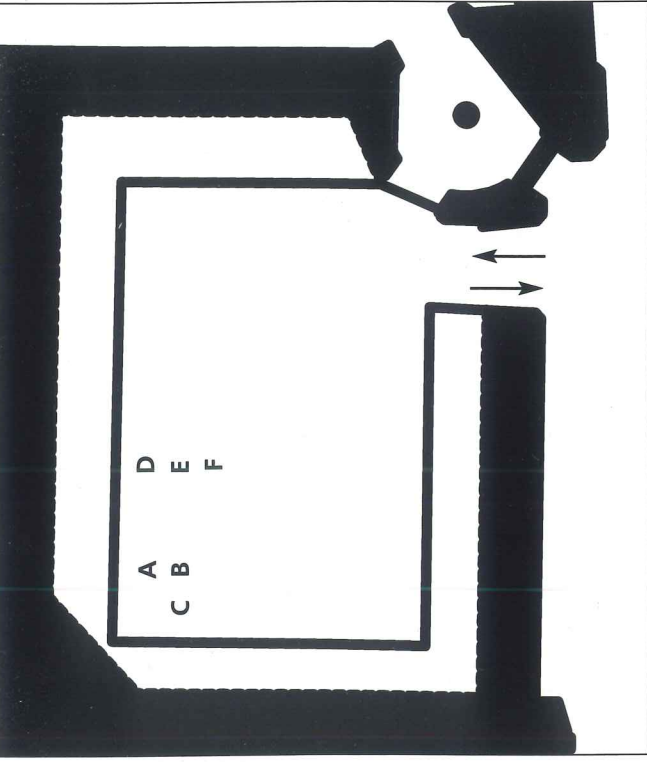




Room 6 English

12th and 13th century stained-glass windows

With their predominant blue and red colours, the sixty stained-glass panels displayed in this room are representative of the colourful and luminous characteristics of churches in the 12th and 13th century. All have an exceptional provenance and were commissioned by the monarch or the court circle. Examples include Abbot Suger's commission for the royal abbey of Saint-Denis, and that from Saint Louis for the precious Sainte-Chapelle in Paris. The featured pieces testify to the extraordinary composition and painting skills of the leading stained-glass artists of the day.

Stained-glass windows date from the Middle Ages. Using pieces of glass each of one single colour stained and painted, then held together by lead rods called cames, the technique entailed two different steps. Established in forests, the master glassmakers of the kingdom of France were tasked with the production of glass. This they would fashion into plates or disks which had been stained. In the towns, the stained-glass artists designed or adapted stained-glass models to suit the commissions from their clients. They transposed the drawing into models which were the actual size of the window. They would then select the glass and cut it precisely to fit the drawing and background colours before embellishing the result with grisaille painting (a mixture of iron oxide and crushed glass) which could only be fixed to the glass by firing. The grisaille served to highlight the details of drapery folds or landscapes. After firing, the glass pieces were arranged and held in place by lead rods which, with the surrounding frame, gave the panel its rigidity.

In the whole history of glass painting, the 12th and 13th centuries presented the most vibrant colours in the history of stained glass windows as illustrated by these panels of outstanding quality which were the subject of prestigious commissions.

The first examples of stained-glass windows (12th century)

Saint Timothy

This small scale window of *Saint Timothy* (A. Cl. 13335) cut from thick glass was for many years falsely considered to be one of the oldest surviving 12th century windows. Depicted face on, clutching a palm, the symbol of his martyrdom (he was a disciple of Saint Paul), this figure decorated one of the windows of the Romanesque chapel of Saint-Sébastien de Saint-Pierre-et-Saint-Paul de Neuviller, an important daughter abbey of Cluny in Basse-Alsace.

The stained-glass window in the abbey church of Saint-Denis

According to the inscription, two monks gaze heavenwards in search of the path left by Saint Benedict upon his death (B. Cl. 22758). This is one of the panels of a window devoted to his life. It was the first time a stained-glass window was used to tell a story at Saint-Denis about the founder of the



A. Cl. 13335



B. Cl. 22758



D. Cl. 22849 a, b



E. Cl. 22849 c



F. Cl. 23530

Benedictine order to which the abbey is affiliated. Abbot Suger, friend and adviser to Louis VI and regent to his son Louis VII, had the choir of the abbey church of Saint-Denis reconstructed (1140–1144) and decorated with mostly blue windows. This exceptional commission paved the way for the spectacular development of stained-glass as an art form in churches throughout the kingdom of France. The spandrel of the lower corner of the panel, as well as the side border of stylised foliage (C. Cl. 23534), received a carefully elaborated embellishment as can be seen in the Romanesque tradition of stained-glass windows.

Troyes in the late 12th century

The museum possesses several stained-glass panels rescued from beneath the roof of Troyes Cathedral in the 19th century. They would appear to originate from the collegial church of Saint-Etienne erected at the entrance to his palace by the Count of Champagne (and destroyed during the French Revolution).

