

W3230

Medieval Architecture

Spring 2002

Stephen Murray

Tuesdays and Thursdays 10.35-11.50

Schermerhorn 614

## Requirements:

Attendance in class

Mid-term and final examinations, each with visual questions and an essay

Two writing assignments, one due at mid term and one due on the last day of classes

Discussion sections to be scheduled

Murray's office hours: 8.00am to 10.00am  
Wednesdays, Schermerhorn 605

- Discussion sections
- Tuesday 12:10-1:00 Room 614
- Tuesday 6:00-7:00 Room 930

The conception and design of the course.

Based upon concepts developed in the Columbia  
Core

Developed collaboratively

Taught digitally

1 a) Introduction to the course. .

b) Rome: the basilica and the centralized church

Reading: Stalley, R., *Early Medieval Architecture*, Oxford, 2000

Krautheimer, R., *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*

2. a) Rome: the basilica and the centralized church

b) Constantinople and Hagia Sophia

Reading: Beck, H. G., Constantinople. The Rise of A New Capital in the East

Krautheimer, R., *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture*

-----, *Rome, Profile of a City*, Princeton, 1980

3. a) Constantinople and Hagia Sophia

b) Middle and Later Byzantine Architecture

Reading: Mainstone, R., *Hagia Sophia. Architecture, Structure and Liturgy of Justinian's Great Church*, New York, 1988

Ousterhout, R., *The Architecture of the Kahrie Camii in Istanbul*, Dumbarton Oaks Studies, Washington, 1988

3. a) The Architecture of Islam

b) Early medieval architecture in northern Europe

Reading: Grabar, O., *The Formation of Islamic Art*, New Haven, 1973

4. a) The Carolingian "Renaissance"

b) Ottonian Architecture

Reading: Hubert, J., Porcher, J., and Volbach, W. F., *Europe of the Invasions*, London and New York, 1969

Verzone, P., *From Theoderic to Charlemagne, A History of the Dark Age in Europe*, London, 1968

Hubert, J., Porcher, J., and Volbach, W. *Carolingian Art*, London and New York, 1970

5. a) Romanesque Architecture: the monastic revival

b) Romanesque Architecture: the Pilgrimage

Reading: Aubert, M., *Romanesque Cathedrals and Abbeys of France*, London and New York, 1966

Conant, K., *Carolingian and Romanesque Architecture 800-1200*, Pelican, 1959

6. a) Romanesque Architecture: regional types

b) Durham Cathedral

Reading: Aubert, M., *Romanesque Cathedrals and Abbeys of France*, London and New York, 1966

Conant, K., *Carolingian and Romanesque Architecture 800-1200*, Pelican, 1959

Rollason, D., Harvey, M., and Prestwich, M., (eds) *Anglo-Norman Durham*, Woodbridge, 1994

7. a) Review

b) Mid-term examination

8. a) ) Wooden structures in the Middle Ages

b) Medieval castles and secular buildings

Reading: Anderson, W., *Castles of Europe*, London, 1970

Thompson, M. W., *The Rise of the Castle*, Cambridge, 1991

-----, *The Medieval Hall: the Basis of Secular Domestic Life, 600-1600*, Aldershot, 1995

9 a) Medieval cities

b) The city of Paris

Reading: Saalman, H., *Medieval Cities*, Brazillier, 1968

Sauerlander, W., "Medieval Paris, Center of European Taste, Fame and Realities," *Paris, Center of Artistic Enlightenment, Papers in Art History from the Pennsylvania State University* 4, 1988 ed. G. Mauner

10.a) The origins of "Gothic"

b) Early Gothic in France

Reading: Frankl, P., *Gothic Architecture* (ed. P. Crossley)  
New Haven, 2000

Binding, G., *High Gothic. The Age of the Great Cathedrals*,  
Taschen, 1999

11.a) Field trip to the cathedral of Saint John the Divine

b) Notre-Dame of Paris

Reading: Binding, G., *High Gothic. The Age of the Great Cathedrals*, Taschen, 1999

Murray S., "Notre-Dame of Paris and the Anticipation of Gothic," *Art Bulletin*, 1999, (xerox)



12.a) Beauvais Cathedral

b) Salisbury Cathedral

Reading: Murray, S., *Beauvais Cathedral. Architecture of Transcendence*, Princeton, 1989

13 a) "Change" in Gothic: regional variations

b) "Change" in Gothic: Late Gothic

Reading: Binding, G., *High Gothic. The Age of the Great Cathedrals*, Taschen, 1999

Murray, S., *Building Troyes Cathedral. The Late Gothic Campaigns*, Bloomington, 1986

14 a) The after-life of the Middle Ages: Gothic revival in Europe

b) Gothic revival in the United States

Reading: Jackson Lears, T. J., *No Place of Grace*, New York, 1981

Introduction to the Web Site

Robert Carlucci, Media Center for Art History

Field Study in the Architecture of Medieval  
France, June 19-August 1.

