



Fantastic State of Ruin **The Painted Towns of Rajasthan** David Zurick

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- The first art-photography study of the painted towns of Shekhawati, India
- The book documents a unique and extraordinary vernacular architecture that is fast disappearing from the world due to neglect and urban development
- A visual account of small-town life in a little-known part of India
- The book's introduction is written by the foremost conservation architect in India, who addresses the importance of preserving the historic Shekhawati buildings
- Portrays beauty in the architectural ruins of the Shekhawati towns

This book tells the story of the painted towns of Shekhawati in rural Rajasthan, India. For centuries the painted buildings served the towns as trading houses, pleasure palaces, temples, caravansaries and private homes. Following independence, the descendants of the merchant families left Shekhawati for India's burgeoning cities, abandoning their opulent structures. Some were left in the charge of caretakers; squatters took up residence in many; most simply remain vacant. The buildings have slowly deteriorated over time, ravaged by climate and neglect, and now lie scattered among the desert settlements as an elegiac collection of beautiful living ruins – a crumbling open-air gallery set amid the ordinary affairs of small town life. This book portrays the fascinating ruinous beauty of the painted towns, and, along the way, provides an intimate look at life and landscape on the arid fringes of Rajasthan. This world, too, is fading, and so the book's photographs, in the end, are a visual study of both place and society at the edge of time.

David Zurick received his PhD in Geography from the University of Hawaii and the East-West Center. He writes and photographs extensively about Asia and the Pacific, with a special focus on the contemporary cultural landscape.