

Gothic Art History

1150 - 1500 A.D

Background

GOTHIC ART dominated Europe from 1100 AD to 1500 AD and became the most popular form of art.

It was focused on communicating the notion that humanity was moving out of the Dark Ages and into the light of civility, aka modern civilization.

It was a time of both architectural and engineering achievement. Gigantic stone structures rose upward toward God. It was the “AGE OF CATHEDRALS”.



The Cathedral: Broken Down

EXTERIOR

Twin Bell Towers

Rose Window:

The rose is a symbol of Our Lady, Mary Mother of Jesus

Pointed Arches:

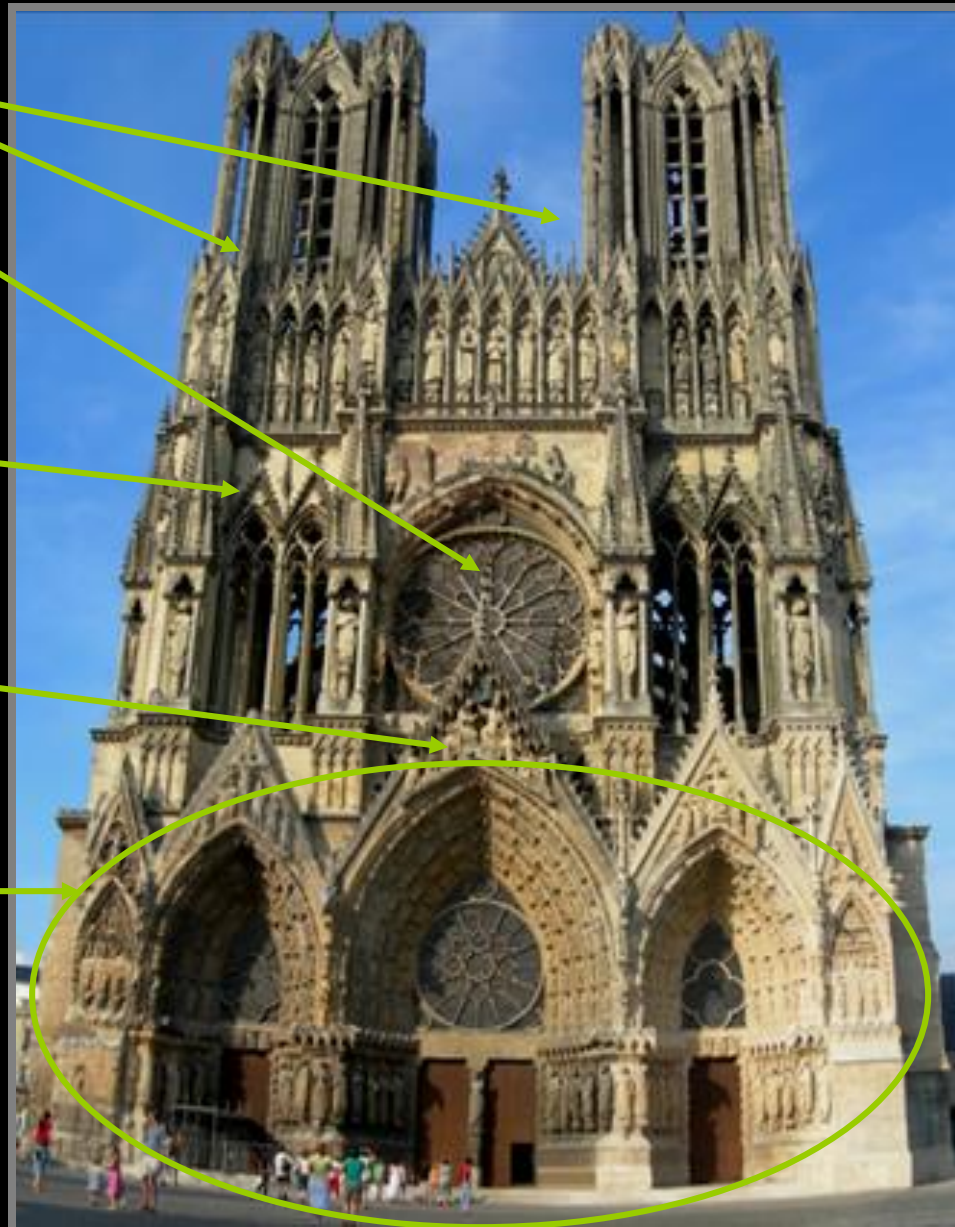
To help direct weight downwards

Pointed Arches:

As decorative motif to accent height

Triple Front Portals:

Much embellished with sculpture & architectural ornamentation



Gothic Cathedrals were airy, built vertically into the sky so that they rose over the cities.

As religion was a focal point in people's lives, the cathedral was the heart of the city.

The cathedral was a source of local pride and inspired devotion.

Exterior

The vertically soaring architecture was made possible with new engineering techniques.