A four-credit summer course

Center: the château of Bostz in the  
Bourbonnais

Objective: the study of some four hundred  
local Romanesque Churches.

Information sessions

Website

## Resources

1. Two texts: A) Roger Stalley, *Early Medieval Architecture*, Oxford, 1999  
B) Christopher Wilson, *The Gothic Cathedral, The Architecture of the Great Church 1130-1530*, Thames and Hudson, 1990
2. Reserve books in the Avery Library
3. Web Site

# Medieval Architecture

January 22

Rome: the basilica and the centralized church.

Readings: Stalley, 17-35 “The Basilica”

Richard Krautheimer, *Rome*, 3-31

## Stalley's description, 17-19

1. The beauty of the columns. He counts them: there are 12 on either side--they were cut from marble quarried at Proconnesus in the Sea of Marmara. Fluting. Capitals. All derived from an earlier (second century) building
2. Spandrels in *opus sectile*
3. Upper wall and clerestory. Light from large windows, 14 feet in height.
4. Materials. Brick.
5. Structure. Arched or arcuated--as opposed to *trabeated*
6. History--an inscription records that the church was founded by the *presbyter* (priest) Peter the Illyrian some time between 422 and 432

Interpretation and explanation through contextualization

Underlying issues:

1. Representation: how do we represent the building (*ekphrasis*; classification) what did the building *signify*?
2. Relation of the object/building to history
3. Relation between the form of the building and its function
4. Continuity and change
5. The human presence and absence; attitudes to death

How do we “explain” and “contextualize”

A) We locate the building in relation to the city (Rome); the patron (the Emperor Constantine) and the institutional function (the established Church)

B) Looking for underlying patterns.  
Architecture imposes its own rules. “1000 Years of Medieval Architecture”



Does History have turning points?

Constantine was declared Caesar on the death of his father in 306. This was the period when the Empire was governed by 4 rulers, 2 Augusti and 2 Caesars. In 308 C. was raised by the army to the status of Augustus. A complicated struggle followed between rival claimants for imperial power. Resolved in 312 when C. marched on Rome and defeated his rival Maxentius at the Battle of Milvian Bridge.

The struggle involved religion: Constantine favored the toleration of Christianity; Maxentius was supported by Roman pagan leaders. Eusebius recorded the story that in the course of his march to Rome Constantine had seen a vision of the cross athwart the sun and underneath the words, “In This Sign Conquer” In front of the walls of Rome C. saw another vision bidding him to place the Christian monogram on the shields of his soldiers.

313 Edict of Milan declared toleration for Christians

324 Constantine defeated his rival Licinius and became sole emperor

Founded the new Christian capital in the east, Constantinople; baptized on his death in 337. The problem of myth and “reality”

Rome, San Giovanni in Laterano c 313.

The first church sponsored by Constantine and the first great church inside the city walls, the cathedral of Rome, it was originally dedicated to Christ and known as the “Basilica Constantiana.” Considered the Mother Church of the entire world.

Built on the east side of the Celian Hill inside the Aurelian Wall near the Porta Asinaria. Constantine owned property here. He demolished the barracks of the horse guards who had supported his rival, Maxentius.

Construction probably began after the Edict of Milan (313) and was consecrated in 318.

The church was occidented (apse to the west). Vast scale (333 by 190 Roman feet). A five-aisled basilica, inner aisles taller than outer aisles. Red granite columns in nave support an architrave (lintel; trabeated). Aisles divided by arcades supported by re-used green marble columns. Brick construction. Wooden roof.

Semi-circular apse to the west.

*Liber Pontificalis* (Book of the Popes, from the 6th century):

“In his time Constantine Augustus built the following basilicas and adorned them: the Constantinian basilica, where he offered the following gifts: a ciborium of hammered silver, which has upon the front the Saviour sitting upon a chair , in height 5 feet weighing 120 lbs and also the 12 apostles, who each weigh 90 lbs and are 5 feet in height and wear crowns of the purest silver; further, on the back, looking toward the apse are the Saviour sitting upon a throne in height 5 feet, of purest silver, weighing 15- lbs and 4 angels of silver, which each weigh 105 lbs and are 5 feet in height and have jewels from Alabanda in their eyes....

Lamps, crowns, gold covering for the apse, silver and gold altars, patens, chalices, pitchers, 122 chandeliers, candlesticks.

Gifts included grants of land as an endowment

How do we define what a building *looks like*?

We describe it through systematic looking and through the use of language, literal and figurative (*ekphrasis*)

We compare it with what it is *not* like.

