

The *Rinceau* Design, the Minor Arts and the *St. Louis Psalter*

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Abstract

Suzanne C. Walsh: *The Rinceau Design, the Minor Arts and the St. Louis Psalter*
(Under the direction of Dr. Jaroslav Folda)

The *Saint Louis Psalter* (Bibliothèque National MS Lat. 10525) is an unusual and intriguing manuscript. Created between 1250 and 1270, it is a prayer book designed for the private devotions of King Louis IX of France and features 78 illustrations of Old Testament scenes set in an ornate architectural setting. Surrounding these elements is a heavy, multicolored border that uses a repeating pattern of a leaf encircled by vines, called a *rinceau*. When compared to the complete corpus of mid-13th century art, the *Saint Louis Psalter's rinceau* design has its origin outside the manuscript tradition, from architectural decoration and metalwork and not other manuscripts. This research aims to enhance our understanding of Gothic art and the interrelationship between various media of art and the creation of the complete artistic experience in the High Gothic period.

For my parents.

Table of Contents

List of Illustrations.....	v
Chapter	
I. Introduction.....	1
II. Manuscripts.....	11
III. Architectural Sculpture.....	18
IV. Decorative Arts.....	26
V. Conclusion.....	35
Illustrations.....	38
Bibliography.....	54

List of Illustrations

Figure

1: Saint Louis Psalter, folio 8v.....	38
2: Saint Louis Psalter, folio 2r.....	38
3: Saint Louis Psalter, folio 28r.....	38
4: Saint Louis Psalter, folio 46.....	38
5: Bibliotheque nationale de France MS Latin 1075, folio 16 v.....	38
6: Gerold Missal, folio 18.....	38
7: Lille 37, folio 5v (and detail).....	39
8: St. Etienne MS 104, folio 72v detail.....	39
9: Saint Louis Psalter, folio 74, top and bottom border.....	39
10. Martyrologue d'Usuard, folio 69v.....	40
11: Bibliotheque nationale MS Latin 16722 folio 41.....	40
12: Sainte-Chapelle Evangeliary, folio 101.....	40
13: Isabella Psalter, folio 3v.....	41
14: Isabella Psalter, folio 70v.....	41
15: Reims Cathedral. Columns.....	42
16: Reims Cathedral. West end, interior.....	42
17: Reims Cathedral. Western central portal, left side.....	43

18: Sainte-Chapelle. Upper chapel, western portal.....	43
19: Sainte-Chapelle. Upper chapel, western portal. Detail.....	44
20: Sainte-Chapelle. Lower chapel, column detail.....	44
21: Sainte-Chapelle Lower chapel, detail.....	45
22: Sainte-Chapelle Lower chapel, detail of Fig. 21.....	45
23: Amiens Cathedral Interior detail.....	46
24: Amiens Cathedral. Row of kings, western facade.....	46
25: Amiens Cathedral Western facade. Detail.....	46
26: Amiens Cathedral. Western central portal.....	47
27: Amiens Cathedral. Western central portal.....	47
28: Amiens Cathedral. Southern portal.....	47
29: Amiens Cathedral. Southern portal.....	48
30: Stained glass from Troyes Cathedral.....	48
31: Stained glass from Sainte-Chapelle.....	48
32: Part of a buskin.....	49
33: Jesse Cope.....	49
34: "The Flagellation": Embroidered Panel from an Altarpiece.....	49
35: St.-Aignan-Sur-Cher, crypt chapel.....	50
36: Church of Saint-Jean-Baptiste. South wall.....	50
37: Pierpont Morgan Library Glazier 25. folio 2.....	51
38: Book cover.....	51
39: Coffret medallion.....	52
40: Tomb of Effigies of John and Blanche of France.....	52

41: Detail of Fig. 40.....	53
42: Book Cover, the Crucifixion.....	53

Introduction

The border of the *Saint Louis Psalter*¹ differs from other French Gothic manuscript decoration, taking after architectural and metallurgic ornament of thirteenth-century France. Created between 1254 and 1270, the *Saint Louis Psalter* is a private devotional book of psalms commissioned by and for King Louis IX of France. The royal family commissioned two other psalters during this time: the *Isabella Psalter* and the *Leiden Saint Louis Psalter*,² which have similar formal elements and ornamentation. The *Saint Louis Psalter* from the Bibliothèque nationale de France features, in addition to the text of the psalms, 78 introductory illustrations of Old Testament scenes painted in an ornate architectural setting [Fig. 1]. Surrounding these elements is a heavy, multicolored border, which uses a repeating pattern of an ivy leaf encircled by vines called *rinceau*. [Fig. 2] The *rinceau* was a popular decoration originating in Classical Rome and spreading East to Byzantium and India and westward across Europe.³ The inspiration for the *Saint Louis Psalter*'s thick border of *rinceau* originated outside the manuscript tradition of France given its deviation from the corpus of mid-thirteenth century Parisian art. This paper is an examination of visual sources for the *Saint Louis Psalter*'s border from other art forms in thirteenth-century France. This *rinceau* design appears frequently in multiple media besides manuscript painting during this

¹Bibliothèque national de France MS Latin 10525.

²Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Library MS 300 and Rijksuniversiteit te Leiden, Bibliotheek MS Latin 76A respectively.

³Trilling, James. *The Language of Ornament*. London: Thames & Hudson, Ltd., 2001.

time, gaining increased botanical fidelity over time, but it manifested itself in different ways. Enameled metalwork and architectural decoration used the *rinceau* decoration for borders and horizontal dividers, while manuscript painting lacked any *rinceau* before the mid-twelfth century. Instead of being used in borders, *rinceau* in manuscripts is used primarily in decorated initials. The use of the *rinceau* border in the *Saint Louis Psalter* is more similar to that used in church decoration and in the frames of manuscript covers. Like the borders used in architecture and metalwork, the border of the *Psalter* serves to demarcate inside from outside, and the sacred from the profane.

Modern study of the *Saint Louis Psalter* begins with analysis of the work of Robert Branner and Harvey Stahl, the primary scholars of the *Psalter* over the last twenty-five years.⁴ Both writers, as well as the scholars before them, focus primarily on the figural decoration of the *Psalter*. They also base their research on comparison with other manuscripts, ignoring the rampant cross-pollination of motifs and decoration across the various arts and the artificiality of the division of the arts from one another, given that they all were employed in the decoration of Gothic churches. The expansion of the artistic canon beyond manuscript painting results in a more comprehensive understanding of the development of motifs in the *Saint Louis Psalter* and in Gothic art in general.

Robert Branner, in his comprehensive study of manuscript painting in Paris during the mid-thirteenth century, incorporates scholarship of the *Psalter* into a greater narrative about the development of manuscript painting. In Branner's opinion, the *Psalter* is one of a number

⁴Robert Branner, *Manuscript painting in Paris during the reign of Saint Louis: a study of styles* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977). and Harvey Stahl, *Picturing kingship :history and painting in the Psalter of Saint Louis* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008). Please see their bibliographies for other earlier works on the *Psalter*.

of manuscripts from the Sainte-Chapelle Atelier, a group of artists who worked together to create royally-commissioned manuscripts, including works for Louis IX's palace chapel, the Sainte-Chapelle. Branner posits that the *Psalter* was created by several workshops working in tandem because of its massive visual program. In addition, Branner identifies several artists that he believes worked on other, earlier pieces before working on either the *Psalter* figures or border.

In contrast to Branner, Harvey Stahl bases his examination of the *Saint Louis Psalter* on painstaking examination of just the physical document of the *Psalter*. He reaffirms Branner's working assumptions that the *Psalter* represents a work of art with personal meaning to the king.⁵ In his examination of the iconography of the *Psalter*, Stahl wishes to draw parallels between the images chosen for the *Psalter*'s illustration and Louis' vision of the holy king⁶ as well as between the *Psalter* and the *Bibles moralis es* commissioned by Louis' mother.⁷

The analysis in this paper differs from that of Stahl and Branner and the works of previous scholars as it will exclusively examine the border of the *Psalter* illustrations and not the Biblical scenes or the architectural decoration. The study of the marginalia and the borders of manuscripts has been a fairly recent development in scholarship. Seminal works such as Randall's *Images in the Margins of Gothic Manuscripts*⁸ stress that the border or marginal imagery is as important for creating meaning as the imagery it encloses. In

⁵Harvey Stahl, *Picturing kingship: history and painting in the Psalter of Saint Louis* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008), 11.

⁶Ibid., 10.

⁷Ibid., 23.

⁸Lillian Randall, *Images in the Margins of Gothic Manuscripts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966).

addition, the study of ornament, especially in Gothic art, remains a relatively unexplored topic in art history. Most histories of style and ornamentation are glosses on the subject; the existing scholarship fails to document how and where ornamentation changes. Many art historians omit discussions of ornamentation in their work, thinking it a less crucial contributor of meaning to the work they are studying than the figures the border encloses. In the case of the *Saint Louis Psalter*, the foliate *rinceau* design provides a path into a different understanding of the work as a whole; the border is a gateway into the scenes presented within, indicating that they are holy in nature.

