

Plenitudes of Painting:  
Wilhelm Worringer and the Relationship  
between Abstraction and Representation in European Painting  
at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century

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To Lucian Silaghi,  
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## Abstract

Throughout the twentieth century, the relationship between representation and abstraction has been regarded predominantly in terms of opposition. One of the prominent early twentieth-century defenders of this approach is Wilhelm Worringer (1881-1965), who introduces representation and abstraction as antithetic modes of art-making in *Abstraction and Empathy. A Contribution to the Psychology of Style* (1908). However, while he distinguishes between abstraction and representation on theoretical grounds, Worringer also observes that, in the history of art, these modes of art-making coexist.

The current thesis examines Worringer's approach to the writing of art history and theory, inquiring into his perspective on the personal responses of viewers and artists to the world, and the manifestations of these responses in art. *Abstraction and Empathy* addresses issues of empathy, form, and will, in aesthetics and art-making; it discusses and extends the writings of Theodor Lipps, Immanuel Kant, Arthur Schopenhauer, and Alois Riegl. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Worringer's book attracted much attention: like its sequel, *Form in Gothic* (1910), it was often associated with the rise to prominence of Expressionism in Germany.

Later in the twentieth century, Worringer's thought came under the scrutiny of Rudolf Arnheim, who criticized Worringer's emphasis on abstract-representational opposition. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari praised Worringer's approach to antithesis, yet questioned the terms Worringer proposed as opposites. For Arnheim, Deleuze and Guattari, alternatives to the antithesis between abstraction and representation became visible. Indeed, in Worringer's time, artists such as Adolf Hildebrand, Ferdinand Hodler, Paul Cézanne, Claude Monet and Wassily Kandinsky underscored the common grounds between representation and abstraction. Exploring Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic*, as well as the words and works of Hildebrand, Hodler, Cézanne, Monet and Kandinsky, this thesis aims to highlight abstract-representational interplay as observable in early twentieth-century writing and art-making.

Key words: Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy*, *Form in Gothic*, abstraction, empathy, representation, antithesis, interplay, painting.

## Preface

Painting is either representational or abstract, the notes I had been taking for the last two weeks seemed to imply. The University of Canterbury postgraduate seminar for fine arts, art history and theory students organized by Desmond Rochfort and Pamela Gerrish Nunn was due to begin soon; we would be responding to a painting of their choice, and sharpen our interpretive skills in the process. As a painter working with abstraction,<sup>1</sup> I felt more at ease focusing on my canvases in 2007 – to search for the words, concepts and contexts that could accompany my viewing of artworks was a task I approached with the curiosity and hesitation of a newcomer. My readings explained that contemporary pictorial explorations revolved around issues of abstraction and representation, two modes of art-making predominantly approached as antithetic.

If common grounds between representation and abstraction were to be found, I mused while hastening towards the seminar room, a key question of the art of painting would be answered.<sup>2</sup> Soon I was to come across Mark Rosenthal's *Abstraction in the Twentieth Century: Total Risk, Freedom, Discipline* (1996), where the approach of Wilhelm Worringer (1881-1965) to artistic tendencies was summarized. Worringer, Rosenthal explained,<sup>3</sup> recognized two distinct urges (or inner tendencies) in art: an urge to empathy and an urge to abstraction; in Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy. A Contribution to the Psychology of Style* (1908), these urges featured as polar opposites.<sup>4</sup> At first glance, the distinction between representational and abstract tendencies in art-making appeared to drive Worringer's inquiry

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<sup>1</sup> I explore the interweaving of colours, lines, shapes in my paintings. While my works seem independent from motifs in the world, they develop in resonance with such motifs. The processes that foster 'abstract' practices in contemporary painting require in-depth investigation, and need to be addressed in self-standing essays.

<sup>2</sup> Five years later, I acknowledge the role of this thought as a starting point of my explorations. However, I see in representation and abstraction only two of the coordinates that support the access of viewers and artists to painting. The key questions posed by painting abound; they can indeed receive punctual solutions, but are not limited to them.

<sup>3</sup> Mark Rosenthal, *Abstraction in the Twentieth Century: Total Risk, Freedom, Discipline* (New York: Guggenheim Museum Publications, 1996), 8-9.

<sup>4</sup> Wilhelm Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style* (New York: International Universities Press 1953 [1908]), 4.

– yet I wondered to what extent Worringer regarded abstraction and representation as antithetic, and how he pursued their differentiation in *Abstraction and Empathy*. The current thesis explores these issues, engaging in an examination of the relationship between tendencies (or urges) to art-making and modes of art-making in Worringer’s early twentieth-century writings.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> As this thesis aims to highlight following from Worringer’s writings, abstraction and representation can be approached from the perspective of their opposition, but also from the point of view of their interplay. Abstract-representational interplay is particularly visible in contemporary art; nowadays, painters persuasively combine the depiction of their motifs with passages highlighting colour, structure, line, and paint application. See, for instance, the works of Richard Killeen (b. 1946), Denis Castellás (b. 1951), Pia Fries (b. 1955), Peter Doig (b. 1959), Suzanne McClelland (b. 1959), Beatriz Milhazes (b. 1960), Monique Prieto (b. 1962), Franz Ackermann (b. 1963), Shane Cotton (b. 1964), Toba Khedoori (b. 1964), Adriana Varejão (b. 1964), Tal R (b. 1967), Cecily Brown (b. 1969), Inka Essenhigh (b. 1969), Carla Klein (b. 1970), and Laura Owens (b. 1970). Abstract-representational interplay may assume different shapes, and various levels of visibility; it may be recognized in the art of many more contemporary artists than mentioned above. This topic requires detailed inquiry, yet exceeds the scope of the current thesis.

## Introduction

Contemporary writers regard Wilhelm Worringer (1881-1965) as the creator, in *Abstraction and Empathy* (1908), of a much cited manifesto for abstract art,<sup>1</sup> as a supporter of German Expressionism and critic of conventionalised art-making,<sup>2</sup> as a contributing force to the development of Vorticism, Abstract Expressionism, and Cobra,<sup>3</sup> and as a scholar whose approach to the writing of art history and theory has proved fascinating for artists, writers, psychologists, social theorists, and architectural activists.<sup>4</sup> Abstract-representational antithesis – articulated by Worringer in *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic* (1910) – is generally considered a key element of his demonstrations.<sup>5</sup> This thesis acknowledges and examines the role of antithesis in Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic*, yet shows that Worringer's oppositions tend to assume a certain degree of openness as his demonstrations take shape.

My text highlights the place of abstract-representational interplay in Worringer's books. For Worringer, who asserts his counter-Classicism and counter-Impressionism and defines the relationship of representation and abstraction as oppositional,<sup>6</sup> abstract-representational

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<sup>1</sup> W. Wolfgang Holdheim, 'Wilhelm Worringer and the Polarity of Understanding', *boundary 2*, 8, No. 1, 1979, 339. Also, Rudolf Arnheim, *New Essays on the Psychology of Art* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1984), 61-62. Also, Neil H. Donahue, 'Introduction: Art History or "Sublime Hysteria"?' in Neil H. Donahue, *Invisible Cathedrals: The Expressionist Art History of Wilhelm Worringer* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, c.1995), 1-9. Also, Mary Gluck, 'Interpreting Primitivism, Mass Culture and Modernism: The Making of Wilhelm Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy*', *New German Critique*, No. 80, 2000, 154.

<sup>2</sup> Geoffrey Christophe Perkins, *Contemporary Theory of Expressionism* (Bern: H. Lang, 1974), 48. Also, Joseph Masheck, 'Raw Art: "Primitive" Authenticity and German Expressionism', *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, No. 4, 1982, 95-96.

<sup>3</sup> Susan Hiller, *The Myth of Primitivism: Perspectives on Art* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), 139.

<sup>4</sup> Donahue, 'Introduction: Art History or "Sublime Hysteria"?', 1. Also, Joanna E. Ziegler, 'Worringer's Theory of Transcendental Space in Gothic Architecture: A Medievalist's Perspective' in Neil H. Donahue, *Invisible Cathedrals: The Expressionist Art History of Wilhelm Worringer* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, c.1995), 106.

<sup>5</sup> Holdheim, 'Wilhelm Worringer and the Polarity of Understanding', 339. Also, Arnheim, *New Essays on the Psychology of Art*, 51. Also, Hal Foster, Rosalind Krauss, Yve-Alain Bois, and Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, *Art Since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2004), 86.

<sup>6</sup> Wilhelm Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style* (New York: International Universities Press 1953 [1908]), xiv, 28-29, 38, 101-102, 112, 123-135. Also, *ibid.*, 4, 14-15, 26, 34. Also, Wilhelm Worringer, and Herbert Edward Read, *Form in Gothic* (London: Tiranti, 1957 [1910]), 15-16, 18-19, 34-36.

interplay can actually be observed in many of modes of art-making throughout history.<sup>7</sup> Worringer repeatedly inquires into the interplay of abstract and representational elements in Gothic, for instance;<sup>8</sup> he also explains the workings of abstract-representational interplay in the art of his contemporaries.<sup>9</sup> Where Worringer adopts a generic approach to art,<sup>10</sup> my thesis points to the relationship between Worringer's thoughts on abstract-representational antithesis and interplay – as expressed in *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic* – and early twentieth-century painting.<sup>11</sup>

To his English-speaking readership, Wilhelm Worringer (1881-1965) is known primarily for two of his earlier books: *Abstraction and Empathy* (1908), and *Form in Gothic* (1910).<sup>12</sup> Comprising the dates of his studies, relocations, and professional activities, his brief biographies tend to name few significant places, and even fewer people of note in his life. The most detailed portrait of Worringer is thus invited to emerge from his writings. In 'Wilhelm Worringer: sketch for a portrait', this thesis traces the profile of Worringer by culling and interweaving biographical data as made available in English texts.<sup>13</sup> The forewords Worringer provided for successive editions of *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic* are addressed in 'Gazing in the mirror of history: Worringer's forewords to *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic*'. Bringing to light Worringer's views on the echoes of his thought within his epoch, these shorter texts also reveal the discourse strategies that structure his argument from *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic*.

The key terms of Worringer's investigation are examined in 'Empathy, abstraction and representation in Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy*', and 'Representation and abstraction in art-making: Worringer's perspective'. Combining aesthetic and artistic viewpoints in his

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<sup>7</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 55, 7-77, 79-80, 96, 99-101, 104, 114-115. Also, Worringer and Read, *Form in Gothic*, 11-13, 19, 21, 26-33, 40-41, 60-63.

<sup>8</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 106-121. Also, Worringer and Read, *Form in Gothic*, 40-41, 60-62.

<sup>9</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 4, 43, 84, 136-137.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, vii-xv. Also, Worringer and Read, *Form in Gothic*, 1-11.

<sup>11</sup> I focus on the paintings of early twentieth-century artists to whom Worringer refers in *Abstraction and Empathy* and 'The Historical Development of Modern Art' (1911); I also analyse paintings produced by artists who mention Worringer in their own writings, who feature in circles where Worringer is admired, or who are in contact with Worringer around the time of his publishing *Abstraction and Empathy*, *Form in Gothic* and 'The Historical Development of Modern Art' (1908-1911).

<sup>12</sup> Also see, from the current thesis, 'Wilhelm Worringer: sketch for a portrait,' 10-48.

<sup>13</sup> A biographical exploration of Worringer's presence and influence within modern German-speaking contexts (a topic much exceeding the research span of this thesis) still awaits its publication in English.

book, Worringer intuitively assumes, at times, the standpoint of artists; he follows Theodor Lipps in this respect. The urge to empathy and the urge to abstraction thus come to resonate with both artistic and aesthetic concerns in *Abstraction and Empathy*, drawing attention to the terminological challenges Worringer's writings bring along. In the course of his argument, Worringer explains that the urge to empathy fosters artistic naturalism, while the urge to abstraction requires a focus on style. Yet the opposition between naturalism and style is less effective today than in Worringer's time: later twentieth-century researchers prefer to contrast 'representation' (or figuration) and 'abstraction' instead.

