

# Aesthetics of Romanesque Architecture

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**Abstract.** *Architecture is a content area in art education that is not much investigated by art educators. Even less addressed is Romanesque architectural style. Based on direct experiences of visiting hundreds of Romanesque churches in France, Italy, and Spain; many years of teaching design courses; and subsequent research and visual analyses of photos, the author discusses the aesthetic merits of Romanesque architecture through design principles: unity by repetition, variety and contrast, proportion, hierarchical forms, and articulation. Unity, variety, and contrast are found in many modern design books, proportion, less so, but it was very important in the medieval period. Hierarchical forms and articulation are uniquely Romanesque. The author demonstrates that Romanesque builders possessed a great sense of design and creativity.*

In the study of art history, Romanesque architecture has not been appreciated as much as it deserves. This realization came to me from my first direct experience with Romanesque churches in Auvergne, France.<sup>1</sup> I had taken many art history classes together with my courses in aesthetics, art education, and studio art; but my conceptual picture of the Romanesque was not positive. I remembered it as the building style that looked “heavy” outside, “dark” inside, and studded with “frightening” sculptures. However, my direct experience of these churches told me a wholly different story, that of formal harmony, stylistic richness, and ingenuity in design solutions. As a researcher in art education, I became intrigued by this discrepancy between my conceptual knowledge and my direct experience of architectural history.

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This, in turn, compelled me to return to Europe many times to visit Romanesque churches, take thousands of photos, and read many books on Romanesque architecture.<sup>2</sup>

It is not difficult to discern why the aesthetic aspects of Romanesque architecture are not well known. The simplest reason derives from the nature of art history writing. Generally, art history books provide explanations and analyses but rarely aim at critique or evaluation. This tendency became extreme when the discipline of art history began to strive for scientific objectivity and the modernist architectural trend in the middle of the twentieth century drove aesthetics out in favor of functionalism.<sup>3</sup>

More importantly, Romanesque architecture is overshadowed by Gothic and Renaissance architecture in terms of fame. It is eclipsed by Gothic architecture because its engineering achievement was modest by comparison. The shadow cast over the Romanesque by the Renaissance results from the similarity of formal elements between them, owing to their application of the architectural idioms of ancient Rome, but the visibility of the latter predominates in theory and practice. There is basically no significant record of Romanesque theory or practice. In contrast, Renaissance architects adhered intentionally and prescriptively to Vitruvius's architectural theory, and the Renaissance theory of architecture was revived again and again in slightly different versions of neoclassicism throughout Western architectural history. Its corporeal manifestations still live in our midst in the form of government buildings, monuments, and other conservative corporate buildings such as banks.

In this paper, I analyze Romanesque architecture in terms of its aesthetic merits expressed in several design principles: unity, variety, contrast, proportion, hierarchy of forms, and articulation. The first three are prevalent even in modern design books, but proportion was especially important for medieval builders (even though it lost its importance in design in modern times), while the last two seem uniquely Romanesque, not particularly applicable to earlier Christian basilicas or later Gothic cathedrals. Balance is not included because most buildings both in the West and East were symmetrically balanced until the modernists broke this norm. My analysis is based on different theories of visual perception, aesthetics, and art history, but also grounded in my long experience of teaching design courses in university.

### **Basis of the Analyses**

In analyzing forms, I tried to imagine what kind of design problems Romanesque builders would have encountered and how they solved them. I found that they employed many ingenious design strategies to avoid the undesirable visual effect resulting from the limitations of Romanesque construction. For practical and perhaps also symbolic reasons, the builders of the eleventh

century began building large churches with stone vaults throughout western Europe. The stone vault inevitably necessitates a strong support system owing to its immense downward thrust. This resulted not only in the construction of thick walls, support systems of thick columns or piers, and heavy buttresses, but also in the formation of small and few windows. The overall heaviness of forms and immense empty wall spaces were the major design challenges for the Romanesque builders.

