



British attacking a gunboat

Date

1849

Primary Maker

William Smyth

Medium

Oil on canvas

Description

The Beinecke Collection of the Lesser Antilles was originally assembled by Walter Beinecke, Jr., H1966. Although he did not graduate from Hamilton, Beinecke was devoted to the College. He

was elected to the Board of Trustees in 1960 and served as a life trustee, until his death in 2004. In the late 1960s, he was integral in the planning of Kirkland College, where he was also appointed a trustee. During the 1960s, Beinecke collected art and manuscripts pertaining to the colonial period of the Lesser Antilles, a group of islands in the Caribbean including the present-day US and British Virgin Islands, Trinidad and Tobago, Saint Kitts and Nevis, and Barbados. In 1971, he presented his collection to Hamilton College. The diversity of these islands caused by their disparate geological underpinnings, the geographic origins of the slaves brought to each island, the policies of their colonial rulers, and their locations along trade routes is reflected in the wealth of material in the Beinecke Collection. The collection contains many landscapes and views of the various islands along with maps, most of which were created in the service of European colonial powers. For example, John Herbert Caddy—who painted Kingston, St. Vincent (cat. no. 38)—began his military service in England and served as an engineer in the West Indies during two tours of duty with the Royal Artillery between 1828 and 1837. Before the popularization of photography, topographical drawing and painting were an important part of an engineer's training, used, in this case, to document the geographic features of the lands that encompassed the British Empire. European nations were often at war over these territories, as seen in William Smyth's *British Attacking a Gunboat* (opposite). Saint Vincent itself became a British colony in 1763, after many decades of French rule. Beginning in 1720, European colonists brought thousands of Africans there as slaves to cultivate sugarcane. Prior to its European occupation, the island had been the domain of the Carib people, who had resisted foreign attempts to settle the island and continued to do so under British rule, until the country was emancipated in 1833. Kingston, St. Vincent depicts the then-inchoate harbor town of Kingstown (as it is spelled today), which eventually became the capital, on the island's southwest coast. The Wellin Museum's holdings of nearly one hundred watercolors, oil paintings, and prints dating from 1675 to 1878 are complemented by manuscripts, rare books, and other archival materials also collected by Beinecke, now held in the Hamilton College Special Collections at Burke Library. (SOURCE: Alcauskas, INNOVATIVE APPROACHES, HONORED TRADITIONS, 2017) "Gunboat at anchor in cover under attack from eight longboats, puffs of smoke; two ships under sail in distance; two men under three palm trees, right foreground; barrels in water to viewer's left (starboard of ship); mountain in background." The island pictured is likely British-held based on the smaller attacking boats flying the Union Flag, which was flown on land and not by the British Navy, rather than the Union Jack. The gunboat is possibly French or Swedish.

Dimensions

Overall: 20 × 27 in. (50.8 × 68.6 cm) Frame: 24 × 31 × 2 1/8 in. (61 × 78.7 × 5.4 cm)