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## Research Paper

### The iconography of Saint Denis in early French Gothic architecture

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## ABSTRACT

Of the many sculptures on the facades of cathedrals and churches all over France, the curious Head-carriers, also known as Cephalophores, are arguably some of the most thought-provoking sculptural pieces one will come across. This study is concerned mainly with the iconography of St Denis, the first Bishop of France, as articulated on the portals of the Basilica of St-Denis. The events that followed immediately after Denis' martyrdom by decapitation is mostly regarded as mere fable. Consequently, the symbolic meaning of the unusual movement has evaded scholarship. This work will discuss the symbolism of the Head-carriers and the meaning it gives to the architectural space of the Basilica of St Denis. This study argues that the emblematic ideology behind the sublime interaction between the living and the dead in the Basilica of St Denis, epitomised by the statue of the martyr, is a visual representation of a central message in Christianity which presents death, not as the end, but as a transitory and glorious beginning of oneness with Christ. Through critical visual analysis and metaphysical discussions, the study places Gothic art and architecture in the centre of the enunciation of 16th century Christian doctrine.

**Keywords:** St Denis, Cephalophore, Iconography, Gothic Art, Gothic Architecture, Symbolism.

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Trung ND, Trang PhThH, Huy DTN, Diep NT (2022).  
**Designing and constructing universities with lecture hall and relevant regulations.**  
*J. Art Arch. Stud.*, 11 (1): 08-13.  
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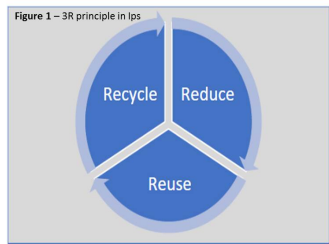


Figure 2 – Industrial zones in Hanoi city (source: internet)

Trung ND, Han LTh, Thuy NTh, Diep NT, Yen LL (2022). **Suggestions and regulations for designing, planning and constructing industrial parks, a case study of Vietnam.** *J. Art Arch. Stud.*, 11 (1): 14-18. DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.54203/jaas.2022.3>

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