However, our first impression is rarely that of heaviness or weakness of design, at the least in the mature style of Latin Christendom. The reason is that Romanesque builders made every effort and used every “device” to avoid this undesirable visual impression. The buttresses with their harmoniously proportioned architectonic masses were often incorporated well into the main body of the church (Figure 1), the doors or windows were surrounded by sculptural frames that were much larger and imposing than actual openings to avoid visual weakness (Figure 2), and the compound piers with many vertical lines prevent us from scanning horizontally the true thickness of the supporting system (Figure 3).

Therefore, it is important to examine what came before, what was available at the time in terms of knowledge and skill, and what kind of function it had. In this respect, I follow Ernst H. Gombrich’s lead on two important issues in art history writing. First, he warned against seeing a past style through the lenses of a later style.<sup>4</sup> We should not evaluate Giotto based on what was available to Michelangelo and therefore blame Giotto for not painting as realistically as Michelangelo. The same kind of false judgment



Figure 1. Buttresses treated architectonically to be incorporated into the body of the church, Saint-Martin, Chapaize, France.



Figure 2. Door frame with multiple arches in recess, Saint-Pierre, Aulney, France.



Figure 3. Compound pier, Saintes-Marie-Magdaleine, Vézelay, France.

could easily be made of Romanesque architecture compared to the accomplishments of the Gothic. My previous conception of Romanesque architecture before my direct encounter with it is a good example of how we can easily fall victim to this fallacy. If seen through the lenses of Gothic cathedrals, Romanesque churches do indeed look unimpressive and heavy. However, we have to remember that there were not many models for Romanesque builders to refer to in the eleventh century and that Gothic engineering was only possible because of 150 years of Romanesque engineering experience.

The second thesis of Gombrich relevant here is that we need to know the function of the art in order to understand its style.<sup>5</sup> He wanted to demystify the Romantic and expressionistic interpretations of art history current in the writing of his time. This attitude permeates his popular art history book *The Story of Art*, therefore rendering it perpetually popular and accessible to the general public, as is evidenced in the publication of the sixteenth edition of the work in 1995. Then, what did Romanesque builders and patrons want to achieve through their church buildings? After the devastating destruction of the Norman invasions, they indeed wanted to build fire-proof edifices with stone walls and vaults for practical reasons. However, more importantly, they wanted to build them beautifully to glorify God and to remind the faithful of the "heavenly Jerusalem."<sup>6</sup>

The theory of beauty Romanesque builders relied on was the classical notion of beauty based on the interplay of forms derived from ancient Greek philosophy. Even though Roman engineering techniques were mostly forgotten after the fall of Rome, it is generally acknowledged that this classical notion of beauty survived through the Middle Ages and remained as a tacit knowledge of Romanesque patrons and builders. Therefore, we have every reason to believe that Romanesque architects indeed paid great attention to how forms are related to each other when they designed their edifices.

In addition to the classical notion of beauty, my analyses refer to design theory. Design theory as a teaching tool was developed and propagated in the first half of the twentieth century by Arthur W. Dow and later by other theorists.<sup>7</sup> Design theories differ from each other in terms of what is considered an appropriate set of design principles. Most current design books include unity (by repetition and continuation), variety, contrast, balance, a center of focus (or dominance and subordination), and movement. To understand design theories in a consistent and rational manner, I found Gestalt psychology and Daniel E. Berlyne's empirical aesthetic theory based on the Information Theory to be very helpful. Gestalt psychology tells us about our innate design preference for unity and symmetry, while Berlyne's theory allows us to understand why the opposite principles, such as variety, contrast, and complexity, are also needed for making an interesting design.

Architect and architecture theorist Christopher Alexander independently investigates the properties of beauty in his own unique way. Some of them

overlap with “traditional” design principles, and some of them are his own.<sup>8</sup> His purpose is to discover somewhat empirically what made a certain art object “beautiful” or “alive.” I found many of his properties of beauty apt for describing Romanesque architecture but intentionally veered away from his analysis because it is better to use the terms that have been familiar in the literature on design and art education. The most useful component in Alexander’s list for my purpose is what he called “levels of scale.” This principle is not in the list of “traditional” design principles but is a close approximation of what Romanesque architecture historians recognized as “the hierarchy of forms.”