Although critical towards the aesthetic inquiries of the past, Worringer relies on the investigations of Immanuel Kant, Arthur Schopenhauer and Alois Riegl.<sup>14</sup> Worringer, following Kant, recognizes the role of form in his interpretation of art; Schopenhauer inspires Worringer's approach to opposition, while Riegl's research provides to Worringer the concept of artistic will. Like Robert Vischer and Heinrich Wölfflin, Worringer is interested in issues concerning empathy and expressiveness. However, he discusses empathy in less detail than R. Vischer, and connects it, unlike Wölfflin, with human feelings rather than embodiment and imitation.

The direction assumed by Worringer's explorations from *Abstraction and Empathy* reflects and expands upon the interests of his predecessors, attracting the attention of later twentieth-century writers such as Rudolf Arnheim and Gilles Deleuze.<sup>15</sup> For Arnheim, Worringer's abstract-representational opposition is memorably articulated, yet assigns to abstraction a limiting role. Deleuze sees Worringer as a theoretician of Gothic, emphasizing the attention Worringer bestows on Gothic line, and, in his turn, approaches Gothic art by opposing it to Egyptian and Classical art. Both Arnheim and Deleuze note that Worringer develops more than an antithetic strand of inquiry in *Abstraction and Empathy*.

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<sup>14</sup> See, from the current thesis, ' "Common to all": form for Kant and Worringer,' 111-121, 'A matter of will: Schopenhauer and Worringer on life and art,' 122-126, and 'Riegl and artistic will', 127-131. Exploring the diverse influences observable in Worringer's texts, as well as his discussion of turn-of-the-century aesthetic investigations, would require self-standing inquiry.

<sup>15</sup> See 'Abstraction, representation, opposition: Worringer and Rudolf Arnheim,' 132-139, and 'The relationship between abstraction and representation: highlights from Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy*, and Gilles Deleuze's *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation* (1984),' 140-148. Also, 'Rethinking abstract-representational interplay: Worringer, Arnheim, Deleuze and Guattari,' 350-361.

For many twentieth-century writers, Worringer's early texts are associated with the rise and decline of German Expressionism.<sup>16</sup> Worringer does not refer to Expressionism in *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic*, yet the frequency of his employing the term 'expression' in these books points to his interests from the first decade of the twentieth century. Defending the artistic experiments of his time in an essay entitled 'The Historical Development of Modern Art' (1911),<sup>17</sup> Worringer praises contemporary French 'Synthetists and Expressionists' and mentions their appreciation of the works of artists such as Paul Cézanne, Vincent van Gogh and Henri Matisse. Worringer's attention to early twentieth-century artistic explorations surfaces briefly in *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic*, yet is unambiguously revealed in 'The Historical Development of Modern Art'. Later texts on Expressionism – for instance, *Expressionism* (1914) by Paul Fechter, and *Expressionism* (1916) by Hermann Bahr –<sup>18</sup> signal Worringer's influence in particular; indeed, Fechter and Bahr approach German Expressionism from an oppositional vantage point inspired by Worringer's abstract-representational antithesis from *Abstraction and Empathy*.

Worringer proved primarily interested in the exploratory aspects of Expressionism, regardless of the specific form they took.<sup>19</sup> In *Current Questions on Art* (1921), he revealed his doubts concerning the active role of Expressionist art around the second decade of the twentieth century, underscoring the experimentalism of writing instead. However, despite the critical position he adopted towards later Expressionist art-making, Worringer was still considered a representative of Expressionist thought by Georg Lukács.<sup>20</sup> Pointing to the abstract aspects of Expressionism, Lukács argued that the movement had encouraged the bypassing of spatial and temporal considerations, and had shown no commitment to economical and social contexts.

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<sup>16</sup> See 'The words of Worringer: "Expressionism" at the beginning of the twentieth century,' 149-157, and 'Worringer and Expressionism: late twentieth-century perspectives,' 215-224.

<sup>17</sup> From the current thesis, see ' "The Historical Development of Modern Art" (1911): Worringer's early response to Expressionism,' 158-184.

<sup>18</sup> See 'Worringer's impact: Expressionism (1914) by Paul Fechter, and Expressionism (1916) by Hermann Bahr,' 185-195.

<sup>19</sup> See, from this thesis, 'Current Questions on Art (1921): Worringer revisits Expressionism,' 196-198.

<sup>20</sup> See 'Questioning Worringer: critical discussions on the writings of Worringer and on Worringer's association with the Expressionist movement,' 199-210.

Yet Lukács' reference to *Abstraction and Empathy* allowed him to configure his own views, Richard Sheppard maintains,<sup>21</sup> also drawing attention to the impact Worringer's thought had on Lukács before 1911. Significantly, Worringer de-emphasizes Western aesthetics, and addresses negative responses to challenging environments, according to Joseph Frank. William Spanos and Ulrich Weisstein are critical towards Worringer's theoretical and historical perspectives; they both note the existence of alternatives to abstract-representational opposition as articulated by Worringer. For Neil Donahue, emotional aspects, abstraction-oriented practices, and 'primitivism' become particularly visible in Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy*.

In contemporary writings on Expressionism – for instance, in the studies of Bernard Myers, James Bednarz, Stephen E. Bronner, Emily Hicks, Donald Gordon and Peter Guenther –<sup>22</sup> Worringer features as a writer who provided theoretical grounds for the development of the movement. Yet Worringer did not write about the Expressionist movement as such, Michael Jennings points out. Instead, Jennings shows that Worringer offered an art historical equivalent for Expressionist explorations in *Abstraction and Empathy*. Jennings, Mary Gluck and Debbie Lewer also draw attention to the sociological and psychological aspects of *Abstraction and Empathy*. For Lewer, Worringer's work does not hold contemporary interest; however, she mentions the impact of Worringer's writing on his contemporaries, as do Geoffrey C. W. Waite, Joseph Masheck, Joseph Frank, Magdalena Bushart, and Neil Donahue.

Worringer's perspective actually encouraged the association of Gothic and early twentieth-century art, according to Gordon, Guenther, Horst Uhr, and Shulamith Behr. Preoccupied with local as well as international artistic explorations, Worringer underscored the ties between contemporary French and German art-making, as Gordon and Rose-Carol Washton Long point out. The writings of Worringer inspired, or defended, practices associated with Expressionism, as Long, Gordon, Frank Whitford, Ida Katherine Rigby, and Norbert Lynton explain; however, Paul Vogt, Rigby and Long also mention Worringer's growing disbelief in Expressionism around the second decade of the twentieth century. Charles Haxthausen draws attention to Worringer's explorations of the connections between Gothic and Expressionist

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> See, from the current thesis, 'Worringer and Expressionism: late twentieth-century perspectives,' 215-224.

art; around 1925, Worringer finds Expressionism to be a systematic approach to art-making, Haxthausen observes. As made visible in contemporary research, Worringer's relationship with Expressionism in the early decades of the twentieth century is marked by striking shifts in perspective, much like his approach to the relationship between abstraction and representation from *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic*.

The driving force of Worringer's early books, as W. Eugène Kleinbauer and Hilton Kramer observe, is the antithesis between urges towards art-making, and also between art-making modes.<sup>23</sup> To establish the distinctive features of the urge to abstraction and the urge to empathy, Worringer places them in opposition: this allows him to point to the formal specificities of representation, while emphasizing the characteristics and merits of abstraction-oriented art. Artistic polarities reflect, for him, the argumentative engagement of human beings with their environment; in his writings, opposition thus features as a key contributor to art-making, but also as a fundamental form of relating between human beings and the world.

Contrasting between the modes of art-making of different epochs in *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic*,<sup>24</sup> Worringer points to the art and culture of Classicism, where, as Johann Wolfgang Goethe notes, harmony between human beings and their world was predominant. Yet Worringer underscores the negative influence of Classicism on aesthetics and art. Imitation as approached, for instance, in the writings of Aristotle is particularly criticised by Worringer. However, Aristotle's *Rhetoric* also requires antithesis to inform a persuasive, memorable argument – a demand that must have attracted the attention of Worringer, who, in his early books, proves to follow Aristotle's perspective on the construction of discourse. *Abstraction and Empathy* begins by approaching the urge to empathy and the urge to abstraction as polar opposites. Nevertheless, Worringer also draws attention to artistic instances where the two opposite urges coexist.

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<sup>23</sup> See 'About Worringer: W. Eugène Kleinbauer, Hilton Kramer, Debbie Lewer,' 14-16. Also, 'Antithesis: Classical, modern and contemporary contexts,' 225-242.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

As discussed in *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic*, gradation, displacement, transposition, remembering, assimilation and interpolation provide alternatives to antithesis.<sup>25</sup> These processes do not claim the limelight of Worringer's investigations, yet are mentioned in Worringer's explorations of art-making. For instance, Worringer, in *Abstraction and Empathy*, observes the gradation of feelings and urges, the historical displacement of one style by another, and the formal transposition of representational elements in abstract contexts. He also signals, in *Form in Gothic*, the abstracting function of remembering, the formal process of assimilation, and the result of assimilation, namely the interpolation of observational elements in abstract contexts. Although Worringer is uncomfortable with the possible loss of differentiation between imitative and creative urges in naturalism, he continues referring to instances of abstract-representational interplay in both *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic*. Interplay, unlike antithesis, does not assume a leading role in Worringer's inquiries,<sup>26</sup> yet gains visibility in his analysis of Gothic art.

For Worringer, Gothic occasions a notable meeting between the urge to empathy and the urge to abstraction.<sup>27</sup> Having signalled abstract-representational interplay in Japanese art, in Saracenic (or Islamic) arabesque, in Byzantine style, and in Greek Ionic architecture, Worringer observes interplay at work in Gothic cathedrals, where the urge to empathy animates abstract form. Schiller, an admirer of Goethe and Classicism, had noted in *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* (1794) that the play drive balanced senses and law, feelings and reason.<sup>28</sup> Harmony between material reality and lawful formality, between human beings and their social contexts, was achievable for Schiller. Worringer, however, considers Gothic abstract-representational interplay hybrid rather than harmonious;<sup>29</sup> according to him, Gothic art allows opposite elements to coexist without cancelling their differences.

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<sup>25</sup> From the current thesis, 'Gradation, displacement and transposition: alternatives to antithesis in Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy*', 'Interplay in naturalism', and 'Interplay in the Gothic art of Northern Europe: memory, assimilation, interpolation'.

<sup>26</sup> See, for instance, '*Form in Gothic*: interplay readdressed', and 'History and Ego: Worringer's approach'.

<sup>27</sup> See 'Gradation, displacement and transposition: alternatives to antithesis in Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy*,' 244-253.

<sup>28</sup> From the current thesis, 'Schiller, Worringer, interplay,' 264-269.

<sup>29</sup> 'Interplay: a dual, hybrid state in Gothic art,' 270-273, from this thesis.

Worringer addresses the art of the past in *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic*, yet writes with his contemporaries in mind.<sup>30</sup> Often critical towards his epoch, he notes that human beings are as disoriented at the beginning of the twentieth century as ‘primitive’ people were when confronted with a world they did not understand. He questions current art-making that is based on Classical norms rather than on genuine creative drives, and commends the ability of contemporary artists to differentiate between potentially similar artistic approaches. Early twentieth-century creators, he argues, need to recognize the fundamental differences between modes of art-making. According to him, art-making in his time amalgamates geometric and representational elements (a process he also recognizes in ancient Egyptian art), allowing the coexistence of representation and abstraction to come to surface. Worringer does not focus on the works of particular artists active around the turn of the twentieth century; he comments only briefly on the practices of Ferdinand Hodler, Adolf Hildebrand and Auguste Rodin in *Abstraction and Empathy*.

