

French renaissance: kings and architecture research paper sample

[Art & Culture](#), [Renaissance](#)



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Synopsis

History has witnessed major revolutions of art and architecture in various countries especially those in Europe. These art and architecture revolutions have been marked by various eras and are also usually associated with various kings and leader who are credited with leading the movements. The period between the 14th and the17th Century particularly huge revolutions in the discipline of art and architecture. This paper will explore the development and revolution of architecture during the French Renaissance which started in the early 16th Century. The paper will look at the architectural styles in this era and how they were tied to different kings who were at the helm of the French throne at the time. The three Kings are Francois I, Henry II, and Louis XIII. The paper will show the Italian Renaissance stimulated the beginning of the French Renaissance and how the elements of Gothic style in French architecture were slowly replaced by classicism as the years progressed as the three kings shifted in power. While architects and artists in France and in other parts of Europe were still engaged in the process of discovering and exploiting the dominant Gothic style of art and architecture, a new style that was inspired by classical

heritage was beginning to emerge in Italy. This was marked by the Italian Renaissance, which commenced in the early years of the 15th Century. However, it was not until a full century after the full establishment of the Italian Renaissance in Italy that the Renaissance architecture started to flourish in France.

History seems to show that the earliest Renaissance art and architecture was first exhibited at the Loire valley chateau which was located at Amboise. This came about after the current French king Charles VIII ordered the rebuilding of the chateau in the Italian style. This happened in 1495. King Charles VIII went even as far as contracting an Italian architect known as Domenico da Cortona for this purpose.

However, it is King Francois 1 (1515-1547) who is credited with facilitating the blossoming of the Renaissance architecture in France. Francois was an intelligent and a well-cultured monarch who after ascending to the throne in 1515 invited the famous Leonardo Da Vinci to France to live and work in France. Da Vinci was stationed at Amboise and with him, he came with various drawings and paintings and many of these can still be found at Louvre including the famous Mona Lisa.

Francois I did not just facilitate and pave the way for the development of Renaissance art but he also commenced the building of Renaissance style buildings both in the city where he lived as well as in outside places. There are some classic examples of Renaissance buildings that depict François love for the renaissance architecture and his contribution to this discipline of architecture. Two that particularly stand out are the rebuilt royal palace in the south of Paris at Fontainebleau and the royal chateau located at

Chambord, in the French Loire Valley. Domenico da Cortona was responsible for the building and the design of the latter although there are suggestions that da Vinci also played a role in the design of the building. The palace main designers were Gilles le Breton (a French mason) and Phillippe Delome, a French architect who had been a student in Italy. François brought over a lot of architects from Italy to decorate the interior as well as the exterior of his royal residences, and he also imported many arts works from Italy. All these aspects facilitated the flourishing of Renaissance architecture in France. The flourishing of the French Renaissance was accompanied by the building and the rebuilding of various castles using the new Renaissance style of Art. Some of the standouts in this regard include the Valancay, the Chenonceaux, the Villandy and the Azay Rideau.

Therefore, François was the first French King to introduce and facilitate the flourishing French Renaissance. He introduced some of the most famous interior architecture in France. During his reign when Renaissance architecture was beginning to flourish in France, the interiors of buildings started acquiring touches and aspects of luxury. In addition, in the construction of the interiors, there was increasing reliance on symmetrical classicism. The other standout aspects that reflected the kingship of François is elaborate wall decorations which were sometimes accompanied by three-dimensional carvings of human figures and animals. There was also the emergence of classical motifs. The main focal point in many rooms became the fireplace mantel and there was increased emphasis on its decoration. The other standout aspect of architecture during the Kingship of François was in regards to the ceilings of buildings. There emerged the featuring of

ceilings in main rooms where they were often treated with coffers of beams utilizing repeating motifs.

