

Art history presentation script essay sample

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1. Introduction (Alissa)

characteristic of early Gothic churches.

- Very simple
- Very thin vertical support
- Large windows
- Combination of the triforium gallery and clerestory in one large area -

Walls of glass and screens

How did the term ' Gothic' come about? The term was actually applied after the time by Italian writers in the Renaissance who, compared this architecture to that of the " barbaric tribes" that destroyed the Roman Empire and its culture in 5th Century BCE. They were appalled at the abandonment of classical Romanesque lines and proportion which they felt was true beauty.

2. Timeline (Alissa)

- By the 12th and 13th centuries there was a massive shift in population in Europe. - People moved from the outskirts and countryside to towns, which grew into vast cities. - Cathedrals became a very important religious, cultural and social center everywhere. - They replaced monasteries and schools and learning centers, places where the community would come to meet and a place to get close to God. - It was a time for new ideas and knowledge and this freedom emerged gothic art. - A) 1140- Gothic style was born at the Cathedral of Saint-Denis. · Artist: Abbot Suger (which Kailas will expand on a little later in our presentation). · He started this movement of gothic architecture, which expands and grows in France, Spain, England and even a bit in Germany and Italy. - B) 1150- Paris' first university is constructed.

- University of Paris (1150-1970)
- Matthew Paris, a Benedictine monk, did his teaching study there in 1170. · Pope Innocent III completed his studies there in 1182.
- It becomes Europe's leading center of liberal arts and religion. · This attracts bishops and architects to experiment with architectural forms and build larger churches and cathedrals. - C) 1284- Collapse of 64-meter-high vault of Cathedral of Saint-Pierre-Beauvais. · By 120's cathedrals were becoming more vast, following the goal of an architect at the time which was to build a very tall structure and preserve as much natural light as possible. · Its vaulting collapsed due to weakness in structure because its height was much greater than its width, and the buttresses were too thin, and wouldn't cope with the region's high winds. · It was rebuilt, but this event marked the technical limits of gothic architecture. - D) 1180- Phillip Augustus becomes King of France.
- By this time there was a spreading of vaults, ribs, columns, pilasters and stained glass. · Gothic architecture was becoming more popular and its characteristics were developing - E) 1210-1250- Elaborate programs of stained glass windows all over France. · Artists at Chartres, start to elaborate on stained glass windows in cathedrals under construction there. · Stained glass depicted religious figures, but now it was starting to show more scenes of tradesmen and everyday life, since churches and cathedrals were becoming a more social place where the community meets. - F) 1226- Louis IX becomes King.
- Grandson of Philip Augustus
- Very religious man and a firm protector of the university and the arts,
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making Paris a thriving cultural center. · Paris becomes the heart for production of all precious arts (e. g. manuscript illustration, ivory carving, and goldsmith's work) · Paris becomes an iconic city on the global scale.

- G) 1328- Philip VI comes to the throne.

- H) 1348- the Black Death kills 1/3 of the French population. · First hit in the East (Mesopotamia, Syria)

· 1347- 1351- it kills about 25-50% of all Europe.

4) Suger and Characteristics (Kailas)

Here we have the Basilica de St Denis, the birthplace of the Gothic, thanks to Suger who was the Abbot for the first half of the twelfth century.(abbot-head of an abbey of monks.) This church is incredibly important because it's the burial place of the royal family. Suger himself was actually also an adviser for the royal family.

As you can see when standing in the choir of the church, light just pours in the windows from all sides.

The choir is the space behind the altar of the church, and the ambulatory is the isle that takes one behind the altar. Now Suger completed the ambulatory, and also the facade of the church - but none of this was new construction. There had been a ninth century church here, but Suger had felt it was inadequate as the burial place of the kings.

At this historical moment, the kings of France only really controlled the Ile de France, that is the area immediately around paris, but this was a time when the kings parallel was expanding, and Suger really wanted to create an

architectural style that would express the growing power of the monarch. Ile-de-France was a region in northern France (now the wealthiest and most populated). As you will later on see in our presentation many iconic cathedral names belong to these cities.

Now, in the history of western church architecture, the way that this would generally work is that you would have an ambulatory that would move around the back of the altar,

and that would allow pilgrims to stop at each of the small radiating chapels. That is, the small rooms that would contain relics which are pieces of the body of a saint, an item owned or used by the saint, or an object which has been touched to the tomb of a saint.