Two episodes from the windows of the *Life of Saint Nicholas* (D. Cl. 22849 a, b) are presented here. Before setting off on his travels, a Jew leaves his possessions under the protection of the saint's statue. On his return, he finds that his possessions are missing and remonstrates with the statue. The goods are restored, and, witnessing this subsequent miracle, the Jew converts to Christianity. Below, we can see the episode in which the saint gives charity to an elderly pauper in order to save his daughters from prostitution.

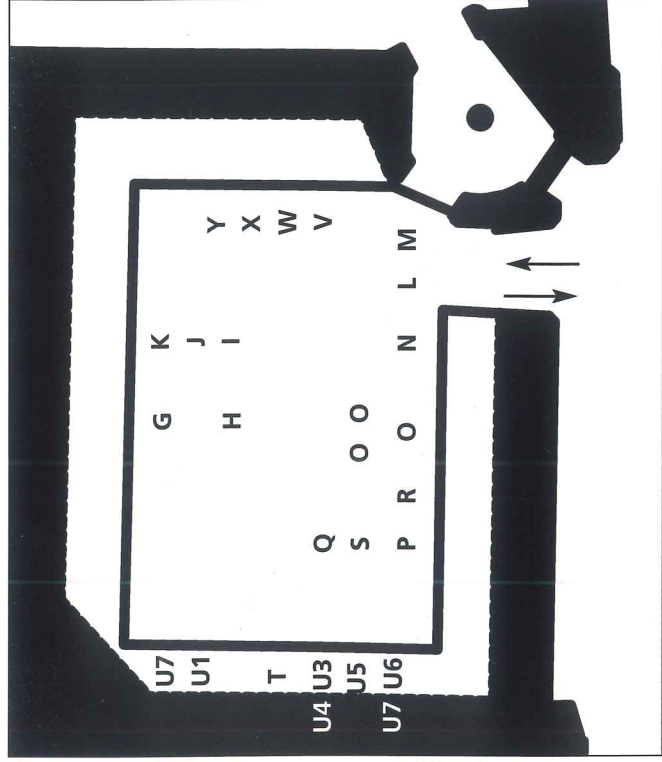
At Troyes, hagiographic windows (devoted to the lives of saints) were complemented by windows dedicated to the life of Christ, such as Christ being comforted by angels after the last temptation (E. Cl. 22849c) or the Glorification of the Virgin Mary. Here we can see the apostles in tears at the death of the Virgin (F. Cl. 23530). Such episodes are rare in the stained-glass tradition and imply considerable scholarship on the part of those who designed them. The posture of the figures, the flowing nature of the drapery folds, the treatment of the hands with such delicately tapered fingers are all evidence of the high standard of artistic output in Troyes between 1170 and 1180.

Stained glass in the first half of the 13th century: scale and colour

L'Île-de-France: Gercy

Reconstituted here in three narrative windows, the panels of the

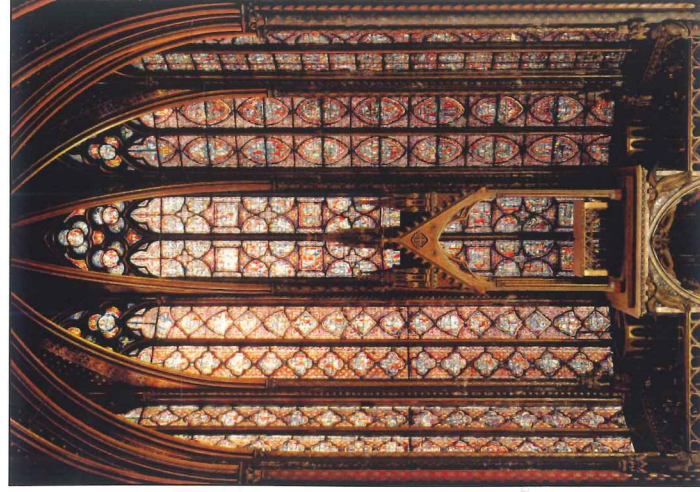
1131–1137 Reign of Louis VI	1137–1180 Reign of Louis VII	1081–1151 Suger, Abbot of Saint-Denis	1144 Dedication of the choir of the Abbey of Saint-Denis	1152–1181 Henri le Libéral, Count of Champagne
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former Abbey of Gercy, were discovered in the small church of Varennes-Jarcy (near the town of Corbeil-Essonne), in the late 19th century. Located in the royal estate, coming under the domaine of Saint-Victor of Paris, the abbey of Gercy seems to have received royal endowments before being formally founded in 1270 by Jeanne de Toulouse, the sister-in-law of Saint Louis (whose funeral mask is displayed in room 14). Indeed the stained-glass windows date from 1225-1230.