The attention Worringer bestows on coeval artistic explorations surfaces, for instance, through his addressing Impressionist art-making in *Abstraction and Empathy* (where he explains its connections with representation),<sup>31</sup> as well as through his frequent references to ‘expression’ in both *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic*.<sup>32</sup> His ‘Historical Development of Modern Art’ (1911) and *Current Questions on Art* (1921) further reveal his perspective on contemporary artistic practices, and his empathic resonance with them. Recognizing abstract-representational interplay during his time, Worringer observes its compositional amalgamation of geometric and representational elements.<sup>33</sup>

The increased visibility of geometric, regular aspects of art-making as noted by Worringer in *Abstraction and Empathy* is preceded and supported by two allied processes also mentioned in his book: the growing assertion of personal perspectives, and the decisive reorganization of the processes of art-making. Around the turn of the twentieth century, Adolf Hildebrand

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<sup>30</sup> See ‘Worringer, his contemporaries, and early twentieth-century art-making in *Abstraction and Empathy*,’ 274-277.

<sup>31</sup> From the current thesis, see ‘Monet, Worringer’s Impressionism, and the interplay of abstraction and representation,’ 293-297.

<sup>32</sup> See ‘The words of Worringer: “Expressionism” at the beginning of the twentieth century,’ 149-157.

<sup>33</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 43.

wrote about the necessity of achieving self-sufficiency and formal unity in art,<sup>34</sup> while Ferdinand Hodler underscored the compositional role of parallelism.<sup>35</sup> Paul Cézanne allowed his brushstrokes to gain visibility and thus impart a distinctive lifelikeness to the rendition of his motifs;<sup>36</sup> readdressing his later works in the studio, Claude Monet focused on the demands of his canvases as well as on their relationship with motifs as observed in the world.<sup>37</sup> Kandinsky, who was in contact with Worringer around the time of publishing *The Blaue Reiter Almanac* (1912), experimented with the expression of inner events in pictures he regarded as ‘improvisations.’<sup>38</sup> Kandinsky’s writings from the second decade of the twentieth century address directly the contemporary meeting of representation and abstraction, reaching conclusions that resonate with Worringer’s explorations, but that ultimately differ from them. In the works and words of artists active in the early years of the twentieth century, abstract features of art come to surface, shining a different light on the connections between art-making and the world.

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<sup>34</sup> Adolf Hildebrand, *The Problem of Form in Painting and Sculpture* (New York and London: Garland Publishing, 1978 [1893]), 11. Also, from the current thesis, ‘Worringer’s approach to the writing of art history and theory,’ 49-64, ‘Empathy, abstraction and representation in Worringer’s *Abstraction and Empathy*,’ 65-85, and ‘Representation and abstraction in art-making: Worringer’s perspective,’ 86-110.

<sup>35</sup> Peter Selz, *Ferdinand Hodler* (Berkeley: University of California Berkeley, University Art Museum, 1972), 123. Also, from the current thesis, ‘Representation and abstraction in art-making: Worringer’s perspective,’ 86-110.

<sup>36</sup> See, from the current thesis, ‘Pictorial contexts for abstract-representational interplay: Cézanne’s realized sensations,’ 278-292.

<sup>37</sup> From the current thesis, ‘Monet and his motifs: representational and abstract aspects,’ 298-300, ‘*The Doorway (Morning Effect)* (1894): re-materializations,’ 301-307, and ‘Representation and abstraction in Monet’s *Water Lilies* (1907),’ 308-315.

<sup>38</sup> Wassily Kandinsky, Kenneth C. Lindsay, and Peter Vergo, *Kandinsky. Complete Writings on Art* (Boston, Massachusetts: G.K. Hall, 1982), 218. Also, from the current thesis, ‘Towards the expression of inner worlds: Kandinsky, Worringer, and turn-of-the-twentieth-century artist writings,’ 316-324, ‘Interplay in Kandinsky’s *On the Spiritual in Art* (1912) and “On the Question of Form” (1912),’ 325-342, and ‘Painting interplay: Kandinsky’s *Impression (Park)* (1911), *Picture with a Black Arch* (1912), and *Picture with Red Spot* (1914),’ 343-349.

## Part 1: Outer pictures, inner contours

### Wilhelm Worringer: sketch for a portrait

Theoretician, historian and critic of art, Wilhelm Worringer (Aachen, 13 January 1881-Munich, 29 March 1965), is best known in English-speaking contexts for two of his debut books: *Abstraction and Empathy. A Contribution to the Psychology of Style* (1908), and *Form in Gothic* (1910). Worringer studied at the universities of Freiburg, Berlin, Munich and Bern; Georg Simmel (1858-1918),<sup>1</sup> and Theodor Lipps (1854-1914),<sup>2</sup> were among his professors. Upon completing his doctoral dissertation at the University of Bern (1905-1906),<sup>3</sup> under the supervision of Artur Weese (1868-1934),<sup>4</sup> Worringer enlisted the help of his family and published his thesis in Neuwied.<sup>5</sup> He then posted a printed copy of his dissertation to Paul Ernst (c. 1899 - c. 1985), who reviewed it for *Kunst und Künstler* [*Art and Artists*], and sent Worringer's dissertation to Simmel. Upon reading Ernst's supportive review, Reinhard Piper (1879-1953) – a publisher based in Munich – decided to make Worringer's book available to a wider audience.<sup>6</sup> The book proved an instant success with the artists of the time.<sup>7</sup> *Form in Gothic*, also published with Piper in 1910, took Worringer's research from *Abstraction and Empathy* a step further; it clarified and expanded on a number of Worringer's core ideas and methodology.

At present, the biographical data available to English-speaking researchers offer only glimpses into Worringer's life. Joanna E. Ziegler, in 'Worringer's Theory of Transcendental Space in Gothic Architecture: A Medievalist's Perspective' (an essay from Neil Donahue's

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<sup>1</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, ix.

<sup>2</sup> Norbert Lynton, 'Expressionism' in *Concepts of Modern Art: From Fauvism to Postmodernism* ed. Nikos Stangos (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1994), 42.

<sup>3</sup> W. Eugene Kleinbauer places the completion of Worringer's dissertation in 1907. See W. Eugène Kleinbauer, *Modern Perspectives in Western Art History: An Anthology of Twentieth-Century Writings on the Visual Arts* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press [Medieval Academy of America] [Holt, Rinehart and Winston], 1989 [1971]), 29-30.

<sup>4</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, xiv.

<sup>5</sup> See Rhys W. Williams, 'Worringer, Wilhelm', in *Grove Art Online. Oxford Art Online*. Also, Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, x.

<sup>6</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, xi. The spelling of the name of Reinhard Piper follows Worringer's spelling from the 1948 preface. See ———, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, xi.

<sup>7</sup> Rose-Carol Washton Long, Stephanie Barron, and Ida Katherine Rigby, *German Expressionism: Documents from the End of the Wilhelmine Empire to the Rise of National Socialism* (New York: Maxwell Macmillan Canada, 1993), 9.

*Invisible Cathedrals*, c. 1995) observes in this respect: ‘Much of Worringer’s biography remains a mystery, especially his whereabouts between the two World Wars and the crucial question of whether he was Jewish.’<sup>8</sup> From the brief notes encountered in contemporary texts,<sup>9</sup> Worringer’s trajectory appears meandering, despite the early success of his publications. Having lived in Munich between 1902 and 1909,<sup>10</sup> Worringer moved to Bern in May 1909.<sup>11</sup> He wrote *Abstraction and Empathy* sometime between 1905 and 1907, while in Munich; from 1908 onwards, he focused on completing *Form in Gothic*.<sup>12</sup> Worringer taught

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<sup>8</sup> Joanna E. Ziegler, 'Worringer's Theory of Transcendental Space in Gothic Architecture: A Medievalist's Perspective' in Neil H. Donahue, *Invisible Cathedrals: The Expressionist Art History of Wilhelm Worringer* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, c.1995), 117. Ziegler continues: ‘It seems that he [Worringer] taught in the Art History Institute at the University of Bonn during the 1920s, having been called there from the University in Bern. After the Second World War, in 1946, he held the chair at Halle University that [Paul] Frankl had abandoned in 1933 to emigrate to the United States.’ Ziegler points to the originality of Worringer’s approach to transcendental space in Gothic architecture, noting five key statements Worringer makes in *Form in Gothic*: that predominant art forms and particular expressive means must be analysed; that Gothic architecture can be contrasted with Classical architecture; that the dematerialisation of stone becomes visible in Gothic; that an important formal feature of Gothic is the dissolution of walls; that scholasticism is analogous to Gothic architecture. Worringer’s intuitive arguments, Ziegler notes, did not meet with the approval of medievalists (with the exception of Paul Frankl), yet his ideas were widely adopted and disseminated as truisms. (Ibid., 108-109.) She explains this simultaneous acceptance and rejection as follows: ‘Why did Worringer's five stunning moments of Gothic architectural theory become truisms rather than Worringerianisms? Although to answer this would require a study dedicated to this topic alone, a few ideas can be offered here nonetheless. In the first place, the immigration of German-Jewish art historians, like Panofsky, needs to be much more fully understood than it is at present. There was, on the other hand, the geographical migration to America in which Worringer, who stayed in Germany during the Second World War, did not participate. Scholars also migrated ideologically, as it were, into a new positivism. On our shores a hardy commitment to the "science" of art historical research took root with the *émigrés*, a position nourished and renourished by a disdain for the seemingly soft and subjective intellectual ground from which Worringer's method sprang. The result was that all that Modernists found imminent in Worringer, medievalists ultimately and systematically dismantled from acceptable interpretations treating Gothic as a historical phenomenon. The interaction between these two groups of interpreters (the modernists and medievalists) has not yet been featured, however, in the vast enterprise that constitutes the history of Worringer's reception.’ (Ibid., 111.) For further suggestions regarding Worringer’s whereabouts between the two World Wars, Ziegler sends to the work of Jolanda Nigro Covre, ‘Wilhelm Worringer prima e dopo: Da un equivoco a un “tramonto”’, *Ricerche di storia dell'arte* 12 (1980), 65-76. (Ibid., 115, 128.) This thesis does not propose to focus on Worringer’s biography – a topic that would require extensive exploration. My inquiry highlights specific aspects of Worringer’s contribution to the writing of art history and theory, and the relevance of Worringer’s thought on abstraction and representation for early twentieth-century painting.

<sup>9</sup> Donahue explains, in *Invisible Cathedrals*, the relatively scant information on Worringer. According to Donahue: ‘His [i. e., Worringer’s archival estate or *Nachlaß* in the Germanisches Museum in Nuremberg] contains and reveals little, since Worringer twice left his belongings behind: in Königsberg, where he taught from 1928 to 1944, and in Halle, where he was professor of modern art history after the war, from 1946 to 1950.’ Neil H. Donahue, *Invisible Cathedrals: The Expressionist Art History of Wilhelm Worringer*, 4.

<sup>10</sup> Sebastian Preuss, 'Spiritual Intoxication: Sebastian Preuss on Wilhelm Worringer and Modernism', *Deutsche Bank ArtMag*, No. 56, 2009, 16.

