



# The St. Albans Psalter: Painting and Prayer in Medieval England

*Kristen Collins, Peter Kidd, Nancy Turner*

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The St. Albans Psalter is one of the most important, famous, and puzzling books produced in twelfth-century England. It was probably created between 1120 and 1140 at St. Albans Abbey, located on the site where Alban, England's first saint, was martyred.

The manuscript's powerfully drawn figures and saturated colors are distinct from those in previous Anglo-Saxon painting and signal the arrival of the Romanesque style of illumination in England. Although most twelfth-century prayer books were not illustrated, the St. Albans Psalter includes more than 40 fullpage illuminations and over 200 historiated initials. Decorated with gold and precious colors, the psalter offers a display unparalleled by any other English manuscript to survive from the period.

In 2007 the St. Albans Psalter was removed from its binding and in 2012 the disbound leaves traveled to the J. Paul Getty Museum, where scholars, conservators, and scientists conducted a close examination. New evidence revealed here challenges several prevailing assumptions about this richly illuminated manuscript.

*The St. Albans Psalter* is published on the occasion of the exhibition *Canterbury and St. Albans: Treasures from Church and Cloister* on view at the J. Paul Getty Museum from September 20, 2013, to February 2, 2014.

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