Plaque with Saint John the Evangelist, early 9th century; Early Medieval Carolingian

Early Medieval Europe

5th – (first quarter of the) 11th century

(Left) Four Evangelists, (right) Christ Enthroned, Book of Kells, 9th c, Insular/Celtic
Historical Timeline

Late Antiquity/ Early Christian
3rd - 7th c AD

Byzantine Empire (East)
330 – 1453 AD

Medieval Europe (West)
400-1400 AD
Early Medieval Art

• Scholars often refer to this era, from classical antiquity to the Renaissance, as rigid and uncivilized.

• The pagan religions of antiquity and their sculptures are no longer existent or tolerated. Western Europe is Christian. Art is Christian. Architecture is Christian. Manuscripts are Biblical texts. Life is dominated by Christianity.

• Charlemagne creates the Holy Roman Empire – a Christian empire – based on a model of the Roman Empire. This reintroduces forgotten art mediums and introduces new architectural elements.

• Over time, artists gain back the skills of their predecessors. Monte Cassino, Charlemagne’s court & St. Michael’s at Hildesheim were all strong centers of learning, culture and the arts.
Early Medieval Europe

Celts

Vikings

Visigoths, Ostrogoths, Franks, Lombards
Medieval Art

- Between 400 and 1400 AD
- Also known as the Middle Ages (between Classical & Renaissance periods) or the “Dark Ages”

- Celtic Art, aka migration art, introduced elaborate swirling motifs to western decoration during the Middle Ages.
  - Germanic & Insular art
  - After Christianization of Europe, it developed further into various schools of EMA
Pair of Merovingian looped fibulae, from Jouy-le-Comte, France, mid-sixth century. Silver gilt worked in filigree, with inlays of garnets and other stones.

The fibula is a garment pin that goes back to the Romans and Etruscans. This one has red gems and blue enamel. Aside from the fish, all the designs are abstract ones.

Similar fibulae are found on the figures next to Justinian in the San Vitale mosaic.
Purse cover, from the Sutton Hoo ship burial in Suffolk, England, ca. 625. Gold, glass, and cloisonné garnets

On the clasp side the outer motifs are men flanked by opposed lions (?).
Belt buckle, from the Sutton Hoo ship burial in Suffolk, England, ca. 625. Gold
Its surface is filled in with an interlace of lines. These are the standard elements of this warrior art: animal forms and interlace patterns.
By the 11th century, much of Scandinavia had become Christian. So here the “barbarian” interlace adapted to the decoration of the church.
Early Medieval Europe is Christian

- Celts
- Vikings
- Visigoths, Ostrogoths
- Franks, Lombards
Medieval Monasticism

- As monastic communities developed so did the need for principles to guide those living within the monastery. In the 6th century, St. Benedict (480–550) created his famous Rule as a guide to running a monastic community.
  - It covered every aspect of life, from worship to everyday practical issues

- The Rule of St. Benedict became the most influential of the Christian monastic rules. It is still used by a number of orders, including the Benedictines.

- The earliest Benedictine monasteries were independent and autonomous but were united by the observance of the same Rule.
The Monte Cassino Monastery was founded by St. Benedict about 529 A.D. on the remnants of a pre-existing Roman fortification.

Monte Cassino became famous for the remarkable life and the tomb of its founder. Through the ages, the abbey was looked upon as a place of holiness, culture and art.
Schematic plan for a monastery at Saint Gall, Switzerland, ca. 819. Red ink on parchment

Monasteries spring up all over Europe, each with a functioning scriptorium

Abbey of Saint-Riquier, Centula, France, 790–799, in an engraving of 1612 after a lost 11th-century manuscript illumination
Scriptorium

- A **scriptorium** is a room devoted to the hand-lettered copying of manuscripts.

- In the monasteries, the scriptorium was a room, rarely a building, set apart for the professional copying of manuscripts.
  - A scriptorium was a normal adjunct to a library
  - The scriptorium was also a source of revenue for the monastic community.

- During the 7th - 9th centuries, many earlier parchment manuscripts were scrubbed and scoured to be ready for rewriting. Such overwritten parchment manuscripts, where the original text has begun faintly to show through, are called **palimpsests**.
  - Many of the works of Antiquity often said to have been preserved in the monasteries were only preserved as **palimpsests**.
Man (symbol of Saint Matthew), folio 21 verso of the *Book of Durrow*, possibly from Iona, Scotland, ca. 660–680. Ink and tempera on parchment

**Parchment** - lambskin
Cross-.inscribed carpet page, folio 26 verso of the Lindisfarne Gospels, from Northumbria, England, ca. 698–721. Tempera on vellum

**Vellum** - calfskin

Combination of Christian imagery and the animal-interlace style of the North
Luke 1:1 -
The first initial and words of Luke "Quoniam quidem multi conati sunt ordinare narrationem" (Many have undertaken to draw up an account)
Evangelists & their Symbols

- **Matthew** (Apostle) – man; humanity
- **Mark** (follower of Peter, an Apostle) – lion; represents courage & monarchy
- **Luke** (follower of Mark) – ox or bull; sacrifice, strength and service
- **John** (Apostle) – eagle; ability to journey in the sky (think: union with God in Heaven)
Chi-rho-iota (XPI) page, folio 34 recto of the *Book of Kells*, probably from Iona, Scotland, late eighth or early ninth century. Tempera on vellum

$XPI = \text{chi-rho-iota}$

$= \text{the initials/letters of Christ in Greek}$
Celtic Crosses

The halo-like circle identifies the work as Celtic.