### **Design Principles of Romanesque Architecture**

In this section, I present five representative design principles (or six if we make a distinction between variety and contrast) that are responsible for the aesthetic experiences derived from Romanesque churches. As a set, these principles do not apply significantly to any other architectural style, such as ancient Roman, early Christian basilica, Gothic, or even Renaissance. They seem to be uniquely Romanesque virtues.

#### *1. Unity by Repetition (Especially of a Semicircular Arch)*

Even if the architectural components of a Romanesque church are sometimes exceedingly numerous, we do not feel overwhelmed by them. Since many visual elements are repeated, the whole looks highly unified. Among those elements, the semicircular arch is the most dominant. Romanesque builders inherited the arch from the Roman past. There are two practical and engineering advantages of an arch. One is the possibility of building an opening with materials that are cheaper and more available than single stones in the post-and-lintel system. An arch is formed by the compression each small wedge-shaped cut stone or brick exert on each other laterally. The second advantage is that the arch can open an immense space because the downward weight of the wall above the arch can be diverted around the semicircle and conducted to the vertical supports, therefore allowing for a wider span of an opening than the post-and-lintel system.

Even though these structural advantages of the arch were inherited from Roman predecessors, Romanesque builders tapped its symbolic, psychological, and aesthetic dimensions to the fullest. A circle or a sphere is the most “perfect” among all geometric forms because of its radial symmetry and, for that reason, became elevated to a symbol of heaven in the Middle Ages. I think it is mostly owing to this symbolic significance that almost all of the major architectural components of a Romanesque church are made with the semicircular form, such as the tunnel vault, round apse in the floor plan and elevation, side chapels, doors, and windows. Byzantine architects



used domes and canopies profusely for their churches for the same reason. In Christian cosmology, all the phenomena of nature could be “read” like a divine book as manifestations of God: this was a foreign concept in pagan Rome.

The psychological effect of a rounded shape in comparison with a jagged one is well known. It reminds us of a soft and benevolent contact, whereas the jagged shape makes us imagine an object with a sharp edge and the pain it may produce. With our innate cognitive flexibility in forming metaphors, this opposite modality can be easily translated in our mind into other opposite modalities such as good and evil.<sup>9</sup> It seems surprisingly natural to us that, in the movie *The Lord of Rings*, the dwelling of the evil lord is built with a black and jagged profile and the city of humankind is all white and in the Romanesque style.

Examining hundreds of Romanesque churches, I clearly sensed that Romanesque builders intentionally and deliberately used the arch form for design purposes in addition to its symbolic or psychological potential. While all the idioms of the arch were inherited from ancient Rome, as noted above, in Romanesque times they were used more *profusely, playfully, and creatively*.

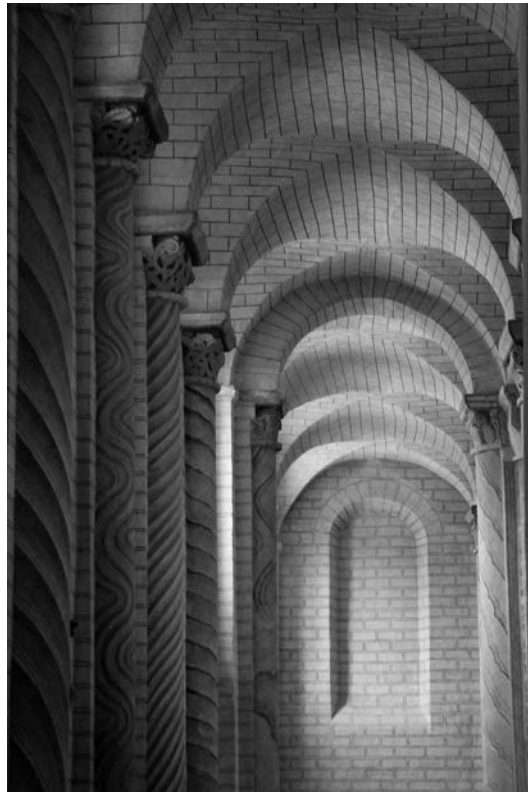


Figure 4. The blind arch on the back wall of aisle, Saint-Savin sur Gartemps, France.

