

**These are the texts (in black) and the slides (in blue) used for my half-hour introduction to French Gothic Sculpture for the Winter Study Group of An Aquitaine Historical Society at Montagrier on 24 November, 2009. This short talk followed an introduction to Gothic Architecture by Kit Rees-Evans. Most of the photographs are my own, but a few were taken by friends and - where necessary - I have borrowed a few from the Internet. The music used was Gregorian Chant from the CD, "Quand le chant Gregorien s'appelait chant Messin".**

**To see the slides, please click below:**

**<http://picasaweb.google.co.uk/JuliannaLees/FrenchGothicSculpture11401500#>**

**and then click “slideshow” or use the manual facility**

**My other albums – mostly of Romanesque sculpture – can be accessed here:**

**<http://www.green-man-of-cercles.org>**

## **GOTHIC SCULPTURE in FRANCE, 1140-1500**

**Neuilly en Donjon, capital, c.1140-50**

**Gothic art evolved from Romanesque art and lasted from the mid-12th century to as late as the end of the 16th century in some areas.**

## **BASILICA of ST. DENIS, PARIS c.1140**

**Gothic sculpture was born around 1140, at the royal abbey of St. Denis near Paris, under the abbot Suger. Before this, there had been no tradition of monumental sculpture in the Ile-de-France, and masons had been brought in from Burgundy.**

## **SCULPTURES ON PORTALS AT CHARTRES (1145-55),**

**How did Gothic sculpture evolve?**

**In the 12th and early 13th centuries, Gothic sculpture was predominantly architectural, since it was primarily used to decorate the exteriors of churches and cathedrals.**

## **PARIS, Notre-Dame, Saints and Angels, c.1220, left**

**The earliest Gothic sculptures were stone figures of saints and the Holy Family, used to decorate the portals of cathedrals in France and elsewhere.**

## **PARIS, Notre-Dame, Saints and Angels, c.1220, right**

**The largest and most important of the figures are the over-life-size statues in the embrasures on either side of the doorways known as statue-columns or jamb figures.**

## **CHARTRES Cathedral, c.1145-55,**

**The earliest surviving statue columns are on the Royal Portal of Chartres Cathedral.**

## **ETAMPES, c. 1145**

**During the next few decades the west portals of Chartres inspired a number of other portals in France, as well as in Spain, and elsewhere in Europe.**

## **BOURGES, c.1195.**

**They were little changed from their Romanesque predecessors in their stiff, straight, elongated and hieratic forms.**

## **REIMS, St Denis portal, c.1240**

**By the 1200s Romanesque stylization had given way to a period in which the statue begins to assume a feeling of grace, sinuosity, and freedom of movement.**

## **CHARTRES, c.1205**

**These figures, while retaining the dignity and monumentality of their predecessors,**

## **Amiens, St Firmin, c.1225**

**have individualised faces and figures,**

## **AMIENS, sculptures on Last Judgement portal c.1225**

## **REIMS CATHEDRAL, THE VISITATION, c.1240**

**as well as full, flowing draperies and natural poses and gestures,**

## **STRASBOURG, Dormition of the Virgin, c.1230**

**and they display a classical poise that suggests an awareness of antique Roman models on the part of their creators.**

## **LAON CATHEDRAL, sculptures c.1230**

**While at Laon cathedral, let's take another look at the Gothic oxen on the roof that Kit mentioned:**

## **OXEN AT LAON CATHEDRAL, c.1230**

**REIMS Cathedral:  
The Annunciation, c.1240**

But by the 13thc, the rippling surface treatment of the classicizing drapery was replaced by more solid volumes.

**REIMS Cathedral:  
King, 1220-30**

Eventually the statue-column was to lead to the freestanding monumental statue, a form of art unknown in Western Europe since Roman times.

**AMIENS trumeau, c.1225**

Increasingly freed from their bondage to architecture, the statues lose the immobile and fantastic aspect of Romanesque figures.

