

The Parkville Frame Gallery Newsletter

2023 Newsletter #23-3 (May/Jun)

Note: To see our May/June “Top Picks”. [Click Here](#)

Subject: Diptychs, Triptychs, and Polyptychs



What English King is depicted kneeling in the *Wilton Diptych*, an extremely rare survival of a late medieval religious panel painting in England? (Answer below.) This **diptych** is on display in the National Gallery in London. What is a “diptych”? See more below.

How can a hinged diptych work for you? Your wedding pictures perhaps.

The painting: [The Crucifixion](#), is a **triptych** that was painted in the 1450's by Italian artist [Paolo Uccello](#). The original painting is located in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (The MET) in New York, City. Visit us in the gallery to see a framed reproduction of this triptych. We will be pleased to discuss the significance of this specific triptych, its “backstory”, so-to-speak. But, what exactly is a “triptych”? See below to learn more.



Finally, the **polyptych** known as [The Ghent Altarpiece](#) is the size of a barn door. It weighs more than an elephant, and is one of the most famous and coveted paintings in the world. How many times has this work of art been stolen? How did it end up in a salt mine in Germany? Who were [the Monuments Men](#)? Answers to these questions can be found in the book by Lynn Nicholas: [The Rape of Europa](#), and in the movie: *The Monuments Men* (available on DVD).

As a term used in connection with art, a *diptych* is an artwork consisting of “two” pieces or panels that together create one single display. The two pieces can be attached together, with a hinge for example, or presented adjoining each other. In medieval times diptychs used as altarpieces were often hinged so that they could be closed protecting the artwork from potential damage from bright light, human contact, smoke from candles, etc. King Richard II is shown kneeling in [the Wilton Diptych](#) above.

A *triptych* is defined as an artwork made up of “three” pieces or panels. The triptych is also used to split a single piece of art into three, or to combine three pieces into one. Triptychs made their appearance in the Middle Ages as altarpieces in churches. They presented visual stories from the bible to a largely illiterate congregation.

A *polyptych* displays more than three images, sometimes many more as seen in [The Beaune Altarpiece](#) (The Last Judgement) which was created by Netherlandish artist Rogier van der Weyden. It was originally commissioned in 1443 and completed in 1451. The Beaune Altarpiece is a large polyptych painted in oil on oak panels. It consists of fifteen paintings on nine panels. Six panels are hinged and painted on both sides. It retains some of its original frames which is unusual for any work of art this old. It hung as an altarpiece in The Hospices de Beaune, a hospital in Beaune France, a place where people usually went to die (and face the last judgement, which they understood).



The Beaune Altarpiece (1445-1450)

A polyptych, also known as *The Last Judgement*

Rogier van der Wyden

How might a diptych, a triptych, or a polyptych work for you? Family pictures perhaps?

As always, we welcome your comments, questions, and suggestions. Please call the gallery at (816) 326-7949, visit us on our web site: parkvilleframegallery.com, or stop by the gallery to see many examples of our work, both past and present. Let's discuss your ideas and make them become a reality.

You can contact our [Art Advisor](#) at: theartadvisorpfg@gmail.com