This makes the Romanesque usage of the rounded arch distinctively different from that of ancient Rome or the Renaissance. The blind arch is especially notable; it is used not only for unity along with open arches but also for other design purposes such as filling an empty space (Figure 4), creating visual echoes (Figure 5), and introducing rhythm in the design (Figure 6).

## *2. Variety and Contrast*

If the repeated shape of a rounded arch gives unity, the size differences of the shape introduce variety. In Western aesthetics, unity is often paired with variety, as in the term “unity in variety.” This concept of beauty was introduced by an early medieval philosopher, was periodically revived thereafter, and became a kind of a slogan in nineteenth-century aesthetics.<sup>10</sup> It seems that these quite different design principles—sameness and difference—should coexist to make a design beautiful. We can get an insight of why this is so from the empirical aesthetics of D. E. Berlyne.<sup>11</sup> He informs us that aesthetic pleasure is at its maximum when a design is neither too simple nor too complex. As a human organism, we need both stimuli that calm us down and that excite us. To the calming effect (“arousal-reducing”



Figure 5. Blind arches in triforium echoing clerestory windows, Sacré-Coeur, Paray le Monial, France.





Figure 6. Rhythmic repetition of blind arches, Saint-Pierre, Aulney, France.

in Berlyne's terminology) belong the stimuli that are redundant, simple, and familiar; at the exciting end, there are stimuli that are novel, complex, and unfamiliar.

I have observed that currently circulating design principles can be categorized as having either a calming or an exciting effect. I suggest that unity, center of focus (or dominance and subordination), and symmetry belong to the design principles producing a calming effect, whereas variety, contrast, asymmetry, and movement have the opposite effect.<sup>12</sup> I did not categorize variety and contrast differently in this case because I interpret contrast as variety carried to an extreme degree.

How, then, is variety/contrast manifested in a Romanesque church? The semicircle of an arch is contrasted with its straight posts and other vertical parts, such as engaged shafts and columns. The compound pier is an excellent example of variety/contrast, giving an impression of having many shafts and columns bundled together. They exhibit rhythmic alternation in forms, such as thick and thin, rounded and angled (see Figure 3, above). In

Gothic times, the compound pier became more of a homogeneous bundle of many thin columns, thus losing its rhythm but producing a stronger impression of verticality.

The arched door or window shows even more variety/contrast than the compound pier since it is not only varied by different masses (thick and thin) and different forms (rounded and angled) but also by different moldings. The apse window of Saint-Pierre in Aulnay, France, is one of many beautiful window frames with a conspicuous rhythm found in Romanesque churches all over Western Europe (see Figure 6). These varying and contrasting configurations pulsate through Romanesque space, giving a sense of life and vitality.

### *3. Proportion*

As mentioned previously, the theory of beauty available to Romanesque builders was a classical one, stating that beauty consists in the (right) proportion and arrangement of parts in relation to each other and to the whole. This principle could have been interpreted generally or specifically with numerical proportions. This has been so prevalent throughout two thousand years of Western architecture theory that it is simply called "The Great Theory."<sup>13</sup>

In the numerical-proportion theory, there were different versions.<sup>14</sup> The most famous came from Pythagoras, who discovered that harmonious sounds were produced when two strings with a simple ratio were struck together (1:2 = octave; 2:3 = fifth; 3:4 = fourth). This was quickly translated into the visual arts, especially architecture. Since the musical proportions produced consonance, it is logical that these proportions should produce "harmonious" visual composition. This simple ratio must have been considered when a module system of construction was used. For example, a square can be used to decide the length and the width of a church as five-versus-two modules.

The second proportion system is "the golden ratio" or "the golden rectangle" derived from geometry. The golden ratio is established when a shorter length is to a longer as the longer is to the whole, formulated as  $a:b = b:(a + b)$ . Even though this ratio produces an irrational number, such as 1.61803 . . . , it is easily produced by using only a straight edge and a compass (a peg with a rope attached) (Figure 7). A golden rectangle can be made by first making a square (ABCD), putting the point of the compass in the middle of bottom line (P), and drawing a partial circle from the upper corner (D) to the line extended from the bottom line (Q). Since this ratio is prevalent in natural forms, such as a nautilus shell or a sunflower seed pad, its orthodox status was not challenged until the nineteenth century.