Louis IX was a French king known for his piety and dedication to the arts. Regarded as a saint and canonized in 1297.⁹ Louis led two crusades to the Levant, one in 1248 until 1254 and another in 1270 until his death not long after in Tunis. He was also responsible for the purchase and the transportation of priceless holy relics from Constantinople to Paris in the 1230's. In addition, Louis commissioned the Sainte-Chapelle, a private chapel for the royal family's use located in the palace on the Île de la Cité. A masterwork of the rayonnant style of Gothic architecture, the Sainte-Chapelle is an oversized reliquary box for the relics taken from Constantinople, such as the Crown of Thorns, a piece of the True Cross and the Image of Edessa, among others. Louis was known to be heavily involved in the details of the program of the Sainte-Chapelle. It was finished and the relics were installed in 1248 before Louis left on the Seventh Crusade. Both the Sainte-Chapelle and the *Saint Louis Psalter* feature artistic programs depicting Biblical warriors, which can be read as

⁹Stahl, Harvey. *Picturing kingship: history and painting in the Psalter of Saint Louis* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008), 6.

representing Louis' political agenda and self-image regarding the Seventh Crusade.¹⁰

The *Saint Louis Psalter's* border takes up a considerable portion of the illuminated image, approximately one quarter of its width. [Fig. 1, 9] The inside and the outside of the border are surrounded by a thin line of gold that helps separate the border from the architectural setting and the figures enclosed within it. The gold line also clearly separates the illuminations from the creamy white parchment of the page's margin. No elements from within the border, including the tree of Abraham (folio 7v) or the ladder of Jacob (folio 13v), overlap with the border or go beyond it. Each corner from folio 1 verso to folio 41 verso [Fig. 2] (not including folios 25 verso to 28 recto) features two monsters with long necks and tails and only two legs, a holdover design from the Romanesque period and before, called *lacertines*. From between the tails of these entwined dragons flow long, swirling vine designs with each spiral terminating with either a red or a blue ivy leaf. The remaining space is filled in with lavender or blue tendrils and gilded circles. From folio 43 verso through the rest of the manuscript, as well as the section from 25 verso to 28 recto [Fig. 3,4], the style of the *Psalter's* border is less complex with fewer colors and often omits the *lacertine* design.

Most of the background consists of blocks of pink or blue on which are painted and gilded lines making up the *rinseau* design. The rest of the *Psalter's* corners consist of boxes containing a stylized flower design, a tiny two-legged dragon, or a golden circle instead of the intertwined monsters. The change in styles is abrupt and radical, as if two different ateliers had completed their sections without any collaboration with one another. The second type of decoration has a rich history in the quill work of Parisian manuscripts. While the style

¹⁰Jordan, Alyce A. *Visualizing Kingship in the Windows of the Sainte-Chapelle*. Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2002.

of the second type of border poses its own questions, only the borders of folios 1 verso to 41 verso will be analyzed in this paper. The complex, multi-colored design in a wide frame of the first section of the full-page manuscript paintings represents a new stylistic development with precedents outside the artistic conventions of manuscript painting.

Evaluation of the *Psalter's* border begins with investigation of earlier and contemporaneous manuscripts. Not all thirteenth-century manuscript painting in Northern Europe makes use of full-page illustrations, using primarily initials or other marginal decorations instead [Fig 10, 11], which makes the *Psalter's* copious use of full-page illustrations the more notable. When full-page illustrations exist, the borders are primarily composed of simple ruled lines [Fig. 5]. Beyond that, books such as the *Gerold Missal* [Fig. 6] used interlacing bands and abstracted acanthus leaves.¹¹ The repeating design of emerging buds in the *Gerold Missal* is heavily stylized: the pattern has been greatly simplified and made more decorative so that the design bears little resemblance to the plant it is meant to resemble. Other manuscripts such as the *Romanesque Gospel Book of Abbot Wedricus* (c. 1147) make use of the Celtic and Northern European traditions of inhabited interlace.¹²

The closest manuscripts in style to the *Saint Louis Psalter* are the *Isabella Psalter*¹³ and the *Leiden Saint Louis Psalter*,¹⁴ which were created at the same time as the *Saint Louis Psalter*. They were also created for the French royal family, the *Isabella Psalter* likely for Louis' sister and the *Leiden Psalter* for Louis himself. They share stylistic similarities in

¹¹London, British Library, Additional 17742 folio 18.

¹²Societe Archeologique et Historique, Avesnes-sur-Helpe, France.

¹³Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Museum MS. 300.

¹⁴Rijksuniversiteit te Leiden, Bibliotheek MS. Lat. 76A.

border treatment but do not capture the same level of naturalism or artistic fidelity to nature.¹⁵ The search for the artistic parentage of the *Psalter's* naturalistic *rinceau* border design must extend beyond the manuscript tradition.

The border of the *Saint Louis Psalter*, with its accurately articulated illustration of ivy, relates to a greater trend towards naturalism in Gothic art. Botanical naturalism is present in much of the architectural decoration of Gothic churches; native plants such as watercress and hemlock appear on the compound piers and capitals, replacing classical acanthus leaves. The *Saint Louis Psalter* border also shows a certain relative naturalism in comparison to previous manuscript depictions of foliage, which tended to be very stylized acanthus leaves that bordered on abstracted arabesques. While colored in the *Psalter's* unnatural palette of red and blue, care has been taken to draw the primary veins of each red leaf. The alternating use of flat blue leaves and veined red leaves in the *Psalter* border creates a repeating pattern of alternating tops and undersides of leaves, with copious tendrils emerging from the undulating central vine.

As the decoration of several of the churches such as the Sainte-Chapelle --completed in 1248-- predate the painting of the *Psalter*, the incorporation of the ivy design in the *Psalter* implies a co-opting of stone-carving motifs found on walls, doorways and capitals. The use of an ivy border in a manuscript is meant to echo decoration in cathedrals, taking a decorative element frequently used in one medium and translating it to another medium. In a similar manner to the way in which the foliate decoration demarcates sections in a cathedral, the border of the *Saint Louis Psalter* enfolds and delineates the architectural setting from the

¹⁵This is in direct opposition to stylization. With naturalism, greater care is taken to accurately portray the item with as much detail. The more naturalistic an image of a plant is, the more readily it can be identified as a member of a particular group or species.

page.

An increase in the use of naturalistic foliage is present in a number of artifacts from a variety of different artistic media such as embroidery or stained glass. The relationship between the use of foliate decoration in these arts and in the *Psalter* is analyzed, in addition to the analysis of architectural decoration. Embroidery, stained glass and enamel work are under considered because during the High Gothic era, they were equally valued with painting and sculpture. All of these media were regarded as elements of the artistic program of the church they decorated. The different media reinforced the visual theme and the meaning; a tapestry or a chalice would not be displayed outside of the church for which they were commissioned. The creation of pieces of art meant to be individually examined and displayed with other, unrelated items is a modern construction, the Renaissance idea of the genius of the artist.

The visual affinity between the *Saint Louis Psalter* and book covers in ivory and metal is the most congruous. The use of a full-page illustration surrounded by a border is not a new concept in thirteenth-century manuscript illustration; it precedes the *Psalter* by over five hundred years.¹⁶ However, the tendency to use undulating foliate designs as a bordering decoration is a notable innovation. In contrast, there is a long tradition of using foliate designs in the borders of metal and ivory book covers, including examples from late Roman times. The visual translation from book cover to book interior is easy; both the border of a book cover and the *Psalter's* border create strong separations between frame and inner tableau. The visual affinity in both instances, including both frame and content, points to a relationship between these items. The format and decoration of the covers of ecclesiastical

¹⁶*Godescalc Evangelistary* (Paris, Bibliothèque national de France, NA.lat.1203), 8th c.

books had a strong impact on the formatting and decoration of the *Saint Louis Psalter*.

Hundreds of decorative objects share a visual affinity to the border of the *Saint Louis Psalter*. The items analyzed in this paper were selected because their formal elements, such as the *rinceau* design, strongly echo the *rinceau* in the *Psalter*. At the same time, works were chosen because they were representative of stylistic trends within their medium. Criteria for selection included the items' temporal and geographical affinity with the *Psalter*, Paris, and Louis IX. Through the study of these items, the minor arts are shown to have had great visual and cultural affinity with the ornamental design of the *Psalter*.

Specifically, Limoges champlevé enamel designs reveal the closest affinity to the *Psalter's rinceau* decoration, especially the designs for book cover borders. Champlevé is a type of enameled metalwork similar to cloisonné; rather than using wire soldered to a metal plate to define the boundaries of color as in cloisonné, champlevé utilizes lines and shallow cavities carved into copper plates. These cavities are filled with fragments of glass and fired at high temperatures, the surface polished and the exposed copper is gilded. Champlevé enamel work became a major industry for many Northern European cities because of both its beauty and its affordability. The city of Limoges became a center for enamel production in the mid-twelfth century, in part due to church and royal patronage.¹⁷ The small scale of Limoges enamels, the large number of items produced and the relative sturdiness of these items led to widespread exposure of Limoges enamel work throughout Europe. Owing to the popularity of champlevé enamel, the ornament and pictorial motifs used on Limoges-enameled items would also be well-known to many artists and patrons. Louis IX is known to

¹⁷Gauthier, Marie-Madeline. Émaux limousins champlevés des XIIe, XIIIe & XIVe siècles. Paris:G. Le Prat,1950.

have come in direct contact with Limoges enamel work: he commissioned a piece from Limoges in the form of plaques for the graves of his deceased children in the cathedral of St.-Denis.¹⁸ From the extensive collection of surviving objects, the repertoire of enamel design will be examined in comparison to the manuscript border ornament of the *Saint Louis Psalter*. The technique of the first portion of the *Psalter's* full-page decorations, with its use of small patches of variegated color and strong black outlines is reminiscent of the mottled color and golden lines produced by champlevé enamel. Study of Limoges enamel's stylistic traits has proven fruitful in the analysis of the *Psalter's* border and its possible origins.

Through the examination of thirteenth-century decorative items related to the *Saint Louis Psalter*, the development of its innovative border design is better understood. As the study of the marginalia of Gothic artworks has yielded new insights into Gothic art, so too can the study of trends in decorative art add meaning to an artwork. The ornamentation of a work is as important for creating meaning in an artwork as its figural depictions. The *rinceau* ornamentation of the border of the *Saint Louis Psalter* is connected to the traditions of minor art and architecture decoration as well as the tradition of manuscript painting.

