

Die Informationen des Rijksbureaus werden also auch nach 1995 unentgeltlich sein, sofern es sich um wissenschaftliche Zwecke handelt und die Inanspruchnahme der Mitarbeiter einen vertretbaren Zeitaufwand nicht übersteigt. Auch schriftliche Auskünfte werden in diesem Rahmen erteilt. Mitgliedsbeiträge und Stiftungen – die ja die Tradition des RKD begründet haben – sind jedoch selbstverständlich willkommen.

Für den Freundeskreis, der Mitglieder und Stifter vereint, wird demnächst dreimal jährlich das *RKD-Bulletin* erscheinen, das über weitere Aktivitäten des RKD informieren soll. Die sonstigen Publikationen des Instituts – wie die renommierte Fachzeitschrift *Oud Holland* – werden hiervon nicht berührt.

Es ist dem Institut und seinem derzeitigen Direktor, R. E. O. Ekkart, zu wünschen, daß seine Aktivitäten, in denen wissenschaftliche Ziele pragmatisch angesteuert werden, die internationale Resonanz finden, die ihnen selbstverständlich gebührt. Es könnte sich erweisen, daß die am RKD erarbeiteten Lösungen für verbreitete Probleme von Materialsammlungen und deren Auswertung als Modelle für ähnlich gelagerte Fragen an anderen Instituten dienen.

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Öffnungszeiten: Mo-Fr 10-12.30, 13.30-17 Uhr

Sibylle Appuhn-Radtke

Tagungen

THE WILTON DIPTYCH AND COURT ART IN THE REIGN OF RICHARD II
Symposium, London, The National Gallery, November 5-6, 1993

(with two illustrations)

In 1993 the National Gallery completed the cleaning and conservation of one of its most remarkable panel paintings, the Wilton Diptych, indisputably the most important survival of its type from the English court milieu, and also the most controversial. The panel, which shows King Richard II (1377-99) kneeling with his sponsors St John the Baptist, St Edward the Confessor and St Edmund before the Virgin and Child and an entourage of eleven angels bearing Richard's badge of the chained and couched White Hart, is undocumented, and there has been no agreement as to its date, authorship or exact purpose. The cleaning produced one significant discovery which has served to focus attention on its political sensibility. The standard held in the presence of Richard and the Virgin and Child has at the top of its staff an orb one centimetre in diameter which, when

cleaned, was revealed to show a minute view of an island, presumably England, set in a sea of silver leaf with a boat in full sail (*Abb. 1, 2a*). Shakespeare's play *Richard II* includes a speech by John of Gaunt, Richard's uncle, in which he refers to England as „this little world ... set in the silver sea“, a speech which celebrates one idea of national consciousness. It was this discovery, one of a number about the panel's technique and imagery, which offered the starting-point for a two-day symposium on the current state of research on this most beautiful and enigmatic work.

The symposium offered twenty papers, starting with contributions by Dr Dillian Gordon (who was responsible for the symposium and for an effective exhibition of the Diptych at the National Gallery with related works), and by Dr Ashok Roy of the Scientific Department, on the technique of the panel. Dr Gordon placed special emphasis on the imagery of the standard and globe as a sign of Richard's direct personal involvement in the panel's conception. She related it to a lost panel painting once in the English College in Rome, which showed Richard and his queen Anne of Bohemia kneeling before the Virgin Mary and offering her an orb symbolizing England as her dowry, the so-called *dos Mariae*. This indicates that the Diptych was not entirely unique.

The fact that the Diptych includes a sensitive portrait of Richard II, and has on its reverse Richard's arms and emblems to identify it when closed, has always tended to favour the idea that the panel was made for Richard before his death, perhaps in the mid 1390s. Dr Shelagh Mitchell argued in addition that the choice of saints represented on the panel reflected Richard's personal devotional preoccupations. The alternative view is that the panel was either a later copy, or was produced after Richard's deposition and alleged murder in 1399, perhaps for Henry V, who rehabilitated the king's memory. This view was explored controversially by Dr Sylvia Wright. If anything has sustained this interpretation, first put forward by Francis Wormald, it has been a certain native diffidence about the possibilities of English art in a European context, and a belief that England in the 1390s could not have produced anything so advanced stylistically. The symposium was in fact remarkably free of anxieties of this type, focussing its attention on the meaning and circumstances of the panel rather than upon its style, which remains isolated.

Two central papers were offered by Dr Maurice Keen and Dr Nigel Morgan. Both addressed the emblematic character of the panel and the idea that it was made in the mid or late 1390s. Dr Keen argued that though the panel did not have an exclusive context or meaning, the plans for a crusade in the 1390s bore at least partly upon its formation. Richard's collar of broomcods was thus a token of amity with France, and the imagery of Christ's Passion, Christ on the panel bearing a halo with the Crown of Thorns, and the standard, were related to the French order of the Banner associated with Philippe de Mezières, who sent a famous letter concerning the crusade to Richard II. Dr Morgan spoke about the standard from a liturgical perspective, discussing the way in which it appears to be blessed by Christ before being returned to Richard. His view that the standard

was in effect a national emblem was compatible with Dr Gordon's reading of the orb at its top, but Dr Morgan felt more inclined to see the standard in a militaristic context; for him the ensemble of the panel indicated a triumphalist approach by Richard towards the end of his reign. Themes of this type provided a focus for Dr Nigel Saul's historical contribution on Richard's life and notions of kingship, which convincingly explored his symbolic concerns, preoccupations with royal dignity and growing political isolation. Dr Morgan was also inclined to see the male saints on the panel as representations of Richard's older relatives Edward II, Edward III and Edward the Black Prince, his father, as it were acting out an epiphany before the Virgin and Child. Richard was born during the feast of the Epiphany, and this theme was explored further by Olga Pujmanová with reference to imperial Bohemian images of the Three Magi.

