

Gothic Sculpture | Higher Level Notes

Transition from Romanesque to Gothic

- Gothic educated the worshipper in a more benign and forgiving way
- Early Gothic sculptures still stylized and elongated (like Romanesque)
- Later Gothic sculptures more realistic
- Accuracy in anatomy and proportion became more important
- Fabric folds became more three-dimensional in appearance
- Facial expressions most commonly calm and serene
- Sculptures given more individual treatment and characteristics
- Virgin Mary occupies a more prominent position
- Imagery less gruesome

Sculpture at Chartres Cathedral – The Royal Portal (Early Gothic)

- Theme: Salvation – peaceful vision of eternity with Christ
- Virgin Mary and Christ are central characters
- Column statues of kings and queens (possibly from Old Testament)
- Used to enhance architecture, seen as own art form
- Folds in drapery show tall, linear quality
- Serene and dignified facial expressions
- More accomplished body proportions

Sculpture at Chartres Cathedral – The North Portal (High Gothic)

- Theme: Dedication to the Virgin Mary
- Virgin Mary, St Anne, prophets and apostles are central characters
- Old Testament figures: high priest Melchizedek and Abraham
- New Testament figures: John the Baptist and St Peter
- Portal paid for by Blanche of Castile (powerful woman in medieval France)
- Resulted in many female figures on portal
 - E.g. sculpture of St. Modeste
 - Portrays maidenly quality, sweetness and purity
 - Young saint with veil on hair, holds book in one hand and raises the other in blessing
- Individuals with defined personalities and gestures
 - E.g. Abraham looking over his shoulder at the angle whilst protecting his son Isaac

Sculpture at Chartres Cathedral – The South Portal (High Gothic)

- Theme: Dedication to glory of Jesus Christ
- Sculpture of Jesus on central trumeau
- Book in one hand, other raised in blessing
- His feet stand on a lion and dragon
- Surrounded by sculptures of 12 apostles on either side
- St Peter is on Christ's right (curly hair and beard, carrying a key)
- The other apostles all carry instruments of their deaths
- Beneath them at their feet are the crowned figures of the Roman Empire who persecuted them

Sculpture at Rheims Cathedral

- Theme: Dedication to Virgin Mary
- Many figures inspired by Roman statuary
- Lifelike bodies, flowing garments, delicate expressions, graceful movement
- Famous smiling Angel Gabriel is an example (now emblem for Rheims city)

Gothic sculpture in Germany

- Sculpture spread from France to neighbours
- French artists travelled and taught others their skills
- Talented sculptor = The Naumburg Master (actual name unknown)
- Thought to have trained in France
- Naumburg Cathedral (East-central Germany) contains examples of his work
- E.g. sculpture of Count Ekkehard and Uta
- Very life-like and convincing
- Ekkehard holds strap of shield, Uta pulls cloak to face
- Still have some of their original bright colours
- Uta is thought to have influenced Walt Disney in the creation of some cartoon queens