**Constance of Arles, 13thc statue, Versailles**

There is a humanization and a desire for refinement. Movement and attitudes become more gracious and poses more natural,

**REIMS Cathedral, smiling angel c.1240**

as witnessed by the Smiling Angel of the Annunciation at Reims.

**REIMS Cathedral, smiling angel - detail**

**Sémur en Brionnais, Romanesque capital, 12thc**

Romanesque sculpture concentrated  
on capitals of pillars,

**Sémur en Brionnais, Romanesque lintel, 12thc**

on lintels,

**Neuilly en Donjon, tympanum, c.1140-50**

and on the tympana of portals.

**Conques, Hell, c.1120**

**Beaulieu, Dordogne, Last Judgment, c.1155**

The sculptures often represented the Last Judgment: the fate of the damned destined for Hell is described there in detail, to terrify the faithful.

**Basilica of St-Denis, PARIS, Tympanum c. 1135-40**

Gothic sculpture tends to be nearer to mankind. It is a deliverance from ancestral fears, of a world teeming with monsters, which characterizes the Romanesque.

**BORDEAUX, St. Seurin, tympanum, 13thc**

Gothic sculpture tends to express the idea of a more human God, a God of mercy.

**Basilica of St-Denis, PARIS, Rose Window c. 1135-40**

Meanwhile, in the architecture and through the stained glass windows, the churchgoer is reminded that "God is light".

**Sémur en Brionnais, Romanesque capital, 12thc**

**Corinthian capital, Roman empire, 2ndc**

Foliate capitals had been made continuously since antiquity;

**VIENNE, BURGUNDY, GALLO-ROMAN TEMPLE**

**VIENNE, Cathedral, Foliate capitals in the choir, 13thc**

now Gothic capitals saw a return to decoration with plants and flowers.

**REIMS, foliate capitals c.1240**

Historiated capitals tend to remain outdoors, so that nave capitals inside the church are less distracting to the worshipper.

**Notre-Dame en Vaux at Châlons-sur-Marne, remains of the cloister, 1180.**

**Chennevières, Val de Marne, foliate capital, 13thc**

Monsters and fantastic animals give way to scenes from the lives of saints or Bible stories.

**Notre-Dame en Vaux at Châlons-sur-Marne, capital from the cloister, 1180.**

This capital from the cloister at Châlons-sur-Marne, is one of the rarer historiated capitals of the Gothic period.

**Elne, Roussillon: the Magi at the Nativity, 14thc**

However, such capitals are found in cloisters more often than in churches; as in these examples from Elne, in Roussillon.

**Elne, Roussillon: the Magi before Herod, 14thc**

It was not all sweetness and light, however. Grotesque images still abound in the margins:

**Notre-Dame de PARIS, Portal of the Last Judgment, c.1230**

**And Notre-Dame de PARIS, detail of above**

**AMIENS, grotesque sculptures on Last Judgment portal c.1225**

and monstrosities lurk beneath larger sculptures

**AMIENS, grotesque sculptures known as «marmosets» below the larger sculptures c.1225**

**AMIENS, «marmoset» c.1225**

**AMIENS, «marmoset» c.1225**

**REIMS, grotesque sculptures on Last Judgment portal c.1225**

**and as Gargoyles, for example.**

**Notre-Dame de PARIS, gargoyles, 13thc**

**Last Judgements and other Apocalyptic visions continue to be awe-inspiring.**

**LAST JUDGMENT, BOURGES, c.1250-55**

**LAST JUDGMENT, BOURGES, 2 c.1250-55**

**STRASBOURG CATHEDRAL TYMPANUM c.1230**

**Notre-Dame de PARIS, portal of St Anne, 1210-20**

**DURING THE 12THc, the cult of the VIRGIN MARY grew in importance.**

**Notre-Dame de PARIS, V&C on tympanum, 1210-20**

**Already present on the tympana of Romanesque churches, she was now, more than ever, venerated in monumental sculpture.**