¹⁸ O'Neill, John P., editor. *Enamels of Limoges: 1100-1350*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1996.

Manuscripts

By the middle of the thirteenth century, Paris had become a major center for manuscript production. The growing number of university students and lawyers – who needed written records for their practice -- increased the number of books being produced. Royal and aristocratic' desire for luxury books also contributed to the increased production of both secular and religious books.¹⁹ Given the number of books required, book production was no longer confined to monasteries. Book producers settled primarily in two areas of Paris: the rue Neuve Notre Dame on the Île de la Cité and the nearby area on the rue des Ecrivains on the Left Bank.²⁰ The increase in the number of manuscripts produced resulted in role specialization. Numerous independent craftsmen coordinated on a single project and a number of guilds sprang up to regulate each portion of manuscript production from parchment preparation to binding and illumination.²¹ For a large project such as the *Saint Louis Psalter*, two or more ateliers (or workshops) would have been necessary to handle the project. Robert Branner identifies six figure painters and nine border painters involved in the project (five for most of the decoration before folio 42, called “animal vines,” and four for

¹⁹Branner, Robert. “Manuscript Painting in Paris during the Reign of Saint Louis: A Study of Styles.” *California Studies in the History of Art*. Vol. 18. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977. 2.

²⁰Rouse, Richard H and Mary A. *Manuscripts and their Makers: Commercial Book Producers in Medieval Paris, 1200- 1500*. London: Harvey Miller Publishers, 2000, 19.

²¹Ibid., 7.

the gold pen work of the rest of the *Psalter*).²² The heterogeneity of styles and treatment in the *Saint Louis Psalter* came from the large number of artists working on the project along with the inexperience of the nascent field of bookmaking.

In *Manuscript Painting during the Reign of Saint Louis*, Robert Branner organizes Parisian manuscript painters into groups that share similar styles, which he labels as ateliers. These groupings are primarily based on the stylistic characteristics of the human figures, particularly their drapery, exclusive of the external decoration of the manuscript painting. Branner's assignment of ateliers may be correct based on figural style, but his assignment of ateliers for the border type is not convincing, if the works he cites are compared to the border of the *St. Louis Psalter*. Given that Branner was an expert in the field of manuscript painting, and the examples he gives are close to but not similar enough to the border of the *Saint Louis Psalter*, it leaves open the possibility that the artists responsible for the creation of the *Psalter's* border were not primarily manuscript painters. And the possibility exists that the inspiration for the decoration came from outside the manuscript tradition.

The works cited by Robert Branner are representative of the general range of manuscript illumination in France, especially Paris, during Louis IX's reign. Most of the works he includes in his papers have borders that have very simple decorative motifs while some are solid colors [Fig. 5, 6].²³ The majority of other frames have simple designs of keys, concentric circles or stylized acanthus leaves that form narrow borders around the figural work. Other page decorations include embellished initials and elaborate sections of

²² Branner, Robert. "Manuscript Painting in Paris during the Reign of Saint Louis: A Study of Styles." *California Studies in the History of Art*. Vol. 18. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977, 176.

²³ London, British Library MS Latin 1075; Paris, Bibliotheque national de France MS Additional 17742 folio 18.

decoration in the margin of the text. The decoration used in these manuscripts is primarily abstract, with seemingly little connection between itself and the rest of the manuscript. The absence of large botanical borders in these manuscripts implies that the border of the *Psalter* is an anomaly compared to mainstream thirteenth-century French manuscript painting practices.

When mentioning the *Saint Louis Psalter*, Branner briefly credits some of the work of the border to the Guines Atelier,²⁴ which moved to Paris from the north of France.²⁵ Branner, however, fails to provide evidence for this assertion. Given the examples presented as the work of the Guines Atelier,²⁶ Branner must be referring to the creatures in the atelier's works. Comparing the two-legged creature in the top left of the initial of the *St-Etienne* manuscript [Fig. 8]²⁷ to the creatures on the *Psalter's* f. 2r [Fig. 2], the similarity is only incidental. The ears of the *St-Etienne* creature are much larger and protrude from a wedge-shaped head; in contrast, the *Psalter* creatures have pear-shaped heads with tiny, recessed and rounded ears that do not extend beyond the outline of the head. While both creatures have only one set of legs, the structure of these legs is different. The legs of the *Psalter's* creatures are completely outlined and frequently colored a different tone from the torso; the lines drawn to suggest the leg's shape do not meet in the *St.-Etienne* creature, and the color of the

²⁴Branner, Robert. "Manuscript Painting in Paris during the Reign of Saint Louis: A Study of Styles." *California Studies in the History of Art*. Vol. 18. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977, 136.

²⁵Ibid., 69.

²⁶Paris, Bibliotheque national de France MS Additional 30045, f. 23; Lille, France, Bibliothèque municipale de Lille 37 [5], f. 5v; Oxford, Bodleian Library, Douce 48; f. 64. Paris, Bibliotheque national de France MS Latin 1246; Auxerre, France, Sainte-Etienne Cathedral MS 104, f. 72 v.

²⁷Auxerre, France, Sainte-Etienne Cathedral MS 104, f. 72 v.

creature is continued from the torso to the leg. The articulation of the leg is also different. The pastern from the back claw to the hock is longer and thinner in the *Psalter*, and the paw has longer, thinner paws with sharp claws.

The wyvern-like creatures of manuscript *Lille 37* [Fig. 7]²⁸ also do not resemble the *Psalter's* creatures. The head of the *Lille* creature has long pointed ears and muzzle. The legs lack the attention to detail of the *Psalter* creatures' legs, with fewer joints depicted and the legs awkwardly stuck onto the body of the creature; the legs of a *Psalter* creature accurately resemble the back legs of a stoat or fox, whereas the legs of the *Lille* creature are more schematic. The style of the *Lille* and *St.-Etienne* manuscript decorations, especially the creatures, do not make a convincing argument that they share an artist with the *Saint Louis Psalter*.

In contrast, the presence of both beasts and less abstracted plants makes the *Ste.-Chapelle* Group (discussed below) rather than the Guines atelier more likely to be the authors of the *Saint Louis Psalter* or their works an inspiration for the *Psalter's* design.

Branner's assessment of the *Ste.-Chapelle* artists group is compelling. All of the works he describes are internally consistent, both figuratively and ornamentally, which suggests that all of the works were produced by one atelier. Given the evidence, it seems that the artists responsible for the initial borders of the *Saint Louis Psalter* and the borders of the *Isabella Psalter* joined, collaborated with, or inspired the *Ste.-Chapelle* Atelier [Fig. 13, 14].²⁹

²⁸Bibliothèque municipale de Lille, MS 37 folio 5v.

²⁹Cambridge, Fitzwilliam Library MS 300.

The works regarded as the *Ste.-Chapelle* group include frequent depictions of ivy or grape leaves in a *rinceau* design, although none of the works include this decoration confined within the band of a border. Many works also include fantastic animal shapes. *MS Latin 12834* [Fig. 10]³⁰ is especially interesting because it includes not only the penwork *rinceau* of the last part of the *Psalter* border but also a *rinceau* design more like the earlier border, with a thick vine and recognizable five-lobed grape leaves. The initial on f. 69v includes a naturalistic grape vine rooted into the ground next to two men, one carrying grapes to the other who smashes them in a barrel with his feet, illustrating September, the wine-making season.

All of the works from this group feature a number of depictions of plants that are less stylized in nature. This can most clearly be seen in the first initial of 1 Chronicles in *Latin 16722* [Fig. 11],³¹ a Bible which uses swirling vines and ivy leaves to unite the mandorlas of Christ, the Virgin, and King David playing various instruments. This design of swirling vines and leaves appears throughout the text of *Latin 16722* as part of the decorative program of the Bible.

While the penwork section of the *Psalter's* border is similar to other penwork filigree at the time, there is no stylistic predecessor for the *Saint Louis Psalter* border from folios 1 to 41 verso. While some manuscripts may feature one or more of the following: fantastic beasts, thick and clearly demarcated frames, frames using a wide array of colors, or increasingly naturalistic depiction of flora. None of the manuscripts combines these four features together.

³⁰Paris, Bibliotheque national de France MS Latin 12834 folio 69v.

³¹Paris, Bibliotheque national de France MS Latin 16722 folio 41.

The manuscript *British Library MS Royal I.D.X.*³² from circa 1210 is one of many psalters that feature nearly full-page illustrations. The decoration consists of intricate thin interlace with the addition of small, ill-defined leaves to indicate that the lacing is made of vines. Nothing else indicates the specific species of vine; the plant stem exists solely as a decorative motif with only the suggestion of plant form. The treatment of foliage is especially noticeable when compared to the two bushes depicted in *Latin 17326* [Fig. 12].³³ The enclosed bushes of *Latin 17326* have trunks, roots, branches, and leaves that are identifiable as being those of a fig plant; there is no ambiguity about the type of plant because enough information has been supplied to make positive identification possible.

The Sainte-Chapelle Atelier's work has the features of naturalistic plant life, a rich color palette, and imaginary beasts, but none of the decorative work is made up of borders. Instead the decorative elements primarily consist of long, tall boxes with decoration that branches out into the empty white space of the page.³⁴ These boxes are placed in the margin or between columns of text instead of borders around images. Interestingly, these boxes also contain architectural details that arch above the figures, not unlike the architecture of the *Psalter*.

The *Isabella Psalter* along with the *Saint Louis Psalter*, was commissioned by the French royal family to be an item of personal devotion solely for the use of a member of the family. The *Isabella Psalter* was created at roughly the same time of the *Saint Louis Psalter*.