Solid walls dissolved and become lighter, thinner and taller and were pierced by large windows. Instead of having thick walls with massive interior supports - as in Romanesque style, Gothic churches were made of "exoskeletons". In other words, the church itself was like a skeleton with the walls and windows decorating the outside.

The weight of the construction was transferred from the interior to the exterior by the flying buttress system. This consisted of heavy external piers and a stone bridge that crossed over the side aisles.

An ornamental masonry Pinnacle capped the pier adding to the downward thrust of the weight from the walls & heavy stone roofs.



Gothic Support System

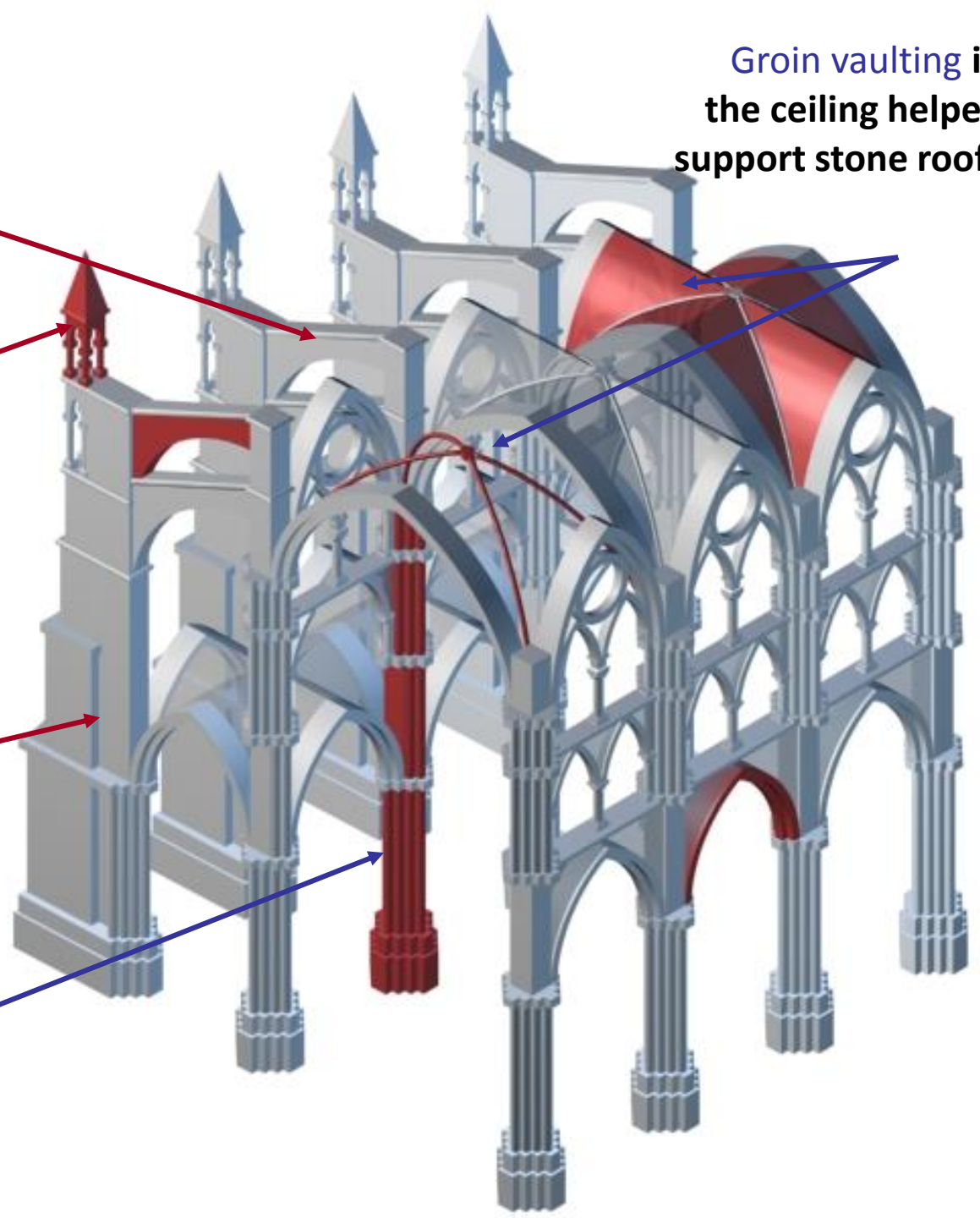


Groin vaulting in the ceiling helped support stone roofs

FLYING BUTTRESS

PINNACLE

EXTERIOR PIER



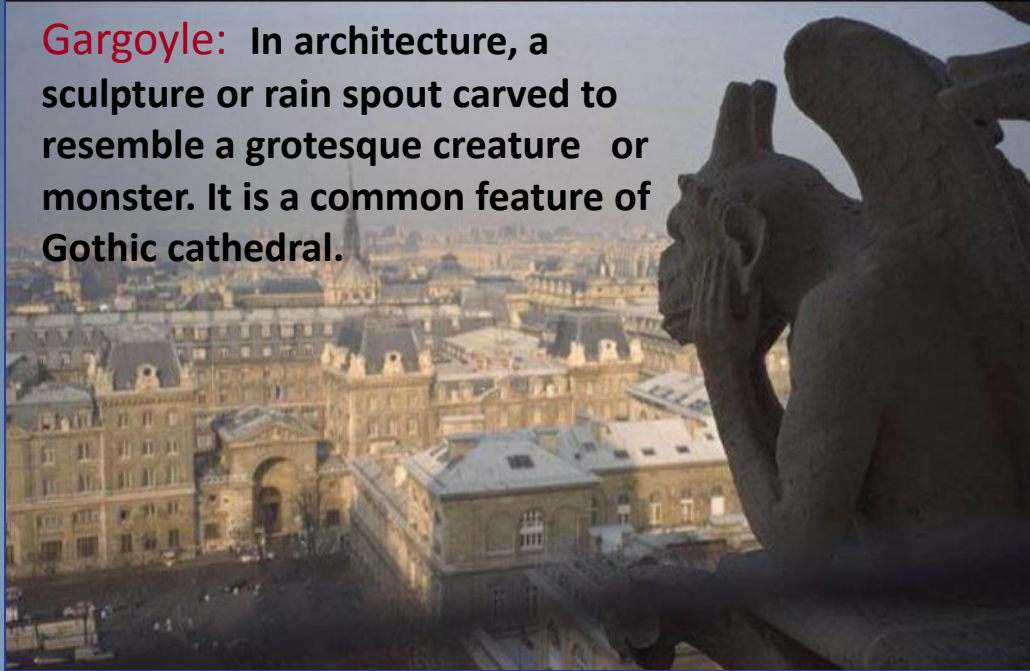
Interior pier/columns carved with vertical lines to emphasize height



Notre Dame, Paris
: **Gargoyles**



Gargoyle: In architecture, a sculpture or rain spout carved to resemble a grotesque creature or monster. It is a common feature of Gothic cathedral.





Interior

The interior of the cathedral is very dramatic with its soaring columns and vaulting. It is inside that the height of the cathedral can be appreciated, as the different levels of windows can be seen.