**Mantes-la-Jolie Cathedral portal:  
Life of the Virgin, 13thc.**

**Coronation of the Virgin, SENLIS, 1150-55**

**Coronation of the Virgin, Senlis: note that the Virgin is seated in a position of equality with her son.**

**Coronation of the Virgin, CHARTRES, 1205-10**

**Portal of the Virgin, N-D de PARIS, 1210-20**

**Coronation of the Virgin, N-D de PARIS, 1210-20**

**REIMS, Coronation of the Virgin, c.1240**

**The austerity of some of the earlier Madonnas was gradually replaced by . . .**

**STRASBOURG CATHEDRAL, WEST PORTAL**

**a more maternal type of the cult statue of the Virgin Mary playfully balancing the Christ child on the outward thrust of her hip**

**Virgin & Child of REIMS, 1245-55**

**Late 13thc and early 14thc Gothic sculpture became more refined and elegant and acquired a mannered daintiness resulting in a paradoxical synthesis of naturalistic forms, courtly affectations, and a delicate spirituality.**

**Virgin & Child of the Sainte-Chapelle, 1250-60, Louvre**

**AMIENS Cathedral, Virgin & Child, 1260-70**

**The elegant and somewhat artificial prettiness of this style was widely disseminated throughout Europe in sculpture,**

**WILTON DIPTYCH, NATIONAL GALLERY, LONDON, 1395**

**painting**



**Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry – January – by the Limbourg brothers, 14thc**

**and manuscript illumination during the 14th century and became known as the “International Gothic” style.**

**Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry – April – by the Limbourg brothers, 14thc**

**Note how during the bleakest month, when the poor will be starving, the rich - tall, elegant and beautifully dressed – are feasting.**

**Virgin & Child of Cérisy-la-Salle, c.1350**

**Gothic sculpture evolved into the more technically advanced and classical Renaissance style in Italy during the 14th & 15th centuries but persisted somewhat later in Northern Europe.**

**Here, the exaggerated smile, almond-shaped eyes, and clustered curls of the small heads and the mannered poses give a foretaste of the humanistic style of the French Renaissance.**

**Trier Museum, Green Men on polychrome monument, 2ndc**

**Certain themes continue unchanged between Romanesque and Gothic,**

**Trier Museum, Green Man on polychrome monument, 2ndc**

**often inherited from Antiquity, such as The Green Man:**

**VIENNE CATHEDRAL, 13thc GREEN MAN**

**CHARTRES, Three GREEN MEN capital, 13thc**

**Villard d’Honnecourt sketch of Green Men, 13thc**

**The well-known architect and mason, Villard d’Honnecourt illustrated Green Men in his influential sketchbooks, in the 13thc.**

**CERCLES, Dordogne, Green Man capital, 12thc**

**150-200 years separate these images – from the simplicity of Romanesque**

**Green Man from ST. DENIS, now in the Louvre, c.1280-1320**

**to the excesses of Flamboyant Gothic.**

**Chauvigny, Romanesque capital, 12thc**

**We should bear in mind that marble and stone sculptures were usually painted, from Ancient Greece onwards,**

**FONTEVRAULT – 13thc effigies of Alienor of Aquitaine and Henri II**

**FONTEVRAULT – 13thc effigies of Richard Cœur de Lion and Isabelle of Angoulême**

**and throughout the Roman occupation, and the Romanesque and Gothic periods.**

**AMIENS CATHEDRAL – son et lumière performance**

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**AMIENS CATHEDRAL – son et lumière performance**

**Nazareth: Virgin Mary, Apostle & devils capital c.1160-80**

**During the Romanesque and earlier periods, sculptors had been seen as masons, without celebrity status, and they worked anonymously. Those that acquired a reputation are usually known as “The Master of Cabestany”, the “Nazareth Master” etc.**

**Gradually, during the transition to Gothic art, some of these masters began to sign their names, sometimes with quite boastful Latin phrases. The concept of**

artists with an idea of their reputation is indicative of a change of focus during the new Gothic technology.

