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HUM120
HISTORY OF
WESTERN ART

INSTRUCTOR
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1. GOTHIC ART and Architecture was created by patrons who demanded the largest, richest churches to demonstrate their dedicated religious fervor. As technical skills progressed through the 12th and 13th centuries, masons constructed high vaults supported on piers, designed windowed walls stabilized by *flying buttresses* to illuminate interiors and began to use stained glass. When light passed into the sanctuary the stained glass provided an illusion of a jewel-like rainbow of glory to God. Eventually the windows of stained and leaded glass were made as paintings in and of themselves. See p501, 'Master Masons.'

The term *Gothic* is credited to the Italian artist and historian Giorgio Vasari who erroneously attributed the style to the Goths. In its time the style was known as *Modern art* or *The French Style* as it originated on the Ile de France, the French king's domain in Paris. This style and building technique coincided with the emergence of the monarchy as a powerful centralizing force in France. Gradually the *Gothic* style eclipsed the *Romanesque*. By the late 14th century various regional styles of Europe coalesced into what came to be known as the *International Gothic Style*, and it was adapted to all types of structures.

By 1163 Paris had become a strong economic center and a center for learning. The Church played a strong role in education, culture and politics. The Italian theologian Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274) studied and taught in Paris, making it the intellectual center of Europe. Some scholars today suggest a relationship between the geometric order underlying Gothic cathedrals and *scholasticism*, an intellectual system of thought that developed in the universities of Paris, which attempted to reconcile Christian theology with Classical Philosophy.

2. Abbot Suger, a powerful figure in the Church, began construction of the *Benedictine Abbey of St. Denis* in the 1130s. St. Denis is a monastery containing tombs of French kings and regalia of the French crown. The architectural elements of the choir—rib vaults springing from round piers, pointed arches, wall *buttresses* to relieve stress on the walls, and window openings—had already appeared in Romanesque buildings. The dramatic achievement of Suger's master mason was to combine these into a fully integrated architectural whole emphasizing an open, flowing space. Sanctuary, ambulatory, and chapels opened into one another and walls of stained glass replaced masonry to allow light to flood the interior with color.

3. *Rib vaulting* was a major technical contribution of Romanesque and Gothic builders. Rib vaults are a form of groin vault in which the ridges (groins) formed by the intersecting vaults may rest on and be covered by curved moldings called ribs. These ribs usually served structural and decorative functions. They strengthened the joints and helped channel the vaults' thrusts outward and downward. The ribs were constructed first and supported the scaffolding of the vault. Rib construction developed over time into an intricate masonry skeleton filled with an increasingly light weight skin of the vault. Sophisticated variations on the basic rib vault can be observed in soaring interiors that are the hallmark of Gothic architecture.

4. *Notre Dame Cathedral* in Paris represents most people's idea of the consummate Gothic cathedral. Notre Dame is constructed on a site that located other religious buildings from the Celts to a Romanesque basilica that occupied the lot on Ile de la Cite until construction was begun by bishop Maurice de Sully in 1163.

Notre Dame—an early Gothic style building—was designed to be the centerpiece of Paris and pushed the talents and resources of its master mason. Notre Dame's innovative building technique of combining triangular ribs with subtle transverse arches resulted in an open, wide interior without the visual interruption of supporting elements. This is an impressive architectural—and aesthetic—achievement compared even to contemporary buildings.

Most Gothic Architecture was based on a Latin-cross plan, with a projecting transept marking the transition from the nave to the sanctuary. *Narthexes* (vestibules) lead to the nave. Generally there was an *ambulatory* (passageway around the apse) with radiating chapels surrounding the *apse* (semicircular niche usually containing the altar) on the east. The *Narthex* was located to the west. Above the nave was a clerestory for illumination and the nave usually had structural/decorative rib vaults to bear the weight of the structure to the ground and allow for an open, spacious interior. *Flying buttresses* provided support in addition to rib vaults. Several levels of these buttresses were constructed one atop the other to channel the weight of the massive walls and windows to the earth.

