

ROUEN 1431

THE ERA OF JOAN OF ARC

With the Rouen Panorama, Yadegar Asisi takes the visitor on a trip into the Gothic era. In the Middle Ages, this French city on the Seine played a key role as an interface between the hinterland (with the capital Paris) and the English Channel, gaining prosperity as a trading centre for imports from England and exports from the hinterland. At the same time, cloth production flourished in Normandy.

Asisi portrays the city of the "hundred church towers" (Victor Hugo) in the Late Gothic Period at the onset of modern times. Contrary to popular belief, this epoch is not shown as a period of darkness and backwardness, but instead as an age of upheaval and shift towards the individual. This Panorama presents Rouen with a differentiated and structured social and commercial life. The various craftsmen in their many guilds (e.g. fishermen, weavers, saddlers, clothmakers, tanners, carpenters, millers, furriers, etc.) are exemplary in this regard.

At the same time, the Gothic Cathedral of Rouen, previously an inspiration for Claude Monet, stands as an example for the sparse architecture of that period. The weight of the stone vaults, as high as a house, is borne not by walls but by pillars and supports giving a filigree effect, strengthened with flying buttresses and candle arches as well as external columns. Between them are large glass windows depicting art work images. The sophisticated, ingenious symbolism of the Gothic cathedral embodies an ideal of the medieval Christian world of ideas, auguring light in the apocalyptic "darkness" of the lifeworld of the Dark Ages. Even today, this manifests itself in the great art of the architects and guilds who constructed the buildings in the course of centuries.

Asisi also takes up a key historical aspect: the Hundred Years' War between France and England. Large swathes of France belonged to England in the 15th century, the tide being only turned to France's advantage by troops under Joan of Arc. Captured by the English as a result of betrayal, she was burnt at the stake in Rouen in 1431. Seen from the cathedral tower, the scene unfurls in May 1431: Judgement is passed on Joan of Arc; she awaits her fate at the stake. Parallel to this, the Panorama depicts the pulsating life in Rouen with its churches, half-timbered houses, courtyards and the Seine bridge. In the hinterland can be seen the Normandy countryside dotted by farmsteads.

For the first time ROUEN 1431 was on display in Rouen in 2016. Since then the panorama has been on display there for a second time.