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Sainte Chapelle Site Summary

The Sainte-Chapelle, located in the heart of the city on Ile-de-la-Cité, was commissioned in the 13th century by King Louis IX to hold relics, including Christ's Crown of Thorns. The Sainte-Chapelle was designed in the gothic style and is a prime example of the political role of art. It praised Jesus Christ and the kings on earth the importance of service and humility. Upon entering the Sainte-Chapelle, there is an lower chapel, and an upper chapel - in the upper chapel you can find on of the most extensive collections of stained glass windows in the world. At the time in which Sainte-Chapelle was built, it was the tallest building, as it rose over forty meters above the ground. Additionally it had flying buttresses, a steep roof, and a tall wooden spire with gargoyles on it.

Art and Politics in the Sainte-Chapelle of Paris - Christopher Olaf Blum

- Blum points out the importance of both art in saying “We need the art of which the Holy Father speaks because to live the virtues in community and to crown them with worship is distasteful to us until we have come to love the good as we should. Art can and should draw us forward in our love of the good by delighting us with the good” and of the Sainte-Chapelle as a sign of Christian political art.
- The Patron of the Sainte-Chapelle, Louis IX, led two crusades and contributed to one of the most significant expansions in territory in France.
 - The end of his reign was considered by some to be the end of a golden age in France.
 - Louis IX was a religious fanatic, and was criticized by some to be too monkish.
 - He had also commissioned the Cistercian abbey of Royaumont, The Dominican Convent of Sainte Jacques, and the rebuilding of the royal chapel at Sainte Germain en Laye.
 - From the Emperor of Constantinople, King Louis IX obtained the Crown of thorns of Jesus Christ, as well as a part of the holy cross, and other relics

- The King met the relics on the road, and carried the treasures on his shoulders barefoot to where they would be kept.
- The Sainte Chapelle is considered to be an act of piety and serves to honor Christ
 - This is because if images of Christ alone were being honored, it was necessary to honor relics of Christ even more so.
- King Louis' dedication towards the relics were considered to be apart of his dedication to the Blessed Sacrament
 - As a result, the Sainte Chapelle as serves to further the devotion to Christ, and the stained glass windows serve to educate those from all backgrounds of Christ, as the windows represent almost the whole of scripture
- When Sainte Chapelle was built, art was considered a form of teaching. Sainte-Chapelle does this through offering itself as an additional space for worship, and through it's honoring of Christ and his relics, as well as instructing through the stained glass windows

An Indulgence for the Visitor: The Public at the Sainte-Chapelle of Paris - Meredith Cohen

- A gothic style known as rayonnant
- Cohen discussed how the public interacted with the space of Sainte-Chapelle
- The relics in the chapel were only shown to the public on occasion
- Sainte Chapelle was thought to be a pilgrimage site for the public to come show how dedicated they were to the cult of kinds
- The acquisition of the relics was symbolic, because it was seen as a sign that God himself favored France and King Louis IX
- Interestingly, all people, regardless of class and rank, were encouraged to use and celebrate in the chapel regularly, and it was even orientated for public use
- At the time, Sainte Chapelle was a significant building and drew a lot of attention to itself due to its size and significance - it was one of the tallest buildings in medieval Paris
- Sainte Chapelle unified the public under Louis IX and it's lure and influence over the public essentially turned the King into a Saint

References

- Blum, C.O. (2001). Art and Politics in the Sainte-Chapelle of Paris. *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture*, 4 (2), 13-31. <https://doi.org/10.1353/log.2001.0013>
- Cohen, M. (2008). An Indulgence for the Visitor: The Public at the Sainte-Chapelle of Paris. *Speculum*, 83(4), 840-883. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20466372>