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## Review of *The Geometric Unconscious: A Century of Abstraction* Edited by Jorge Daniel Veneciano

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*The Geometric Unconscious: A Century of Abstraction.* Edited by Jorge Daniel Veneciano. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2012. xvii + 186 pp. Illustrations, photographs, notes, index. \$50.00 paper.

Published in conjunction with an exhibition of the same name at the University of Nebraska–Lincoln’s Sheldon Museum of Art, this book traces developments in geometric abstraction during the past one hundred years. Curators Jorge Daniel Veneciano and Sharon Kennedy have provided essays for the catalogue, Kennedy putting geometric abstraction into its historical context and Veneciano analyzing it from the philosophical perspectives of spiritualism and the esoteric tradition. In addition, two well-known artists/critics, Peter Halley and Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe, contribute essays. Halley’s “The Crisis in Geometry,” first published in *Arts Magazine* in 1984, was influenced by the then emergent critical theory positions associated with postmodernism, especially the work of Michel Foucault and Jean Baudrillard. Gilbert-Rolfe’s “New Directions in Geometric Abstraction,” a recent text, deals with contemporary abstract painting, including his own, and makes use of the theoretical work of Julia Kristeva and Gilles Deleuze.

Sheldon Museum has an extensive collection of geometric abstraction. Visitors to the museum and the university community generally should find this book a useful guide. The catalogue is richly illustrated with color images and includes examples of modernist abstraction ranging from geometric still-life compositions by Henry Fitch Taylor and Patrick Henry Bruce from the 1910s, through grids by Piet Mondrian and Burgoyne Diller from the 1940s, color paintings by Alvin Loving and Gene Davis and sculptures by Donald Judd and John McCracken from the 1960s, to complex conceptual abstractions by Mary Boocher and Rebecca Norton from the first decade of the twenty-first century. Indeed, the book deals with works by more than one hundred European and American painters and sculptors, some well known, some less so. It also includes an interesting section about abstract works by African artists and an excursus on Constantin Brancusi’s *Prin-*

cess X and Barbara Hepworth's *Small Form Resting*, owned by the museum.

*The Geometric Unconscious* is an excellent addition to the literature about abstract art, and as such, should interest students of modern and contemporary art generally and perhaps serve as an ancillary text in university art history courses about these subjects. As Veneciano says in his introduction, the book explores the development of geometric abstraction from "historical, post-

structural, speculative, and occultist" perspectives. Among the most informative aspects of the work is the way in which it places minimalism into the context of earlier movements and shows how such tendencies have continued to be central to contemporary art practice.

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