

# Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style (Elephant Paperbacks)

*Wilhelm Worringer*

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## Abstraction and Empathy

Wilhelm Worringer

A classic in the literature of modernism  
and the interpretation of modern art

With an introduction by Hilton Kramer



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**Wilhelm Worringer : Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style (Elephant Paperbacks)** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style (Elephant Paperbacks):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five StarsBy Walter KrellAmazing book. Excellent service from .1  
of 3 people found the following review helpful. Don't waste your timeBy Robert HydeDon't waste your time. I thought  
I was getting the book by Worringer, instead I received some sappy reprint issue of "The healing light" by Agnes  
Sanford. The cover was the one for Worringer's book, but the title and cover did not correspond to the insides of the  
book which was a completely different book. Obviously this reprint process is flawed.. it would be better to find an  
older edition, even a beat-up or ex-library copy to read, rather than this mucked up joke of a reprint copy.11 of 11  
people found the following review helpful. One of the key documents of modern artBy Chandan Das GuptaPublished  
in 1908 , this doctoral dissertation of Wilhelm Worringer soon became the most valid theoretical support for  
Expressionism.Elaborating the idea of Riegl's "kunstwollen"(roughly means the will to create)Worringer suggested that  
the history of art is the history of artistic intentions rather than the artistic skills which culminated in the scientific  
observation of the external world and became a Greco-Roman-Renaissance tradition.Empathy ,on the other hand,is a  
subjective approach to aesthetics and fails to explain the arts outside the European tradition.So a more fundamental  
psychology is needed and Worringer explained that how this "will to form" at any period of human history is related  
to a man's surrounding world which causes him insecurity and fear. Art is a response to overcome this constant flow of  
randomness and becomes a corrective to this feeling by means of creating permanent aesthetic forms. Great book  
.Physical shape and large font of this book is highly satisfying.Also read author's "Form in Gothic".

Wilhelm Worringer's landmark study in the interpretation of modern art, first published in 1908, has seldom been out  
of print. Its profound impact not only on art historians and theorists but also for generations of creative writers and  
intellectuals is almost unprecedented. Starting from the notion that beauty derives from our sense of being able to  
identify with an object, Worringer argues that representational art produces satisfaction from our "objectified  
delight in the self," reflecting a confidence in the world as it is?as in Renaissance art. By contrast, the urge to  
abstraction, as exemplified by Egyptian, Byzantine, primitive, or modern expressionist art, articulates a totally  
different response to the world: it expresses man's insecurity. Thus in historical periods of anxiety and uncertainty,  
man seeks to abstract objects from their unpredictable state and transform them into absolute, transcendental forms.  
Abstraction and Empathy also has a sociological dimension, in that the urge to create fixed, abstract, and geometric  
forms is a response to the modern experience of industrialization and the sense that individual identity is threatened by  
a hostile mass society. Hilton Kramer's introduction considers the influence of Worringer's thesis and places his book  
in historical context.

Worringer's little book is an enduring classic. (James Sloan Allen Arts and Letters)Language NotesText: English  
(translation) Original Language: GermanAbout the AuthorWilhelm Worringer (1881–1965) was an art historian  
who lectured and taught at the universities of Bern, K nigsberg, and Halle. Hilton Kramer is editor of The New  
Criterion.