

From a set of vestments embroidered in *opus anglicanum* from southern England. c. 1330–1350. Red velvet with silk and metallic thread and seed pearls; length 4'3" (129.5 cm), width 30" (76 cm). Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Fletcher Fund, 1927 (27 162.1).

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During the celebration of the Mass, especially as the priest moved, *opus anglicanum* would have glistened in the candlelight. Court dress was just as rich and colorful as the treasures on the altar, and at court such embroidered garments proclaimed the rank and status of the wearer. Such gold and bejeweled garments became so heavy that their wearers often needed help to move.

## Architecture

In the later years of the thirteenth century and early years of the fourteenth, a distinctive and influential Gothic architectural style popularly known as the "Decorated style" developed in England. This change in taste has been credited to Henry III's ambition to surpass Louis IX, who was his brother-in-law, as a royal patron of the arts.

### The Decorated Style At Exeter

One of the most complete Decorated-style buildings is **EXETER CATHEDRAL**. Thomas of Witney began construction in 1313 and remained master mason from 1316 to 1342, supervising construction of the nave and redesigning upper parts of the choir. He left the towers of the original Norman cathedral, but turned the interior into a dazzling stone forest of colonnettes, moldings, and vault ribs (FIG. 18–23). From piers formed by a cluster of colonnettes rise multiple moldings that make the arcade seem to ripple. Bundled colonnettes spring from sculptured foliate corbels (brackets that project from a wall) between the arches and rise up the wall to support conical clusters of 13 ribs that meet at the summit of the vault, a modest 69 feet above the floor. The basic structure here is the four-part vault with intersecting cross-ribs, but the designer added additional ribs, called tiercerons, to create a richer linear pattern. Elaborately carved **bosses** (decorative knoblike elements) signal the point where ribs meet along the ridge of the vault. Large bar-tracery clerestory windows illuminate the 300-foot-long nave. Unpolished gray marble shafts, yellow sandstone arches, and a white French stone, shipped from Caen, add subtle gradations of color to the upper wall.



Devon, England. Thomas of Witney, choir, 14th century and bishop's throne, 1313–1317; Robert Lesyngham, east window, 1389–1390.

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Detailed records survive for the building of Exeter Cathedral, documenting work over the period from 1279 to 1514, with only two short breaks. They record where masons and carpenters were housed (in a hostel near the cathedral) and how they were paid (some by the day with extra for drinks, some by the week, some for each finished piece); how materials were acquired and transported (including horseshoes and fodder for the horses); and, of course, payments for the building materials (not only stone and wood, but rope for measuring and parchment on which to

draw forms for the masons). The bishops contributed generously to the building funds. This was not a labor only of love.

Thomas of Witney also designed the intricate, 57-foot-high bishop's throne (at right in FIG. 18-23<sup>□</sup>), constructed by Richard de Galmeton and Walter of Memburg, who led a team of a dozen carpenters. The canopy resembles embroidery translated into wood, with its maze of pinnacles bursting with leafy crockets and tiny carved animals and heads. To finish the throne in splendor, Master Nicolas painted and gilded the wood. When the bishop was seated on his throne wearing embroidered vestments like the Chichester-Constable Chasuble (SEE FIG. 18-22<sup>□</sup>), he must have resembled a golden image in a shrine—more a symbol of the power and authority of the Church than a specific human being.

## The Perpendicular Style At Exeter

During the years following the Black Death, work at Exeter Cathedral came to a standstill. The nave had been roofed but not vaulted, and the windows had no glass. When work could be resumed, tastes had changed. The exuberance of the Decorated style gave way to an austere style in which rectilinear patterns and sharp, angular shapes replaced intricate curves, and luxuriant foliage gave way to simple, stripped-down patterns. This phase is known as the Perpendicular style.

In 1389–1390, well-paid master mason Robert Lesyngham rebuilt the great east window (SEE FIG. 18-23<sup>□</sup>, far wall), designing its tracery in the new Perpendicular style. The window fills the east wall of the choir like a luminous altarpiece. A single figure in each light stands under a tall, painted canopy that flows into and blends with the stone tracery. The Virgin with the Christ Child stands in the center over the high altar with four female saints at the left and four male saints on the right, including St. Peter, to whom the church is dedicated. At a distance, the colorful figures silhouetted against the silver *grisaille* glass become a band of color, reinforcing the rectangular pattern of the mullions and transoms. The combination of *grisaille*, silver-oxide stain (staining clear glass with shades of yellow or gold), and colored glass produces a glowing wall and casts a cool, silvery light over the nearby stonework.

Perpendicular architecture heralds the Renaissance style in its regularity, its balanced horizontal and vertical lines, and its plain wall or window surfaces. When Tudor monarchs introduced Renaissance art into the British Isles, builders were not forced to rethink the form and structure of their buildings; they simply changed the ornament from the pointed cusps and crocketed arches of the Gothic style to the round arches and columns and capitals of Roman Classicism. The Perpendicular style itself became an English architectural vernacular. It has even been popular in the United States, especially for churches and college buildings.