Earlier ones were filled in with interlace.

Later ones and those to follow were filled in with figurative scenes from the life of Christ (or Celtic saints), though patterning remains a strong element.

Sometimes a fantastic animal is included.

South Cross, Ahenny, Ireland, late 8th century. Sandstone

High Cross of Muiredach (east face), Monasterboice, Ireland, 923
Spain

Visigoths converted to Christianity in the early 5th century. Many churches still stand today.

Follows the basilica form; built over the site of a miraculous healing, horseshoe arch.
One of the *earliest known depictions of a scriptorium*.

To the left is the bell tower with a monk ringing the bell. The walls of the tower resemble *Islamic tiles*; the interior ladders & *horseshoe arches* are *Visigothic*.

To the right is the scriptorium. Three monks are shown and each is doing his respective duty. The two seated together are the senior *scribe* and the *artist* (Emeterius); to the right the monk is cutting parchment.
Emeterius, the tower and scriptorium of San Salvador de Tabara, colophon (folio 168) of the *Commentary on the Apocalypse* by Beatus, from Tabara, Spain, 970. Tempera on parchment

Bihzad, *Seduction of Yusef*, folio 52 verso of the *Bustan* of Sultan Husayn Mayqara, from Herat, Afghanistan, 1488. Ink and color on paper
Charlemagne

Rex Francorum (King of the Franks)
Rex Longobardorum (King of the Lombards)
Imperator Romanorum (Emperor of the Romans)

KAROLVS IMP AVG (Carolus Imperator Augustus)
Carolingerian Art in the 9th century (present day France & Germany)

- Charles the Great (Charlemagne) was the most important name linked to Medieval art and culture. Established Frankish Empire.

- His reign spans more than 40 years (768-814) and it was during this time that modern day European civilization came into existence.
  - He was interested in preserving 3 things: the Roman past, the Germanic way of life, and Christianity.

- Carolingian Renaissance, a revival of art, religion, and culture is closely associated with Catholic Church.
  - Charlemagne encouraged the spread of uniform religious practices as well as a culture

- By the end of his career, Charlemagne had unified his empire, elevated education, standardized coins, handwriting and Latin. Religious texts were created in the everyday vernacular.
Equestrian portrait of Charlemagne or Charles the Bald, from Metz, France, 9th century. Bronze, originally gilt

Gilding – a technique for applying fine gold leaf or powder to solid surfaces such as wood, stone, or metal to give a thin coating of gold
A number of medieval illuminated manuscript Gospel books are called the *Coronation Gospels*, meaning they have, at least by tradition, had a coronation oath sworn upon them at some point.
Christ enthroned, folio 3 recto of the *Godescalc Lectionary*, 781–783. Ink, gold, and colors on vellum.

**Lectionary** - a book or listing that contains a collection of scripture readings appointed for Christian worship on a given day or occasion.

What is the name of this Christ image when it pertains to the Byzantine Empire?
Saint Matthew, folio 18 verso of the *Ebbo Gospels* (Gospel Book of Archbishop Ebbo of Reims), from Hautvillers (near Reims), France, ca. 816–835. Ink and tempera on vellum

Art of Charlemagne’s Court

- A youthful, beardless, Christ is nailed to the cross.
- He stairs open-eyed in gold *repoussé* (hammered out from behind).
- Mary and Saint John and two other figures crouch below; angels plus personifications of the moon and sun flit above.

Crucifixion, front cover of the *Lindau Gospels*, from Saint Gall, Switzerland, ca. 870. Gold, precious stones, and pearls
Carolingian Architecture

• Palatine Chapel
  – The term “palatine” means chapel for the royal palace; it is a chapel usually attached to the palace structure itself.