### **André Beauneveu notice, PARIS, ST.DENIS, 1374**

### **Effigy of Charles V by André Beauneveu, PARIS, ST.DENIS, 1374**

A shadowy name of the late 14thc is that of André Beauneveu, who worked for Charles V. The king referred to him as, «mon aimé André Beauneveu, mon imager».

### **Effigy of Charles V – detail - by André Beauneveu, PARIS, ST.DENIS, 1374**

His only surviving work is the effigy of Charles V for the royal necropolis at St. Denis.

Nevertheless, it was not till the 15thc that individual artists really began to make a name for themselves in France, although in Italy the emergence from anonymity had begun in the previous centuries.

### **Chartreuse de Champmol, portal, c.1389, by Claus Sluter**

The most famous name in late Gothic sculpture in France is that of Claus Sluter. He was born in Harlem, but he worked at Dijon, for the Duke of Burgundy for most of his career.

### **Philip and his wife, Margaret of Bavaria, kneel on each side of the Virgin**

Sluter's work is bound to his patron, Philip the Bold, or Philip le Hardi, regent of France after the death of his older brother, Charles V.

### **Philip and his wife, Margaret of Bavaria, kneel on each side of the Virgin**

Born in 1342, a younger son of Jean II or «John the Good», Philip became Duke of Burgundy in 1363 and fought in the Battle of Poitiers in 1356. In 1378 he acquired Champmol near Dijon, for the construction of a Chartreuse, or

**Carthusian Monastery. Philip's chief mason was Jean de Marville and his favourite sculptor was the famous Claus Sluter.**

**Claus Sluter, «The Well of Moses» 1391-1401**

**Sluter's chef d'œuvre, «The Well of Moses», is conserved in a special building in the museum.**

**Claus Sluter, «The Well of Moses» 1391-1401 – and the others, culminating in:**

**Claus Sluter, fragment of a Christ**

**It was the centrepiece of the cloister of the Ducal chapel of Champmol.**

**TOMB of PHILIP the BOLD, 1390-1406 by Marville and Sluter**

**Philip commissioned a splendid tomb from these men, also in the museum, which was begun in 1390.**

**TOMB of PHILIP the BOLD, 1390-1406, detail of mourners**

**Philip died before it was finished, in 1403,**

**TOMB of PHILIP the BOLD, 1390-1406, detail of mourners**

**and after Marville's death, Sluter completed it with his nephew in 1406.**

**TOMB of PHILIP the BOLD, 1390-1406, detail of mourners**

**TOMB of PHILIP the BOLD, 1390-1406, detail of mourners**

**Tomb of Philippe Pot, c.1493-5, Louvre**

**With advances in Gothic sculptural technique, conspicuous consumption was most evident in the lavish tombs of rich and great men and women:**

**Michel Colombe, monumental tomb of Francis II, Duke of Brittany, NANTES, 1505-7**

**Michel Colombe executed the highly sophisticated monument of Francis II, Duke of Brittany, in the late-Gothic/early Renaissance style in the cathedral at Nantes**

**Tomb of Philibert II of Savoy in the royal church of Brou, c.1502**

**and possibly, the tomb of Philibert II of Savoy in the royal church of Brou.**

**BROU – Bourg-en-Bresse – West Portal**

**Brou, chapel of Marguerite of Austria 1502**

**The final phase of Gothic sculpture during the 15th and 16th centuries is known as «Flamboyant Gothic»**

**The Seven Joys of Mary,  
Royal church of Brou, c.1502**

**The Seven Joys of Mary,  
Royal church of Brou, c.1502**

**and is characterised by highly decorative flame-like additions in architecture, and every excess in monumental sculpture.**

**TROYES, la Madeleine, choir screen, 15thc**

**Choir screens, already an area for Gothic sculptural decoration, became the focus of exuberant display for virtuoso craftsmen, with spires and tracery in stone.**

**ALBI, choir screen, 15thc**

**ALBI, choir screen, 15thc**

**And after this – THE RENAISSANCE!**