Vaulting

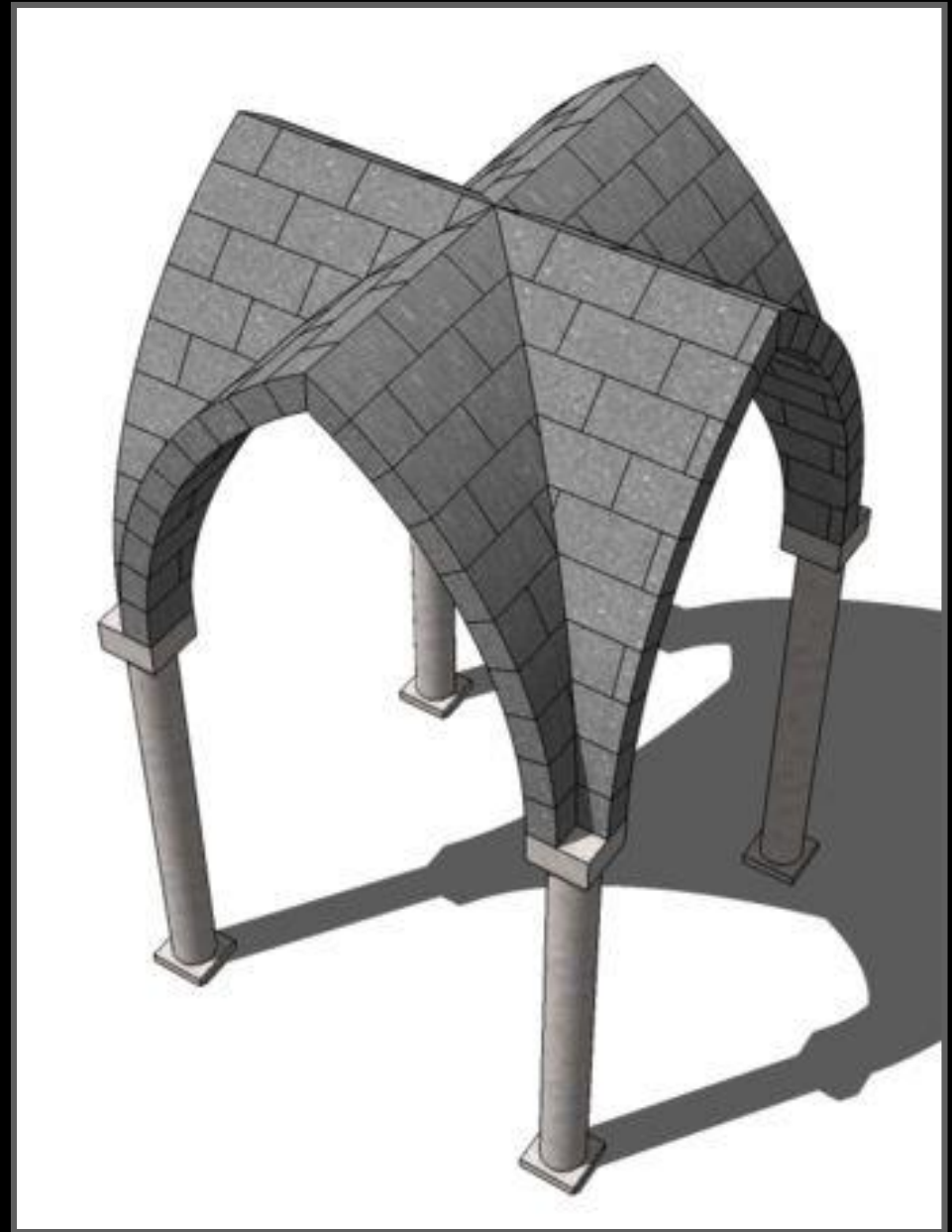
GROIN VAULT

A vault is a ceiling of brick, stone, or concrete built in the principle of the arch.

If a barrel vault is intersected at right angles by another barrel vault of the same size, a groin vault is formed.

This is a very efficient & cost saving form of vaulting