

FILM 2- ROMANESQUE ART

Focus : Notre-Dame la Grande at Poitiers, a new architecture

The church of Notre-Dame la Grande at Poitiers, in the Vienne region, is one of the most famous Romanesque monuments of Poitou-Charentes.

Documented as early as the 10th century, it combined the functions of a parish church (for the residents of the parish) and a collegiate church (served by the clergy and the canons). It was rebuilt from 1030 to 1080. Its design and its stone cover are examples of the new religious architecture that developed in the 11th century.

Built above a crypt, the choir was built on an innovative design : it is surrounded by a deambulatory (a half-circular hall) which gives out onto three chapels. This created space for more altars, thereby making additional room for the prayer services of the canons, for whom the space was reserved.

The nave, which welcomed the parishioners, had to be well-structured. While building it, the constructors decided to create a vault. They covered the central nave with a barrel vault arch and side cross-vaults that nearly rise to the same height. This type of covering, which became often used in Poitou, created a reciprocal counter-buttressing of the vaults.

The main decor of the 11th century church, the religious message, was then painted. Created in the second half of the century, the paintings subsist in the crypt and on the choir's vault, representing the Virgin with Child, Christ in Glory, the Lamb and the apostles. The paintings in the nave date back to the 19th century.

Decorative sculptures adorn the capitals of the pillars. They are inspired by Antiquity (Corinthian capitals) in the choir, and evolve into original plant motifs in the nave. Among the rare figurative capitals, a remarkable sculpture depicting the Ascent of Christ is the oldest historiated capital of the Poitou

Romanesque treasures of Poitou-Charentes, Nouvelle Aquitaine region, 2014.

www.romanesquetreasures.com

www.tresorsromans.fr

region.

The current facade was created from 1115 to 1130, following the extension of the nave to the west. It displays a remarkable sculpted ensemble, which testifies to the developments in sculpture in the 12th century. The sculpted scenes, which are exceptional due to their great number and quality, are an affirmation of the Christian faith and prominently display religious scenes. The most famous sculpture is a frieze on the ground level that illustrates the story of the Incarnation, from Adam and Eve to the Childhood of Christ.



Illustration 1 : *The church of Notre-Dame la Grande at Poitiers.*

© Région Nouvelle-Aquitaine, inventaire du patrimoine culturel / G. Beauvarlet, 2009.

Romanesque treasures of Poitou-Charentes, Nouvelle Aquitaine region, 2014.

www.romanesquetreasures.com

www.tresorsromans.fr



Illustration 3 : *Facade of the church.*

© Région Nouvelle-Aquitaine, inventaire du patrimoine culturel / G. Beauvarlet, 2013.



Illustration 2 : *The richly decorated arch of the main portal on the church's facade.*

© Région Nouvelle-Aquitaine, inventaire du patrimoine culturel / G. Beauvarlet, 2012.

Romanesque treasures of Poitou-Charentes, Nouvelle Aquitaine region, 2014.

www.romanesquetreasures.com

www.tresorsromans.fr



Illustration 4 *Detail of the frieze on the church's facade, depicting many scenes from the Old Testament..* © Région Nouvelle-Aquitaine, inventaire du patrimoine culturel / G. Beauvarlet, 2009.



Illustration 5 : *Detail of the frieze on the church's facade, depicting the Nativity scene.* © Région Nouvelle-Aquitaine, inventaire du patrimoine culturel / G. Beauvarlet, 200.

Romanesque treasures of Poitou-Charentes, Nouvelle Aquitaine region, 2014.

www.romanesquetreasures.com

www.tresorsromans.fr



Illustration 6 : *The church's nave, seen from the entrance, facing the choir.* © Région Nouvelle-Aquitaine, inventaire du patrimoine culturel / J. Bonneau, 2013.



Illustration 7 : *The choir of the church of Notre-Dame la Grande at Poitiers.* © Région Nouvelle-Aquitaine, inventaire du patrimoine culturel / A. Dagorn, 1995.



Illustration 5 : *The mural paintings on the semi dome vault in the church's choir.* © Région Nouvelle-Aquitaine, inventaire du patrimoine / G. Beauvarlet, 2012.



Illustration 9 : *The crypt at the church of Notre-Dame la Grande.*
© Région Nouvelle-Aquitaine, inventaire du patrimoine / A. Dagorn, 1995.



Illustration 10 : A capital in the deambulatory at the church of Notre-Dame la Grande, representing the Ascent of Christ. © Région Nouvelle-Aquitaine, inventaire du patrimoine / A. Dagorn, 1995.