It is almost unbelievable that there is hardly any written record of the proportion system that Romanesque builders used,<sup>15</sup> but later investigations

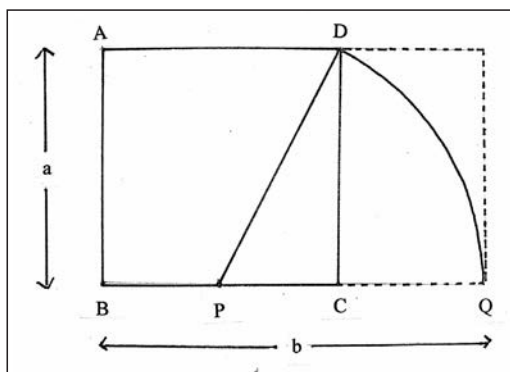


Figure 7. How to draw a golden rectangle.

revealed that both seemed to be used frequently. These ratios were used not only in the dimension of the church as a whole but also in the composition of individual forms and spaces. Even if the proportion is applied in a small space, our eyes cannot easily discern the exact mathematical relationship between the parts. This reflects the stark difference between visual art and music: musical harmony is detectable at once, but visual harmony requires “scanning.” Therefore, appreciation of proportion may work subconsciously. I believe that the overall harmony and calmness we often experience in a Romanesque church derive from these proportions, which are never too extreme.

Speaking of extremes, many Romanesque churches abandoned their modesty by adding a very tall bell tower that is out of proportion in relation to the body of the church. It is understandable why the height of a bell tower can easily be exaggerated: since it has to send its sound far away, obviously a taller tower will accomplish this better than a shorter one. However, I suspect that its sheer physicality probably could have been interpreted as symbolizing the church’s status; therefore, the patron of the church would have found it difficult to resist building a prominently tall bell tower. For the same reason, the west façade of many German imperial Romanesque churches and English Romanesque churches were exaggerated in terms of their size, height, and decoration.

#### 4. Hierarchical Forms or Levels of Scale

Some Romanesque architecture historians have especially noticed in Romanesque churches a compositional arrangement that is called “hierarchical forms,” “hierarchical order,” or “echelon of forms.” It is composed of similar motifs but in different sizes, in such a way that a large form embraces smaller forms in hierarchy. Its best example is illustrated in the eastern part of the church called the “chevet.” It is composed of an apse,

an ambulatory around the apse, and radiating chapels attached around the ambulatory. When seen from the exterior, these circular forms appear to be lowered step-by-step in a cascading manner. This arrangement is so visually charming that most pilgrim churches in France adopted this type of chevet. The monastery church of Cluny III, demolished by the French revolutionary government as a symbol of the ancient system, had a very elaborate east end (Figure 8).

Other hierarchical forms are found in arcades or arched openings. When there is a second story arcade, called the “gallery,” it is usually composed of two or three small open arches enveloped by another larger blind arch, which usually corresponds to the arch in the first floor but is shorter in height. The cathedral of Modena in Italy is famous for its decorative but deeply recessed arches enclosed by a larger blind arch on its east end. It is visually obvious which is dominant and which subordinate, and this visual embracing introduces organization and order (Figure 9).

A similar design principle is discussed by Christopher Alexander under the title of “levels of scale,” one of his fifteen properties of an object that make it beautiful or “alive.” This principle does not suggest a hierarchical order or similarity of shape but emphasizes many different sizes of shapes that do not differ greatly. Therefore “levels of scale” encompass a broader gamut of compositions. For example, when “levels of scale” are considered, the former chevet of Cluny III had at least seven or eight levels of scale (see Figure 8). In the interior of the chevet, we can easily find arches that are



Figure 8. Hierarchical forms of east end, model of Cluny III, France.