because less materials & labor was needed to construct them.

Groin vaulting reached its ultimate expression in Gothic architecture.



Vaulting

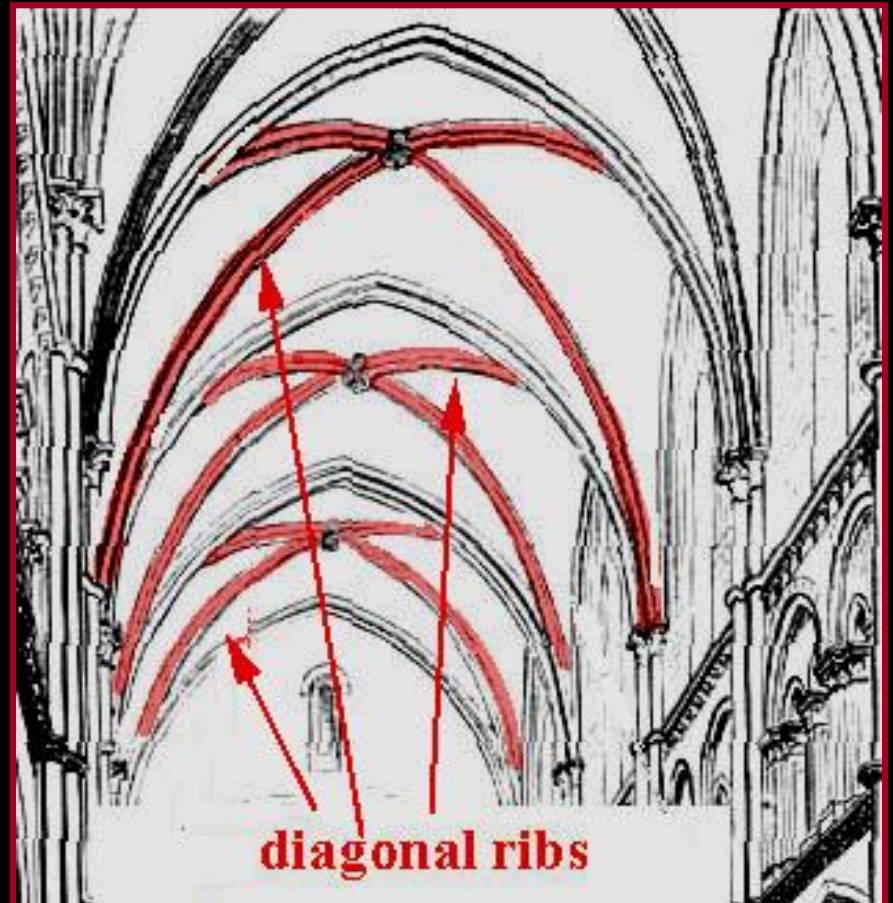
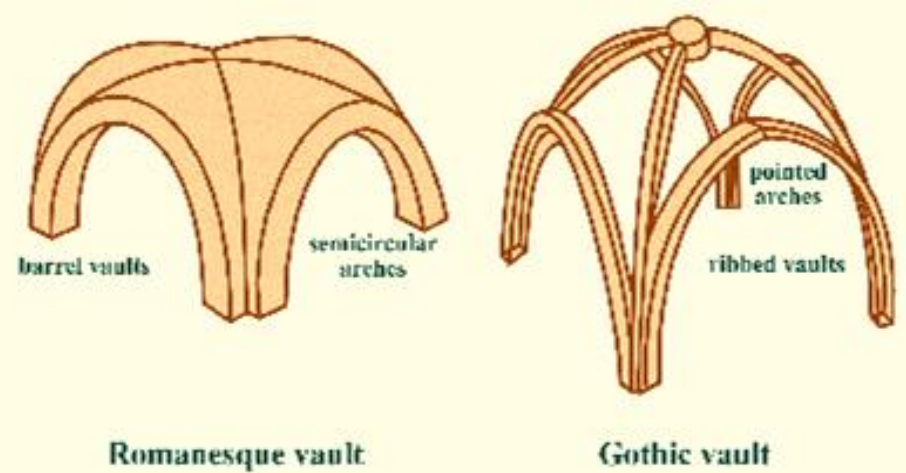
RIB VAULT

As the Gothic era progressed, the RIB VAULT replaced the plain groin vault.