Protection was important during this era and, therefore, castles were accompanied by very huge gates. They also had round turrets as well as conical roofs and central courtyards. Since François ruled in the first half of the 16th century, and this was a time when the French Renaissance was still flourishing, Gothic style still played a significant part in the overall architecture of the land. In fact, early manifestations of the French Renaissance during the rule of François featured the Gothic style combined with some classical elements and details. For example, pilasters were used as decorations. Some buildings, for instance, hotels that were also referred to as townhouses during this era of the French Renaissance continued exhibiting Gothic half-timbered construction. There was however the addition of arches, brackets, and even large windows. In addition, rooflines were irregularly shaped in silhouette and were asymmetrical in organization. The exterior walls were organized and articulated by order, regularity, and symmetries. Moreover, pilasters were used to frame symmetrically placed windows. Different stories in buildings were separated by string course. Generally, there was a mixing of Mannerist and Gothic details in buildings. As the era of François I progressed, French architecture started to institute more confident classicism. This was facilitated by the arrival of more architects from Italy as well as frequent visits to Italy by French architects. Therefore, as the century crossed over to the latter half, there was more classical elements in French buildings.

Henry II took over the French throne in the year 1547. He continued

with what Francois had already initiated. His reign is said to have marked the peak of the French Renaissance, and this was a period where the architecture relatively moved away completely from the Gothic style and embraced classicism fully. The Italian classic influence on architecture was fully visible during this era of Henry with some of the most conspicuous aspects for instance, being slender columns, moldings, cornices, friezes among others.

There are other several architectural styles that are synonymous with the kingship of Henry II. Windows retained their transformed and mullioned divisions. There also emerged round arched windows. Another aspect was the use of panel inside shutters. The door heads began having a corresponding shape to those of the window heads. The over the door decoration acquired a pediment that was either arc-shaped or rectilinear. The furniture utilized in this era of the French Renaissance was also very similar to that of the Italians. There was the use of simple forms of buildings that had high levels of proportion and balance. His reign also saw the emergence of two stylistic trends that went concurrently. The first ' Il de France style". This had a fairly classical influence. The style featured delicate carvings that had low relief. The style is said to have been inflicted by Goujon and duCerceau. The other stylistic trend that emerged during the reign of King Henry II was the Burgundian style. This mainly had a Mannerist influence. It was characterized by carvings in high relief as well as term figures and mythological figure objects.

The other king during the French Renaissance whose influence on architecture was massively felt was King Louis XXIII. He officially took over

the throne in 1589 and went on to rule up to 1643. At this time, classicism had been fully adopted. Buildings constructed at the time were more solid and immense. They adopted rectilinear shapes and generally had basic and simple forms. The main influence for this was once again Italian art and there is an accentuated use of carvings. One standout aspect of the architecture of this era regards the windows whereby they increased massively in size and sometimes extended all the way from the ceiling to the floor. Other conspicuous features that were visible in this period included rusticated quoins or corner blocks, window surrounds, chaines (that were vertical rusticated masonry bands that divided facades into bays and panels). Even though the French buildings started being fully adoptive of the classical appearance; the French buildings managed to retain some climatic differences from Italy, and these were clearly during the rule or the kingship of King Louis. Some of these differences, for example, included steep roofs large windows and prominent chimneys. There was also a retention of the traditional pavilions. These differences together with more surface decorations gave the French buildings a more vertical, more animated and in fact, a more picturesque appearance than their Italian counterparts. However the influence of the Italian style was still visible in French buildings.

Conclusion

Italian Renaissance as observed can be credited with stimulating the French Renaissance. Italian Renaissance commenced in the early years of the 15th Century, but it was only about 100 years after the full establishment of the Italian Renaissance in Italy that the Renaissance architecture started to

flourish in France. King Charles is seen as the first French King to have paved way for the introduction of Italian renaissance architecture into France when he ordered the rebuilding of a chateau using the “ Italian Style”. However King Francois 1 who ascended to the throne in 1515 is credited with facilitating the blossoming of the Renaissance architecture in France especially by inviting Italian architects and artists including the famous Leonardo Da Vinci to France to live and work there. Other kings that succeeded Francois- Henry II and Louis XIII- also propelled the French Renaissance architecture farther, and each era was marked by distinctive architectural styles.

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