The Decorated Style:
Gothic Architecture in England, c. 1245-c. 1340

Gothic Cathedrals
AAHVS 225
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The three stylistic divisions of English Gothic architecture

EARLY ENGLISH (c. 1175-c. 1260)
    Canterbury, Wells, and Lincoln
    
    Long buildings with low vaults
    Complex design of piers
    Richly molded arches
    Elaborate capitals
    Purbeck marble (shiny, polished grey)
    ABA elevations with 3 independent levels, horizontally divided
    Clerestories with thick passages

DECORATED (c. 1245-c. 1340) (October 28th)
    Westminster Abbey → Gloucester Cathedral

PERPENDICULAR (c. 1320- c. 1540) (November 2nd)
    Gloucester Cathedral → The Reformation and the Dissolution of the Monasteries (1538-48)
What is the Decorated Style?

The Decorated Style begins with the reconstruction of Westminster Abbey in 1244 & nears its end with the Black Death in 1348.

The Decorated is the English response to the Rayonnant style, which sweeps through Europe in the 1240s.

As usual, England goes its own way and diverges from French practice almost immediately. By the end, more importantly, as the most common decorative motif every inch of the buildings is covered with blind tracery & traceryed niches.

At the same time, there is an explosion of sculpture, both on inside and out. Ornament, not structure, becomes more important than anything else (hence the name Decorated Style).

Architecture becomes subordinate to sculpture, although that impression is now often hard to grasp (due to huge losses during the Reformation and under the Puritans).

The fusion of tracery and ornament leads to some of the most spectacular buildings of the Middle Ages. It was a riot of blazing color and texture, as if a precious metal shrine has been exploded in scale inside-out.
Henry III
(rg. 1220-1272)

Effigy,
Westminster Abbey

Westminster by the mid C14
Abbey founded as a monastery in the Romanesque style begun by King Edward the Confessor in 1042.

Used for coronation of William the Conqueror in 1066 and every king after.

Henry III decides to rebuild in the Gothic style as a combination coronation church (Reims), royal mausoleum (St-Denis), and shrine for Edward the Confessor.

1st architect: Henry of Reyns (1244-53)

2nd architect: John of Gloucester (1253-60)

3rd architect: Robert of Beverley (1260-72)

Palace of Westminster (now the Houses of Parliament/Big Ben) was Henry III’s palace/court/center of government since the whole Middle Ages. Mostly destroyed by fire in 1834.
Romanesque abbey as shown on the Bayeux Tapestry, c. 1070
Westminster, aerial view and ground plan

Proy church, 1244-72 / chapter house, 1244-c. 1250
Harry VII’s Lady Chapel (far E end), 1503-9
Westminster Abbey

North transept and N flank of nave
(heavily restored in the C19)
Westminster Abbey,
E end from the crossing and the nave
Westminster Abbey, nave

Tierceron vault (ribs sweeping from capital to ridge rib)
“Diaper” ornament in the gallery
Westminster Abbey, chapter house

Rayonnant aesthetic: flat walls -- dematerialized masonry – long, thin shafts & mullions -- streamlined moldings -- windows taking up maximum possible height/width
Westminster Abbey, chapter house
Eight-part vault springing from central pier
Lincoln Cathedral, Angel Choir
Begun 1256 and consecrated 1280

Last 5 bays of the E end
(2nd E end of St. Hugh’s Choir demolished in 1255-6)
Lincoln Cathedral, E end of Angel Choir
Lincoln Cathedral, nave

c. 1210-35
Richly molded arches
Vault corbels with stiff-leaf and Purbeck shafts
Trefoils in the spandrels

Middle story a riot of decoration: shafts & traces with hollows behind
Angels in the spandrels (originally painted red, green, and turquoise with gilded inscriptions)

Clerestory with large 4-light windows, replicated by a front “screen” of tracery

Metallic, highly polished quality of interior = precious metals, the inside of a shrine (as at Sainte-Chapelle)
Lincoln Cathedral, Angel Choir
Details of angels
Ely Cathedral, before and after the Decorated style

Romanesque cathedral (begun 1083 and completed c. 1170)

Central tower collapses in 1321

Octagonal crossing tower built to replace it, 1322-34
One bay of nave, choir, and transepts demolished

Lady Chapel added to N side of choir, begun 1321 and completed c. 1340
Ely Cathedral, Octagon
1322-34
Ely Cathedral, Octagon
Ely Cathedral, Octagon

Wooden lantern by the royal carpenter William Hurley, 1328-34

The Decorated style as a triumph of illusionism, fantasy, and theater (brought about by technological ingenuity)
Ely Cathedral, Lady Chapel
1321-c. 1340

Largest Lady Chapel of the Middle Ages

Strength of the cult of the Virgin Mary & the financial power of the diocese

A Decorated “jewel box” encrusted with ornament, every square inch painted and gilded
Ely Cathedral, Lady Chapel

Rows of blind arcading – multiple layers -- spandrels carved with the *Life and Miracles of the Virgin* over a background of diaper – “bays” divided by miniature buttresses
Ely Cathedral, Lady Chapel

- Long ogees – cusps underneath – crocketed gables – traces of paint – headless sculpture in the spandrels

Gable with crockets

How to draw an ogee arch (2 S-shaped curves)
Ely Cathedral, Lady Chapel, lierne vault

Iernes = small rib segments connecting two other ribs, usually forming a star pattern.
FIG. 87. Vault

KEY:
1. Tunnel vault  
2. Groin vault  
3. Transverse rib  
4. Diagonal rib  
5. Transverse ridge-rib  
6. Longitudinal ridge-rib  
7. Boss

Diagram of a Decorated vault
Exeter Cathedral

W façade, c. 1320-40
Image screen added 134

Three tiers
Top: Christ, VM, Apostle Evangelists, kings of Eng
Middle: Kings of Judah
Bottom: Angels
Exeter Cathedral, image screen
With reconstructed color scheme discovered in the 1980s
Exeter Cathedral,
Nave looking west

Begun c. 1270 and completed 1342
Exeter Cathedral, nave (looking W)
Exeter Cathedral, choir screen

*1315-20*
Exeter Cathedral, bishop’s throne
Early C14
Exeter Cathedral,

Boss from the choir (medieval painted restored)