<sup>11</sup> Magdalena Bushart, 'Changing Times, Changing Styles: Wilhelm Worringer and the Art of His Epoch' in *Invisible Cathedrals: The Expressionist Art History of Wilhelm Worringer*, ed. Neil H. Donahue (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, c.1995), 71.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

at the University of Bern between 1909 and 1914;<sup>13</sup> after Richard Hamann's review (1915) of *Form in Gothic*, Worringer applied unsuccessfully for a number of academic positions, continued teaching, and gave public lectures in Bern and Bonn.<sup>14</sup> He left for the front at the outbreak of the First World War (1914-18),<sup>15</sup> completed his military service, and then took up a position at the University of Bonn, where he taught between 1918 and 1928.<sup>16</sup> With the support of one of his admirers (Carl Heinrich Becker, Prussian Minister of Culture),<sup>17</sup> Worringer received a professorship in 1928 in Königsberg (or Kaliningrad, Russia), where he resided between 1928 and 1945.<sup>18</sup>

Worringer stopped publishing when the National Socialist Party came to power (1933). However, his lectures in Königsberg – during which he hinted at his anti-Nazi views – were met with much interest.<sup>19</sup> Sebastian Preuss describes Worringer's situation in the nineteen-thirties as follows:

When the Nazis took power, Worringer's educated middleclass, left-wing world collapsed. Out of political conviction, he didn't publish anything during these years, and he was eyed with mistrust and considered unworthy of representing Germany in lectures abroad. He was now “a quiet person in Germany, who is only loud at home,” as he wrote to his publisher Piper in 1937. But even during World War II, educated Königsberg residents flocked to his lectures, in which he described the art of old Europe, which was now burning to the ground, as a humanitarian value system, and everyone in the hall understood his unspoken criticism of the Nazis.<sup>20</sup>

After the end of the Second World War (1939-45), Worringer taught modern art in Halle from 1946 to 1950, at a time when the city was part of Germany's Soviet-conquered zone.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Donahue, *Invisible Cathedrals: The Expressionist Art History of Wilhelm Worringer*, 4.

<sup>14</sup> Preuss, 'Spiritual Intoxication: Sebastian Preuss on Wilhelm Worringer and Modernism', 16.

<sup>15</sup> Wilhelm Worringer and Herbert Edward Read, *Form in Gothic* (London: Tiranti, 1957 [1910]), xiv.

<sup>16</sup> Donahue, *Invisible Cathedrals: The Expressionist Art History of Wilhelm Worringer*, 4.

<sup>17</sup> Preuss, 'Spiritual Intoxication: Sebastian Preuss on Wilhelm Worringer and Modernism', 16.

<sup>18</sup> Lee Sorensen, 'Worringer, Wilhelm', in *Dictionary of Art Historians*. According to Donahue, Worringer taught in Königsberg until 1944. Donahue, *Invisible Cathedrals: The Expressionist Art History of Wilhelm Worringer*, 4.

<sup>19</sup> Preuss, 'Spiritual Intoxication: Sebastian Preuss on Wilhelm Worringer and Modernism', 16-17.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>21</sup> Sorensen, 'Worringer, Wilhelm'.

He moved from Halle to Munich in 1950, to protest against having his name used in local propaganda,<sup>22</sup> and remained in Munich until the end of his years in 1965.<sup>23</sup>

The works of Worringer were extensively published in the first half of the twentieth century. In his books – for instance, *Lucas Cranach* (1908), *Old German Book Illustration* (1912), *Current Questions on Art* (1921), *The Origins of German Panel Painting* (1924), *Egyptian Art* (1927), *Greek Culture and the Gothic: On the Empire of Hellenism* (1928), and *On the Influence of Anglo-Saxon Book Painting on the Monumental Sculpture on the Continent in the Early Middle Ages* (1931) –<sup>24</sup> Worringer explores topics he had approached in *Abstraction and Empathy*. However, despite his sustained activity, Worringer's ideas received widespread recognition for two of his debut publications: *Abstraction and Empathy*, and *Form in Gothic*. According to Worringer: '... [F]or the general public, he [i. e., Worringer] has remained almost exclusively the much translated author of *Abstraktion und Einfühlung* [*Abstraction and Empathy*] and *Formprobleme der Gotik* [*Form in Gothic*]. The youthful exuberance of his early works has overshadowed the continued efforts of his maturity.'<sup>25</sup>

Indeed, from Worringer's books, only *Abstraction and Empathy*, *Form in Gothic* and *Egyptian Art* were translated into English during the twentieth century.<sup>26</sup> *Abstraction and Empathy* remains the best known and most cited of Worringer's publications up to date. In *Abstraction and Empathy*, Worringer contrasts the urge to empathy and the urge to

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<sup>22</sup> Donahue, *Invisible Cathedrals: The Expressionist Art History of Wilhelm Worringer*, 4. Also, Preuss, 'Spiritual Intoxication: Sebastian Preuss on Wilhelm Worringer and Modernism', 17.

<sup>23</sup> Sorensen, 'Worringer, Wilhelm', Also, Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, vii-xv. Also, Worringer and Read, *Form in Gothic*, xiv-xv.

<sup>24</sup> Worringer also wrote: *Urs Graf: The Woodcuts of the Passion* (1923), *German Youth and Eastern Spirit* (1924), and *The Book of Life and the Famous Author of the Fables, Aesop, Ulm 1475* (1925). He contributed introductions to *The Cologne Bible: 27 Woodcuts from 1479* (1923), and *Otto Pankok* (1927). He lectured on *The Problematics of Contemporary Art* (1948), and collected his essays from 1919 to 1954 in *Questions and Counter-Questions* (1956). Further details regarding the publication of Worringer's texts can be found in Donahue, *Invisible Cathedrals: The Expressionist Art History of Wilhelm Worringer*, 203-206. Also, Long, Barron, and Rigby, *German Expressionism: Documents from the End of the Wilhelmine Empire to the Rise of National Socialism*, 10-13, 284-287. For a list of his articles and reviews, see Donahue, *Invisible Cathedrals: The Expressionist Art History of Wilhelm Worringer*, 204-205.

<sup>25</sup> Worringer and Read, *Form in Gothic*, xv.

<sup>26</sup> The first of Worringer's books to be published in English is *Form in Gothic*. Edited and introduced by Herbert Read, *Form in Gothic* appeared in 1927 at Putnam's, London; it was then reissued in 1957 by A. Tiranti, London, and by Schocken Paperbacks in 1964. Donahue draws attention to the existence of an unattributed translation of *Formprobleme der Gotik: Form Problems of the Gothic*. This translation, dedicated in 1918 and issued in 1920, contains images from collections in the United States of America, as Donahue points out in *Invisible Cathedrals: The Expressionist Art of Wilhelm Worringer* (c. 1995). See Donahue, *Invisible Cathedrals: The Expressionist Art History of Wilhelm Worringer*, 206.

abstraction. He draws a powerful antithesis between two approaches to art: on the one hand, an approach that encourages the empathic engagement of viewers, and relies on the positive emotional responses of artists to their environments; on the other hand, an approach that, through processes of abstraction, highlights the distancing of artists and viewers from the world. His memorable antithesis is rooted in the methodological practices of his time, according to W. Eugène Kleinbauer.

### **About Worringer: W. Eugène Kleinbauer, Hilton Kramer, Debbie Lewer**

Kleinbauer, in *Modern Perspectives in Western Art History: An Anthology of Twentieth-Century Writings on the Visual Arts* (1989), underscores the significance of antithesis in the writing of German art history and theory around the turn of the twentieth century. He notes that Worringer is one of the researchers relying on antithetic categories, alongside historians and theoreticians of art such as Heinrich Wölfflin (1864-1945), Alois Riegl (1858-1905), and Max Dvořák (1874-1921). In the words of Kleinbauer:

Wölfflin's use of antithesis betrays a major tendency in German scholarship of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. We have already found such a dichotomy in the work of Riegl (haptic and optic), and we shall come to it again, near the end of this introductory essay, in an important book by Riegl's most gifted student, Max Dvořák (idealism and naturalism). The observation of antithetical categories occurs also in the work of Wilhelm Worringer (1881-1965). A major exponent of German Expressionism, Worringer married Lipps' theory of empathy to Riegl's concept of *Kunstwollen*. In his widely read essay *Abstraktion und Einfühlung; ein Beitrag zur Stilpsychologie* (his doctoral dissertation of 1907), published the following year, Worringer intended to make a "contribution to the aesthetics of a work of art, and especially of a work of art belonging to the domain of the plastic arts". He observes a distinction between geometrical (abstract) and organic (empathic) forms in the whole history of art, Eastern and primitive as well as Western. Abstract aesthetic styles characterize peoples oppressed by nature and involved with spiritual reality, while

organic styles characterize peoples who have an affinity for nature and find spiritual satisfaction in it.<sup>27</sup>

Kleinbauer notes that Worringer's reliance on antithesis is a key aspect of *Abstraction and Empathy*. Placing Worringer's approach to the writing of art history and theory in historical perspective, Kleinbauer contextualizes Worringer's research, drawing attention to the employment of dichotomy by Riegl, Lipps and Dvořák in their writings on art.

Like Donald Gordon, Geoffrey Perkins, and Rose-Carol Washton Long, Kleinbauer notes the association between Worringer and Expressionism. However, Kleinbauer connects Expressionism to the inquiries of Worringer more decisively than the above-mentioned writers.<sup>28</sup> Kleinbauer considers Worringer indebted to both Lipps and Riegl.<sup>29</sup> As signalled by Kleinbauer, the contrast between abstract, geometric, spiritually inclined art,<sup>30</sup> and organic,<sup>31</sup> empathic, nature-inclined art, stands out in Worringer's writings.

Hilton Kramer also notes the role of antithesis in the texts of Worringer. Like Kleinbauer, Kramer draws attention to Worringer's employment of antithesis when articulating distinctions between modes of art-making. The differentiation Worringer traces between art that creates spatial illusions, and art that suppresses such illusions, is existentially relevant for Kramer.<sup>32</sup> He explains Worringer's contrast between modes of art-making from the perspective of artistic experience in his introduction to the 1997 edition of *Abstraction and*

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<sup>27</sup> Kleinbauer, *Modern Perspectives in Western Art History: An Anthology of Twentieth-Century Writings on the Visual Arts*, 29-30.

<sup>28</sup> Sections to follow examine in greater detail the connections between Worringer and Expressionism from the standpoint of several contemporary writers. See, for instance, 'Worringer and Expressionism: late twentieth-century perspectives'.

<sup>29</sup> Regarding Worringer's approach to the theory of empathy as delineated by Lipps, see Geoffrey C. W. Waite, 'Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy*: Remarks on Its Reception and on the Rhetoric of Its Criticism' in *Invisible Cathedrals: The Expressionist Art History of Wilhelm Worringer*, ed. Neil H. Donahue (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), 24-25, 28. Also, David Morgan, 'The Enchantment of Art: Abstraction and Empathy from German Romanticism to Expressionism', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 57, No. 2, 1996, 321-322.

<sup>30</sup> 'Spirit' is a term Worringer employs to refer to inner activity – especially the activity of the mind. In *Form in Gothic*, Worringer defines 'spirit' as the opposite of matter. Worringer and Read, *Form in Gothic*, 106.

<sup>31</sup> 'Organic' is a term Worringer associates with lifelikeness in both *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic*. See, from the current thesis, 'Empathy, abstraction and representation in Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy*', and 'Representation and abstraction in art-making: Worringer's perspective'.

<sup>32</sup> Wilhelm Worringer and Hilton Kramer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee and Elephant Paperbacks, 1997 [1908]), ix. The term 'existential' as employed by Kramer points to human experience in the world; it does not acquire further philosophical nuance in his introduction.

*Empathy*. Kramer notes that the ‘will to abstraction’ as described by Worringer is the response of artists to a world they regard as a source of uncertainty and anxiety.<sup>33</sup>

Focusing on the merits of Worringer’s theory rather than on a critique of Worringer’s perspective, Kramer writes: ‘What proved to be so timely in *Abstraction and Empathy* was Worringer’s further claim that this will to abstraction was to be understood to be one of the two fundamental aesthetic impulses known to human culture – the other, of course, being the urge to empathy which manifests itself in the naturalistic depiction of the observable world.’

<sup>34</sup> For Kramer as for Kleinbauer, Worringer constructs a memorable opposition between the ‘will to abstraction’ and the ‘urge to empathy’. Both these contemporary authors are sensitive to the significance of antithesis in Worringer’s writings.