³²Morgan, Nigel J. *Early Gothic Manuscripts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, c1982,).. Fig. 105

³³Paris, Bibliotheque national de France MS Latin 17326 folio 101.

³⁴See: Initial for Aristotle's *De Differentia*, Paris, Bibliotheque national de France or MS Latin 12953 f 276 or the *Ste. Chapelle Evangeliary*, Paris, Bibliotheque national de France MS Latin 17326.

Due to the inclusion of the coats of arms of Castile and the feminine endings on prayers, the *Isabella Psalter* was given to either Louis' sister or his daughter, both of whom were named Isabella.³⁵ The *Isabella Psalter's* border also bears a striking similarity to the border of the *Saint Louis Psalter*; it is decorated with vines, leaves and fantastic beasts that serve to frame an architectural setting and scenes from the *Old Testament* [Fig. 13]. Unlike the *Saint Louis Psalter*, the undulation of the vines is looser, and the leaves face the same direction rather than being encircled by spirals of vines. These leaves also do not resemble ivy so much as grape leaves, and alternate between being colored red and green. The background of the frame is expansively gilded. While the monsters in the corners closely resemble those of the *Psalter* with their drumstick back legs and long tails and necks, the snouts and ears of the *Isabella Psalter's* beasts more closely resemble dogs than mythic creatures. As with the *Saint Louis Psalter*, partway through the manuscript the border decoration changes from detailed painting to flat color with pen work of the exact same sort seen from folio 75 verso to the end of the *Saint Louis Psalter* [Fig. 14]. The leaves of the *Isabella Psalter's* rinceau pattern are more leaf-shaped than the *Saint Louis Psalter's* club-like shaped leaves. The same palette of pink and blue dominates the borders of both manuscripts, as well as the careful limning of the inside and outside of the frame with gold. Thus it seems likely that the borders of both the *Isabella* and *Saint Louis* psalters were the product of two or more ateliers and the same two ateliers produced all of the borders for both manuscripts. The artists who produced the first portion of both psalters' borders likely went on to work on other royally-commissioned works, such as the manuscripts for the Sainte-Chapelle

³⁵Harvey Stahl, *Picturing kingship: history and painting in the Psalter of Saint Louis* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2008. 15.

Architectural Sculpture

The decorative tradition of manuscripts in Paris at the time of Louis' reign shows many features in common with the *Saint Louis Psalter*. But these common features do not provide enough evidence for the origin of the *Saint Louis Psalter's* border's decorative program. A possible solution is to examine the decorative motifs of other arts at the time to attempt to find congruent forms.

The city of Reims is approximately ninety miles to the northeast of Paris, and it was known at this time for its production of tapestries. More importantly to the kingdom of France, monarchs, including Louis IX, were crowned in the cathedral of Reims since Clovis in 498.³⁶ After the original church burned down in 1210, extensive effort was taken to rebuild the cathedral throughout the first third of the thirteenth century.³⁷ Sculpture dominates the cathedral as it does in few other churches at that time; extensive figural works are carved from the jambs of the door to the base of the bell towers outside, and from the floor to the tips of the pointed arches inside. Scholars disagree as to whether Parisian art influenced Reims Cathedral or vice versa.³⁸ The difficulty in elucidating the origin of the decorative motifs as originating in either Paris or Reims indicates that both cities were centers of artistic production and influenced each other simultaneously throughout the mid-

³⁶Anne Prache, et al. "Reims." In *Grove Art Online. Oxford Art Online*, <http://www.oxfordartonline.com/subscriber/article/grove/art/T071246> (accessed February 16, 2009).

³⁷Branner, Robert. "Historical Aspects of the Reconstruction of Reims Cathedral, 1210-1241" *Speculum*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (Jan., 1961), 23-37.

³⁸See Sauerländer, Willibald, "Antiqui et Moderni' at Reims" *Gesta*. Vol 42 No. 1 (2003). 37, footnote 52 about Kurmann, *La facade de la cathedrale de Reims*.

thirteenth century. Thus the cathedral at Reims seems an appropriate place to begin searching for similarities.

Vegetal sculpture entwines itself in the cathedral of Reims as it does in few other churches. Five different swags of plants delineate the space between lines of figures on the archivolt of the cathedral's west facade [Fig. 17]. The extensive use of local plants as ornament continues on the inside, where foliage wraps around the capitals of the thick compound piers ringing the nave [Fig. 15]. The addition of leaves to the molding to the tops and bottoms of these columns and the continuance of the foliage theme throughout the nave gives the effect of a frieze of sculpted leaves ringing the nave of the cathedral. The use of floral ornamentation as architectural detail echoes the decoration of the cathedral of Amiens, another thirteenth-century cathedral equidistant from Reims and Paris, where a frieze of heavily stylized flowers encircles the walls of the cathedral between the main arcade and the triforium [Fig. 23]. The horizontal border in Amiens serves to unify the cathedral, taming the strong verticals of the Gothic style in architecture and drawing the eye further down the nave. The Reims cathedral's careful placement of bands of intricate carving serves a similar purpose; the carving breaks up the soaring, Spartan vertical lines and marks the place where the arches spring from the compound piers [Fig. 15].

The greatest use of foliage occurs on the cathedral's interior, on the western wall of the nave and the ends of the north and south transepts. On these large, flat surfaces, countless niches are filled with masonry statues of saints and Biblical figures. In bands between rows of these niches are boxed-in sections of different kinds of plants [Fig. 16]. Ivy is present in many of them, but so are oak and grape leaves and even lily pads on an upper register on the right side of the western portal. These registers have a strong resemblance to

the decoration used in the Sainte-Chapelle group manuscripts, especially the *Sainte-Chapelle Evangelary* [Fig. 12].³⁹ In both cases, the foliage is enclosed within a plain frame. Both sets of boxes not only include botanically-correct leaves, but also realistic depictions of the plants, including stems and ell-rooted trunks. The similarity of the foliate designs at Amiens, as well as a similar interest in visual fidelity to nature hints that the manuscript and architectural sculptural programs followed the same general artistic trends despite the physical distance between the sites of production.

The Sainte-Chapelle is the next logical place to pursue a search for ornament that might offer clues to the origin of the border design of the *Saint Louis Psalter*. On the Île de la Cité in Paris, attached to the king's palace and near Notre Dame cathedral, the Sainte-Chapelle was the church in which the royal family worshiped. Constructed with amazing speed in the 1240's and consecrated in 1248, the chapel was commissioned by Louis to hold the holy relics he obtained from Baldwin II of Constantinople. There are few works of art more closely linked to Louis IX; it is unlikely that the creators of Louis' psalter would have been unaware of the church so very close to where they practiced their trade.⁴⁰

The Sainte-Chapelle contains a profusion of different carved plants in its capitals, lintels, and jambs. The capitals contain foliage decoration different from the decoration of Greek columns. The plant design sprouts with leaves from the oak, grape and fig, but their stems disappear into the column which creates the sense that the leaves are glued onto the column rather than making up the bulk of the column[Fig. 20]. Plant forms are also used

³⁹Paris, Bibliotheque nationale MS Latin 17326.

⁴⁰Rouse, Richard H and Mary A. *Manuscripts and their Makers: Commercial Book Producers in Medieval Paris, 1200- 1500*. London: Harvey Miller Publishers, 2000.

frequently to form crockets, that is, a Gothic ornamental development in which plant stem or leaf projects from the solid base to form a hook-like shape. The use of crocketing can be seen in the second and fourth capitals on the interior of Sainte-Chapelle [Fig. 20]. The second from the left illustrates some of the most extreme of these crockets, in which long, drawn out taffy-stems are capped by a nearly unrecognizable leaf. The fourth from the left represents the combination of the crockets and leaves. In addition to their use on the capitals of the columns, leaves are used as an ornamental device throughout the interior of the chapel. One border of leaves forms a thin band over the arches, delineated from the rest of the spandrel by a very narrow band. Carved leaves fill the remaining space not taken up by the quatrefoils. Stylized parsley-like leaves and berries also form a border on the upper level of the chapel; the border demarcates the line of gilded colonettes from the stained glass windows.

Many examples of foliage, especially the *rinceau* design exist in the interior of Sainte-Chapelle. The *rinceau* wraps around columns and decorates the underside of arches, as well as forming additional borders on the chapel walls [Fig. 21]. Realistic leaves are painted in a repeating pattern on one of the moldings decorating the bracing in the lower chapel [Fig. 22]. Unfortunately this is not original painting of the architectural details, although the painting of these current designs goes back at least as far as Branner's photographs of the Sainte-Chapelle in the 1960's. The only possible original painting is in the quatrefoils of the upper chapel.⁴¹ Given the questionable restoration of the Sainte-Chapelle in the mid-nineteenth century, it is only possible to say that the restorers viewed the

⁴¹Branner, Robert. "The Painted Medallions in the Sainte-Chapelle in Paris" from *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, New Series, Vol. 58, No. 2 (1968), 9.

use of *rinceau* and leaf motifs as being essential to the chapel's decorative motif. However, as examined below, *rinceau* designs were painted over archways of other churches elsewhere in France.

Some proof of the centrality of the *rinceau* or garland motif in the decoration of the Sainte-Chapelle is present in the western portal of the upper chapel. The long borders of delineating foliage that are present in Reims' portals are also present on the portals of the Sainte-Chapelle. The foliage makes up four bands between the jamb columns rather than between lines of figures in the archivolt. While one row of plants is composed of opened flowers, the rest form lines of branching scrolls of different species of plants including oak and parsley. Another border of undulating vines with grape leaves demarcates the frieze of the judgment of souls from the trumeau filled with angels and Christ [Fig. 18]. While the species of plant is different, the trumeau's dividing band clearly resembles the border of the *Saint Louis Psalter*. A long, undulating vine makes up the bulk of the design; in between the curves of the vine a single leaf is placed in each alternating half-circle [Fig. 19]. Like the *Saint Louis Psalter's* border, anatomical features of the leaves such as veins and carefully-articulated leaf shapes are present. *Rinceau* designs of all sorts not only make up a significant portion of the decorative program of the Sainte-Chapelle, but they also appear prominently at doorways such as at the western portal. The design works to delineate holy spaces from profane spaces.

