

Late Romanesque Architecture **St. Andrew's of Wells and San Lorenzo of Florence**

Deriving from late Romanesque architecture, early Gothic style churches adopted certain principles from it to develop more durable and taller structures. The five main distinctions between late Romanesque and early Gothic styles was the transition into constructing (1) distinctively pointed arches, (2) an open gallery, (3) a clerestory of high windows, (4) a thinner and more open triforium, and (5) the flying buttress. The flying buttress is mostly seen through French Gothic architectural works, not necessarily all gothic styles. This characteristic is not typically seen in English Gothic styles. English Gothic cathedrals tend to have long lengths, with an emphasis on expanding the facades of their churches horizontally; as seen in the Cathedral of St. Andrew at Wells. Contrasting to the Gothic style, Renaissance architects adopted traditional strategies and features in their works that derive from the Roman era and their architecture. Unlike Gothic architecture, Renaissance buildings have square, symmetrical appearances in which proportions are usually based on a module. This principle can distinctively be seen through the derived works of Alberti at the Sant' Andrea church in Mantua. The need to integrate the design of the plan with the façade was introduced as an issue in the works of Filippo Brunelleschi, specifically in San Lorenzo. These two works depict two different styles of architecture throughout different times in history. Both share similarities and differences in the forms of structure, space, decoration, and perceptual experience.

The structure of St. Andrew is massive. The plans of gothic style churches were much grander than those of renaissance structures, both vertically and horizontally. The façade of St. Andrew resembles a massive wall, similar to a fortress wall. From an up-close axial view, the towers on either side of the façade absorb the sky and your surroundings, leaving you to be embraced with only a wall and the tall spiral seen at the transept intersection. St. Andrew's is quite complex in structure internally and externally. Its stonework is decorated with carvings, particularly with Corinthian style capitals. The altar is at the end of the nave, located towards the apse. Because of the massive height of its stone walls, the altar is not clearly visible from the front of the church. It is hidden by a unique structure added to its original interior design. This structure, the "Scissor/Strainer" arch, supports the outside walls from an inward collapse. The floor plan actually follows more of a Greek cross style, since the transept intersects near the nave's center. It additionally has an atrium, or cloister, that surrounds a green space. This space is beautifully vaulted and decorated as well, similarly to the church's interior. In the past, this area only one chapel available to monks living there, which acted as a chapter room for their following. Late Gothic styles in England were built on the outskirts of towns where it could be surrounded by greenery. The contrast between an open outside space and its colossal structure began to diminish due to this illusion in space utilization. Over time, urban sprawl that occurred around this cathedral diminished the contrast that was once seen between the massive cathedral and its open surroundings.

The structure of San Lorenzo in Florence is also massive. Plans for renaissance churches emphasize the beautification of symmetry through geometry rather than the exaggeration of height and size. San Lorenzo specifically follows the Latin cross plan. The difference between the external size of San Lorenzo and St. Andrew is that San Lorenzo was built in an urbanized part of the city. When compared to St. Andrew, the perception of its scale immediately diminishes since buildings buffer its grandness. The façade of San Lorenzo is bare and resembles a fortress-like style. San Lorenzo was never finished within Michelangelo's lifetime and the commissioners of the project never completed it. This could be taken two ways: (1) the facade could either have been an unfinished work by Michelangelo, or (2) it could have emphasized the idea that the bare façade of the cathedral acted as the "protector" and/or fortress to the Medici family. Either way, the difference in design between the outside and inside of the cathedral is very crucial when differentiating English Gothic from Italian Renaissance architecture. Inside San Lorenzo, the altar acts as a vanishing point to its occupants. Different from the gothic vaulted ceilings and thick columns, San Lorenzo has a flat and chauffeured ceiling with thin columns that are widely separated. This separation acts as the divider between the central nave and side aisles. Both St. Andrew and San Lorenzo have similarly decorated column capitals, distinguished by its Corinthian design. However, the thinly tapered columns, and post-and-lintel structure of the side columns at San Lorenzo allot more interior space to its occupants, whereas St. Andrew's interior has heavy usage of concrete and dark spaces. The interior of St. Andrew shows similar characteristics to the vault-like structure of the underground crypt to the catacomb basement of San Lorenzo. Both cathedrals have an outside atrium that surrounds a green space. San Lorenzo also has three distinctive chapels with domed ceilings and a public library that is still available to the city of Florence and its visitors. This application of public space differentiates from the single chapel located at St. Andrews for its monks, which was secluded from any public use.

In conclusion, the structures of San Lorenzo and St. Andrew encompass some similarities in the utilization of space and decoration. However, both styles of architecture adopt different design principles even though they derive from ancient styles of architecture. The differences in the design of these structures are rooted in their perceptual interpretation and meaning. At St. Andrew, occupants are meant to embrace this cathedral from an "ascension" procession. In order to experience this cathedral to its fullest design, the structure is supposed to be looked at from the ground up to the sky. This procession is supposed to detail the "ascension" from the earth to the heavens. At San Lorenzo, occupants are supposed to experience the cathedral through the vanishing point of the altar. This experience is supposed to be enhanced by the surrounding colonnades of its interior, which act as a gravitational pull towards the center altar. To summarize, St. Andrew and San Lorenzo share similarities with experiencing spirituality, but the way this spirituality is meant to be experienced is emphasized in different architecturally designed ways.