Figure 9. Hierarchical forms of east end, Modena Cathedral, Italy.

different in size. In the apse of the church of Fontevraud monastery, there are five levels of scale: the arcade surrounding the ambulatory, transverse arches on the ceiling of the ambulatory, windows in the ambulatory, small decorative blind arches in the triforium, and the windows of the apse (Figure 10).

### 5. *Articulation*

Articulation signifies a clear demarcation of parts. This is not one of the design principles we are very familiar with, but it is worth exploring, as it is one of the most cited virtues of Romanesque architecture by art historians. I suspect that those who notice superior articulation in Romanesque architecture would have unconsciously compared it with Gothic architecture. Compared with the vastly open and undifferentiated interior space of Gothic cathedral, Romanesque church interior is indeed well demarcated by architectural components.

What if we compare Romanesque articulation with that of the early Christian basilica, as it is more legitimate than comparing it with that of a Gothic church. It is true that the longitudinal interior demarcation punctuated by columns was structural rather than aesthetic: it is necessary for any building to have a support system placed with a regular distance to distribute compressive stress evenly. The early basilica had this same system. Can we still praise articulation as a Romanesque virtue? I think we can. Romanesque interiors and exteriors exceed the early Christian church in



Figure 10. Arches in five different scales in apse and ambulatory, Fontevraud, France.

visual clarity. Often different types of piers alternate through bays; the bays are then accentuated by transverse arches and other spaces, such as the transept; and the crossing is demarcated by more prominent piers or diaphragm arches. If we consider the articulation of elevation of the wall, Romanesque churches are indeed superior to early Christian basilicas. In Romanesque times, we find approximately four ways of articulating the wall space horizontally from single- to four-tier construction, but one-, two-, and three-tier systems are most frequently chosen.<sup>16</sup> Here, I will only address two-tier and three-tier systems.

The arcade-gallery two-tier structure without a clerestory was chosen for an obvious engineering reason. We see this two-tier design lacking a clerestory of windows in large pilgrim churches, such as the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in Spain, Sainte-Foy monastery church in Conques, and Saint-Sernin in Toulouse (Figure 11). Their second-floor gallery structure, as a whole, functions like a huge buttress that supports a substantial load from the nave vault with the quadrant vault of the gallery ceiling. Because there is





Figure 11. Arcade-gallery two-tier wall articulation, Saint-Sernin, Toulouse, France.

no clerestory window, the interior with this design is indeed very dark; the light from the windows in the gallery walls does not penetrate deep into the nave space.

Three-story arrangement of the arcade-gallery-clerestory with a wooden ceiling is popular in Italy, but one with a stone vault is rare because windows in the clerestory weaken the wall. The most popular design is a three-story, arcade-triforium-clerestory articulation. In this design, the second story is substituted by a decorative section called the “triforium.” The triforium usually consists of multiple small blind arcades and the height of the story is much shorter than that of the usual second gallery, giving the impression of a broad decorative band. There are many medium to large churches that adopted this elevation. Since this design has clerestory windows that are neither too high nor too far away, the interior of the church is relatively bright. La Trinité in Caen, Normandy, shows a beautiful triforium and lovely window frames with miniature columns. The church is unforgettable with its decorative interior and warm cream-colored limestone, for which the region around Caen was famous (Figure 12). All three of these most common designs have a clear marking provided by sculpted moldings or some other means to separate different stories.

The result of these articulations is an added order and regularity. Even if a certain part of the design is complex, we grasp it more easily when it is demarcated clearly from the other parts because it allows for “visual chunking.” This may apply to “hierarchical forms” as well. I think that aesthetic



Figure 12. Arcade-triforium-clerestory three-tier wall articulation, La Trinité, Caen, France.

terms, such as “clarity” or “orderliness” applied to Romanesque churches, derive mainly from this design strategy. Owing to this order and articulation, we sense that the space is rationally constructed, and we feel comfortable being in a Romanesque interior, since we know which part serves for which function and where we are located with regard to the whole structure. This sense of clarity would later be lost in Gothic cathedrals.

