



Exploring History: Medieval to Modern 1400 – 1900

Palais Jacques Coeur: decoration

Narrator

The standard of workmanship in the decoration suggests that Coeur employed some of the leading craftsmen from inside and outside the region.

On the exterior and in the interior of the building there is a wealth of decoration.

Carved wooden faces adorn the ceiling of the first floor gallery. There's a stone sculpture of Tristan and Isolde, with King Mark hiding in the tree, and another of an angel over the fireplace in the angel chamber. The chapel ceiling is covered in much restored paintings.

Some of the decoration has more than a purely ornamental purpose. Coeur's idea of status was intimately tied up with his decorative scheme.

Coeur celebrated his connections to family and business associates in the coats of arms on the chapel ceiling. Those of Coeur's father-in-law, those of Pierre Jobert who supervised the building of the mansion and those of Guillaume de Varye, Coeur's deputy in the royal household treasury, and who also looked after his business affairs in Geneva. Remaining fragments show that coats of arms were set in the stained glass windows of principal rooms in the mansion including those of Jacques Coeur.

Coeur's symbols of ownership are stamped throughout the building. Statues purporting to be Coeur and his wife, greet the visitor at the gateway. Emblems taken from his coat of arms, hearts and shells, adorn the exterior and interior. The emblems are a pun on the name of the owner; Jacques being shown as a scallop shell, Coquille St. Jacques in French, and Coeur, a heart.

In the lower great hall there are allusions to Coeur's career in royal service. The French royal emblem fleur de lys, or lilies, are sculpted over the doorway. The winged stag is a personal emblem of Charles VII. An equestrian statue of Charles VII once adorned the façade of the mansion, as seen in this book of Hours made for a member of Coeur's family.

The palm tree and date tree above the main entrance reflect Coeur's trading links in the Mediterranean, as do the ships carved about the doorway in the galley chamber and set in the stained glass of the windows.