

## Believing and Seeing

The art of Gothic cathedrals

Roland Recht

Translated by Mary Whittall

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Developments in medieval science and natural philosophy elevated sight above the other senses, deeming it the basis of empirical truth. These principles, meanwhile, found religious expression in the Christian emphasis on miracles, relics, and elaborate structures. In his incisive survey of Gothic art and architecture, Roland Recht argues that this preoccupation with vision as a key to religious knowledge profoundly affected a broad range of late medieval works.

Expanding the boundaries of the Gothic survey, Recht goes beyond the great cathedrals of France to also explore key religious buildings throughout Northern Europe, Italy, and Spain, revealing how their grand designs supported a profusion of images that made visible the signs of scripture. Metalworkers, for example, fashioned intricate monstrances and reliquaries for the presentation of sacred articles, and technical advances in stained glass production allowed for more expressive renderings of holy objects. Sculptors, meanwhile, created increasingly naturalistic works, and painters used multihued palettes to enhance their subjects' lifelike qualities. Reimagining these works as a link between devotional practices in the late Middle Ages and contemporaneous theories that imbued vision with supreme importance, Recht provides students and scholars with a new and powerful lens through which to view Gothic art and architecture.