoulders forward, face oblique) [1913] Photogravure. 21.9 × 17.2

964:0065:0033 Portrait. Robert Bridges [1844-1930] (bust; right profile) [1913]
Photogravure. 23.8 × 17.6

964:0065:0034 Portrait. Henri Matisse (3/4 length; front view; in smock with left elbow
resting on step of ladder, palette and brushes in left hand) [1913] Photogravure. 22.7 ×
18

II. Loose prints, 1904-ca. 1950, n.d. (16 items)

964:0428:0001 Portrait. [Semi-nude woman with vase] (left side view of a woman squatting before a large vase the top of which she is touching with her hands; there is a cloth draped over her legs and another wrapped around her head like a turban) [n.d.] **Box**
Photogravure. 10.4 × 12 4

964:0428:0002 Portrait. [Portrait of a young woman] (1/2 length; front view; light skin of face, neck, and right hand contrast sharply with dark clothing and background) [c. 1912] Photogravure. 14 × 10.7

964:0428:0003 Portrait. George Moore (different image from one in *Men of Mark*; bust; front view, face slightly oblique) [1908?] Photogravure. 22.5 × 17.3

964:0428:0004 Portrait. [George Meredith] (signed by the subject below image; same image as in *Men of Mark* but smaller print; bust; almost full right profile) [1904] Photogravure. 12.3 × 9.3

964:0428:0005 Portrait. Alfred Stieglitz (circular image; bust; right profile) 1905 Photogravure. 19.3 × 17.8

964:0428:0006 Portrait. [Alvin Langdon Coburn] (by unidentified photographer; 3/4 length; front view; face slightly oblique; wearing trappings of Freemasonry) [c. 1950] Gelatin silver print. 16.4 × 12

964:0429:0001 View (Cityscape) London Bridge (pedestrian and vehicular traffic on bridge, which bisects image diagonally; buildings visible on bank in background) 1905 Photogravure. 14.3 × 11.2

964:0429:0002 View (Marine) [River scene with boats in foreground] (sailboats with sails furled; trees and buildings visible on opposite bank) [n.d.] Photogravure. 19.9 × 24.7

964:0429:0003 View (Marine) [Rotterdam] (boats and their reflections in the water) [1908] **Box**
Photogravure. 32.2 × 40.7 5

964:0429:0004 View. Dinkelsbuhl, Bavaria (two peasants with ox-drawn cart coming through arched passageway in building with shuttered windows) 1908 Photogravure. 38.4 × 29.5

964:0429:0005 View. Roth, Bavaria (steeple and part of church roof seen in distance through two trees in foreground) 1908 Photogravure. 39.7 × 30

964:0429:0006 View (Townscape) [Isle of Machen] (view of town from field outside it; sky fills 2/3 of frame) [1908] Photogravure. 30 × 40.9

- 964:0429:0007 View (Cityscape) [St. Paul's Cathedral] (hazy scene with cathedral in upper left corner and a cloud of smoke in lower left corner; a street with traffic and blurry buildings visible in lower right corner) [1908] Photogravure. 40.8 × 30.4 **Box**
6
- 964:0429:0008 View (Landscape) [Bavarian landscape] (view of a field bordered by trees with what appears to be a figure in it; sky fills 2/3 of frame) [1908] Photogravure. 38.8 × 28.2
- 964:0430:0001 View (Cityscape) Singer Building (Noon) [on p. [1] of [4] p. printed advertisement for *New York*, published volume of 20 images of the city by Coburn] 1910 Photogravure. 11.3 × 3.6 (image, on leaf 28 × 21.3) **Box**
5
- 964:0431:0001 Abstract photograph. Vortograph (non-figurative image produced with an instrument composed of 3 mirrors put together in the form of a triangle) 1917 Gelatin silver print. 21.3 × 16.4 **Box**
4

III. Portraits of Helmut Gernsheim, 1963 (8 items)

966:0002:0001-0008 Portraits. [Helmut Gernsheim] (series of 8 poses, in coat and tie, seated with one or both elbows on polished table) 1963 Gelatin silver print. 22 × 14.2

Box
5

Alvin Langdon Coburn Collection--Subject Index

Title/Description--Accession No.

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