The Basilica of Maxentius in the Forum Romanum, begun by the Emperor Maxentius (306-312) and completed under Constantine. It was dedicated by the Senate to Constantine.

Built of brick-faced concrete walls and concrete vaults. 39 meters high. Nave vaulted with three groin vaults; aisles have transverse barrel vaults.

Giant Corinthian columns with fluted monolithic shafts 15 meters high made of Proconnesian marble articulate the interior.

The bishops of Rome at first resided near their cathedral of Saint John in the Lateran.

But by the sixth century a residence was established at the site of the martyrdom of Saint Peter where Constantine had built a great funerary basilica.

By the 8th century the Vatican Palace had become a major center for guests and pilgrims and in the 9th century it was enclosed within a defensive wall and became a separate city (now known as the Vatican City)

Saint Peters was built on the slope of the Vatican Hill in a cemetery which had grown up around the ruins of Circus of Nero. Legendary site of Saint Peter's martyrdom in 64 in retribution for the burning of Rome. By the 3rd century a modest tomb set in a wall in the cemetery was venerated by Christians.

## *Liber Pontificalis*

“At the same time Constantine Augustus built the basilica of blessed Peter the Apostle in the shrine of Apollo and laid there the coffin with the body of the holy Peter; the coffin itself he enclosed on all sides with bronze, which is unchangeable; at the head 5 feet, at the feet, 5 feet, at the right side 5 feet, at the left side 5 feet, underneath 5 feet, and overhead 5 feet; thus he enclosed the body of blessed Peter the Apostle and laid it away.

And above he set porphyry columns for adornment and other spiral columns which he brought from Greece.

He made a vaulted apse in the basilica, gleaming with gold, and over the body of the blessed Peter, above the bronze which enclosed it, he set a cross of purest gold weighing 150 lbs,... and upon it were these words, ‘Constantine Augustus and Helena Augusta beautify with gold this royal house, which a court shining with like splendor surrounds.’”

Gifts of gold and silver candlesticks, lamps, chalices, jars, pitchers, patens.

Endowment of lands in the East acquired after 324



Saint Peters basilica--the most important church of Catholic Christendom--begun mid 320s consecrated 18 November 326.

The central pilgrimage site of Europe.

Charlemagne was crowned Roman emperor here by Pope Leo III in 800.

By the fifteenth century its condition had deteriorated and Pope Nicholas V decided to rebuild the church. Work was delayed; by 1506 under Pope Julius II demolition of the old church was under way. The work of Bramante and Michelangelo.

Beside the basilica of Peter was the Vatican Palace--began as a house used for state occasions, but not the papal residence--it became the main residence of the popes under Gregory IX in 1378 on his return from Avignon.

## Description

A basilica with a central nave flanked by 2 aisles on each side (a five-aisled basilica)

Note that the inner aisle was taller than the outer aisle.

The intersection of a transverse hall or transept created an appropriate location for the tomb of the Apostle. Symbolism of the cross. An apse to the west.

Note that the entrance of the basilica was to the east allowing the first rays of the morning sun to stream in.

Total length was 403 feet; the nave was 298 feet long; total width of nave and aisles was 208 feet; height was 104 feet (to horizontal roof beams or ties). 22 columns on each side for a total of 88 columns plus 4 at the end of each double aisle and 4 more in the transept for a total of 100 columns

Two-story elevation with trabeated colonnade and upper wall pierced by clerestory in 2:3 ration

Clerestory wall was quite thin (about 3 feet)

More description.

Saint Peters can be characterized as a thin-walled wooden-roof basilica.

Thin wall construction was daring and new for great public buildings which normally had thick walls. It was a bright building

Clerestory: 11 windows on each side, not necessarily aligned with intercolumniations--ie different rhythm in lower and upper nave.

Form of the roof is not known for certain. It may have been coffered or (more likely) open. The tie beams were over 80 feet in length. They would have been covered in gold.

It is not certain whether the double aisles on each side were covered with a single roof or whether the greater height of the inner aisle was apparent on the exterior.

The height of the transept is not known

## Decoration

The carved capitals and column shafts in Saint Peters were re-used from older buildings (*spolia*).

They were made of at least five materials: red granite from Aswan in upper Egypt; grey Egyptian granite; cipollino, a green-veined marble from Greece; portasanto, a mottled reddish marble from the Greek island of Chios, and Africano, a multi-colored (red, black, white) marble from Turkey

Decoration (in addition to the glistening marble columns candelabra etc) lent the interior a “gleaming” or “shining” appearance.

Imagine the basilica at night with hundreds of lamps flickering.

Constantine endowed Saint Peters with property in Egypt and the east that produced olive oil.