Although antithesis is a key aspect of *Abstraction and Empathy*, different facets of Worringer’s approach to the writing of art history and theory have been readdressed in contemporary criticism. For instance, Michael W. Jennings notes the implicit criticism directed by Worringer towards a depersonalized, commodity-oriented modern capitalist society.<sup>35</sup> Pointing to Worringer’s discussion of ancient cultures in psychological terms, Mary Gluck underscores that, much to the benefit of turn-of-the-twentieth-century artists, Worringer’s approach signalled the existence of an authentic, creative and redemptive inner space that could be accessed through art-making.<sup>36</sup> In her recent discussion of Worringer’s *Abstraction and Empathy*, Debbie Lewer observes that Worringer’s book echoes the pervasive sense of alienation experienced by Worringer’s contemporaries in early twentieth-century surroundings.<sup>37</sup>

Lewer, in *Post-Impressionism to World War II* (2006), mentions the current lack of interest in Worringer’s writings.<sup>38</sup> Yet, as she writes, Worringer’s thought attracted the sustained attention of his contemporaries around the time *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic*

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., viii-ix.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., x.

<sup>35</sup> Michael W. Jennings, ‘Against Expressionism: Materialism and Social Theory in Worringer’s *Abstraction and Empathy*’ in *Invisible Cathedrals: The Expressionist Art History of Wilhelm Worringer*, ed. Neil H. Donahue (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), 94-95.

<sup>36</sup> Mary Gluck, ‘Interpreting Primitivism, Mass Culture and Modernism: The Making of Wilhelm Worringer’s *Abstraction and Empathy*’, *New German Critique*, No. 80, 2000, 166-167.

<sup>37</sup> Debbie Lewer, *Post-Impressionism to World War II* (Malden: Blackwell, 2006), 58.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 66.

were published.<sup>39</sup> For instance, painter Franz Marc (1880-1916),<sup>40</sup> poet Rainer Maria Rilke (1875-1926),<sup>41</sup> and architectural historian Walter Müller-Wulckov (1886-1964),<sup>42</sup> commented appreciatively on Worringer's research, while art historian Richard Hamann (1879-1961) and philosopher Emil Utitz (1883-1956) signalled the limitations of Worringer's writings.<sup>43</sup> The thought of Worringer found considerable appreciation in Great Britain,<sup>44</sup> where T. E. Hulme (1883-1917) and Herbert Read (1893-1968) were among Worringer's earliest supporters.<sup>45</sup>

### **Worringer, T. E. Hulme and Herbert Read**

Hulme, an admirer of Lipps' thought, met Worringer at the Berlin Congress of Aesthetics (1913). Upon his return to Great Britain in 1914, after nine months in Berlin,<sup>46</sup> Hulme was

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<sup>39</sup> Joseph Masheck considers *Abstraction and Empathy* to be '[t]he premier theoretical text of the whole German movement'. See Joseph Masheck, 'Raw Art: "Primitive" Authenticity and German Expressionism', *RES: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, No. 4, 1982, 110.

<sup>40</sup> Geoffrey C. W. Waite, 'Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy*: Remarks on Its Reception and on the Rhetoric of Its Criticism' in *Invisible Cathedrals: The Expressionist Art History of Wilhelm Worringer*, ed. Neil H. Donahue (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, c.1995 [1981]), 17-18.

<sup>41</sup> Neil H. Donahue, 'Introduction: Art History or "Sublime Hysteria"?' in *Invisible Cathedrals: The Expressionist Art History of Wilhelm Worringer*, ed. Neil H. Donahue (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, c.1995), 1.

<sup>42</sup> Bushart points out that Müller-Wulckov finds in *Form in Gothic* a theory that explains the contemporary transformation of the concept of art. For him, *Form in Gothic* has more importance in connection to the art of his time than to the history of art. Bushart, 'Changing Times, Changing Styles: Wilhelm Worringer and the Art of His Epoch', 70-71.

<sup>43</sup> As Waite remarks, Utitz criticizes Worringer for his approach to Gothic art, for his emphasis on metaphysics and religion, as well as for his approach to and expansion of Riegl's concept of absolute artistic will. Like Worringer, Utitz does not seek to ally aesthetics with the theory of beauty exclusively. Waite, 'Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy*: Remarks on Its Reception and on the Rhetoric of Its Criticism', 35. Waite also mentions the critical positions adopted by writers such as Rudolf Arnheim and E. H. Gombrich towards the work of Worringer. ———, 'Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy*: Remarks on Its Reception and on the Rhetoric of Its Criticism', 19.

<sup>44</sup> Joseph Frank remarks: 'Heinrich Wölfflin certainly taught me something about the possibilities of formal analysis; and I was led to Wilhelm Worringer by his influence on T. E. Hulme and the constant references to him in English criticism.' Joseph Frank, *The Idea of Spatial Form* (New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press, 1991), xiv.

<sup>45</sup> Current research exploring the connections between Worringer, Hulme and Read includes: William C. Wees, *Vorticism and the English Avant-Garde* ([Toronto]: University of Toronto Press, 1972). Also, Reed Way Dasenbrock, *The Literary Vorticism of Ezra Pound and Wyndham Lewis: Towards the Condition of Painting* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985). Also, Miranda B. Hickman, *The Geometry of Modernism: The Vorticist Idiom in Lewis, Pound, H. D., and Yeats* (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 2005).

<sup>46</sup> T. E. Hulme and Herbert Read, eds., *Speculations: Essays on Humanism and the Philosophy of Art* (London, England: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1936 [1924]), x. The introduction to *Speculations* is written by Herbert Read.

already in favour of Worringer's approach to abstraction.<sup>47</sup> Read edited Hulme's *Speculations: Essays on Humanism and the Philosophy of Art* (1924), where Hulme explained Worringer's views on art in 'Modern Art and Its Philosophy'. While working as a curator of the collection of Ceramics at the Victoria and Albert Museum,<sup>48</sup> Read contacted Worringer, with whose ideas he resonated, and translated *Form in Gothic* in English in 1927.<sup>49</sup>

Worringer's dichotomies are highlighted and discussed in the writings of both Hulme and Read, who define modes of art-making through opposition in their books. Hulme offers a close, perceptive reading of Worringer's basic tenets from *Abstraction and Empathy*; he acknowledges his interest in Worringer's writings, yet does not exclusively refer to Worringer for the articulation of his own ideas. In his turn, Read prefers to emphasize dichotomy in Worringer's texts, yet, without pointing to Worringer, also addresses the possible reconciliation of opposites in later texts. Hulme and Read bring to light the key methodological role of antithesis in Worringer's writings, and rely on antithesis in the articulation of their own discourses.

Representational and abstract aspects of art as approached by Worringer are emphasized in the writings of Hulme and Read in particular. In his introduction to the first English edition of *Form in Gothic* (1927),<sup>50</sup> Read draws attention to the necessity of appraising the relationship between sensuous and formal components of perception. He points to a lineage of aesthetic research that addresses matters of form and sense, underscoring the connection between the thought of Lipps and Worringer. Further distinguishing between General Aesthetics (as

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<sup>47</sup> Michael H. Levenson, *A Genealogy of Modernism: A Study of English Literary Doctrine, 1908-1922* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 96. Worringer's impact on Hulme is regarded as significant by William Spanos, who writes: 'It was no accident that T. E. Hulme ... appropriated almost entirely Worringer's aesthetics and principle of artistic periodization as these are presented in *Abstraktion und Einfühlung* (1908), his famous critique of Theodor Lipps's theory of empathy.' William V. Spanos, 'Modern Literary Criticism and the Spatialization of Time: An Existential Critique', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 29, No. 1, 1970, 92, 93.

<sup>48</sup> David Thistlewood, 'Herbert Read (1893-1968)', *Prospects: The Quarterly Review of Comparative Education*, 24, No. 1/2, 1994, 3. Also, Robin Kinross, 'Herbert Read's "Art and Industry": A History', *Journal of Design History*, 1, No. 1, 1988, 37.

<sup>49</sup> Donahue, *Invisible Cathedrals: The Expressionist Art History of Wilhelm Worringer*, 206. Also, Shulamith Behr and Marian Malet, *Arts in Exile in Britain 1933-1945: Politics and Cultural Identity* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi, 2005), 13.

<sup>50</sup> See Worringer and Read, *Form in Gothic*, ix-xiii. Also, Herbert Read, *The Forms of Things Unknown: Essays towards an Aesthetic Philosophy* (Cleveland and New York: Meridian Books, 1963), 145-152.

endorsed by Worringer in *Abstraction and Empathy*) and the Theory of Art (visible in *Form in Gothic*),<sup>51</sup> Read assigns to the domain of General Aesthetics the exploration of tone, colour, imagery, and their impact on perception. Such elements, Read explains, are diverse, lacking organization and unity; he demands structure rather than variety from approaches to art instead. 'Art is *ordered* expression',<sup>52</sup> Read posits, echoing Worringer's attention to key features of form.<sup>53</sup>

Like Worringer, Read differentiates between beauty (which can be recognized in representation, and speaks to the senses) and art – in other words, abstraction. Worringer associates art with abstraction and style in *Abstraction and Empathy*,<sup>54</sup> regarding abstraction as emergent from instinct rather than intellect.<sup>55</sup> However, for Read, art has an intellectual value.<sup>56</sup> Read's standpoint from 1927 reflects Worringer's increasingly pro-intellectual argument from *Form in Gothic*,<sup>57</sup> as well as *Current Questions on Art* (1921), rather than Worringer's earlier approach to abstraction from *Abstraction and Empathy*.

In *A Concise History of Modern Painting* (1959), Read notes that Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic* played a key part in the growth of German Expressionism. Pointing to Worringer's distinction between Northern art, Classical art and Oriental art, Read reflects on the forewords Worringer wrote to *Abstraction and Empathy*,<sup>58</sup> highlighting that Worringer's explorations provided a historical background for the experimentations

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<sup>51</sup> Worringer and Read, *Form in Gothic*, ix.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 30.

<sup>54</sup> For instance, Worringer mentions the coexistence of 'the imitation impulse' and 'the art impulse' in the art of ancient Egypt. Ibid., 12.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>56</sup> Intellect (or the faculty of the human mind to think, learn, know, reason, and understand) has the power of dimming instinct (or the innate capacity to respond to the world, sometimes equated with impulses and intuitions.) Worringer argues in *Abstraction and Empathy*. Regarding the contribution of intellect to art-making in *Abstraction and Empathy*, Worringer denies the intellectual origin of abstract art, which he regards as the work of instinct. Sensuousness and intellect only come together in Classical Greek art, according to him. (Ibid., 19, 34-35, 46.)

<sup>57</sup> Although critical of the intellect in *Form in Gothic*, Worringer displays more tolerance towards the connections between intellect and art; he underscores, for instance, the inclinations of German culture towards intellectuality. (Worringer and Read, *Form in Gothic*, 62-63, 114-116, 168-169.) He also signalled the intellectual aspects of German art in *Abstraction and Empathy*, criticizing its disregards of form. Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 31-32.

<sup>58</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, vii-xv.

conducted by contemporary artists.<sup>59</sup> Abstract, expressive, restless art is characteristic for the North of Europe, Read argues, following closely Worringer's thought;<sup>60</sup> however, unlike *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic*, *A Concise History of Modern Painting* also provides extensive discussions of the art of Read's time. In his epoch, Read finds that, due to straining historical conditions, abstraction is emphasized with increased intensity.<sup>61</sup> For him, the works of *Die Brücke* [The Bridge] Expressionists bring to mind the art of the French *Fauves* [Wild Beasts],<sup>62</sup> but also the style of the Northern Middle Ages.<sup>63</sup> Worringer hesitated to trace direct connections between Expressionism and Gothic art in *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic*.<sup>64</sup> Read, however, finds the association of Gothic and Expressionist art appealing, despite the differences he notes between the historical and ideological backgrounds of these styles.