The window of *Jesse's tree* (G. Cl. D. 23674-23675) illustrates the lineage of Jesse, father of David (neither of whom feature here). This is based on the prophecy of Isaiah and is derived from a dream. The Virgin Mary, the mother of Christ, was descended from this line. The theme of Jesse's Tree gave rise to many plant compositions which are beautifully balanced in this example.

A large window was devoted to the *Life of Saint Martin*, one of the most popular saints in the Middle Ages. As with most windows, it should be read from bottom to top and from left to right. The saint is revered for an act of charity when, on a winter's night, he cut away half of his cloak as a gift to a pauper at the town gate of Amiens (H. Cl. D. 23677). An angel appears and reveals to him that he made the gift of his cloak in the name of Christ (I. Cl. D. 23678). Martin becomes bishop of Tours. He deflects a falling pine tree felled by Pagans intent on his death (J. Cl. D. 23679). Christ welcomes him upon his death (K. Cl. D. 23680). This series of stained-glass windows is one of the most interesting illustrations of the Gothic glass painting in the Île-de-France region prior to the Sainte-Chapelle.



Interior of the Sainte-Chapelle

The Sainte-Chapelle (1244-1248)

Built by King Louis IX (Saint Louis) to house the relics of the Passion acquired from Emperor Baldwin of Constantinople, the Sainte-Chapelle features fifteen monumental windows some 15 metres high, saturated with colours

and which primarily depict Biblical scenes. On the heraldic stained-glass windows (L. M. Cl. 14470-14471), the yellow fleurs-de-lys and red *castilles* (castles) contribute warm ochre hues. This ambitious programme championed by the king stands apart more for its sheer scale and the quality of decoration than the originality of the chosen theme.

Removed during work to restore the Sainte-Chapelle, those panels not remounted were brought to the Cluny Museum and presented on two walls in this room. They were either part of the original programme or subsequently incorporated at an unknown date, such as *the Angel sounding the last judgement day*, created around 1200 (N. Cl. 23721), scenes from the life of John the Baptist (O. Cl. 23710, Cl. 23713, Cl.23724) dating from the late 13th century, and scenes from the story of Joseph (P. Cl. 23716), of Tobias (Q. Cl. 23722), of Job (R. Cl. 23725), and of David (S. Cl. 23719) from the late 15th century.

The panel depicting *Four figures* (T. Cl. 14474), the most stunning example in this series from the Sainte-Chapelle, was taken from the Numbers window. The stained-glass painter coated the glass with several layers of grisaille. He then began with light washes before using broad strokes to define drapery folds, facial features and other details. Lastly, he carefully scraped material away to create the impression of "light" reflecting off the hems of the gowns. This skill and subtle colouring recall the work of the "principal master" in charge of stained-glass work at the Sainte-Chapelle.

Normandy circa 1300

On the last wall, four apostles stand from right to left: Peter, holding a key (V. Cl. 22727), Paul, with a sword (W. Cl. 22728), James, shown dressed as a pilgrim with a hat, staff and the scallop shell of Compostella (X. Cl. 22730) and John, shown beardless as a sign of his youth (Y. Cl. 22729). The seats are evocative of a royal throne, with carved arms depicting lions and hares. Indeed, the stained-glass windows were discovered on the site of the former royal chateau of Rouen in the late 19th century. The introduction of new colours (acid green, orangey yellow), the distribution between bands of white and coloured glass and the sophisticated modelling of the figure reflect the evolution of glass technique in the 1300s.

Sophie Lagabrielle, Chief Curator

The tale of Samson

Among the panels from the Sainte-Chapelle, a number come from the Judges' window. The tale of Samson, one of these Judges, is the most complete: The father of Samson offers a sacrifice when the birth of his son is announced (U1. Cl. 14479). The young Samson pries apart the lion's jaws, an early indication of the superhuman strength which God has given him (U2. Cl. 23723). Betrayed by Delilah, who saps his strength by cutting his hair, Samson is turned over to his Philistine enemies. The Philistines pierce the hero's eyes (U3. Cl. 14480). Samson is put to work grinding grain (U4. Cl. 23718). In his prison, Samson walks with a blind man's stick in his hand. His hair starts to grow back (U5. Cl. 14477). With his hair now shoulder length, Samson approaches the temple of Dagon. (U6. Cl. 14478). With a final effort, Samson brings the temple crashing down on his enemies and perishes at their side. Samson is crowned posthumously (U7. Cl. 14475)



Presentation of the stained windows continues in room 17

1226-1270

Louis IX (Saint Louis), King of France

1243-1248

Construction of the Sainte Chapelle

1285-1314

Philippe IV the Fair, King of France

1485

Repairs to the Sainte-Chapelle

ordered by Charles VIII

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Musée National
du Moyen Âge



G. Cl. D. 23674 - D.23675



H. Cl. 23677



N. Cl. 23721



T. Cl. D. 14474



X. Cl. 22730