**Worringer, Wilhelm (1881-1965)**

Wilhelm Worringer was an art historian and art theorist whose writings had enormously wide-ranging influence. His dissertation for the University of Bern, *Abstraktion und Einfühlung: ein Beitrag zur Stilpsychologie* (1907, trade edition 1908; *Abstraction and Empathy: Essays in the Psychology of Style*) was widely read and influenced German expressionism significantly. The book’s title suggests the deep influence that the esthetic theories of Theodor Lipps (1851–1914) had on its genesis, for Lipps produced the first scientific theory of *Einfühlung*. Lipps’s influence led him to the belief that through artworks we can experience artists’ spiritual states. From Alois Riegl (1858–1905), he adopted the idea that mimetic content counts for less than stylized form, which reflects an urge to form he termed *Kunstwollen*. Worringer maintained that commitment to realistic representation demonstrated a confidence in the material world, while interest in abstraction reveals insecurity about the material world and a greater trust in spirituality. He extended these ideas in *Formprobleme der Gotik* (1911), *Ägyptische Kuns*t (1927; *Egyptian Art*) and *Griechentum und Gotik* (1928). T. E. Hulme (1883-1917) embraced many of Worringer’s ideas (including that of will to form), and through Hulme, these ideas influenced early English modernism, especially Vorticism.

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**List of Works**

Worringer, W. (1907; 1908) *Abstraktion und Einfühlung: ein Beitrag zur Stilpyschologie,* Diss., Neuwied; Munich: R. Piper, trans M. Bullock as *Abstraction and Empathy*, New York: International University Press, 1953.

------ (1912) *Formprobleme der Gotik,* Munich: R. Piper, trans. Sir H. Read as *Form in Gothic,* London: A. Tiranti, 1957.

------ (1927) *Ägyptische Kunst: Probleme ihrer Wertung,* Munich: R. Piper, trans. as *Egyptian Art,* ed. B. Rackham, *et. al.*, London: Putnam's Sons, 1928.

------ (1928) *Griechentum und Gotik: vom Weltreich des Hellenismus*, Munich: R. Piper.

**References and further reading**

Arnheim, R. (1986) ‘Wilhelm Worringer on Abstraction and Empathy’, in *New Essays on the Psychology of Art*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press: 50-62. (A key text situating Worringer’s aesthetics within the tradition of the branch of aesthetics referred to as *Einfühlungsästhetik*.)

Donahue, N. H. (1995*) Invisible Cathedrals: The Expressionist Art History of Wilhelm Worringer*, Pittsburg: Penn State University Press. (Situates Worringer’s work in the context of German discussion and argues for the importance his ideas had in the development of modernism.)

Foster, H. (2004) *Prosthetic Gods*, Cambridge: MIT Press. (See especially 134–44. Foster discusses Worringer in the context of commentary on the adoption of the primitive and of the machine as ideals for modern art.)

Waite, G. (1981) ‘Worringer’s *Abstraction and Empathy*: Remarks on its Reception and the Rhetoric of Criticism’,in *The Turn of the Century: German Literature and Art, 1890-1905*, eds. G. Chapple and H. H. Schulte, Bonn: Bouvier: 197-223. (Provides a good overview of Worringer’s relations with modernism and early modernists.)