*The Forms of Things Unknown*, Read's collection of essays from 1963, provides him with the opportunity to distinguish once more between abstraction and representation. Following Worringer's antithetic approach to the abstract-representational relationship, Read favours abstraction, which he recognizes at work in contemporary art. He signals the distinction between contemporary modes of art-making. According to him: 'It is the distinction between a nihilism or apathy that accepts and expresses the "crepuscular decomposition" which is the historical fact, and a creative positivism that revolts against the tyranny of time and seeks the timeless perfection of an abstract non-figurative art.'<sup>65</sup> The art of representation, associated by Read with a focus on history, is, according to him, in decline in the second half of the twentieth century. Instead, Read observes that the art of his time brings to the fore a-temporal perfection, and abandons the figurative approach. The antithetic method articulated by

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<sup>59</sup> Herbert Edward Read, *A Concise History of Modern Painting* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1969 [1959]), 52-53.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> Read counts Henri Matisse (1869-1954), André Derain (1880-1954), and Maurice de Vlaminck (1876-1958) among the *Fauves*. *Ibid.*, 66.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>64</sup> Charles E. Haxthausen looks at Worringer's essays from the 1920s, pointing to Worringer's changing attitude towards the Expressionist movement, as well as towards the connection between Expressionism and Gothic art. See Charles Werner Haxthausen, 'Modern Art After "The End of Expressionism": Worringer in the 1920s' in *Invisible Cathedrals: The Expressionist Art History of Wilhelm Worringer*, ed. Neil H. Donahue (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, c.1995), 123-126.

<sup>65</sup> Read, *The Forms of Things Unknown: Essays towards an Aesthetic Philosophy*, 146.

Worringer in *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic* still influences Read's thought in 1963.<sup>66</sup>

Read's introduction to Worringer's *Form in Gothic* comprises an extensive citation from T. E. Hulme's *Speculations: Essays on Humanism and the Philosophy of Art* (1924). In 'Modern Art and Its Philosophy', a lecture included in *Speculations* and delivered at London's Quest Society on 22 January 1914, Hulme reviews Worringer's oppositional framing of representation and abstraction.<sup>67</sup> Three theses direct Hulme's inquiry: the existence of two distinct types of art (geometrical and vital),<sup>68</sup> that have different aims and answer to different intellectual needs; the emergence of each type of art from a specific response to the world; and the association of contemporary geometric art with a response to the world specific to it.<sup>69</sup> According to Hulme, Worringer has similar ideas to his own.<sup>70</sup> The debt of Hulme to

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<sup>66</sup> However, Read does not refer to Worringer in 'The Reconciling Image', an essay from *The Form of Things Unknown* where he draws attention to the common psychological ground between human beings. In 'The Reconciling Image', Read brings together a focus on individuality, and an acceptance of instincts and archetypes common to all. (Ibid., 188-205.) Without recognizing it, Read stands very close to Worringer's thought on interplay and counterplay from *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic*.

<sup>67</sup> Hulme and Read, eds., *Speculations: Essays on Humanism and the Philosophy of Art*, 75-109. Also, Hickman, *The Geometry of Modernism: The Vorticist Idiom in Lewis, Pound, H. D., and Yeats*, 15.

<sup>68</sup> For Hulme, the word 'vital' points to living in its strong, creative aspect rather than its weak, imitative aspect. Hulme and Read, eds., *Speculations: Essays on Humanism and the Philosophy of Art*, 77.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 77-78, 81. To exemplify current geometric art, Hulme points to the work of his friend, Jacob Epstein (1880-1959).

<sup>70</sup> Alun R. Jones analyses the differences between the writings of Hulme and Worringer. For instance, he notes Hulme's approach to empathy, a concept Hulme regards as a transferring human emotion onto objects in the world. In his views on empathy, Hulme comes closer to the thought of Lipps, Jones argues. See Alun R. Jones, 'T. E. Hulme, Wilhelm Worringer and the Urge to Abstraction', *The British Journal of Aesthetics*, ONE, No. 1, 1960, 4-6. Miriam Hansen, on the other hand, draws attention to the common ground between the thinking of Hulme and Worringer, as apparent in Hulme's 'Modern Art and Its Philosophy'. Hansen notes that Hulme (who attended to the concept of 'machinery' more than Worringer) expanded on Worringer's thought, emphasizing anti-humanism, primitivism, and the isolation of objects from their living contexts. Miriam Hansen, 'T. E. Hulme, Mercenary of Modernism, or, Fragments of Avantgarde Sensibility in Pre-World War I Britain', *ELH*, 47, No. 2, 1980, 372-373. Regarding the relationship between the writings of Worringer and Hulme, see, for instance, W. Wolfgang Holdheim, 'Wilhelm Worringer and the Polarity of Understanding', *boundary 2*, 8, No. 1, 1979, 343. Also, Joseph A. Buttigieg, 'Worringer among the Modernists', *boundary 2*, 8, No. 1, 1979, 359-362. Also, Waite, 'Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy*: Remarks on Its Reception and on the Rhetoric of Its Criticism', 17. Also, J. B. Bullen, 'Byzantinism and Modernism 1900-14', *The Burlington Magazine*, 141, No. 1160, 1999, 665, 674. Also, Hal Foster et al., *Art Since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2004), 88-89.

Worringer is clearly stated in ‘Modern Art and Its Philosophy’,<sup>71</sup> where Hulme offers a persuasive presentation of Worringer’s thought.<sup>72</sup>

Like Read, Hulme draws attention to the formal, psychological and cultural levels of the division that Worringer traces between representation and abstraction. In anticipation of his summary of Worringer’s line of argument from *Abstraction and Empathy*, Hulme signals that the art of the first decade of the twentieth century is fundamentally different from the art of the past. According to him:

... I think that the new art differs not in degree, but in kind, from the art we are accustomed to, and that there is a danger that the understanding of the new may be hindered by a way of looking at art which is only appropriate to the art that has preceded it. The general considerations I put forward are of this kind. The new art is geometrical in character, while the art we are accustomed to is vital and organic.<sup>73</sup>

Following Worringer, Hulme distinguishes between vital or organic art, specific to pre-modern times, and geometrically oriented art, which he associates with contemporary explorations.<sup>74</sup> However, although Hulme draws attention to the persuasive oppositions traced by Worringer, antithesis is actually nuanced in Worringer’s texts. For instance, Worringer may take the side of abstraction in *Abstraction and Empathy*, but, despite his criticism, does not intend to disparage the urge to empathy and representational art. His interest lies in exploring processes that lead from direct experience to art-making; while asserting the aesthetic validity of art that tends towards abstraction, he prefers to avoid establishing artistic hierarchies. In *Abstraction and Empathy*, Worringer refuses to attach value judgments to either geometric or organic art. He cautions: ‘Here, however, we are in no way concerned with the attribution of values, but with the demarcation of boundaries, a process to which

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<sup>71</sup> Michael Levenson mentions that Hulme found inspiration in Worringer’s theoretical approach more than in the historical framework provided by *Abstraction and Empathy*. (Levenson, *A Genealogy of Modernism: A Study of English Literary Doctrine, 1908-1922*, 96.)

<sup>72</sup> Hulme and Read, eds., *Speculations: Essays on Humanism and the Philosophy of Art*, 82.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 76-77.

<sup>74</sup> The interest of early twentieth-century artists in mechanical, dehumanized characteristics of art-making is addressed by Jessica Burstein in her book, *Cold Modernism: Literature, Fashion, Art* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012). Contrasting the psychological and mechanically-oriented tendencies of modernism, Burstein relies on the writings of Wyndham Lewis in her analysis.

thanks are due if the admiration that is purified by this means grows in relation to both phenomena.’<sup>75</sup> Antithesis, according to Worringer, supports his examination of representation and abstraction, two modes of art-making for which he wishes to provide memorable theoretical definitions and relevant historical contextualisation.

### **Recent opinions, 1960-2008**

Contemporary writers have extended their inquiries beyond highlighting Worringer’s seminal articulation of the abstract-representational opposition; for the last forty years, they have continued to examine the distinctive features of Worringer’s *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic*, the merits and limitations of Worringer’s thought, the less noticeable aspects of Worringer’s discourse on art, the historical and theoretical contexts where Worringer’s writings emerged, as well as Worringer’s influence on various directions of exploration from his time to the present day.

For instance, Worringer’s influence on Hulme is discussed by Alun R. Jones in ‘T. E. Hulme, Wilhelm Worringer and the Urge to Abstraction’ (1960). Jones shows that Worringer is only one of the writers who had a significant impact on the thought of Hulme. Readdressing Hulme’s reliance on Worringer’s texts, Jones mentions that Theodor Lipps and Henri Bergson were also relevant for the British writer. The inquiry of Jones implies that Worringer’s influence during his time needs to be re-examined from nuanced rather than monolithic perspectives.

Signalling Hulme’s interest in Lipps’ theory of empathy, Jones argues that the impact of Worringer’s ideas is visible, yet not exclusive, in Hulme’s writings.<sup>76</sup> According to Jones, Hulme adopts Worringer’s theoretical framework indeed, but follows the thought of Henri Bergson (1859-1941) when analysing modern art. Worringer, Jones notes, inspires the decisive contrast Hulme draws between geometric and organic art; yet Hulme follows his

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<sup>75</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 31. However, Worringer is critical towards post-Renaissance art, and complains about contemporary art (where the inner dimension is missing, according to Worringer). *Ibid.*, 27-30.

<sup>76</sup> Hulme and Read, eds., *Speculations: Essays on Humanism and the Philosophy of Art*, 4-6.

own path when associating representation with humanism and Romanticism, and abstraction with current interests in machinery, religious beliefs and Classicism.<sup>77</sup>

In 'Art and Technical Progress' (1974), Dennis Duerden draws attention to the outstanding characteristics, as well as limitations, of Worringer's inquiries. Worringer, according to Duerden, is the creator of the typological profile of the Northerner in *Form in Gothic*. Both Worringer and Riegl accounted for artistic intentions as embedded in the style of artworks, Duerden notes; however, he questions the capacity of style to reflect artistic objectives comprehensively. For Duerden, the intentions of particular artists cannot be regarded as generic cultural statements.<sup>78</sup> Duerden is critical towards Worringer's generalizing approach. Worringer's perspective on style as the sum of personal artistic tendencies within an epoch meets with Duerden's disapproval. Duerden thus exposes the downfalls of Worringer's interest in an intuitively charted 'history of feeling.'

W. Wolfgang Holdheim, on the other hand, defends Worringer's work in 'Wilhelm Worringer and the Polarity of Understanding' (1979). Underscoring the fruitfulness of Worringer's preference for and employment of antithesis, Holdheim regards *Abstraction and Empathy* as an often cited but rarely read manifesto of abstraction – a classic text of almost instant fame having decisively influenced the field of literary theorising.<sup>79</sup> For Holdheim, Worringer's exploratory approach to abstraction does not establish whether abstraction precedes representation historically,<sup>80</sup> or whether representation and abstraction are paired yet contrastive throughout history. Holdheim exposes the slippage occurring between the historical and theoretical strands of Worringer's inquiry; nevertheless, *Abstraction and Empathy* appears to Holdheim refreshing and non-dogmatic.<sup>81</sup> Drawing attention to the

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>78</sup> Dennis Duerden, 'Art and Technical Progress', *Transition*, No. 45, 1974, 45.

<sup>79</sup> Holdheim, 'Wilhelm Worringer and the Polarity of Understanding', 339.

<sup>80</sup> In *Abstraction and Empathy*, Worringer nevertheless places the abstract urge at the beginning of art. In his words: 'The primal artistic impulse has nothing to do with the rendering of nature. It seeks after pure abstraction as the only possibility of repose within the confusion and obscurity of the world-picture, and creates out of itself, with instinctive necessity, geometric abstraction.' Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 44. Worringer expands on the opinions of Lipps in this respect; Lipps regards the rendering of general qualities of form (or the 'schema,' to employ his vocabulary) as the initial goal of artistic renderings. However, Lipps distinguishes 'schema' from both abstract generality and concrete specificity. See Theodor Lipps, *Estetica. Psihologia Frumosului și a Artei*, vol. I (București: Meridiane, 1987 [1903]), 290-291.

