Duomo of Modena
Modena, Italy
1099-1184
11 important aspects of Romanesque architecture

1. “Romanesque” is the first international style since the Roman Empire. Also known as the “Norman” style in England.

2. Competition among cities for the largest churches, which continues in the Gothic period via a “quest for height.”

3. Masonry (stone) the preferred medium. Craft of concrete essentially lost in this period. Rejection of wooden structures or structural elements.

4. East end of church the focus for liturgical services, west end for the entrance to church.
5. Church portals as “billboards” for scripture or elements of faith.

6. Cruciform plans. Nave and transept at right angles to one another. Church as a metaphor for heaven.

7. Elevation of churches based on basilica forms, but with the nave higher than the side aisles.
8. Interiors articulated by repetitive series of moldings. Heavy masonry forms seem lighter with applied decoration.

9. Bays divide the nave into compartments

10. Round-headed arches the norm.

11. Small windows in comparison to buildings to withstand weight
Durham Cathedral
Durham, England
1093-c. 1133
ROMANESQUE ART

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Durham Cathedral
Durham, England
1093-c. 1133
ROMANESQUE
Durham is the only cathedral in England to retain almost all of its Norman craftsmanship, and one of few to preserve the unity and integrity of its original design. The northern front of the Cathedral is 496 feet (143 meters) in length from west to east. The nave, quire and transepts are all Norman; it is the oldest surviving building with a stone vaulted ceiling of such a large scale. The western towers date from the 12th and 13th centuries. The original medieval sanctuary knocker can be seen in the treasury; a replica hangs at the north porch door.
In Durham you can see the transition from Romanesque (rounded arches with heavy piers for support) to Gothic (pointed arches, lighter piers). In some instances they abut each other, showing how architecture evolved in just 40 years of construction. And the variety of carving on the piers—some of which may be modeled on the original St. Peter’s in Rome—shows the sophisticated variety of carving styles available to Romanesque artisans.

Sorry that some of the pictures are sketchy but photography is not currently allowed in Durham, so these were, um, sort of taken accidentally. Yeah, accidentally. That’s the ticket.
It amazes me to think what this would have looked like in the day, with all of these details painted in bright colors.
Church of St. Etienne
Caen, France
1115-1120
Most critics consider the abbey church of Saint-Étienne at Caen the masterpiece of Norman Romanesque architecture. It was begun by William of Normandy in 1067 and must have advanced rapidly, as he was buried there in 1087.

The spires were added to the towers during the Gothic age in an attempt to bring the structure closer to the heavens.

The use of these groin vaults gave the interior a more spacious feel, and allowed for the addition of large windowed arches in the third story. The result reduced the interior wall surface and gave Saint-Étienne’s nave a light and airy quality that is unusual in the Romanesque period.
Vaulted Ceilings
Ribs
Tribune / Gallery
Clustered Piers
Ambulatory
This church was first constructed in the honor of the city’s first bishop, Saint Saturninus (Saint Sernin in French), who was martyred in the middle of the third century.

This church served as an important stop for pilgrims traveling to Santiago de Compostela in northwestern Spain.

Pilgrims would flock to this church by the masses, and the church had been designed specifically to accommodate them.

The plan of this church closely resembles that of Santiago de Compostela’s and Saint Martin at Tours and exemplifies what has come to be called the “pilgrimage type”.

Aerial view (southeast) of Saint-Sernin, Toulouse, France ca 1070-1120
Aerial view (southeast) of Saint-Sernin, Toulouse, France ca 1070-1120

- radiating chapels
- ambulatory
- transept
- upper galleries (tribunes)
- large nave
Cathedral Complex, Pisa, Italy
cathedral begun 1063, baptistry begun 1153, campanile begun 1174

Save for the upper portion of the baptistry, with its remodeled Gothic exterior, the three structures are stylistically Romanesque.

The construction of this cathedral in Pisa began in the same year as that of Saint Mark’s in Venice.

The goal of the project was not only to create a monument to God, but also to bring credit to the city.

The cathedral’s campanile, detached in the standard Italian fashion, is the famous “Leaning Tower of Pisa”. The tilted vertical axis is the result of a settling foundation. It began to “lean” even while under construction and now inclines some twenty-one feet out of plumb at the top.

The “Leaning Tower” is highly complex in its rounded form, as its stages are marked by graceful arcaded galleries that repeat the cathedral’s facade motif and effectively relate the tower to its mother building.
ITALIAN ROMANESQUE

Italian provinces developed a great diversity of Romanesque architectural styles.

Tuscan and Roman churches featured classical Corinthian capitals and acanthus borders, as well as colored marble in geometric patterns; open arcades, colonnades, and galleries; and facades with sculptures in relief.

In southern Italy, a rich style combining Byzantine, Roman, Arabic, Lombard, and Norman elements was created, with lavish use of mosaic decorations and interlaced pointed-arch arcades.
Pisa Cathedral Complex – Pisa, Italy (begun in 1063)  ROMANESQUE
This frieze, in southwestern France, announces the end of the human race (the Last Judgment).

This church was an important stop along the pilgrimage route to Santiago de Campostela.

The monks, enriched by the gifts of pilgrims and noble benefactors, adorned their church and its cloister, with one of the most extensive series of sculptures of the Romanesque age.

cloister: a special place for religious seclusion - used by monks

Christ occupies the center of the composition and is again flanked by the symbols of the Four Evangelists.

(Left) eagle, ox
(Right) angel, lion
This scene depicts the Judgment in progress, announced by four trumpet-blowing angels.

Once again, Christ sits enthroned in the center of the tympanum in a mandorla that angels support. He presides over the separation of the Blessed from the Damned.

On the left, when facing the tympanum, an obliging angel boosts one of the Blessed into the heavenly city. Below, the souls of the dead are lined up to await their fate.

On the left end of the lintel, two men carry bags with a cross and shell, symbolic of the pilgrims to Jerusalem and Santiago de Compostela. Those who had made the difficult journey would be judged favorably.

To their right of the two men are three small figures begging to an angel to intercede on their behalf. The angel responds by pointing to the Judge above.

To Christ’s left, are all those condemned to Hell. One poor soul is plucked from the earth by giant hands.

Angels and devils contest at the scales, each trying to manipulate the balance for or against a soul.
ROMANESQUE ART

Modena Cathedral
Modena, Italy
1099-1110

ROMANESQUE
Wiligelmo, *Creation and Temptation of Adam and Eve*, Modena Cathedral, Italy, 1110.  ROMANESQUE
Before the 10th century, most English buildings were wood; stone buildings were small and roughly constructed. The Norman Romanesque style replaced the Saxon style in England after the Norman Conquest in 1066, and from about 1120 to 1200, builders erected monumental Norman structures, including numerous churches and cathedrals. The long, narrow buildings were constructed with heavy walls and piers, rectangular apses, double transepts, and deeply recessed portals. Naves were covered with flat roofs, later replaced by vaults, and side aisles were usually covered with groined vaults.