The Cathedral at Amiens is another important church to examine for use of the *rinceau* design. Unlike the ornamentation of Reims and the Sainte-Chapelle, the flower border at Amiens [Fig. 23] is a prominent three-dimensional design that distinguishes it from

other churches built at the time like Reims or the Sainte-Chapelle. Examination of the border reveals a decorative design that bears little resemblance to real leaves. The emphasis is on the dynamic flowing design and the general feeling of lushness rather than the accurate illustration of a particular plant. The leaves are rounded, club-like, and bulbous, looking more as if they were carved out of clay rather than stone. These leaves twist dynamically in every direction, the feeling of straining emphasized by the deep valley where the central leaf's stem should be, as if a potter had wrapped a clay leaf around a v-shaped rod. The thickness of the leaves also gives the border a clay-like feeling as the leaves have a visible edge rather than tapering to near nonexistence. The berries appear more like small balls of clay stuck together geometrically into a larger sphere rather than forming an irregular clump.

The same sort of plastic, stylized border covers the arcade over the row of kings on the facade of Amiens, which ties the facade to the interior through the repetition of ornamentation[Fig 24]. The spandrels are filled with other, similarly rendered foliage, as is the lintel above them. Most notable is the appearance of the *rinseau* design at the base of the kings' statues[Fig. 25]. The graceful design uses clubs at the end of its spirals rather than a specific type of leaf; the undulating vine also has leaves branching off to fill the semicircle created by every half-repetition of the vine. The stylization of plants continues throughout the ornamental detail of the Cathedral of Amiens.

The *rinseau* design is also used for several portals at Amiens. Bands of *rinseau* separate registers in the central trumeau of the west side of Amiens cathedral [Figs. 26 and 27]. The portal shows the same characteristics of Amiens and the Sainte-Chapelle, with the foliage design separating the entering people from the sculpture of souls being judged and from the image of Christ enthroned. Similarly, although slightly different, the south portal

uses lush foliage to surround the doorway into the church, in both the lintel and the innermost jambs of the entrance way. The somewhat box-like shape of this decoration echoes the shape of the border of the *Saint Louis Psalter* [Figs. 28 and 29].

The focus on verisimilitude in vegetal decoration becomes more prevalent in the High Gothic to Rayonnant styles of architecture. The area around Paris saw a profusion of building in the thirteenth century, including the creation of the Sainte-Chapelle, and the continuation of work on the cathedrals of Reims and Amiens. The sculpture in these churches, especially at Reims, included an increase in the use of decorative borders to separate portions of the cathedral. The repeated presence of *rinceau* and other foliate ornamentation in the portals and archways of these churches suggests a connection between the use of plant ornament in ecclesiastical Gothic architecture and its use in the border of the *Saint Louis Psalter*. Increasingly, detailed carving of native plants appeared in the space between the archivolt and surrounding the capitals of the compound piers. The bands of foliage in Reims, the Sainte-Chapelle and Amiens are used as ways of creating dividing spaces in many churches between inside and outside, above and below, holy and profane. The presence of an increasing focus on naturalism in stone carving in this period echoes the care taken to accurately depict the ivy leaves of the *Psalter's* border. While the plants chosen for the decoration of these churches does not overwhelmingly favor the ivy, the species chosen favor local flora. The use of a plant decoration to divide space in these churches echoes the use of the border in the *Saint Louis Psalter*, which uses a design of ivy foliage to separate the architectural elements and Biblical scenes from the rest of the page. The chronological and physical proximity of the churches to Louis IX and Paris hints at strong ties between the

ornamental features of both manuscript painting and church sculpture.

Decorative Arts

While analysis of ecclesiastical stone decoration provided useful clues to the origin of the *Saint Louis Psalter's rinceau*, study of surviving artifacts of the period can further elucidate the stylistic influences on the *Psalter*. A survey of minor art will unfortunately have inevitable limitations; only a small number of objects produced in the middle ages survive and are available for public study. I have extensively combed through the images available of minor arts in the vicinity of Paris (including England, Benelux and westernmost Germany) produced from roughly 1100 to 1300. These arts include stained glass, embroidery and tapestries, wall painting, ivory, metalwork and enamel work. The materials were selected based on their visual affinity to the *Saint Louis Psalter*. Criteria included the incorporation of the *rinceau* design, signs of increased botanical fidelity, the presence of a significant border delineating one space from another, or a combination of all four. The more criteria fulfilled by each object, the greater the likelihood that the *Saint Louis Psalter* was stylistically linked to it.

Stained glass decoration bears some resemblance to the border of the *Saint Louis Psalter*. In its decorative schema, wide borders and foliage decorate the space between figure vignettes. Stained glass uses small pieces of glass tightly fitted together rather than large panes of solid colors, like the small areas of color used for the *Saint Louis Psalter*. While the spiral design makes an appearance in stained glass decoration in a church window

of an angel from Troyes [Fig. 30],⁴² it is a rare occurrence. The *rinceau* design occurs behind the figure of the angel, rather than in the border of the work, which echoes the pattern's use in metalwork to enliven large flat surfaces. While many works of stained glass from this period contain the same fragmented blue glass background as the Troyes work, most appear to be devoid of black painting over the glass background. The absence of a *rinceau* design from these works is not due to the loss of all black overprinting of surviving Gothic stained glass. In the case of the Bourges Cathedral's stained glass, details such as the folds of fabric on tables are starkly visible with little fading; these painted glass sections are immediately adjacent to large sections of unpainted blue chunks of glass [Fig. 31]. Improper cleaning or damage are not likely causes of the lack of *rinceau* decoration in painted stained glass decoration. While the border of the first section of the *Saint Louis Psalter* features small bits of color similar to the small pieces of glass that makes up a stained glass window, the *rinceau* design is not taken up in any border decorations of stained glass. Stained glass windows are unlikely an influence on the pattern of the *Psalter*.

While the architectural setting for the *Saint Louis Psalter* may resemble the Sainte-Chapelle, the decorative elements do not take after its stained glass. The Sainte-Chapelle stained glass primarily features diamond-shaped lattices or circles and grids of blue and ruby-red with the repetition of the fleur-de-lys symbol of the royal house and the yellow-on-red castle of Blanche of Castile [Fig. 31]. These symbols are noticeably missing from the Old Testament panels of the *Saint Louis Psalter* but are present within the backgrounds of the historiated initials, the diamond pattern of castles and fleur-de-lys appear frequently along with geometric and cruciform patterns starting on folio 85v. The images after folio 85v also

⁴²New York, NY: Metropolitan Museum 1977.346.1.

include the second, simplified border type. It is not unthinkable to conclude that the same artists that designed the Sainte-Chapelle stained glass windows were familiar with the artists who created the second part of the *Saint Louis Psalter*, but not the artists who completed the first part of the *Saint Louis Psalter*.

The structure and nature of the decorative foliage designs also differ between the *Saint Louis Psalter* and the stained glass at Troyes and Paris. The leaves in the Troyes work are scalloped multicolored acanthus leaves⁴³ that spring up in artfully-arranged bouquets, unlike the natural appearance of the bushy plant. The stained glass windows of the Sainte-Chapelle also use acanthus leaves in the border decoration to create a variety of repeating patterns such as scallops, flourishes and hook-shaped crockets. While the colors of stained glass and the *Saint Louis Psalter* are similarly saturated and bright, stained glass in both the Troyes piece and the Sainte-Chapelle makes use of a larger range of colors including green, yellow and blood red rather than the limited palette of pink and blue used in the *Saint Louis Psalter* border.

Another medium intimately tied to ecclesiastical use is embroidery on cloth. Because of the scarcity of these works compared to other arts such as manuscript illumination, it is problematic to make assumptions about the medium. The organic and fragile nature of these works of art results in a high incidence of disintegration, especially along the folds of the cloth. In addition, the large amount of salvageable gold present in the thread used for liturgical and luxury items resulted in the destruction of a large number of medieval embroidery.

⁴³Acanthus is not a native plant of France; its use is meant to be a classical reference as it was widely used in Ancient Greek art.

Given this caveat, stylistic traits of the remaining works suggest some ties to the *Saint Louis Psalter*. Embroidery produces the same small patches of color found in the border of most of the *Psalter*. Given the time-consuming nature covering an entire surface with an even “wash” of color, designs were built of many small colored patches of embroidery separated by a thick outline. The use of spiraling vines is a fairly common decorative motif in surviving copes (semicircular church vestments) and other ecclesiastical garments.⁴⁴ The leaves and vines in this buskin from the Victoria and Albert Museum [Fig. 32] serve to link the scattered sections of embroidered figures to one another in a cogent design. Similar in appearance is the Jesse Cope [Fig 33],⁴⁵ also made in the embroidery workshops of England. The Jesse Cope also has more naturalistic leaves, but is from the turn of the thirteenth century. It was influenced by the same innovations as the *Saint Louis Psalter* rather than a possible source of the origin of the motif.

In the case of woven tapestries, later examples such as a fourteenth century tapestry from Italy [Fig. 34] do contain the spiral leaf motif.⁴⁶ It, like the Troyes stained glass, uses the *rinceau* design as a filler in place of a more detailed background behind the scene of Christ's passion. The design features a variety of leaves that are mostly suggestions of leaf and bud shapes rather than specific plants.