<sup>81</sup> Holdheim, 'Wilhelm Worringer and the Polarity of Understanding', 340-341. Holdheim shows that Worringer attempts to negotiate the tension between historical evolution and theoretical polarity by referring to the

variations that emerge in the reading of Worringer's texts, Holdheim notes the association of three-dimensional space and abstraction in literary theory, and the connections between abstract art and two-dimensionality in art history.<sup>82</sup> This ambiguity, Holdheim argues, is occasioned by Worringer's multilayered approach to the urge to abstraction and to abstraction-oriented art-making.

However, although Holdheim defends the relevance of Worringer's polar approach to artistic forms, he also points to a monistic moment in Worringer's text.<sup>83</sup> The paragraphs that conclude the 'Theoretical Section' of *Abstraction and Empathy*, Holdheim observes, expose the common ground of the urge to empathy and the urge to abstraction: namely, the liberating loss of self in aesthetic contemplation. According to Worringer, viewers feel free when engaging with art they find enjoyable: they forget about pressures and constraints experienced in the world.<sup>84</sup> Yet Holdheim insists that Worringer's fame rests on his employment of opposition, even though this strategy has its limitations. Holdheim points to some of these insufficiencies himself: he explains that Worringer overemphasizes the harmony characterizing the contexts where empathy emerges, and offers a narrow reading of abstraction as experiential homelessness.<sup>85</sup> Nevertheless, addressing and correcting the thought of Worringer is always possible, according to Holdheim, who argues for the importance of Worringer's antitheses. Duality (the necessary form taken by antithesis) is dialectic: it fosters dynamic debate in Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy*, Holdheim maintains.<sup>86</sup> For him, Worringer's oppositional framework is worth pursuing: it actually paves the way to an expansion of consciousness.<sup>87</sup>

In 'Worringer among the Modernists' (1979),<sup>88</sup> Buttigieg singles out Worringer's focus on abstraction. However, he observes that, where Holdheim reads Worringer's abstraction as a

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domains of religion (a faith-based perspective on the world) and epistemology (the philosophy of knowledge), where history and theory can coexist even when opposed.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 341.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 342. 'Monism' refers to a belief in oneness rather than duality. See Jonathan Schaffer, 'Monism', in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (2003).

<sup>84</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 24-25.

<sup>85</sup> Holdheim, 'Wilhelm Worringer and the Polarity of Understanding', 350.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 355.

<sup>87</sup> In *Form in Gothic*, Worringer indeed argues that genuine objectivity emerges from approaching the writing of history and theory from opposite perspectives, and that such a strategy widens the otherwise limited Ego. Worringer and Read, *Form in Gothic*, 2-3.

<sup>88</sup> Buttigieg, 'Worringer among the Modernists', 362.

tendency to deorganization and defamiliarization, attention is needed in explaining precisely how such a process takes place. Worringer's views on the defamiliarizing effect of abstraction are actually very specific, Buttigieg argues. He further investigates the influence of Worringer on literary criticism,<sup>89</sup> noting Hulme's role in bringing the ideas of Worringer to the attention of early twentieth-century English-speaking audiences.<sup>90</sup> Buttigieg underscores the limitations of literary interpretations that have distorted, among other sources, Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy*, and asks for careful analyses of literary texts.<sup>91</sup>

Worringer's role in a context that saw the emergence of modern German art is delineated by Joseph Masheck in 'Raw Art: "Primitive" Authenticity and German Expressionism' (1982). For Masheck, Worringer is a supporter of Expressionist art-making and a critic of conventional practices that appear connected to Impressionism.<sup>92</sup> Comparing French and German art at the turn of the twentieth century, Masheck points to the purity and cerebral qualities of French works. He regards German art as emotive and expressive instead.<sup>93</sup> According to Masheck, Worringer defends Expressionist tendencies, sees in primitive art an alternative to Classicism, and draws attention to the qualities of Gothic,<sup>94</sup> an approach to art-making at home in Germany.<sup>95</sup> *Abstraction and Empathy*, Masheck points out, provides a key theoretical statement to German modern art.<sup>96</sup>

Yet Worringer's views do not meet with the approval of Ernst Hans Gombrich, from whom Worringer appears as a cultural relativist.<sup>97</sup> In ' "They Were All Human Beings: So Much Is

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 359.

<sup>90</sup> To Buttigieg, Hulme seems more influenced by Bergson than by Worringer. Ibid., 360.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 365.

<sup>92</sup> Masheck, 'Raw Art: "Primitive" Authenticity and German Expressionism', 95-96.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 95.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 96-98.

<sup>95</sup> Worringer and Read, *Form in Gothic*, 141-142. Worringer argues that Gothic art developed along systematic, organized lines in France, where it initially emerged. Instead, according to Worringer, Gothic art as such flourished in Germany, where verticality, exaggeration and excess found space for expression. In Worringer's words: 'The land of pure Gothic culture is the Germanic North. And the assertion made at the beginning of our investigation is so far justified, that the true architectonic fulfilment of Northern will to form is to be found in German Gothic.'

<sup>96</sup> Masheck, 'Raw Art: "Primitive" Authenticity and German Expressionism', 110.

<sup>97</sup> Gombrich cites from Worringer's *Form in Gothic* to point to the relativism of Worringer's perspective. In a chapter from *Form in Gothic* entitled 'The Science of Art as Human Psychology', Worringer writes: 'The only stable thing in the history of mankind is its actual material, the accumulation of human energies, illimitably variable, but compounded of its single factors and their resultant forms of expression. The variability of these psychical categories, which have found their formal expression in the development of style, progresses by mutations, the orderliness of which is regulated by the fundamental process governing all development in

Plain”: Reflections on Cultural Relativism in the Humanities’ (1987), Gombrich, who states his disapproval of relativism, mentions he does not believe that truth is different for each generation. The common ground human beings share is more important for Gombrich than the perpetual mobility of phenomena in the world.<sup>98</sup> Worringer, on the other hand, regards generic concepts like ‘man’ and ‘art’ (which could lead to the assertion of common ground between human beings) as unsupportive of the writing of art history.<sup>99</sup>

Gombrich also points to the problems generated by Worringer’s exemplifications. If, for instance, Northern artists were generically restless, as Worringer claims, Gombrich asks how Worringer’s theory could account for the work of Jan van Eyck (1395-1441), Johannes Vermeer (1632-45), or Caspar David Friedrich (1774-1840).<sup>100</sup> For Gombrich, Worringer’s argument is circular: it searches for the confirmation of intuitions by adducing only supportive evidence.<sup>101</sup> Worringer appears to Gombrich as a writer whose discourse accounts for cultural flux and change – two conditions that lead to the emergence of abstraction and that characterise, from Worringer’s viewpoint, the world and its phenomena.

In ‘Analysis and Construction: The Aesthetics of Carl Einstein’, Neil Donahue addresses Worringer’s perspective on abstraction and primitivism.<sup>102</sup> Signalling the interdisciplinary relevance of Worringer’s thoughts on abstract art,<sup>103</sup> Donahue notes that Worringer’s defence

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human history: the chequered, fateful adjustment of man to the outer world.’ Worringer and Read, *Form in Gothic*, 13.

<sup>98</sup> E. H. Gombrich, ‘“They Were All Human Beings: So Much Is Plain”: Reflections on Cultural Relativism in the Humanities’, *Critical Inquiry*, 13, No. 4, 1987, 690. Worringer could perhaps have argued that the tormenting changes life brings along make the topic of representation, and that abstract art – a creative approach he defends in *Abstraction and Empathy* – seeks precisely to liberate the viewer from uncertainty and change by recourse to elements suggestive of immutability (such as geometrical forms). Gombrich’s reading of *Form in Gothic* may be shaped by his accounting for only one strand of argument Worringer proposes; as further sections of this thesis point out, Worringer’s discursive method consists in approaching his topics from opposite points of view, in order to construct an objective argument.

<sup>99</sup> Worringer employs the term ‘man’ to refer to human beings in general throughout *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic*. Worringer and Read, *Form in Gothic*, 13.

<sup>100</sup> Gombrich, ‘“They Were All Human Beings: So Much Is Plain”: Reflections on Cultural Relativism in the Humanities’, 692.

<sup>101</sup> The circularity of Worringer’s argument has also been noted in Waite, ‘Worringer’s *Abstraction and Empathy*: Remarks on Its Reception and on the Rhetoric of Its Criticism’, 30-31. The observations of Gombrich and Waite are justified; however, Worringer approaches interplay in mostly generic terms (he does the same with regard to antithesis), addressing overall stylistic tendencies rather than the practices of particular artists, or specific works of art.

<sup>102</sup> Neil Donahue, ‘Analysis and Construction: The Aesthetics of Carl Einstein’, *The German Quarterly*, 61, No. 3, 1988, 420.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*

of 'primitivism' supports the understanding of abstraction in an early twentieth-century context.<sup>104</sup> Worringer distinguishes between affective (or representational) and absolute (or abstract) art,<sup>105</sup> according to Donahue, and rejects emotive, rational naturalism.<sup>106</sup> The response of human beings to their world in primitive times as well as at the beginning of the twentieth century is characterised by fear for Worringer, Donahue observes.<sup>107</sup> He underscores that Worringer considers form a key feature of both primitive and abstract art.<sup>108</sup>

For David Morgan in 'The Idea of Abstraction in German Theories of the Ornament from Kant to Kandinsky' (1992), Worringer is the writer of a remarkable text. In the words of Morgan: 'Indeed, shortly after the turn of the century, empathy was starkly opposed to abstraction in what has become arguably the most discussed doctoral dissertation in German art history [i. e., *Abstraction and Empathy*].' <sup>109</sup> Morgan highlights the key direction of Worringer's research: the historical examination of art from cultures where abstraction and linearity hint to a tendency to transcend the natural realm.<sup>110</sup> He notes that Worringer's abstract art emphasizes inorganic and transcendent aspects, as well as a distancing from bodily forms.<sup>111</sup> Explaining the particularities of Worringer's approach, Morgan emphasizes that Worringer's abstraction includes representational form where negotiated through line and geometry.<sup>112</sup> Abstraction as understood by Worringer does not exclude representational values, Morgan maintains.

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<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 420-421.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 422.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 423. According to Holdheim, Worringer appreciates naturalism but not imitation. Holdheim, 'Wilhelm Worringer and the Polarity of Understanding', 341. Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 27-31. Worringer's distinction between naturalism and imitation reflects the tensions at work in the art of his time. Extensive research would be necessary regarding the particularities of the relationship between naturalism and imitation at the beginning of the twentieth century; such an inquiry must be conducted in a different essay.

<sup>107</sup> Donahue, 'Analysis and Construction: The Aesthetics of Carl Einstein', 42.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 423.