The arcades contained round and pointed arches. Portal facades were customarily flanked by high towers or gabled porches with pinnacle and finial ornament. Architectural sculpture covered the portals' *tympanum archivolt*s (area over a door, enclosed by an arch) and jambs. A magnificent rose window typically was centerpiece of the portal facades. The three Notre Dame portals, l-tor are: the Portal of the Virgin, The Portal of Judgment, and the Portal of Saint Anne.

5. *Chartres Cathedral of Notre Dame* is for many the perfect embodiment of 'spirit' in stone and glass. To erect such enormous buildings required vast resources and frequently the already overtaxed public did not support these undertakings. The building of Chartres sparked uprisings among commoners and nobility as bishops and canons attempted to compensate the deficit by raising commercial and feudal taxes.

6. West Facade, *Chartres Cathedral of Notre Dame*. See 16–6.

7. Royal Portal, West Facade, *Chartres Cathedral of Notre Dame*. See 16–7.

8. Buttresses (left), nave (right), *Chartres Cathedral of Notre Dame*. See 16–11.

9. Interior, *Chartres Cathedral of Notre Dame*.

10. Chartres is unique among Gothic cathedrals in that most of its stained glass windows have survived. Chartres was famous for its glass making workshops which by 1260 had installed about 22,000 feet of stained glass in 186 windows. Most of the glass dates between 1210–1250.

Good Samaritan Window in the south nave aisle, *Chartres Cathedral of Notre Dame*. This allegory of sin and evil is noted by historians as 'narrative art,' and the image to the right on slide 10 depicts the story line. p503, and see 16–12. Also see 16–13, rose window

11. Stained glass window, *Chartres Cathedral of Notre Dame*.

12. Labyrinth of Chartres: "Undoubtedly the best known labyrinth of its type, the beautifully preserved pavement labyrinth in Chartres Cathedral, France, was constructed during the second decade of the 13th century. The labyrinth is 12.9 metres (42.3 ft.) in diameter and fills the width of the nave. While much has been written about the purpose of this labyrinth, little contemporary documentation survives, although it is known that labyrinths in the French cathedrals were the scene of Easter dances carried out by the clergy. It is also popularly assumed that they symbolise the long tortuous path that pilgrims would have followed to visit this, and other shrines and cathedrals, during the medieval period."

—http://www.labyrinthos.net/photo_library14.html

(the source of information for this particular slide states it depicts a pilgrimage representing travel to Jerusalem (called the New Jerusalem—a symbolic voyage of the mind). Also to induce meditation similar to mandalas.

13. *The Cathedral of Notre-Dame in Reims* (in the Champagne region of France). The west facade of Reims Cathedral is magnificent with stone decoration. Mary is prominent in the central portal, the architects and designers of Reims favoring Mary over Christ of earlier cathedrals, thus reflecting growing popularity of devotion to Mary during the Gothic period. p506 and see 16–16.

14. During the reign of Louis IX Paris became the artistic center of Europe (remaining thus until WWII, during which the central focus of Western art shifted to New York). Louis IX' crowning jewel is the Sainte-Chapelle (Holy Chapel) in Paris, commissioned specifically to encase his collections of relics of Christ's Passion—especially the crown of thorns.

15. Sainte-Chapelle is reminiscent of Saint-Denis, yet with even more subtle characteristics including interior walls of slender piers and mullions supporting exquisite and detailed stained glass.

16, 17. From the mid-1200s until Gutenberg's development of *moveable type* in the middle of the 15th century, *illuminated manuscripts* were prized, designed to geometric rules which included the *golden ratio* proportion and produced on precious vellum with sumptuous gilded illuminations of gold and precious substances such as lapis lazuli. Proportions of these *illuminated manuscripts* were visible in the art and architecture of such masters of the time as Villard de Honnecourt. Paris became renowned for illuminated manuscript production. p510.