### **Conclusion**

I have discussed five representative aspects of design that make a Romanesque church beautiful. Romanesque builders wanted to build their churches beautiful, and they knew how to accomplish it within the limit of their engineering knowledge. If we refer to Berlyne’s theory once again, Romanesque architecture has both calming and exciting design principles, which give great aesthetic pleasure. There is much variety, contrast, and complexity to excite us, but they do not overwhelm us because they are organized with unity, articulation, and hierarchical forms. Even though we cannot easily discern numerical proportion, we may sense a certain mysterious visual satisfaction from the careful application of proportions between architectural parts. It was also sensible to consider Gombrich’s theory of interpretation of artistic style based on its artistic function and the means of achieving it with resources and skills available at the given time. Otherwise, Romanesque

architecture would never be duly appreciated because it is vastly overshadowed by Gothic and classical architecture.

After visiting so many Romanesque churches, I cannot resist thinking about the creativity of Romanesque builders. The variety in plan, dimension, design layout, and decoration is incredible. There is so much diversity that it seems almost pointless to use the same stylistic label to cover everything.<sup>17</sup> Where did this amazing variety of Romanesque churches come from?<sup>18</sup> It is obvious that some of it came from the socioeconomic conditions of the time, such as variety in building materials. Without convenient means of transportation, Romanesque builders had to use local building materials as much as possible, such as the limestone of Normandy, the granite of northern Spain, or the different brown and gray volcanic stones of Auvergne. The variety of sizes reflects the religious hierarchy ranging from an archbishopric to a country parish, and availability of funds differed according to pilgrim donations. However, many other varieties cannot be traced to social conditions.

Is it possible that the creative diversity of Romanesque architecture may have derived from its overall parameter, which was not too broad but also not too restrictive? There was no mandatory prescription from an ecclesiastical hierarchy on how to build a church, but there was a broad goal of building a beautiful structure based on the early Christian basilica and the classical notion of formal harmony. Romanesque builders learned from each other, competed in excellence for the glory of God, and did their best to overcome the restrictive conditions of the period. Even though no architectural idiom or method was their own exclusively, the ingenious ways of combining them to suit their practical need and aesthetic aspirations were their own. In my numerous visits to these churches, I felt that I had rediscovered the creativity and design sensitivities of medieval masons whose name we will never know.

My experience of encountering and analyzing Romanesque architecture taught me that we should never omit or dismiss “beauty” from aesthetic education; nor should we regard “formalism” as merely one of many Western historic aesthetic movements. The sense of beauty is biologically endowed, therefore psychologically powerful, and culturally ubiquitous. For this reason, artistic excellence can be found in many different vernacular art objects throughout the world other than Western canonical artworks. This discernment of beauty should not be lost when we introduce multicultural art objects to students.

As a last thought, I wonder how much an individual’s aesthetic preference can influence one’s aesthetic experience. Even though the design qualities that I mentioned can be universally recognized, they might not have exerted such a great appeal to me initially if I were a person with a penchant for baroque sumptuousness. As an Asian who used to visit Korean Zen

Buddhist temples when I lived in Korea and terribly missed that experience when I studied in the United States, I found similar comfort and peace in Romanesque churches in Europe halfway around the globe, reaffirming the old and timeless value of quiet beauty in the midst of our frantically changing modern culture.<sup>19</sup>