Ribbed vaulting functions similarly to groined vaulting, except that it is reinforced with ribs, and can be made much thinner.

The rib vault uses a diagonally reinforced arch (the “ribs”) resting on thin pillars, permitting the walls to be hollowed out and filled with windows, while also allowing the vaults to extend higher.

As the Gothic era progressed, vaulting became increasingly complex.









**Gothic Ambulatory with
radiating chapels**

Gothic Sculpture



To accent the soaring heights & pointed archways of Gothic cathedrals, sculptors elongated the figures. The tippy-toed stance of figures still retained the rigidity of Romanesque art but projected out more from the walls.



Each of the biblical figures stands on a tiny platform projecting from a tall, thin pillar.

Formal, stiff-looking

To suit the tall architecture, their bodies are impossibly elongated within the tumbling pleats of their full-length robes.

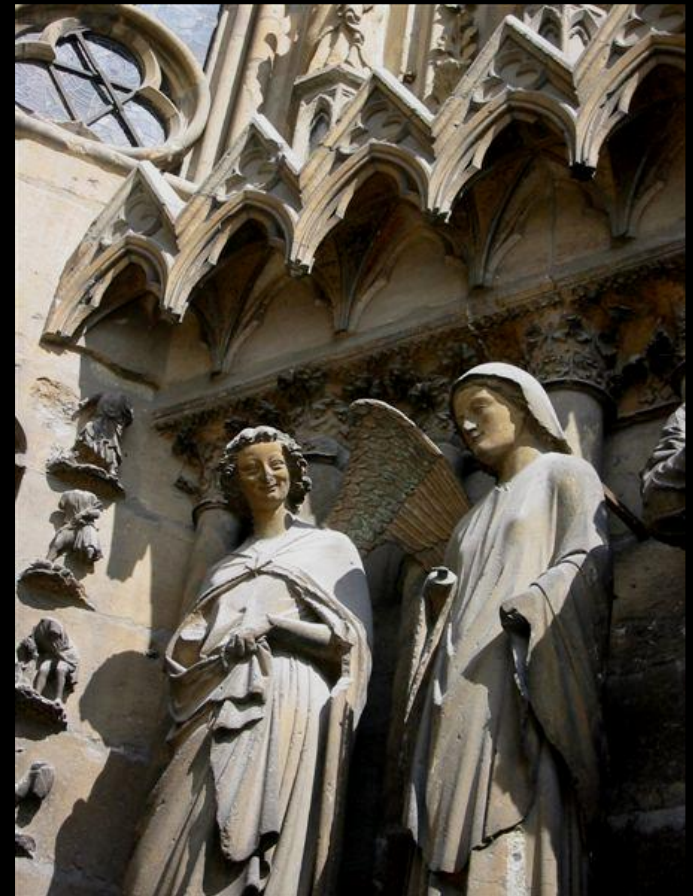
Western entrance to Notre Dame

High Gothic Sculpture

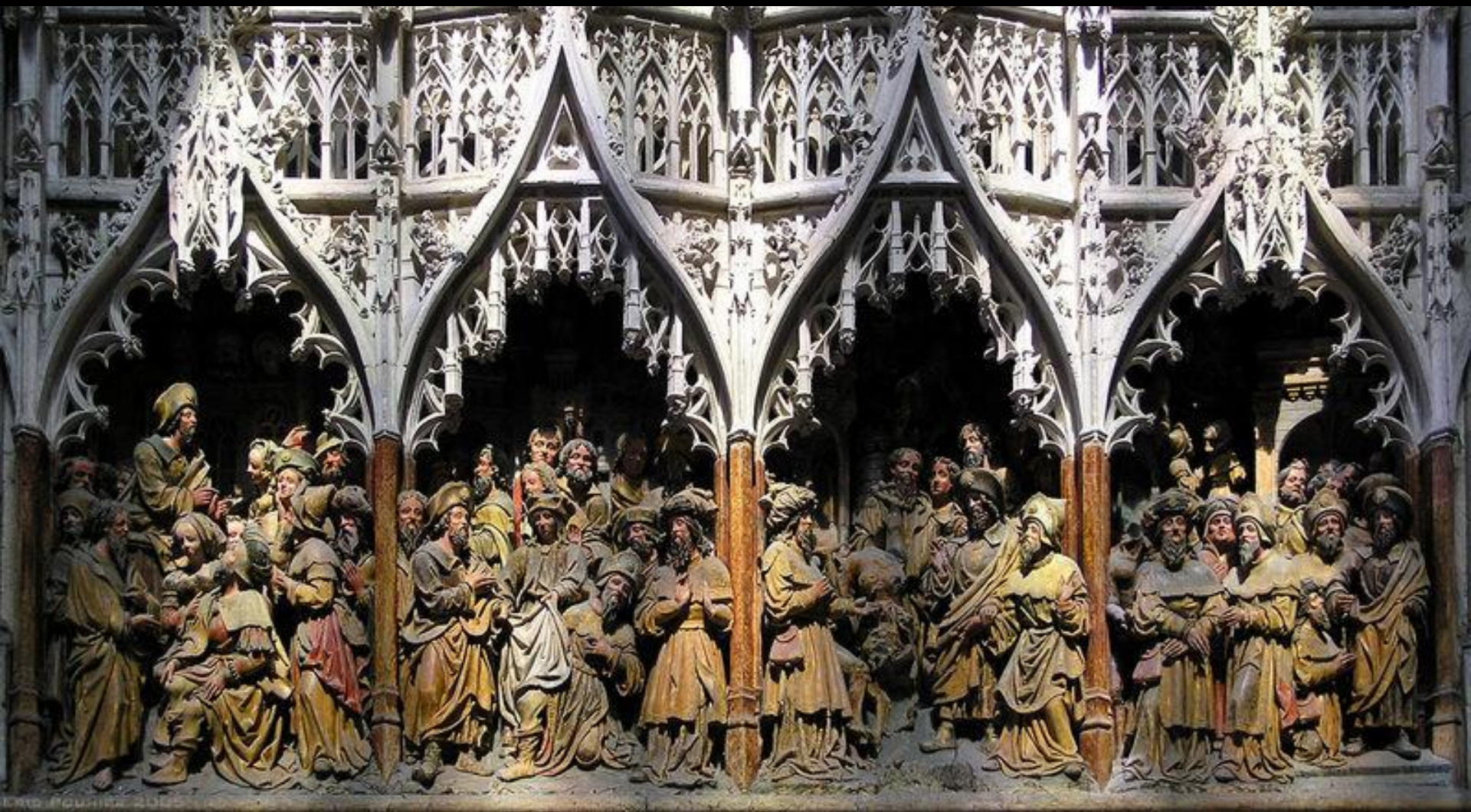


Strong S-curves, richly flowing draperies, curling hair and beards typified the gracefulness of the 'elegant style' of High Gothic sculpture

Higher Relief



Figures for the Northern Portal created fifty years later display fuller bodies & even more individuality.



