

IMMERSIVE SPECTACLES: EXPLORING FRENCH CULTURAL LANDSCAPES OF IMMERSION

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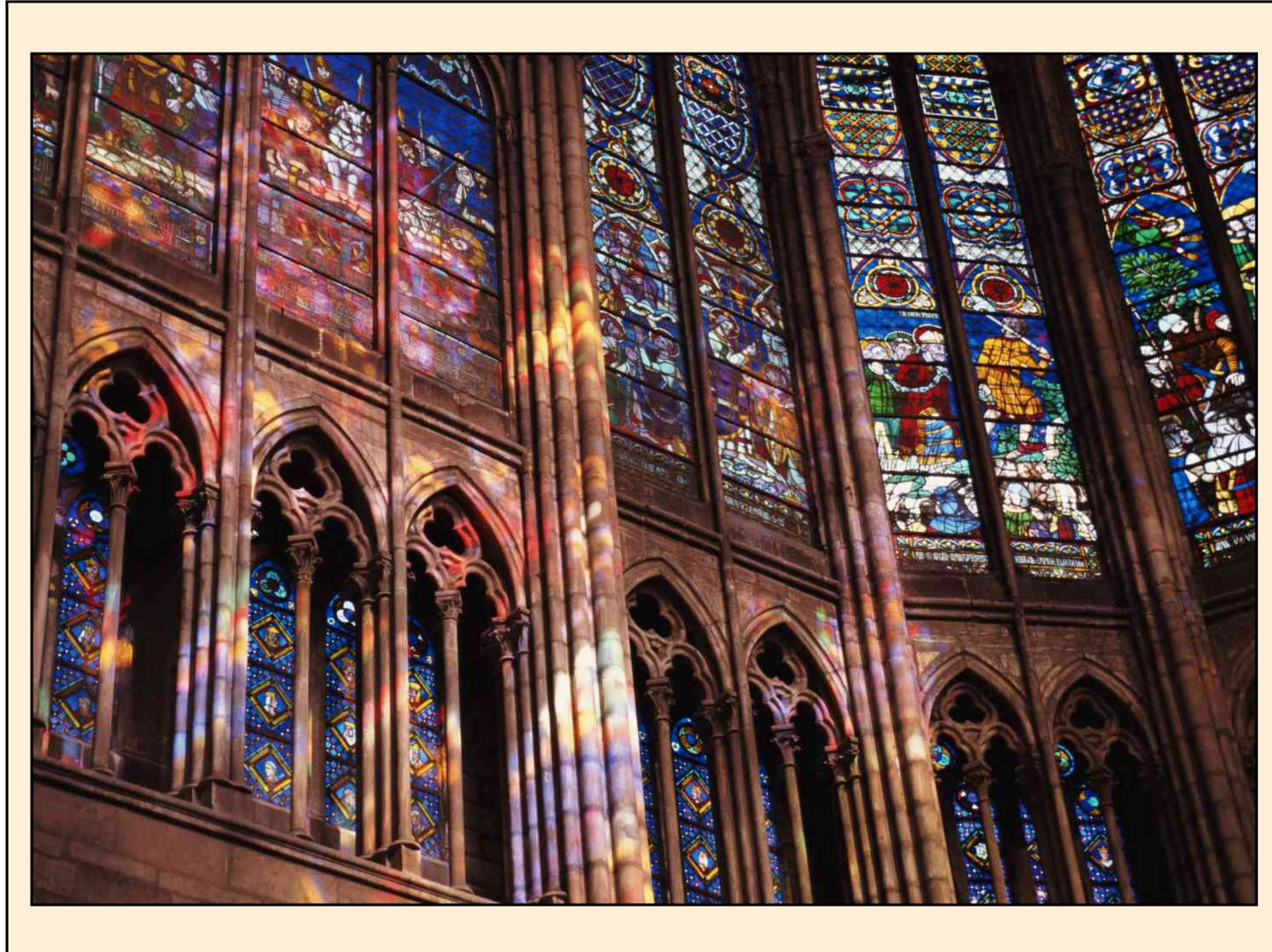
INTRODUCTION

This study traces the evolution of spectacular immersive practices across primarily French power structures, including religious/monarchical, artistic, and commercial. Analyzing immersion and spectacle through the lens of evolving power structures reveals how these multi-sensory artworks challenge passive spectatorship, prompting active engagement to reevaluate perception through intentionally all-encompassing environments.

KEY TERMS

SPECTACLE : The phenomenon of the artistic spectacle simultaneously describes an artwork's grandiosity/popularity and the performative experience it demands of the audience.

IMMERSIVE ART : In the context of this project, immersion, or immersive installation art refers to all-encompassing artworks viewers can physically enter and move through.



THE GENESIS OF FRENCH IMMERSION AND SPECTACLE

BASILICA OF SAINT-DENIS

In the 12th century, Abbot Suger pioneers immersive encounters with the divine through innovative uses of light, color, and architectural elements like large, stained glass windows, launching the Gothic style.

VERSAILLES

Louis XIV gives us the first examples of large-scale, state-controlled spectacle in the courts of Versailles. He harnesses the power of the spectacle to control the aristocracy and uses the *Hall of Mirrors* as a performative stage for rituals that reinforce monarchical power and control.

IMMERSIVE INSTALLATION FROM THE ARTIST

CLAUDE MONET

Monet's *Water Lilies* cycle at the Musée de l'Orangerie builds upon panorama rotunda traditions to immerse viewers in a multi-sensory retreat. The integration of architecture into design separates the series from more traditional, non-immersive practices.

NIKI DE SAINT PHALLE

Saint Phalle's provocative sculptural installations like *Hon* and the *Tarot Garden* invite active audience engagement through their monumental scale and experiential elements.

JEAN DUBUFFET

Dubuffet's otherworldly Hourloupe environments, such as the *Jardin d'hiver* and *Jardin d'email*, blur boundaries between reality and imagination, encouraging viewers to step into his own imagined landscapes.

THE CAPITALIST ARTISTIC SPECTACLE

YAYOI KUSAMA

LVMH's appropriation of Yayoi Kusama's artistic identity in collaborations transforms her aesthetic into a marketing tool. The philosophy of her art is replaced by a commercialized experience centered on consumption and prioritizing superficial engagement.

L'ATELIER DES LUMIÈRES

L'Atelier des Lumières harnesses the spectacle to revive popular interest in artists like Van Gogh. Despite claims of democratizing access to culture, shows like this risk prioritizing superficial entertainment over meaningful engagement with art.



CONCLUSION

Immersive installations and spectacles have evolved from their genesis in religious and monarchical structures to modern artistic expressions and contemporary commercialization. These enveloping, multi-sensory artworks harness the power of immersion to captivate audiences, shape perceptions, and convey diverse messages, reflecting the underlying power dynamics at play in their creation and reception. Whether used to control and influence or to create a haven of art and reflection, the immersive installation is a spectacularly captivating artistic phenomenon.

EXPERIENCE THE SPECTACLE: VIRTUAL REALITY

VR cannot replace the tangible nature of visiting an immersive work of art in person, but does it allow us to approximate the experience of being in otherwise inaccessible spaces. Try it out now and step "into" the spectacle!