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## Book Review

**Kirsti Andersen**

### *The Geometry of an Art. The History of Perspective from Alberti to Monge*

New York : Springer, 2007

Reviewed by João Pedro Xavier

Faculdade de Arquitectura da Universidade do Porto (FAUP)  
Via Panorâmica S/N  
4150-755 Porto PORTUGAL  
jpx@arq.up.pt

Kirsti Andersen's book, *The Geometry of an Art. The History of Perspective from Alberti to Monge*, will surely become one of the fundamental references concerning the mathematical development of *perspectiva artificialis*, from the first steps, found in *De Pictura* (1435) up to its integration in the last edition of *Géométrie Descriptive* (1820).

Given the wide scope of this study and the author's methodology, based on an extensive and careful analysis of "more than two hundred books, booklets, and pamphlets on perspective" [Introduction, xxi], *The Geometry of an Art* is a monumental work, the work of a lifetime, one could say. The author's lifetime has been filled with accurate investigations on perspective that has already given rise to some of the most important titles about its history regarding the work of Piero della Francesca, Stevin, Desargues and Brook Taylor, among others.

This is actually a book of history of science dealing with a specific branch of geometry, that is, perspective. Although perspective became the geometry of an art, because its history is related to the conquest of exactitude in the representation of space from an identifiable point of projection (the artist's viewpoint), the main scope of this book is to narrate the process leading towards the definition of a mathematical theory of perspective:

My primary sources do not give an adequate background for discussing thoroughly the highly pertinent question of the actual use of perspective in paintings, architectural illustrations, and other drawings [Introduction, xxiii].

In a certain way we needed a comprehensive work that systematically treats the scientific aspects of perspective because these were so often neglected and biased in favour of dubious interpretations of its significance. That is why the author is very careful about her sources and only studies what come from printed materials containing drawings and explanations, such as perspective textbooks or other treatises where the subject is developed. This seems to me a wise approach, because even if we look at paintings