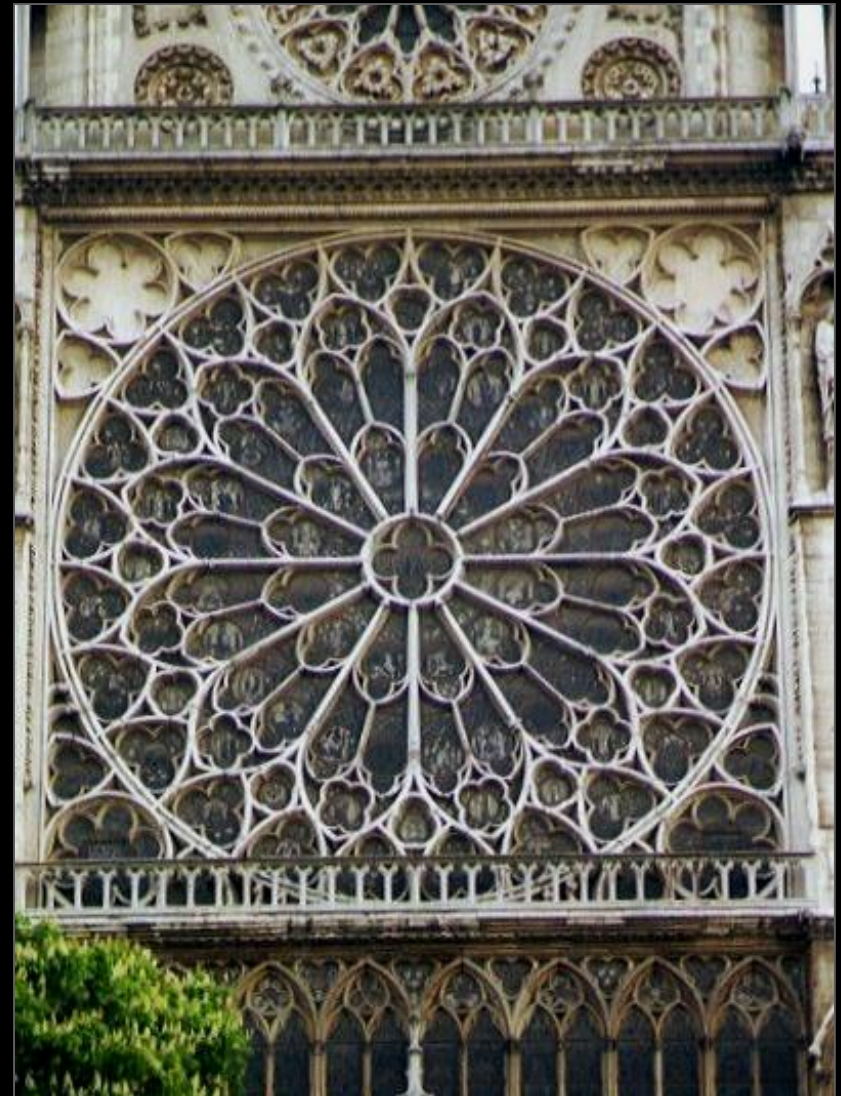
High Gothic Sculpture



High Gothic Tympanum



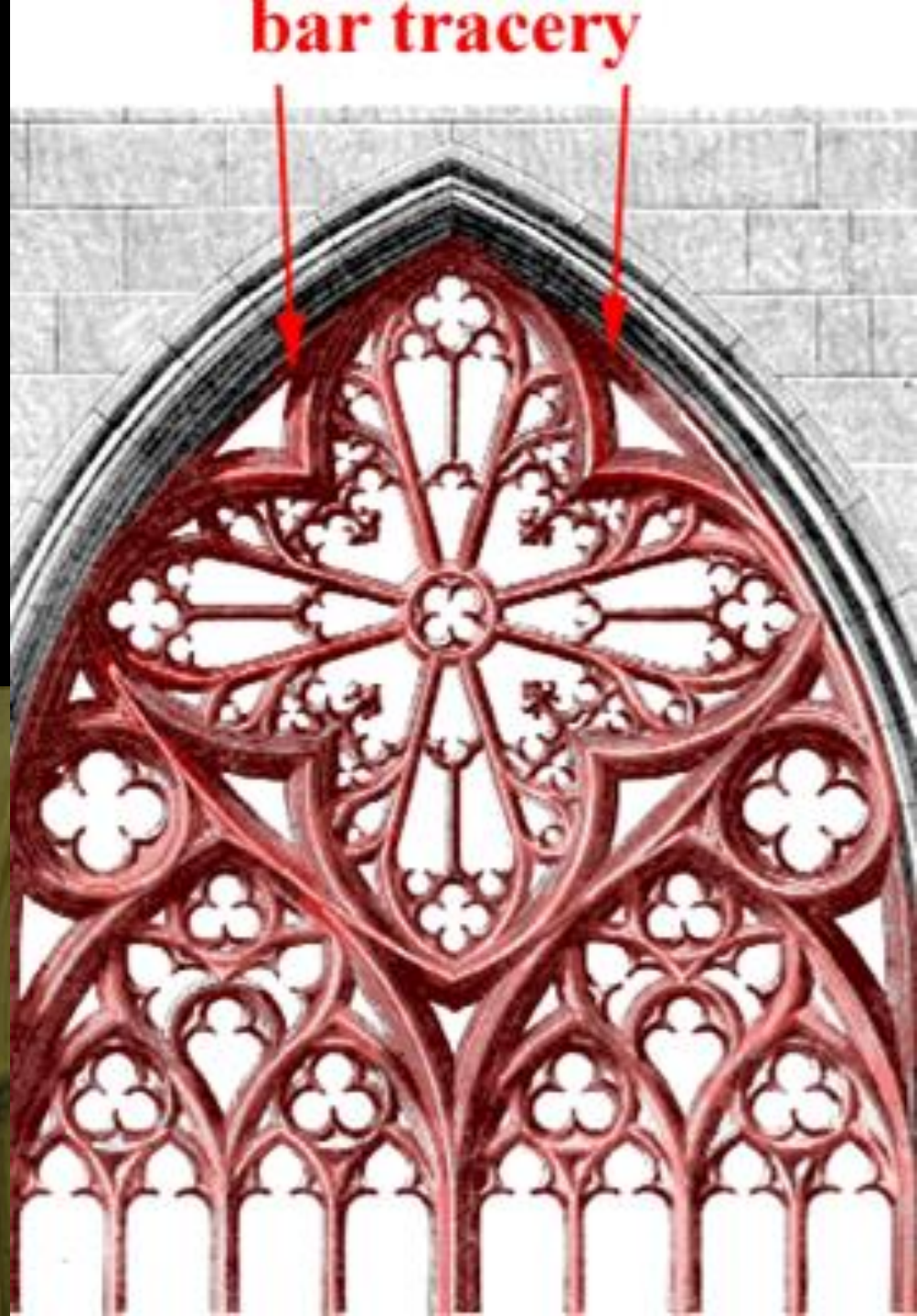
Rose Window



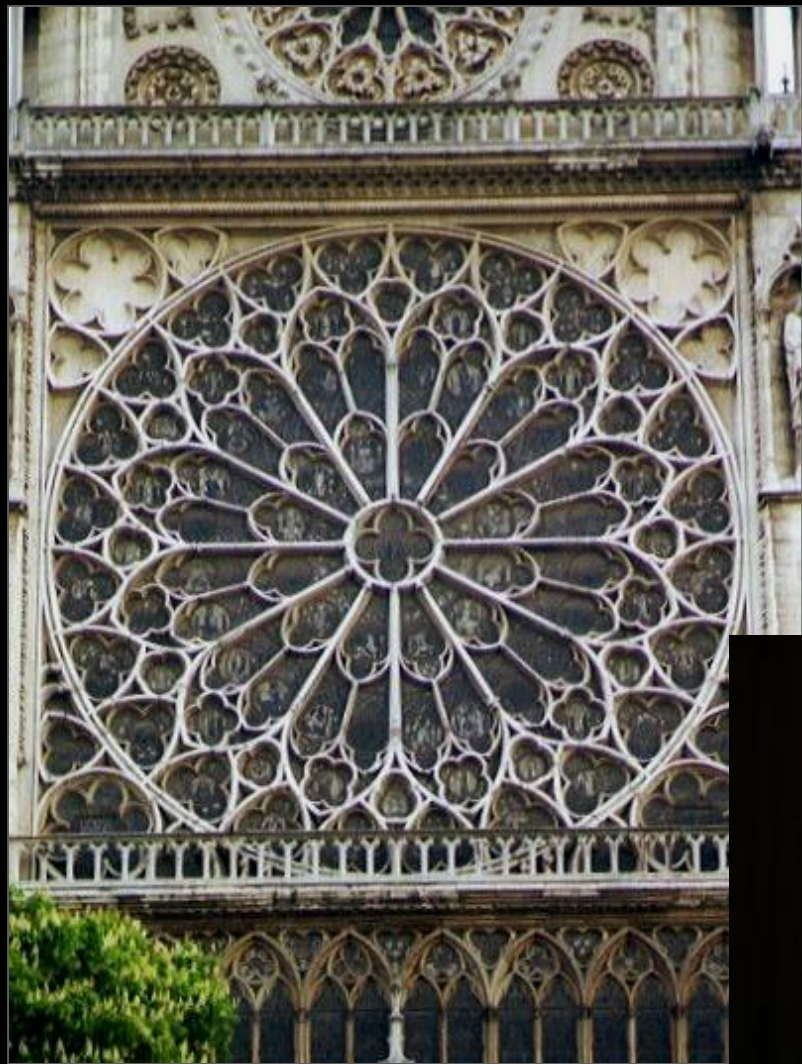
Bar Tracery

Is a pattern of interlacing black ribs carved or formed from stone encasing pieces of coloured glass.

This symbolically patterned stonework was needed to **hold the stained glass panels in place.**







Bar Tracery









Italian Gothic

Compared to the soaring height of French Gothic cathedrals with their use of flying buttresses, Italian Gothic cathedrals are shorter in stature and don't always include flying buttresses.

Milan Cathedral enhanced with thousands of ornaments and statues.





Thousands of statues and ornaments of the Milan Cathedral





KEN
KOMINESKY
PHOTOGRAPHY

Interior of the Milan Cathedral

Church of San Francesco (St. Frances)

Assisi, Italy

ITALIAN GOTHIC



The Florence Cathedral

The Florence Cathedral is a **typical Italian Gothic church** because of its **shorter stature, and absence of flying buttresses and window filled walls.**

