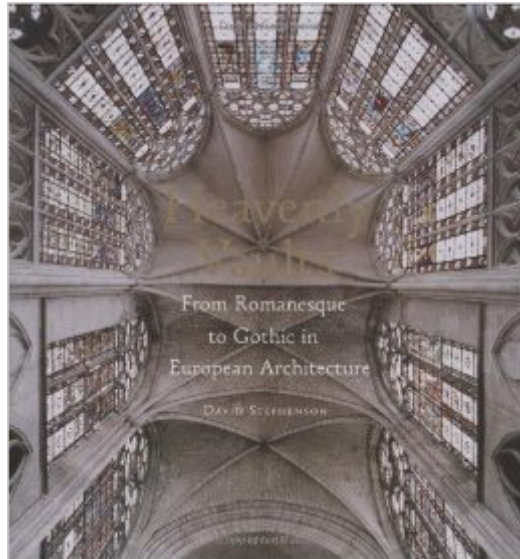


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Heavenly Vaults: From Romanesque To Gothic In European Architecture



Synopsis

The Gothic cathedrals of the Middle Ages are among the world's greatest architectural achievements. Looking up at the soaring vaulted ceiling of a Gothic church, it is impossible not to marvel at the seemingly unending design variations of these transcendent structures. Photographer David Stephenson, author of our best-selling book of dome photography *Visions of Heaven*, continues his exploration of the architecturally sublime by focusing his camera on the amazing vaulted ceilings of the medieval churches, cathedrals, and basilicas of Europe. Stephenson presents more than eighty Romanesque and Gothic vaults in kaleidoscopic photographs that reveal their complex geometrical structures, decorative detailing, and ornamental painting in ways they have never before been seen. From simple arched stone tunnels, or so-called barrel vaults, to quadripartite and sexpartite rib vaults, to intricate tierceron and lierne vaults with their added decorative ribs, to complicated net, fan, and diamond vaults of the late Gothic period, Stephenson's visual taxonomy of this ancient structural form is strikingly beautiful and showcases numerous varieties across time and location. In an accompanying essay, the author charts the history of the vault and explains its technological developments. A foreword by photography curator Isobel Crombie puts Stephenson's work in context.

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Customer Reviews

This new entry (2009) into the library of Gothic building photography is a welcome addition due to its high quality reproductions, its coverage of a wide variety of structures from across Europe, and the addition of a short, but informative, written narrative on the issues surrounding medieval vaulting for

European edifices. As anyone who is interested in Gothic architecture is painfully aware, the ability to purchase high quality (or actually, ANY quality) printed photo books covering the field is excruciatingly difficult. It's not because there are no books out there: it's that many of them are generally available only in Europe, are published by local concerns such as cathedrals, churches, or local towns and therefore not easily found in online sellers, and are not always the best reproduction quality. In addition, those that ARE printed in high quality, large page format tend to sell out quickly, pushing the price of the remaining volumes into the stratosphere. You should keep this in mind with this text, because even though the book is being printed by Princeton, it is entirely possible this volume will follow the same trajectory and end up being prohibitively expensive. That's a shame, because this is a lovely book that is best distributed to a wide audience. If you are interested in Gothic architecture, this book will provide you with great images of the transept crossing vaulting and choir vaulting in full color and with good resolution. A nice touch of the book is that the photos are arranged with essentially the same photographic "framing" in each image, making comparisons between the structures very easy as you move from page to page (see the sample photos above to see what I mean).

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