• This chapel was influenced by 2 things:
  – The central plan of San Vitale
  – Roman Architecture
Restored plan of the Palatine Chapel of Charlemagne, Aachen, Germany, 792-805

Interior of the Palatine Chapel of Charlemagne, Aachen, Germany, 792–805
Interior view

How does interior decoration compare to the interior of San Vitale?
Dome - Palatine Chapel.
The term “palatine” means chapel for the royal palace; it is a chapel usually attached to the palace structure itself.
Ottonian Art
(10th century Germany)

• Following Charlemagne’s death, there was disorder in the Holy Roman Empire

• The most significant successive rulers of the period were 3 Germanic (Saxon) emperors, all named Otto.
  – Otto I had himself crowned in Rome by the Pope in 962 with Charlemagne’s title of Holy Roman Emperor
  – Otto II married to Theophanu – a Byzantine princess; Holy Roman Emperor
  – Otto III was Holy Roman Emperor 996-1002

• Their reign symbolized an extension of Charlemagne’s ideals with attention to the arts and architecture.
Nave of the church of Saint Cyriakus, Gernrode, Germany, 961–973
What message is meant to be conveyed here? Is it political? Religious? Social?
Saint Michael’s, Hildesheim, Germany, 1001–1031

Hildesheim was a center of learning and the arts in the early 11th century.
Longitudinal section (*top*) and plan (*bottom*) of the abbey church of Saint Michael’s, Hildesheim, Germany, 1001–1031.

The Abbey Church of St. Michael’s at Hildesheim was the most important architectural achievement of the Ottonian era.

- used a **modified Roman basilica** plan
COMPARE + CONTRAST

Saint Michael’s, Hildesheim, 1001–1031

Hosios Loukas, Greece, 11th c
Ottonian Sculpture

The panels show a similarity to manuscript illumination of this period. This tells us artisans were using pattern books.

Doors with relief panels (Genesis, left door; life of Christ, right door), commissioned by Bishop Bernward for Saint Michael’s, Hildesheim, Germany, 1015. Bronze
All of the images were meant to be emotional, therefore, they are not considered Classical figures.

Doors with relief panels  
(Genesis, left door;  
life of Christ, right door),  
St. Michael's. 1015

Adam & Eve Reproached by the Lord.  
detail of bronze doors
Column with reliefs illustrating the life of Christ, commissioned by Bishop Bernward for Saint Michael’s, Hildesheim, Germany, ca. 1015–1022. Bronze.
Abbess Uta dedicating her codex to the Virgin, folio 2 recto of the *Uta Codex*, from Regensburg, Germany, ca. 1025. Tempera on parchment.

Crucifix commissioned by Archbishop Gero for Cologne Cathedral, Germany, ca. 970. Painted wood.
Ottonian Manuscripts

• The Ottonian style is associated with the courts of the Saxon emperors.
  – Gospel books and the Apocalypse were more popular than entire bibles.

• The manuscripts were influenced by Byzantium, using gold backgrounds and wide eyed figures in rigid, hieratic poses.
Ottonian arts

- The Ottonian revival coincided with a period of growth and reform in the church, and monasteries produced much of the Ottonian art, including illuminated manuscripts, churches and monastic buildings.

- Christian iconography predominated, but political imagery was often integrated with sacred scenes.
Notice the golden backgrounds and linear figural styles in *Ottonian illuminated manuscripts* --- Ottonian leaders developed and maintained significant contacts with the Byzantine empire.

Annunciation to the Shepherds, folio in the *Lectionary of Henry II*, from Reichenau, Germany, 1002–1014. Tempera on vellum.
Otto III, seen here in his own gospel book, was obsessively interested in the revival of a Christian Roman Empire. His mother’s Byzantine parentage indicates his grandfather’s moving in this direction.

He moved the court to Rome, to be near the center of church power, and to display and demonstrate his interest in reviving imperial power.
Justinian, Bishop Maximianus, and attendants, mosaic on the north wall of the apse, San Vitale, Ravenna, Italy, ca. 547

Otto III is depicted as an enthroned emperor, with a scepter and cross-inscribed orb to represent his universal authority; he is flanked by the clergy & the barons (Church & State).

Has a clear political resemblance to Justinian’s mosaic in Ravenna.
Jesus washing the feet of Saint Peter, folio 237 recto of the *Gospel Book of Otto III*, 997–1000. Tempera on vellum
Speyer Evangeliary
Christ in Majesty
Ottonian
1045-46
Madrid, Escorial
Ms.Cod. Vitrinas 17. folio 2v
As great patrons of manuscript illumination and the monastic centers that produced them, the Ottonian dynasty financed scriptoriums like those in Reichenau, Saint Gall, and Regensburg.

This illumination depicts the blessing for the feast of the purification of the Virgin. The book was illuminated in Bavaria, probably at the Benedictine monastery of Saint Emmeram in Regensburg for Bishop Engilmar of Parenzo (present-day Croatia).

Unknown
German, Hildesheim, about 1170s
Tempera colors, gold leaf, and silver leaf on parchment
11 1/8 x 7 7/16 in.
MS. 64, FOL. 152
Romanesque Art
Dates: 1050-1200

- The use brightly colored stained glass windows
- Illuminated manuscripts
- The colors in the art of this period were generally muted (except those used in manuscripts and stained glass windows)
- Religious shrines and caskets were decorated with fine metals, gilt work and enamel
- Large, stone, figurative sculptures
- Small Ivory Carvings
- Murals

Saint James, Santiago de Compostela ca. 1075