18. See 16–19, *Moralizations from the Apocalypse*, Paris 1226–1234. The design of stacked medallions appears to be derived from the design of stained glass windows such as *The Good Samaritan Window* (16–12). Here both text and illuminations reveal the stories. NOTE: eight years to collect vellum and laboriously hand-letter and draw intricate gilded illuminations.

By the end of the 13th century, book and manuscript production evolved in England beyond monasteries and scriptoria, to secular workshops, fueled by the scholarly impetus of universities such as Cambridge and Oxford.

19. Gothic influences arrived in England, as evidenced by cathedrals such as the thirteenth-century *Salisbury Cathedral*, an excellent example of English interpretation of Gothic style. Not as tall as French cathedrals, those in England have broad naves and screenlike façades (Stockstad p515).

20. Curious to the story of Salisbury Cathedral, a first cathedral had been built within a hilltop the castle enclave of the local lord, after which the bishop, Richard Poore commissioned the pope to have it relocated. Bishop Poore claimed the clergy could not hear themselves recite the Mass due to the wind's howling, though it is more likely he wished to avoid political dominance. The new cathedral was completed between 1220-1258, with the west façade built by 1265. Upon completion the bishop established the town of Salisbury. Also see 16–21.

21. Clergy in Germany increasingly placed emphasis on the sermon, and with this German architects developed the *hall church*, characterized by a nave and side aisle with all vaults reaching the same height. The first true Gothic hall church was the *Church of Saint Elizabeth of Hungary in Marburg*. Also see 16–25.

22. *Church of Saint Elizabeth of Hungary in Marburg*. Interior. Also see 16–26.

23. The oldest functioning synagogue in Europe is *Altneuschul*. Based on the Christian architectural form of Gothic hall churches, it is one of only two principle synagogues today serving the Jewish Congregations of Prague. All vaults are equal height, however unlike their Christian counterparts with divisions of nave and side aisles, *Altneuschul* has only two aisles. In medieval times, the synagogue was a place of communal learning as well as worship. p518; also see 16–27.

24. *Saint Maurice*, an Egyptian and commander of the Roman army who was martyred in 286 while stationed in Germany. The German preference for realism in the thirteenth century may have contributed to this earliest surviving depiction of St. Maurice as a Black African at Magdeburg Cathedral. See 16–29.

25. Influenced by an influx of Byzantine art after the Crusaders' capture of Constantinople in 1204, painted crucifixes such as the one attributed to *Coppo di Marcovaldo* (see 16–34), became popular in Italian churches. The Byzantine depictions of pathos and emotion in turn encouraged an emotional and empathetic techniques by such painters as the Florentine de Marcovaldo.

26. See page 526, 16–35, *Church of Saint Francis of Assisi*, Assisi, Italy. 1228–1253. Two years after the death of Saint Francis of Assisi, a church in his honor was begun. It is unusually elaborate, actually with two churches, upper and lower.

1. To observe changes in forms and stylistic treatments of the central Christian image of Christ on the Cross (Crucifixion) over the extended Middle Ages, compare the following illustrations:

14-19: Crucifixion with Angels and Mourning Figures, Lindau Gospels

14-23: Gero Crucifix

15-26: Crucifix (Majestat Battlo)

16-34: Crucifix

These depictions show important traditions and influences of their eras. Comment on forms, materials, and techniques in their making, and their relevance to art history of the Middle Ages.

2. Go to <http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/>. Under "Thematic Essays," select "Medieval Art." Scroll down to the link: "Jews and Arts in Medieval Europe." Read and view the essay and accompanying slideshow. Knowing twentieth-century European history and the Jewish Holocaust, comment on the significance you see in the medieval history presented in Chapter 16. Does the context of twentieth century history alter our perception of medieval history?

3. Comment on the roles of painting in stained glass and illuminated manuscripts to express religious and secular ideas of the Gothic period.