



## EXPLORE THE WILTON DIPTYCH

**Before you find out more about this painting, see what you can work out by looking closely.**

This artwork is painted on two panels, joined together with a hinge so they can open and close like a book.

Why might it have been made in this way?

What differences do you notice about the condition of the inside and the outside? Why might this be?

What materials have been used to make this painting?

Who do you think it was made for?

What is the relationship between the people in the left panel and the right?

Look at the backgrounds. Are they the same place?

What do you think this artwork is trying to tell us?

## CONTEXT

The Wilton Diptych is a hinged painting on oak boards. A diptych is a painting made of two pieces.

It was painted between 1395–1399 for King Richard II. We don't know for certain who made it. It is a donor portrait, a painting where the person pictured commissioned the artwork.

It is painted using egg tempera, coloured pigments mixed with egg yolk and water. This type of paint is very durable, and at this time was the most common type of painting material. The pigments used here, including gold and lapis lazuli (blue), were very expensive to buy. It is unusual for a medieval English painting to survive in such good condition.

King Richard lived from 1367–1400. Richard was only 10 years old when he became King in 1377. He looks very young in the Wilton Diptych, although he was around 30 years old when the painting was made.

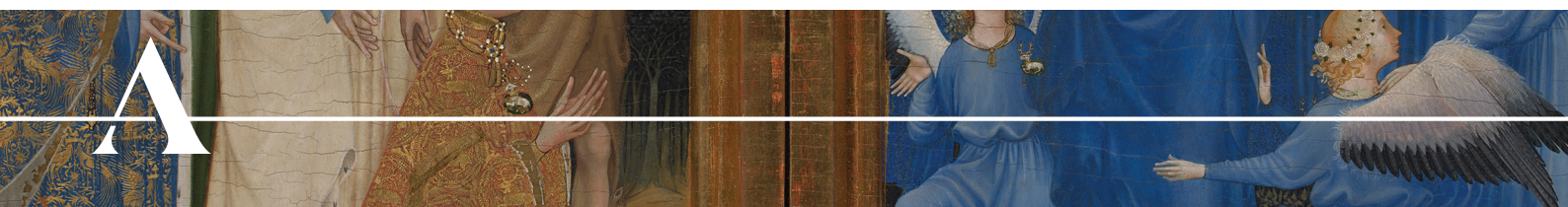
Richard's time as King was not easy. He became King after the Black Death swept across England in 1348, killing almost half the population. He ruled during the first widespread rebellion in England's history, the Peasants' Revolt of 1381.

Two years after the diptych was made, Richard was forced to abdicate in favour of his cousin, Henry IV. He died a year later aged 32.

King Richard II is painted opposite the Virgin and Child, who are surrounded by angels. The saints standing behind Richard are John the Baptist, Saint Edward the Confessor and Saint Edmund.

The angels are wearing badges showing a white deer, known as the white hart. This is Richard's personal symbol. Richard commissioned this artwork for his private and personal use, perhaps to remind himself that heaven was on his side.

He might have spent time with this painting in times of crisis, to find strength and confidence in himself as a King.







## WHAT NEXT?

### Precious and Portable

This artwork was designed to travel. Keeping important images close by is something we still do today. Some people wear a locket, store a special keepsake in their wallet, or choose an important image for their phone lock screen.

Write or draw some of the things you keep close to remind you what or who is important to you.

You could design your own folding artwork to contain some of these.

### Who's On Your Team?

The white hart was Richard's personal badge and had been the badge of Richard's first wife Anne of Bohemia.

It was also a pun on this name - a 'rich hart'. In the Wilton Diptych, the angels are wearing it to show they support him as ruler.

What image would you choose for your personal symbol?

Who would you want to wear it, to show they are on your side?

Explore the museum to find other objects used for personal worship and reflection:



Gallery 41 England 400-1600:  
Pilgrim Badges and  
cast 1270-1400, London  
(AN1988.397)

Depicting the shrine and  
martyrdom of Saint Thomas  
Becket and thought to  
provide personal protection.



Room 28 Asian Crossroads:  
Clay Pilgrims Tokens, Iraq,  
Kerbala (EA2002.25-31)

Made from clay collected  
near the shrine at Kerbala  
that commemorates  
martyrdom of Husain.



Room 32 India from 600:  
Tibetan Thangkas, mid 18th  
Century (EA1991.179)

Portable sacred scroll  
paintings, for travelling  
monk's own meditation as  
well as to spread Buddhism.