Other papers were related to issues of fashion, display and related media. Professor Jonathan Alexander outlined the evidence for the context and history of the great portrait of Richard II in Westminster Abbey, included in the exhibition. Celia Fisher discussed the plants and flowers represented on the panel, and Marian Campbell, Lisa Monnas and Kay Staniland presented papers on display at Richard's court, including goldsmith's work, textile production and the representation on the panel of luxury silks. They revealed the rich documentary sources available from the medieval wardrobe in this period. Dr Richard Marks discussed the patronage of stained glass at the Ricardian court and Dr Phillip Lindley presented on Richard's patronage of sculpture. David Park reported on the contemporary wall paintings in the Tower of London, and Dr Paul Binski reopened the question of limited Bohemian influence in the coronation order in the *Liber regalis* and related works, if not in the Diptych itself. Finally Professor Lucy Sandler presented a compelling paper on donor figures and contemporary illumination in the International Gothic period.

The symposium revealed the wealth and enthusiasm of current researches into this phase of English royal culture and art. It was not concerned with issues of style or large-scale architectural patronage, but penetrated instead into the emblematically rich environment of a troubled monarch whose political achievements were outshone by his legacy of art, small but brilliant as it is. Whether or not the symposium changed our perspective on the Wilton Diptych is debatable. The consensus was that the panel was produced in the mid 1390s for Richard and his immediate circle, by a painter deeply imbued with influences from Italy, France and the Netherlands. Whether or not he was English remains unresolved. One wonders if the old label „French School“ found on the Diptych's display case in the National Gallery will now be removed.

Paul Binski

See the useful and fully-documented accompanying volume edited by Dillian Gordon, *Making and Meaning: the Wilton Diptych*. The National Gallery, London 1993.



Abb. 1 Wilton Diptych, rechte Seite. London, National Gallery (Museum)

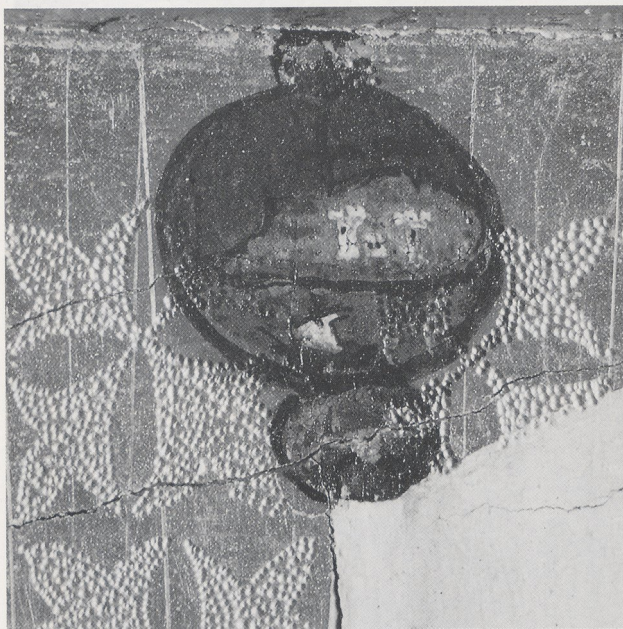


Abb. 2a Wilton Diptych, rechte Seite, Detail: Knauf der Fahnenstange (nach: Ausst. Kat. Making and Meaning: the Wilton Diptych, S. 38 Pl. 21)

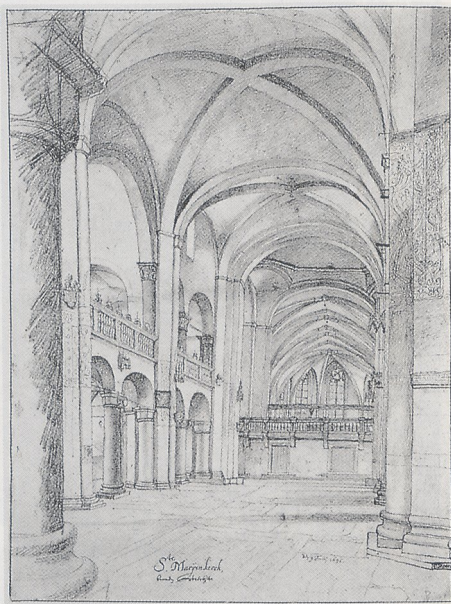
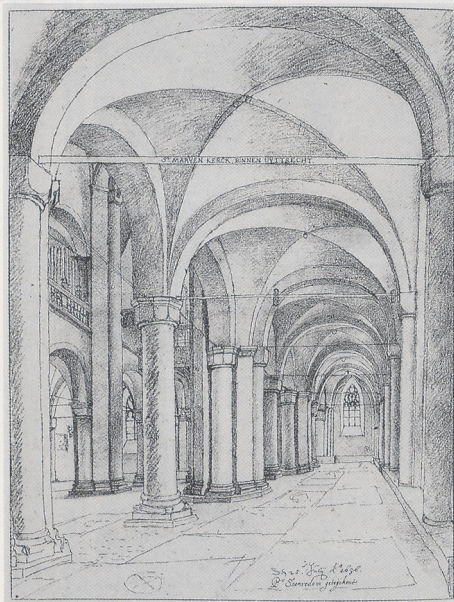


Abb. 2b und c Pieter Saenredam, Inneres der Utrechter Marienkirche. Zeichnungen (Juli 1636) in Edinburgh (Royal Scottish Academy) und Utrecht (Stadtarchiv) (nach: Gary Schwartz u. Marten Jan Bok, P. Saenredam. The Painter and His Time, Maarssen u. a. 1990, S. 138 und 144)