

### **Project Narrative: GSAS Research Travel Grant, Fall 2015**

I seek a GSAS Travel Grant to fund a research trip to France so that I can consult primary source material for my Master's thesis, "The Laon Cathedral Precinct: Clerical Communal Conflict and the Rebuilding of the Gothic Church, 1112-1215." My thesis considers miracle stories at cathedral construction sites in light of narrative accounts of anti-clerical violence and the development of the commune in northern France, with a special focus on Laon. In preparation for research in the field, I have read extensively on the historiography of Gothic art and architecture. I arranged a directed reading tutorial with Dr. Nina Rowe last spring in conjunction with her undergraduate course "The Age of Cathedrals" (ARHI 3350), which culminated in a comprehensive annotated bibliography of the scholarship on gothic architecture. Currently, I am enrolled in Dr. Cynthia Hahn's art history seminar "Performance and Devotion in Medieval Art" (ART 83000) at the CUNY Graduate Center with special permission from the director of the Center for Medieval Studies, Dr. Susanne Hafner. Furthermore, my preparation for the research I will undertake abroad extends beyond the classroom. I have participated in special exhibition tours at the Cloisters, handled medieval art objects at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and attended a vertical tour of the Cathedral of Saint John the Divine. Given my preparation over the last year and the fact that I will defend my Master's thesis in the summer of 2016, I am in the best position to travel to France next Spring and I have scheduled for ample time to incorporate my research into my final project.

The cornerstone of my research involves the medieval city and cathedral of Laon. Because I will be in France and I must fly in and out of Paris, I will have the opportunity to accomplish valuable comparative work both conveniently and affordably while abroad. After my arrival in Paris on the morning of March 18th, 2016, I will visit the Saint-Chapelle, Notre Dame

de Paris, the National Museum of the Middle Ages, the Basilique Saint Denis, and the Collegiale Notre Dame de Mantes La Jolie (33.5 miles from the city center). On March 22nd, I will travel to Laon (88 miles northeast of Paris) by train. I have arranged a homestay adjacent to the cathedral in the medieval city, which sits atop a small, fortified plateau containing over eighty designated historic monuments. Among these, I will visit Notre Dame de Laon, the adjacent bishop's palace and canon's cloister, the city's archaeological museum, and the Abbey of Saint Martin. On March 25th, I will travel to Reims (32 miles east of Laon) and visit Notre Dame de Reims, the adjacent Palace de Tau, and the Abbey of Saint Remi. In the evening I will travel back to Paris (89 miles), and I will return to New York on March 26th. While in France, I will document my observations and supplement my study with digital photography, adding invaluable visual components to my Master's thesis. Rather than taking measurements or identifying iconographical features—which are facts that I could learn from secondary source material—I will assess the subtleties of the buildings' aesthetic relationships to one another and to their surrounding civic environments. I will also investigate the reception of these sites within the local imagination by interacting with guides and residents. In light of my reading of the primary texts associated with these locales, my observations will enable me to make an original contribution to the current scholarship on gothic architecture.

Since the initial research phases of my Master's thesis are complete, the next component of my project naturally involves experiential fieldwork. Art historical research requires knowledge of the ways in which art objects operate on the five senses, and representations, whether printed, digital, or verbal, are no substitute for direct apprehension of an architectural space. Eventually, I plan to expand my Master's thesis into a conference paper, which will require that I demonstrate a significant degree of scholarly authority over the material evidence

used to formulate my argument. Engaging with primary source material on the level that my project necessitates is not possible unless I travel to the sites themselves. I am thoroughly prepared to make the most of my time in France at this moment in my graduate study, and I am certain that my methodology will add significantly to my professionalization in the fields of art history and medieval studies.