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## Review of *Geometry in Architecture: Texas Buildings Yesterday and Today* By Clovis Heimsath

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*Geometry in Architecture: Texas Buildings Yesterday and Today.* By Clovis Heimsath. Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002. xix + 158 pp. Photographs, line drawings. \$49.95.

*Geometry in Architecture* is really two books in one. The subtitle, *Texas Buildings Yesterday and Today*, provides the context for the theme

of a book that is fundamentally a pictorial essay covering selected architectural elements of early Texas buildings. The original book, written in 1968 and titled *Pioneer Texas Buildings: A Geometry Lesson*, was an essay in two parts. The written section provided Heimsath's personal observations on the state of architecture as he perceived it in 1968. As a critique of architectural design, his views, though caustic, had some degree of validity. His major criticism was his concern with the public's naivety and commercial brainwashing which had resulted in what he referred to as a "sham and aesthetic sin" with regard to domestic architecture. The book's second part was a pictorial essay of selected elements of early Texas buildings using a generalized base of geometry. Geometry as used in this context was not based on the branch of mathematics that deduces the properties of figures in space from their defining conditions, but rather on the architect's use of *space and form*.

Thirty-four years later a second revised edition of the book has been printed under the current title. This latest version attempts to bridge the gap of time with recent examples of current Texas buildings. While this would be a formidable task, the scope of the text dictates only a modest sampling of current architectural examples. Perhaps the greatest problem with this latest version is the identification of certain building types as examples done exclusively in the early Texas tradition, whereas other regions have an equally rich tradition of vernacular building.

The book's second part contains a pictorial selection of the built environment in Texas dealing with such architectural elements as porches, stairs, chimneys, steeples, materials, and barns. The photos are much more rewarding than the text; moreover, the diagrams accompanying them endeavor to illustrate a visual language. The strongest aspect of the book's photo-essay is its emphasis on visual literacy. By juxtaposing older photos with new buildings the author provides an introduction to architecture. The observer can then see first-hand fundamental relationships which con-

tinue to be used today. While the older photographs illustrate constructions done mostly by early settlers, the new photographs demonstrate what has transpired using similar techniques in today's world. The photos tend to confirm that new ideas and methodologies are not always an improvement over the simple and straightforward solutions of the past.

Finally, one of the real strengths of the book lies in the black-and-white photos of the old and new. While significantly powerful in themselves, it is unfortunate that they are not identified with location and designers' names.

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