In the past, during the romanesque period, these chapels would be literally separate rooms with walls around them, and Sugers idea was rather to open the areas up, and to allow light to flood in. Which as you can see, is exactly what it looks like.

Instead of this looking like a set of walls that are pierced by windows - and in the romanesque period, relatively small windows - instead he figured out how to engineer the structure in stone so that the walls could basically disappear, and be replaced by glass.

Looking up at the ceiling of the church one can see how he managed this; there is what looks to be a complex web of interlocking pointed vaulting, vaulting being arched forms used to create space within ceilings and the

pointed version having the same concept as that of pointed arches, which really are key here.

For one thing, they are able to cover spaces of different shapes and sizes, and perhaps most importantly, pointed arches don't push so much out as they do down. Because of that, the architect didn't need to build thick walls.

A traditional Roman arch generally has to be placed on quite heavy walls because it really does push outward - it splays.

What the pointed arch does is it tends to take the weight of the vaulting and push it more straight down, so that the weight doesn't have to be buttressed from the side.

Looking up at these ribs, one has a sense of a pull toward the vertical, and all of the ribs and vaulting rest on these thin columns, causing a real sense of elegance and openness.

It's also just so radically different from the romanesque that came before, which felt so solid, and where your eye was always drawn around that rounded arch and back down, and you felt this sense of gravity, you felt a sort of rootedness within the romanesque, and it's so

different to what we see here. You have to remember that the church itself, any consecrated church is an expression of the Holy Jerusalem, it is heaven on earth, so the idea is how can one transport us to a more heavenly and spiritual place. Abbot Suger believed that light could do this. Suger had come to believe that he was reading the writing of St Denis, of the patron saint of this church, when in reality he was reading the writing of a philosopher in the <https://assignbuster.com/art-history-presentation-script-essay-sample/>

sixth century, but the important part is that he took this notion of the divinity of light and its connection to the divine from that writing and made it practical and applicable within an architectural setting.

After reading this writing, what Suger wanted was to open up those walls and allow in the light that would allow a type of thinking on the part of the visitors where they would move from the contemplation of the light to God.

This was a radical and new notion and actually flew in the face of other theological theories of the time, as there were many other ideas being established still that one must eliminate all decorative ornamentation -that it is in fact a distraction. Suger on the other hand moved in the other direction saying that the visual is not a distraction but rather a tool that can be used to transport one to the divine.

5) Interior and Structure (Kailas)

A buttress is a support built against a wall to support or reinforce it. One of the greatest innovations of the Gothic era was the “flying buttress” system of structural support. Attaching to the external walls, these free-standing, arched buttresses allowed builders to construct high cathedrals with soaring interior spaces.

6) 3 Main Styles (Alissa)

A) Rayonnant Style

- 13th century- French building style where architects focused on achieving great size of buildings rather than decoration (e. g. tracery, moldings) ·

Beginning of the era of gothic so their main goal was to reach the size and

proportions they wanted to achieve, so focus decoration was minimal, however it did flourish later on. · Main features:

- Rose window: (a. k. a wheel window) a very decorative circular window, usually with stained glass - Were examples of it in the Romanesque period, but in the middle of the 12th century did it take a big leap). - Became a distinguishing chf tracery.

B) Flamboyant Style

- “ Late Gothic Style”

- Evolved in 15th century in France and Spain

- Took from Rayonnant its proportions and style, however increases emphasis on decoration. - Dominating characteristic: stone window tracery of a S-shaped curve. - Wall surface was minimum in order to allow more windows.

- Elaborate and intricate tracery.

- Rose window changed because of the movement of intricate tracery (radiating intricate network of double-curved bars and geometric shapes; adding structural strength and a new composition).

C) Perpendicular Style

- Originated in England around the same time of French Flamboyant. - This style focused on:

- Visual decorative effects

- Vertical stone windows

- Very great proportions

- Fan vaults

- Arches were in the form of an equilateral triangle.
- This style led to the Tudor style in the 16th century.

7) Ornamentation and Exterior (Alissa + Kailas)

8) Sculpture (Alissa + Kailas)

kailas:

During the Gothic period, sculpture had a far more organic relationship with architecture than in the Romanesque period. In Gothic architecture sculptural decoration extends across almost the entire building. Symbols and allegories are used in the iconography of all the sculptures adorning the building, but are concentrated over the entrances, transforming them to seem like the entrance to heaven, with Christ carved into them, and intricate portrayals of the Last Judgement.