## Notes

1. In this paper, “Romanesque architecture” and “Romanesque church” are used interchangeably because the Romanesque church best represents Romanesque architecture. The period of Romanesque architecture is usually considered to be from 1000 to 1150 in Western Europe Christendom.
2. After the first encounter with Romanesque churches in 2007, I visited over 150 churches in France, Italy, and Spain by 2016. Many of them are located in a deep valley or on a mountain top, as in the case of monastery churches. The sizes vary: pilgrim churches or seats of a bishop tend to be large, but most of them are medium-sized and small.
3. It seems that early historians of Romanesque architecture mentioned aesthetic qualities more freely than later historians in the 1960s and 1970s. Ralph Smith mentioned James Ackerman and H. W. Janson as two art historians who refused to acknowledge aesthetic experience in their writing. See Ralph Smith, “Art, the Human Career, and Aesthetic Education,” in *Culture and Arts in Education: Critical Essays on Shaping Human Experience* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2006), 33–47. The disdain for human feelings and aesthetics on the part of modernist architects was criticized by Peter Smith and Christopher Alexander. See Peter Smith, *Architecture and the Human Dimension* (London: George Godwin Ltd., 1979), and Christopher Alexander, *The Phenomenon of Life* (Berkeley, CA: The Center for Environmental Structure, 2002). After many years of disregard, art historians are paying attention once again to the aesthetic dimensions of Romanesque architecture. In his *Early Medieval Architecture* published in 1999, Roger Stalley devotes a chapter to this subject under the title, “The Language of Architecture.”
4. Ernst H. Gombrich, *Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation* (1960; Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000).
5. Ernst H. Gombrich, *Meditations on a Hobby Horse and Other Essays on the Theory of Art* (London: Phaidon, 1985).
6. While the patrons of the early Christian basilicas, Byzantine churches, and Gothic churches all aimed to build beautiful churches to remind the faithful of “the heavenly Jerusalem,” they differed considerably in terms of how to achieve this beauty. If Gothic and Byzantine builders glorified their churches with jewel-like stained-glass windows and exquisitely laid mosaics, respectively, Romanesque builders, who did not have the necessary skills or resources, had to rely on purely formal relationships.
7. Arthur W. Dow, *Composition: A Series of Exercises in Art Structure for the Use of Students and Teachers* (1899; New York: Double Day, 1927); Denman W. Ross, *A Theory of Pure Design* (1907; New York: Peter Smith, 1933); Johannes Itten, *Design and Form: The Basic Course at the Bauhaus and Later* (1963; New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1975).
8. Christopher Alexander, *The Phenomenon of Life* (Berkeley, CA: The Center for Environmental Structure, 2002). He suggested fifteen “fundamental properties” of beauty: levels of scale, strong centers, boundaries, alternating repetition, positive space, good shape, local symmetries, deep interlock and ambiguity,

- contrast, gradients, roughness, echoes, the void, simplicity and inner calm, and not separateness.
9. Charles E. Osgood, George J. Suci, and Percy H. Tannenbaum, *The Measurement of Meaning* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1967); Gombrich, *Art and Illusion*.
  10. Władysław Tatarkiewicz, *A History of Six Ideas: An Essay in Aesthetics* (Warszawa: Polish Scientific Publishers, 1980), 136.
  11. Daniel E. Berlyne, *Aesthetics and Psychobiology* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1971); Daniel E. Berlyne, *Studies in the New Experimental Aesthetics* (Washington, DC: John Wiley and Sons, 1974).
  12. Nanyoung Kim, "A History of Design Theory in Art Education," *The Journal of Aesthetic Education* 40, no. 2 (2006): 32–45.
  13. Tatarkiewicz, *A History of Six Ideas*.
  14. P. H. Scholfield, *The Theory of Proportion in Architecture* (1958; London: Cambridge University Press, 2011).
  15. Kenneth J. Conant, *Carolingian and Romanesque Architecture, 800–1200* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1978), 200 and 478–79. Conant investigated the proportion systems of Cluny III. He noted that the monastery library housed a copy of Vitruvius's *De architectura*.
  16. Rolf Toman, *Romanesque: Architecture, Sculpture, Painting* (Königwinter, DE: Tandem Verlag GmbH, 2014), 27.
  17. Roger Stalley, *Early Medieval Architecture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 215.
  18. The variety of the capital sculptures inside and outside the church and especially in the cloister is one of the most enchanting aspects of Romanesque church that I did not address in this paper. I found Romanesque sculptures extravagantly varied and even humorous rather than "frightening."
  19. In the United States, we can find many Romanesque style buildings built at the end of the nineteenth century by Henry H. Richardson and his followers. When they are successful, we can see a delightful interplay of forms and masses; when not entirely successful, we get a feeling of immense heaviness. Richardson's inspiration came from the Romanesque churches in southwest France he visited, which have elaborated facades and distinctive turrets. The heavy rustication, grand recessed openings, and thick and short columns of Richardsonian Romanesque are more his own interpretation than the essential features of original Romanesque architecture, especially as found in Latin Europe.