The *rinceau* design of spirals and ivy appears occasionally in French ecclesiastical wall painting, although no known examples exist in Paris or in the vicinity. It is primarily seen as a framing decorative device, specifically in the case of the painting along the inside

⁴⁴Part of a buskin, Victoria and Albert Museum, <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/objectid/O92411>.

⁴⁵Also from the Victoria and Albert Museum <http://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O121306/cope/>.

⁴⁶"The Resurrection." Embroidered Panel from an Altarpiece, 14th c. Italy, Metropolitan Museum of Art.

of a crypt arch in St. Aignan-sur-Cher, a village in central France between Orleans and Tours [Fig. 35].⁴⁷ The design of a *rinceau* with club-like leaves is reminiscent of the English buskin. The design also includes the colors blue and red and forms a narrow band, the same as in the *Saint Louis Psalter*. The border also serves to divide the apse from the nave of the crypt. Another example of ecclesiastical painting featuring a *rinceau* design comes from a church in Sainte-Jean-le-Thomas, a village in Normandy [Fig. 36]. The border design serves as a framing and decorative device along the south wall of the church, like the border on the interior of Amiens.⁴⁸ Wall painting may also be postulated from contemporaneous manuscript paintings, several of which include the *rinceau* design for areas underneath arches such as in a early thirteenth-century manuscript from England [Fig. 37].⁴⁹ The *rinceau* of this arch would appear to be used in the same way as in the two wall paintings mentioned above as a way of demarcating one area from another. The use of the *rinceau* design in the Pierpont Morgan manuscript in conjunction with the Loir-et-cher crypt suggests that it was used as an apse decoration during the mid-thirteenth century, even if it is not a direct link between manuscript and wall painting.

In the Gothic era, as trade routes increased their scope and loot arrived from the Byzantine Empire, ivory became more prevalent in France. The portability and relative durability of ivory objects makes them ideal vehicles for the diffusion of artistic conventions. The return of soldiers from the Crusades allowed for a greater number of portable objects, especially those made of ivory, to be brought back as booty from the Byzantine Empire and

⁴⁷St.-Aignan-Sur-Cher (Loir-et-cher), crypt chapel.

⁴⁸Church of Saint-Jean-Baptiste. South Wall. Late 12th c. Saint-Jean-le-Thomas, France.

⁴⁹Virgin and Child. New York. Pierpont Morgan Library, Glazier 25. f. 2.

the Islamic world. Harvey Stahl's analysis focuses primarily on comparing free-standing ivory sculpture to the figures of the *Saint Louis Psalter*, ignoring the large corpus of other ivory objects such as pyxes, boxes, diptychs and book covers. The vine and leaf design is common in Islamic and Byzantine ivories, often including grapes in the motif to further identify the species of vine.⁵⁰ Many of these ivories come from the area of Syria, which bordered the Crusader-held lands near Acre in the Holy Land. Most notable is the presence of small pyxes that feature an all-over design of vine-encircled five-lobed leaves,⁵¹ although as with embroidery and metal-work, the *rinceau* design is used to fill in large areas rather than as a border motif.

Ivory was used for a variety of different decorative purposes, including book covers. The similarity between ivory bas-relief covers and the *Saint Louis Psalter* is unmistakable. In the case of a ninth-century Carolingian book cover from the Bibliotheque nationale [Fig. 38],⁵² the vine and leaf design creates a large border around the gospel events in the same manner as the border in the *Saint Louis Psalter*. The book cover may have resided in France or the area around Paris before being acquired by the Bibliotheque nationale, adding to the pictorial vocabulary of the painters of the *Saint Louis Psalter*. The book cover is also a finely detailed work of carving; between the vines spring five-lobed palmate leaves with crenated margins and clearly-defined veins and clusters of grapes. The artist took pains to ensure that the leaves looked as grape leaves should; botanical fidelity did not originate with

⁵⁰Fragment of a Carved Ivory, 7th c. Syria, Kuwait City, al-Sabah Collection.

⁵¹Pyxis with *Rinceaux* Pattern, 7th c. Syria, Kuwait City, al-Sabah Collection. Pyxis with Rounded Lid and *Rinceaux* Pattern. 7th or 8th c. Syria. London, Victoria & Albert Museum.

⁵²Annunciation, Adoration of the Magi and Massacre of the Innocents, book cover, 840/5. Paris, Bibliotheque Nationale. Lasko, Peter. *Ars Sacra: 800-1200*. Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1972. Plate 38.

the rise of the Gothic style of art.

While all of the minor arts mentioned above have stylistic properties in common with the *Saint Louis Psalter*, the most likely source of the motifs used is from the flourishing metalwork and enamel industries. New centers of metalwork production were opening in Limoges and elsewhere in France, and in Germany, the Low Countries, and Northern Spain. During the thirteenth century, Limoges became the primary center for *champlevé cloisonné* production in Europe, providing a vast quantity of objects for both sacred and profane uses. The small scale of the objects, the large number of items produced and their relative sturdiness lead to large numbers of these works to be preserved. The brilliant colors, craftsmanship and affordability made Limoges enamel work well-known in medieval Europe.⁵³ The widespread presence of Limoges works means that the pictorial motifs used on the enamel items would therefore also be familiar to many artists and patrons. One particularly prominent stylistic quality of Limoges enamel is the use of *rinceau*, or vermicule, designs for the background of enamel works.⁵⁴ The distinctive Limoges vermicule design features an undulating vine with spiraling vines emerging from the central line to terminate in trifoliate, somewhat ovate leaves that bear a closer resemblance to the fleur-de-lys symbol than to actual plants [Fig. 39]. The *rinceau* design appears on hundreds of surviving objects, from bowls to reliquaries to book covers. It would be impossible for anyone of means to not have come in contact with Limoges enamel work.

Louis IX was personally familiar with the workshops at Limoges. He and his wife

⁵³Boehm, Barbara Drake. "Opus Lemovicense: The Taste for and Diffusion of Limousin Enamels" in *Enamels of Limoges: 1100-1350*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc, 1996. 40.

⁵⁴Taburet-Delahaye, Elisabeth. "Beginnings and Evolution of the Oeuvre de Limoges" in *Enamels of Limoges: 1100-1350*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc, 1996. 35.

made pilgrimages throughout the region, including a stop in Limoges in 1244.⁵⁵ A box from the 1230's, which was commissioned as a gift for Louis, features the symbol of the monarchy, the fleur-de-lys.⁵⁶ In the 1240's, Louis' children John and Blanche of France died and were buried in St.-Denis; metal and enamel grave markers were commissioned from Limoges and were placed on top of the stone sarcophagi [Fig. 40, 41].⁵⁷ Enamel work, despite being made of gold-plated copper instead of solid gold, was highly prized at the time for its jewel-like appearance and detail. The beauty and artistry of the objects created were considered worthy of a royal commission.⁵⁸

Visually, the *Saint Louis Psalter* bears a resemblance to Limoges enamels. The production of enamel work favors small areas of bright colors that can be blended together to create a painterly effect, like the initial portion of the *Saint Louis Psalter's*. Small areas of color are used in champlevé enamel work to prevent the pieces of glass from cracking and falling out of the troughs dug into the metal after the work is completed. The greatest similarity between the *Saint Louis Psalter* and Limoges work is in comparison to a book cover from the first quarter of the thirteenth century [Fig 42].⁵⁹ This is especially noticeable when the blue-backed gold *rinseau* design of the book cover is compared to the borders of the second half of the *Saint Louis Psalter*. The use of line work in the *Psalter* mimics the

⁵⁵ Boehm, Barbara Drake. "Opus Lemovicense: The Taste for and Diffusion of Limousin Enamels" in *Enamels of Limoges: 1100-1350*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc, 1996. 40.

⁵⁶Coffret of Saint Louis. 1234-1237 Limoges, Musee du Louvre, Paris.

⁵⁷*Enamels of Limoges: 1100-1350*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc, 1996. 402.

⁵⁸Boehm, Barbara Drake. "Opus Lemovicense: The Taste for and Diffusion of Limousin Enamels" in *Enamels of Limoges: 1100-1350*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc, 1996. 42.

⁵⁹Christ in Majesty and the Crucifixion. Limoges, 1st quarter of the 13th c. Musee National du Moyen Age; Thermes de Cluny (CL 971 a and b).

raised lines delineating the enameled area. To further cement the similarity, the enamel book cover features corners that are circular bosses or flower-shaped as in folios 43 verso and 55 verso.⁶⁰ The techniques employed by both the *Psalter's* artists and the artists of Limoges enamel are close enough to hint at greater trends existing across media in the Gothic period of the thirteenth century. The personal connection Louis IX had with Limoges enamel (through his commission of his children's grave markers) and the close visual kinship between Limoges book covers and the *Saint Louis Psalter* points heavily towards direct influence of Limoges enamel work on the *Psalter*.

Multiple media produced in France in the thirteenth century utilized the *rinceau* decoration to enliven surfaces, from stained glass and embroidery to ivory and metalwork. Many of these works used small sections of color or consciously attempted to accurately portray the plants of the *rinceau*. In contrast, only two media, ivory and metalworking, feature the *rinceau* that makes the designs on ivory and metal so much like the *Saint Louis Psalter's* distinctive border.

⁶⁰See *Saint Louis Psalter* folio 43v and 75v for examples.

Conclusion

The *Saint Louis Psalter* is a unique object for study as it is a work known for its artistry, provenance, pristine condition, and complexity. As an art historical artifact, increased study of it is likely to yield more about the creation of manuscripts in the mid-thirteenth century. While the figures and iconography have been studied by the eminent art historians Harvey Stahl and Robert Branner, portions of the *Saint Louis Psalter* including its architectural setting and border, have previously been glossed over. Future scholarship of these previously dismissed elements of ornamentation, as well as ornamentation in general, are likely to further the knowledge of how art objects are produced. Analysis of the border of the *Psalter* in this paper shows that it is closely linked to many stylistic developments of the Gothic style in architecture, enamel work, and the minor arts.