- French styled Gothic churches had **flooding light** through **many windows**
- Italian style had **smaller windows, light** was **less vital** to spiritual ambience
- **Both featured rose windows, sculptures and pointed arches** as decoration
- **Italian Gothic cathedral tympanums** are **often filled with mosaics or frescos** instead of relief carvings



The Florence Cathedral: Exterior





Florence Cathedral Interior



Italian Gothic Painting

- ❖ Italian artists continued working in a manner influenced by Byzantine art.
- ❖ These Byzantine characteristics:
 - ❖ elongated figures in formal stiff static poses
 - ❖ simplified detail
 - ❖ rich colors
 - ❖ flat linear composition
 - ❖ Christian symbols
- ❖ Paintings rather than huge stained glass window illuminations were the primary form of religious devotion in Italy. This was due to their retention of the basilica style churches that did not feature large windows. Therefore there was lots of wall space for paintings.
- ❖ The image is of an enthroned Virgin on a gold background (common theme)



Cimabue

The Virgin and Child Enthroned and Surrounded by Angels, c. 1280 Tempera on wood



Image floats on gold
background
(Byzantine influence
lingers)

**Madonna and Child, ca.
1326**
Simone Martini Tempera
on panel

No bones!



Simone Martini

The Angel and the Annunciation

1333

Tempera on panel

- **Elaborate frame with pointed gothic arches**

- lilies symbolize Mary's virginity (4 the number of gospels)

- **What has changed is the more natural positions & emotional element of Mary's surprised distress**



Romanesque vs. Gothic Architecture: How to Tell Them Apart

	Romanesque	Gothic
Emphasis	Horizontal	Vertical
Elevation	Modest height	Soaring
Layout	Multiple units	Unified, unbroken space
Main Trait	Rounded arch	Pointed arch
Support system	Piers, walls	Exterior buttresses
Engineering	Barrel and groin vaults	Ribbed groin vault
Ambiance	Dark, solemn	Airy, bright
Exterior	Simple	Richly decorated with sculpture