



Disciplined Exuberance: The Parish Church of Saint-Maclou and Late Gothic Architecture in Rouen

By Linda Neagley

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In the wake of the Hundred Years' War, Northern Europe saw a reordering of financial, political, and social institutions and with it a change in architectural style. The church of Saint-Maclou in Rouen, which is the most celebrated example of Late Gothic building in France, reflects a society that sought social order in the past while redefining new roles for individuals.

Its profuse ornamentation and sophisticated design established Saint-Maclou as the consummate expression of High Gothic discipline made exuberant by the excesses of Late Gothic craft. The retrospective elements of its style reflect the mood of conservative patrons, while its display of craftsmanship indicates the increasing value placed on individual expression. Linda Neagley now looks at how this particular parish came to build the church, offering a series of interpretive essays that explore its sociopolitical, artisanal, and cultural contexts.

Neagley first examines written sources to document the church's construction and articulate the design theory of architect Pierre Robin. She then focuses on those who were affected by or contributed to the construction, examining the motives of patrons, architect, craftsmen, clergy, and community members. Neagley reconsiders the architectural language of Robin against the backdrop of other structures in Paris and Normandy, and she also examines the cultural values of late medieval craftsmen that contributed to the character of Late Gothic architecture in general and Saint-Maclou in particular.

Disciplined Exuberance provides a wealth of previously unpublished documentary evidence concerning building in fifteenth-century Rouen and Paris and applies computer-based methodology to design analysis. It offers a new criterion for examining French Flamboyant architecture and a new appreciation for this important monument.

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Editorial Review

Review

“Linda Neagley’s book offers a fresh assessment of one of the architectural masterpieces of the fifteenth century. . . . By setting Saint-Maclou against a complex backdrop of political events, technological developments, and the contemporary visual arts, Neagley reshapes our view of this exuberantly creative architecture of late medieval France.”

—Michael T. Davis, Mount Holyoke College

About the Author

Linda Elaine Neagley is Associate Professor of Art and Art History at Rice University.

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