One of the unique features of the *Saint Louis Psalter* is the use of both botanically accurate foliage and a wide decorative border, unprecedented in the development of manuscript painting. While some manuscripts from thirteenth-century France and before may feature fantastic beasts, thick and clearly demarcated frames, frames using a wide array of colors, and increasingly accurate depiction of flora, no other manuscripts combines all four features. The border of the *Saint Louis Psalter* forms an impenetrable barrier between the page and the contents it surrounds, unlike many contemporaneous manuscripts like the

Morgan Picture Bible.⁶¹ Increased study of botany and the incorporation of local flora in works of art are some of the hallmarks of the thirteenth-century Gothic style. Manuscripts associated with the Sainte-Chapelle are the closest stylistically to the *Saint Louis Psalter* and are replete with detailed studies of plants, especially leaves, within their decorative schema. However, the Sainte-Chapelle Group, as it is known, did not decorate their pages with borders but instead limited embellishment to initial and margin decoration. The closest ties to the *Saint Louis Psalter* lie with the *Isabella Psalter*, another manuscript created for the French royal family that features a thick *rinceau* border, but with more stylized leaves. Yet it is unclear as to where the exact inspiration sprang from for either the *Isabella Psalter* or the *Saint Louis Psalter*.

Given the lack of examples in manuscript painting that parallel the *Saint Louis Psalter*, other decorative arts give clues into the origin of the *Psalter* border. Ivory book covers in particular feature thick, intricately rendered borders of elements such as foliage. In addition, the popular medium of Limoges enamel featured a distinctive *rinceau* design that was a popular motif; this motif was frequently utilized as a border for many works, including book covers. The shape and decoration of both ivory and metalwork book covers echo the shape and layout of the pages of the *Saint Louis Psalter*. The use of a border similar to that of book covers in the *Psalter* thus reverses the dichotomy between inside and outside with Gothic manuscripts.

Churches such as the Sainte-Chapelle and the cathedrals at Reims and Amiens were erected during the same era as the *Saint Louis Psalter's* production and the Sainte-Chapelle and Reims are closely tied to the *Psalter's* owner. They too provide evidence of stylistic ties

⁶¹New York: The Pierpont Morgan Library, New York, Ms M. 638.

to the *Psalter*. Gothic stone carving in churches such as Reims Cathedral and the Sainte-Chapelle exhibits increasing use of naturalistic foliage in its ornament. Both churches are associated with Louis IX; Louis was crowned at the cathedral at Reims and built the Sainte-Chapelle for the use of himself and his court. Reims presents the best example of the period's use of foliage for church decoration. Inside the cathedral, capitals are heavily decorated with ivy and other plants. Registers of foliage divide figural sculpture on the western nave and transept walls. On the exterior of the cathedral, long chains of foliage form alternating archivolt on the western portals of the building. Similar decorations are present in the Sainte-Chapelle, where the trumeau and capitals incorporate decorative imagery similar to that found in the cathedral of Reims. Rows of plants thus function as markers of division in these churches, between the inside and the outside, the sacred and profane, the high and the low. The border of the *Saint Louis Psalter* functions in a similar way, demarcating the boundary between the sacred images contained within the frame and the profane world outside of it.

The wide variety of artistic works that resemble the *rinseau* border of the *Saint Louis Psalter* is not a coincidence. The echoes of designs across media indicate the desire to create what might be called “branding,” that is, the repetition of the same element on many different items to link those elements together. The *Saint Louis Psalter* is meant to invoke the memory of churches like the Sainte-Chapelle and the enameled and ivory book covers within those churches through the use of the *rinseau* design for its border. The portability and utility of the *Psalter* would have allowed Louis IX to have a constant reminder of holy spaces no matter how far he travelled.



Fig. 1: Saint Louis Psalter
(Bibliothèque nationale de
France MS Latin 10525),
folio 8v,



Fig. 2: Saint Louis Psalter,
folio 2r



Fig. 3: Saint Louis Psalter,
folio 28r



Fig. 4: Saint Louis Psalter,
folio 46



Fig. 5: (left) Bibliothèque
nationale de France MS
Latin 1075, 13th c, folio
16v



Fig. 6: (right) Gerold
Missal (London, British
Library, Additional 17742),
1218, folio 18



Fig. 7: Lille 37, folio 5v
 (and detail), 1240's.



Fig. 8: St. Etienne MS 104,
 folio 72v detail, 1230-35.



Fig. 9: Saint Louis Psalter,
 folio 74, top and bottom
 border



Left: Fig. 10: Martyrologe d'Usuard (Bibliothèque nationale MS Latin 12834), c. 1270, folio 69v

Right: Fig. 11: Bibliothèque nationale MS Latin 16722, 13th c, folio 41



Fig. 12: Sainte-Chapelle Evangeliary (Bibliothèque nationale MS Latin 17326), 1260-1270, folio 101

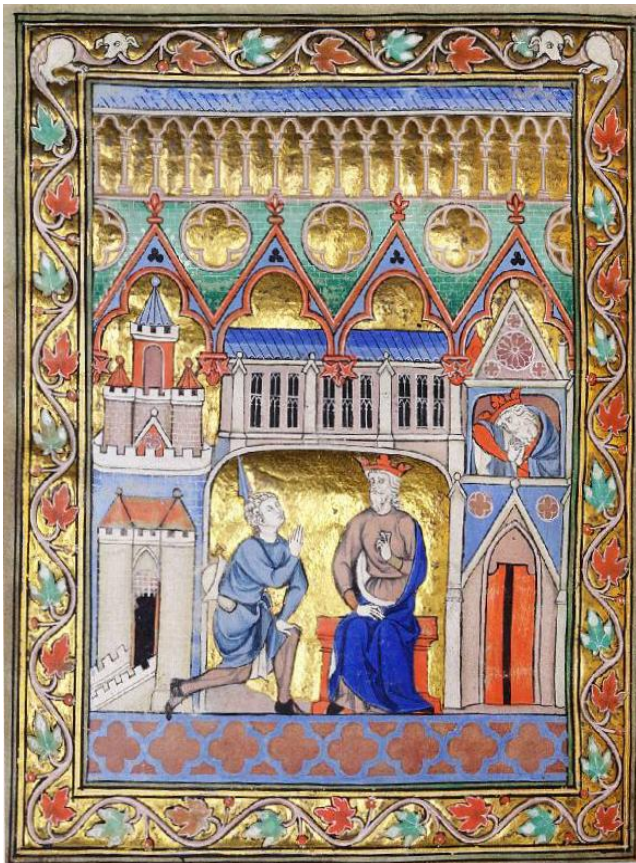


Fig. 13: Isabella Psalter
(Cambridge, Fitzwilliam
Library MS 300), 1255,
folio 3v



Fig. 14: Isabella Psalter
(Cambridge, Fitzwilliam
Library MS 300), folio 70v

© The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. UK



Fig. 15: Reims Cathedral.
Reims, France. 1210-
c1300. Columns.

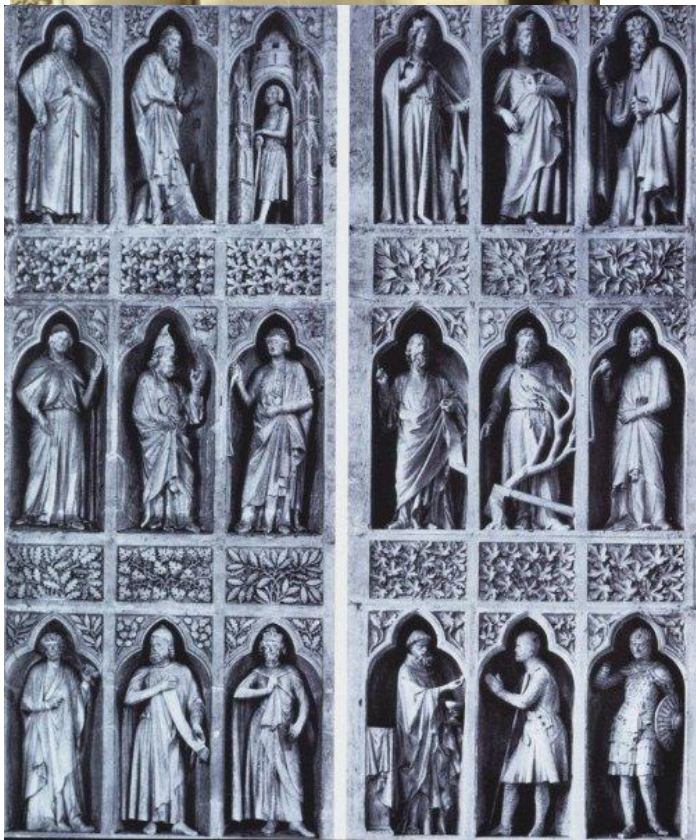


Fig. 16: Reims Cathedral.
West end, interior.

