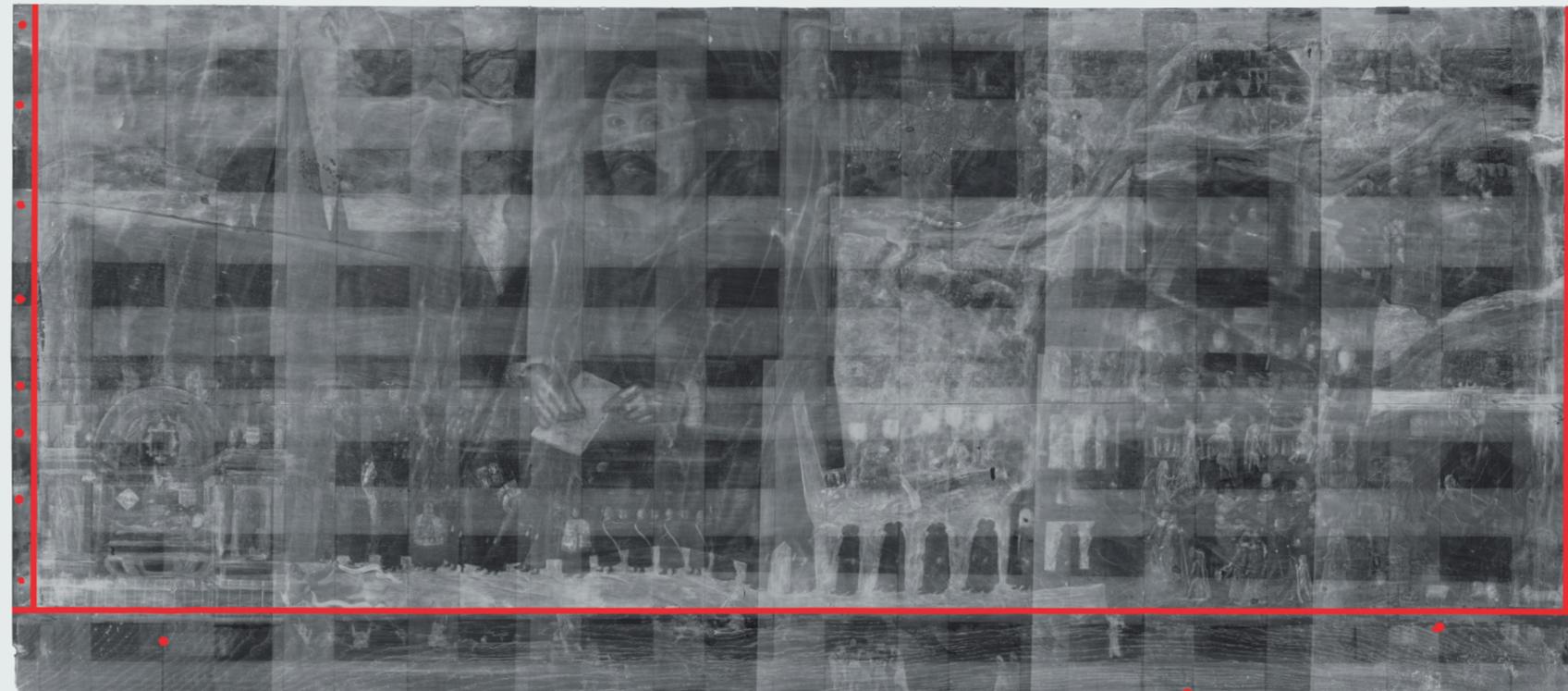


Sir Henry Unton

This highly unusual portrait was commissioned by Sir Henry Unton's wife, Dorothy Wroughton, following his death in France whilst serving as ambassador. Unton is depicted flanked by Fame and Death, wearing a cameo with a portrait of the French king, Henry IV. He is also shown on a smaller scale throughout the composition in a number of scenes from his life, and in each, his figure is touched by a golden ray from the sun.

This painting is featured in a new volume of essays, *Painting in Britain 1500–1630* (published September 2015), published by the British Academy.



'Making Art in Tudor Britain'

Technical analysis undertaken as part of the Gallery's 'Making Art in Tudor Britain' project has revealed new information about the construction of this unusual painting. The panel is made from three wooden boards, the top two of which are probably walnut, and the lower of which is probably oak. The variation in the wood indicates that the painting has been extended at a slightly later date. X-radiography reveals that the edges of the upper boards were unpainted and contain dowels (wooden pegs), which suggests that the painting

was initially inset into another structure. It is possible that this painting originally formed part of a temporary funerary monument that was then extended and turned into an independent painting when the stone tomb at Faringdon Church was completed. This must have happened before 1634 when the painting was listed in the will of Henry Unton's widow as an independent 'story picture'.

Above

X-ray mosaic showing the original size of the panel and the regularly spaced wooden pegs at the sides.



Beneath the Surface

Infrared reflectography and x-radiography reveal that a number of changes were made to the composition during the painting process. Initially, the flock of black birds above the mourners was much larger, with more than twenty birds densely packed in the trees. A small figure on horseback above the fields at Nijmegen was also painted out. A colonnade was initially painted in the small room on the left in Unton's house, which was then overpainted to show a group of clerics debating

around a table; this change is faintly visible when looking at the painting from the side in raking light. Together these small changes provide an insight into the working process by which the unknown artist carefully managed all of the information contained within this intricate 'story picture'.

Digital infrared reflectogram mosaic and x-ray details showing the changes that were made during the painting process.