Didactic imagery not necessarily part of original scheme. Mosaic installed in the apse was probably a *traditio legis*--centrally-placed Christ handing scroll of authority to Peter and flanked by Paul on the other side. Nave walls were painted with scenes of Old and New Testaments

Around the fifth century Marianus, consul, donated a mosaic to cover upper façade. Elements of the Apocalypse--24 elders with crowns; the four symbolic beasts and the Lamb

## Inscriptions

1. On the cross above Saint Peters shrine:

EMPEROR CONSTANTINE AND EMPRESS HELENA/ THE HALL  
SURROUNDS THIS REGAL SHRINE (Domum) GLEAMING  
WITH LIKE SPLENDOR

2. On the triumphant arch:

BECAUSE WITH YOU AS LEADER THE WORLD TRIUMPHANT  
ROSE TO THE STARS/ VICTORIOUS CONSTANTINE  
DEDICATED THIS HALL TO YOU

3. On the apse wall:

SEAT OF JUSTICE, HOUSE OF FAITH, HALL OF MODESTY/ THIS  
WHAT YOU SEE, WHICH ALL PIETY POSSESSES/WHICH  
REJOICES, RENOWNED, IN THE VIRTUES OF THE FATHER  
AND THE SON/ AND EQUALS ITS AUTHOR IN THE PRAISES  
OF HIS PARENT.

## Function and liturgy

Saint Peters was a funerary church built to enshrine the tomb of the Apostle; to accommodate commemorative rituals including funeral banquets and to allow Christians to be buried close to him (*ad sanctos*). The focal point was not the altar but the structure that marked the site of the tomb.

The form of the structure is recorded in an image on the ivory casket from Pola (now in Venice) made c. 400 to carry relics back from Rome.

Pilgrims could enter the enclosure and even lean into the shrine and introduce a piece of cloth that could touch the tomb and thus itself become a relic.

The twisted columns were *spolia*, from a sumptuous eastern palace. By the 12th century they were thought to come from Solomon's Temple

Wealthy people might be buried in close proximity to the tomb: the sarcophagus of the prefect of Rome, Junius Bassus, was found in Saint Peters around 1595

## Saint Peters: Function (cont)

Around 400 the Emperor Honorrius built a round mausoleum attached to the south transept with 8 niches for members of his family, starting with his wife Maria. The floor of the nave was covered with tomb slabs.

In the 4th century the principal use was to house commemorative rituals for those who were buried there, from private family meals to huge gatherings. Public masses were said on Saint Peters day, June 29 when the Pope said mass first at Saint Peters, then at Saint Pauls across the Tiber. Baptisms perhaps also performed on that day.

The need to find a way to engage the attention of a rowdy audience addressed in a famous letter from Paulinus of Nola written around 400:



C. 395 Letter of Paulinus of Nola to his friend Nicetas on the decoration of his church of Saint Felix, Nola, southern Italy.

“What crowds the glory of St Felix drives hither, is unknown to none: the majority of the crowd here, however, are peasant people, not devoid of religion but unable to read. These people, for long accustomed to profane cults, in which their belly was their God, are at last converted into proselytes for Christ while they admire the works of the saints in Christ open to everybody’s gaze.

“Therefore it seemed to us useful work gaily to embellish Felix’s houses all over with sacred paintings in order to see whether the spirit of the peasants would not be surprised by the spectacle and undergo the influence of the colored sketches which are explained by inscriptions over them, so that the script may make it clear what the hand has exhibited.

“

Maybe that, when they all in turn show and reread to each other what has been painted, their thoughts will turn more slowly to eating, while they saturate themselves with a fast that is pleasing to the eyes, and perhaps a better habit will thus in their stupifaction take root in them, because of the painting artfully diverting their thoughts from their hunger

When one reads the saintly histories of chaste works, virtue induced by pious examples steals upon one: he who thirsts is quenched with sobriety, the result being a forgetting of the desire for too much wine.”

## Saint Peters, function (continued)

By the sixth century the function of the basilica had changed and more masses were held there. Gregory I had the apse changed to allow the main altar, now elevated, to exist directly above Saint Peter's shrine. The shrine remained available through a window set in the chancel floor and by means of a curving passage way (annular crypt) below floor level

- The concept of “iconography” in architecture was developed by Richard Krautheime to address the question of how a building takes on meaning. It takes on meaning through visual references made by its architectural forms--*what it looks like*.
- Buildings, look like many things (a boat; a forest) but above all, they look like other buildings.
- Churches achieve their affect by distinguishing themselves from mundane buildings like houses and by referring visually to other churches.
- Saint Peters set up the most powerful model of prototype for the religious architecture of western Europe for the next eight hundred years. It was copied repeatedly.
- 385, the church of Saint Paul outside the walls (on the Ostian way) was begun. A “copy” of Saint Peters