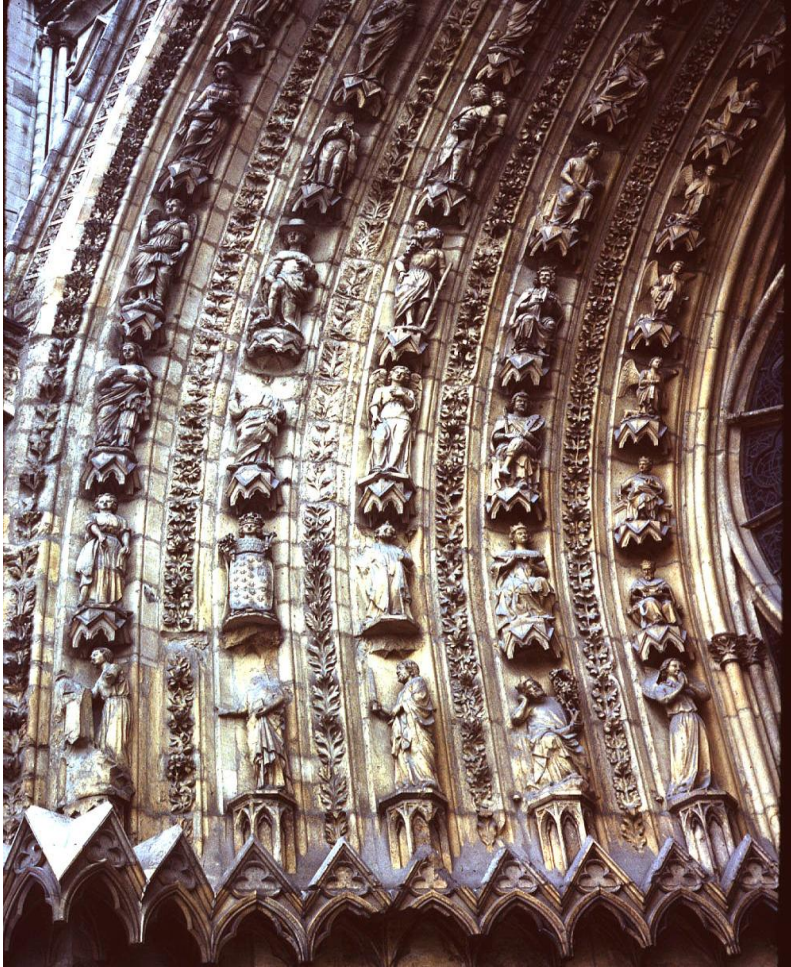


Fig. 17: Reims Cathedral.
Western central portal, left
side.



Fig. 18: Sainte-Chapelle,
Paris, France, 1241-8,
upper chapel, western
portal.



Fig. 19: Sainte-Chapelle,
Paris, France, 1241-8,
upper chapel, western
portal. Detail.



Fig. 20: Sainte-Chapelle,
lower chapel, column
detail.



Fig. 21: Sainte-Chapelle,
lower chapel, detail.



Fig. 22: Sainte-Chapelle,
lower chapel, detail of Fig.
21.



Fig. 23: Amiens Cathedral.
Amiens, France, 1218-
1266, interior detail.

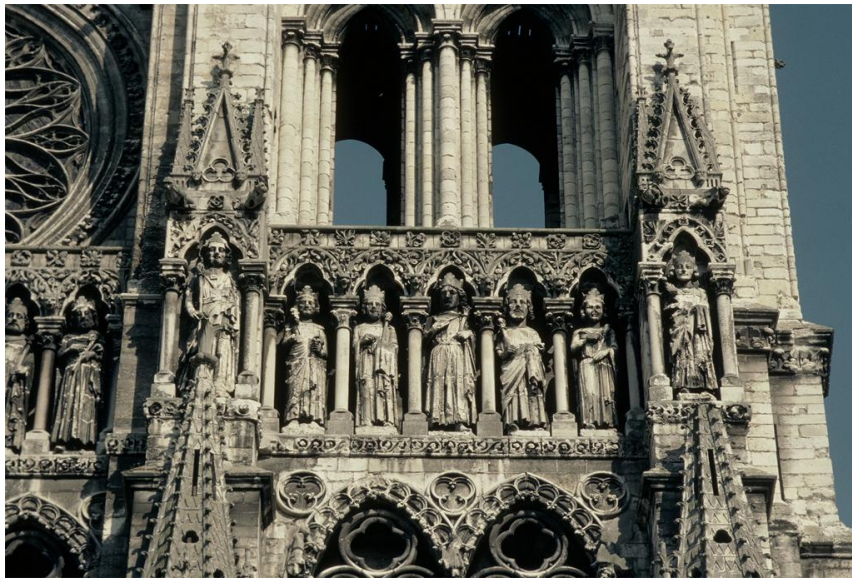


Fig. 24: Amiens Cathedral,
row of kings, western
facade



Fig. 25: Amiens Cathedral,
western facade. Detail.

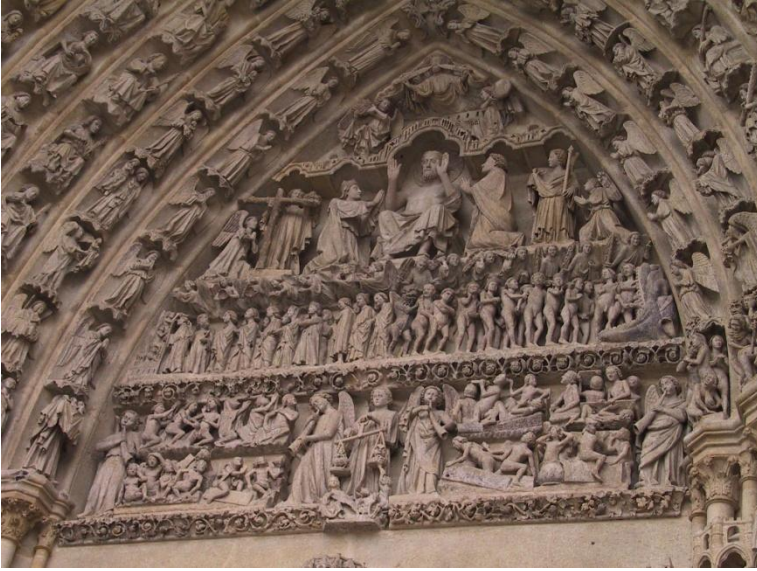


Fig. 26: Amiens Cathedral.
Western central portal.



Fig. 27: Amiens Cathedral,
western central portal.



Fig. 28: Amiens Cathedral,
southern portal.



Fig. 29: Amiens Cathedral,
southern portal.



Fig. 30: Stained Glass from
Troyes Cathedral, 1170-
1180, Metropolitan
Museum of Art, 1977.346.1

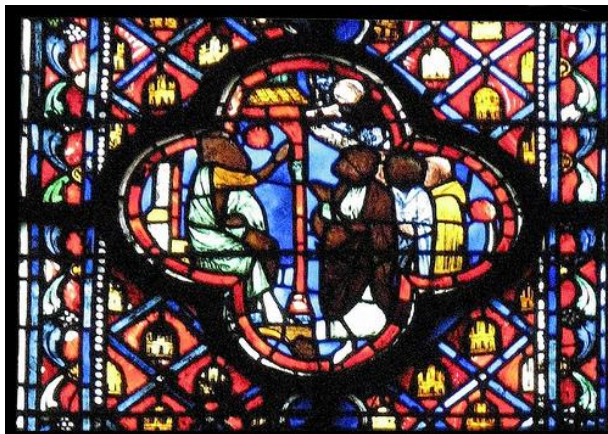


Fig. 31: Stained Glass from
Sainte-Chapelle, c. 1248,
Paris, France



Fig. 32: Part of a Buskin,
1220-1250. Victoria and
Albert Museum



Fig. 33: Jesse Cope, 1295-
1315, England: Victoria
and Albert Museum



Fig. 34: "The Flagellation":
Embroidered Panel from an
Altarpiece, 14th c. Italy,
Metropolitan Museum of
Art.

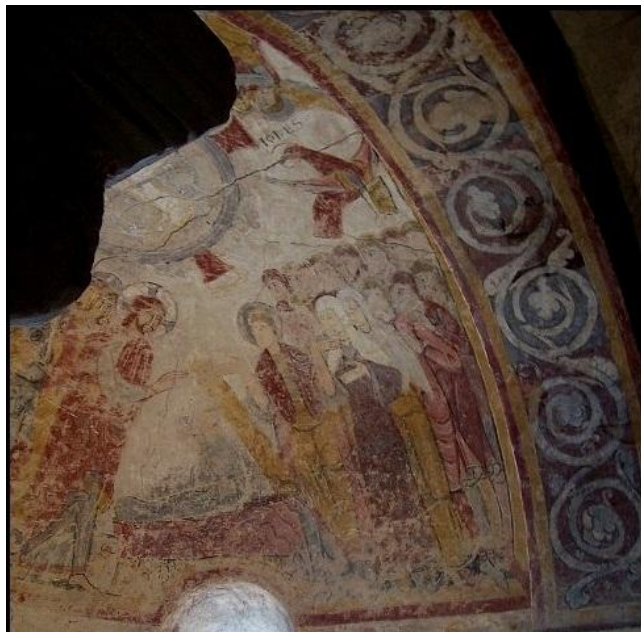


Fig. 35: St.-Aignan-Sur-
Cher, crypt chapel. 12th c.,
Loir-et-cher, France.



Fig. 36: Church of Saint-
Jean-Baptiste. South Wall.
Late 12th c. Saint-Jean-le-
Thomas, France.



Fig. 37: Pierpont Morgan Library, Glazier 25, 1220,-30? folio 2, Detail of Virgin and Child.



Fig. 38: Annunciation, Adoration of the Magi and Massacre of the Innocents, book cover, 840-5. French. Paris, Bibliotheque nationale.



Fig. 39: Coffret medallion.
Limoges, c. 1200-1210.
The Gleincairn Museum,
Bryn Athyn, PA



Fig. 40: Tomb of Effigies
of John and Blanche of
France. Limousin, c. 1250.
Abbey Church, Saint-
Denis, France.



Fig. 41: Detail of Fig. 40



Fig. 42: Book Cover, the Crucifixion. Limoges, 1st quarter of the 13th c. Musée National du Moyen Age Thermes de Cluny de Paris (CL 971 a and b).

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