<sup>109</sup> David Morgan, 'The Idea of Abstraction in German Theories of the Ornament from Kant to Kandinsky', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 50, No. 3, 1992, 238.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Morgan rightly points to this characteristic of Worringer's framing of abstraction. Indeed, at the beginning of the twentieth century, art had seen the emergence of movements such as *Jugendstil* [Youth Style], Fauvism, and Synthetism, where the linear approach to form balanced abstract and representational tendencies. *Jugendstil* was well represented in the architecture of Munich, where Worringer resided at the time of his writing *Abstraction and Empathy*. See Kathryn B. Hiesinger, *Art Nouveau in Munich: Masters of Jugendstil from the Stadtmuseum, Munich, and Other Public and Private Collections* (Philadelphia and Munich: Philadelphia Museum of Art,

Anthony Vidler, in 'Art History *Posthistoire*' (1994), observes that Worringer articulated his thought in a context where form was attentively theorised.<sup>113</sup> According to Vidler, issues of subjectivity, anxiety and gender become visible in the historical theories of form as shaped by Riegl and Worringer, for instance. Key elements of such theories include, Vidler explains, the fear of space and time, a focus on describing distancing from a psychological perspective, and the attention to the uncanny.<sup>114</sup>

Donahue, in his introduction to *Invisible Cathedrals: The Expressionist Art History of Wilhelm Worringer* (c. 1995), observes that Worringer had a successful career, yet that his explorations did not meet with the approval of his academic colleagues. Unconventional, eccentric, fascinating and widely influential, Worringer's approach inspired an international community of artists, critics of art and film, writers, theorists and psychologists, according to Donahue.<sup>115</sup> *Form in Gothic* appears to him as a manifesto for the German avant-garde. Like Lewer, Donahue finds that current research mentions Worringer in passing, and tends to be conducted from the perspective of literary studies rather than art history and theory. Worringer's strongly rhetorical discourse qualifies him as a scholar-artist rather than as a positivist historian, Donahue maintains. In his words:

Worringer is, on the one hand, an art historian who creates a narrative of the past that favours nonnaturalistic art (and which is thereby antithetical to Gombrich's history of naturalistic art in *Art and Illusion*), and, on the other hand, an art critic who employs in his early books an engaged and, by all evidence, highly persuasive rhetoric that addresses that historical narrative to the art of his contemporaries. He thus brings his historical narrative and his immediate rhetoric to bear on the unsettled questions at the time of the value and significance of abstract and Expressionist art.<sup>116</sup>

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Prestel, and Münchner Stadtmuseum, 1988). For a brief introduction to Fauvism and Synthetism, see Read, *A Concise History of Modern Painting*, 34-47.

<sup>113</sup> Anthony Vidler et al., 'The Object of Art History [Art History *Posthistoire*]', *The Art Bulletin*, 76, No. 3, 1994, 407-409.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, 409.

<sup>115</sup> Donahue, 'Introduction: Art History or "Sublime Hysteria"?', 1-9.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

*Invisible Cathedrals* addresses various facets of Worringer's explorations.<sup>117</sup> For instance, in 'Against Expressionism: Materialism and Social Theory in Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy*,' Michael Jennings notes that Worringer's text cannot be considered as reflective of Expressionism, although Worringer would have known the expressive work of the *Fauves* [Wild Beasts] around the time of his writing *Abstraction and Empathy*.<sup>118</sup> Geoffrey C. W. Waite, in 'Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy*: Remarks on Its Reception and on the Rhetoric of Its Criticism', highlights the many roles Worringer plays in his debut book, as well as the effect of these roles on Worringer's discourse.<sup>119</sup> In 'Abstraction and Apathy: Crystalline Form in Expressionism and in the Minimalism of Tony Smith', Joseph Masheck argues that Worringer did not seek balance in his writing; he selected topics acceptable to an academic public, but responded to contemporary artistic concerns.<sup>120</sup> Worringer, in order to connect abstract and pre-Classical art effectively, needed to assume that his public did not understand abstraction, Masheck explains. He reads the title '*Abstraction and Empathy*' as historically charged: art, Masheck's Worringer implies at the beginning of the twentieth century, began with abstraction, became representational, and turned abstract once more.<sup>121</sup>

In 'Changing Times, Changing Styles: Wilhelm Worringer and the Art of His Epoch' (*Invisible Cathedrals*, c. 1995), Magdalena Bushart finds that Worringer's success was influenced by the moment in time when his books were published, and by their reception. Unambiguously nationalist – and antithetic to Southern European Classicism on such grounds – Worringer's method is racial-psychological, Bushart points out.<sup>122</sup> Worringer, Bushart explains, wanted to kindle scholarly discussion; his preference for debate is revealed in *Abstraction and Empathy*. Bushart observes that many passages of Worringer's book engage polemically with coeval art-historical writings. Yet, where Worringer's academic colleagues did not regard his inquiries as reflective of historical truth, the books of Worringer offered to

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<sup>117</sup> References to the essays of Joanna E. Ziegler and Charles W. Haxthausen are included in sections to follow such as '*Form in Gothic*: interplay readdressed', and 'Worringer and Expressionism: late twentieth-century perspectives'.

<sup>118</sup> Jennings, 'Against Expressionism: Materialism and Social Theory in Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy*', 88.

<sup>119</sup> Waite, 'Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy*: Remarks on Its Reception and on the Rhetoric of Its Criticism', 23.

<sup>120</sup> Joseph Masheck, 'Abstraction and Apathy: Crystalline Form in Expressionism and in the Minimalism of Tony Smith' in *Invisible Cathedrals: The Expressionist Art History of Wilhelm Worringer*, ed. Neil H. Donahue (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, c.1995), 41-42.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>122</sup> Bushart, 'Changing Times, Changing Styles: Wilhelm Worringer and the Art of His Epoch', 74-75.

artists the chance of discovering the continuity between their inquiries and the art of the past, according to Bushart.<sup>123</sup>

Bushart questions the direct association of Worringer's writings with Expressionism. For her, Worringer's texts reflect the concept of 'changing time', or 'epochal shift' [*Zeitenwende*], which involved the critique of contemporary society and culture at the beginning of the twentieth century.<sup>124</sup> Highlighting the roots of the link between Worringer's research and Expressionist practices, Bushart writes: 'Here, in this critique of modernism, lie then also the actual points of contact between Worringer's understanding of art and the theoretical concept of the Expressionists.'<sup>125</sup>

In *Abstraction in the Twentieth Century: Total Risk, Freedom, Discipline* (1996), Mark Rosenthal focuses on the contribution of Worringer to writing about abstraction and about its creators. Worringer, for Rosenthal, plays a prophetic role in the early years of the twentieth century. Analysing abstraction from a psychological perspective in *Abstraction and Empathy*, Worringer notes the capacity of abstract art to offer emotional relief from a tormenting world; Rosenthal underscores Worringer's exploration of the connections between artists and their cultural environments, as well as Worringer's analysis of abstraction as observed in the culture of Northern Europe.<sup>126</sup>

Readdressing abstraction in German art and thought, Morgan, in 'The Enchantment of Art: Abstraction and Empathy from German Romanticism to Expressionism' (1996), underscores Worringer's debt to Kant, Schopenhauer and Lipps.<sup>127</sup> For Morgan, the will to abstraction as approached by Worringer resonates with Schopenhauer's mention that art facilitates, through contemplation, a temporary escape from the pressures of will.<sup>128</sup> Contrasting empathy and abstraction, Worringer narrows Lipps' definition of empathy to the realm of the organic –<sup>129</sup> this is a strategy that permits Worringer to define abstraction as geometric, inorganic,

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 69-72.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 72.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> Rosenthal, *Abstraction in the Twentieth Century*, 8-9.

<sup>127</sup> Morgan, 'The Enchantment of Art: Abstraction and Empathy from German Romanticism to Expressionism', 320-324.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 320.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 322.

crystalline, and life-denying, Morgan explains.<sup>130</sup> For him, the influence of Worringer's thought on Expressionist artists (more particularly, on *Der Blaue Reiter* [The Blue Rider] group) is debatable.<sup>131</sup> Worringer, according to Morgan, did not write in exclusive defence of abstraction; the concept of 'style' as employed in *Abstraction and Empathy* included all art forms – representational forms included – that did not rely on the urge to empathy, Morgan explains.<sup>132</sup> Once more, Morgan draws attention to the complexity of Worringer's antithetic pairings.

Allan Antliff and J. B. Bullen further underscore the impact of Worringer's writings on avant-garde movements. In 'Cosmic Modernism: Elie Nadelman, Adolf Wolff, and the Materialist Aesthetics of John Weichsel' (1998), Antliff points out that Worringer disputed the privileged position verisimilitude held in early twentieth-century aesthetics. Worringer, according to Antliff, contrasted the culturally rooted psychological tendencies that allowed for the emergence of mimetic and non-mimetic approaches to art-making.<sup>133</sup> Drawing attention to the influence of Worringer on Hulme, Bullen mentions the special will to form made visible in Byzantine art as discussed by Riegl and Worringer, two writers whose books Hulme had read between 1911 and 1913.<sup>134</sup> Bullen, in 'Byzantinism and Modernism 1900-14', maintains that Hulme consciously explored the connections between Byzantinism and modernism following from Worringer's historically focused approach to Byzantine art.

In 'Interpreting Primitivism, Mass Culture and Modernism: The Making of Wilhelm Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy*' (2000), Mary Gluck emphasizes the merits of Worringer's debut book. She regards it as a seminal text that opened the way to the understanding of primitivism, and mentions *Abstraction and Empathy* never went out of print for forty years.<sup>135</sup> To Gluck, Worringer appears as a cultural innovator.<sup>136</sup> According to her:

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 324.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Allan Antliff, 'Cosmic Modernism: Elie Nadelman, Adolf Wolff, and the Materialist Aesthetics of John Weichsel', *Archives of American Art Journal*, 38, No. 3/4, 1998, 20.

<sup>134</sup> Bullen, 'Byzantinism and Modernism 1900-14', 674.

<sup>135</sup> Joanna E. Ziegler also notes: '[*Abstraction and Empathy*] has never gone out of print because of its utility in signalling Modernism's imminence, and in all its branches, so concisely.' See Joanna E. Ziegler, 'Worringer's Theory of Transcendental Space in Gothic Architecture: A Medievalist's Perspective' in Neil H. Donahue,

The treatise [i. e., *Abstraction and Empathy*] has been alternately describes as the founding text of German Expressionism, as the intellectual catalyst of Anglo-British modernism, as well as the theoretical forerunner of twentieth-century formalism. But the enduring resonance of the work cannot be explained simply in terms of its influence. Like so many modern manifestos of genius... *Abstraction and Empathy* is a work of creative imagination in its own right.<sup>137</sup>

Pointing to the mixed responses to Worringer's text, as well as to its lack of popularity in academic circles, Gluck explains *Abstraction and Empathy* proved too speculative for the needs of art historians.<sup>138</sup> Nevertheless, *Abstraction and Empathy* helped pave Worringer's way to academic acceptance, Gluck comments; she finds that Worringer's trajectory, which led from rejection to eventual incorporation by the establishment, is specific to avant-garde initiatives in capitalist contexts.<sup>139</sup>

Mark Jarzombek, in 'The Psychologizing of Modernity: Art, Architecture, and History' (2000), considers Worringer a historian rather than a theorist of empathy and its manifestations.<sup>140</sup> According to Jarzombek, *Abstraction and Empathy* makes visible the transition from a philosophical focus on empathy to the addressing of empathy in aesthetics, history and culture.<sup>141</sup> Worringer, Jarzombek notes, attempted to provide historiographic explanations for the workings of will, but wrote from a perspective that did not account for the actual psychology of artists;<sup>142</sup> in other words, interpretation overrode artistic motivation in *Abstraction and Empathy*. Empathy accompanies civilisation in its progress, Jarzombek's Worringer comments. In Gothic art, Jarzombek observes the complementarity of Worringer's abstraction and empathy.<sup>143</sup> Although *Abstraction and Empathy* did not focus particularly on

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*Invisible Cathedrals: The Expressionist Art History of Wilhelm Worringer* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, c.1995), 107-108.

<sup>136</sup> Gluck, 'Interpreting Primitivism, Mass Culture and Modernism: The Making of Wilhelm Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy*', 165.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., 154.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., 155.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid., 167.

<sup>140</sup> Mark Jarzombek, *The Psychologizing of Modernity: Art, Architecture, and History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 64.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

the possibility of balancing empathy and abstraction in the art of Worringer's time, Jarzombek mentions that Herbert Read, for instance, followed this line of research.<sup>144</sup>

Worringer's writings are associated with German Expressionism, English Vorticism and early abstraction by Hal Foster, Rosalind Krauss, Yve-Alain Bois and Benjamin Buchloh in *Art since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism* (2004).<sup>145</sup> Foster, Krauss, Bois and Buchloh underscore the key contrast in Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy*: the opposition between geometric abstraction and naturalistic representation.<sup>146</sup> As seen by Worringer, these styles of art-making are expressive of two antithetic responses to the world: withdrawal on the one hand, and engagement on the other. Foster, Krauss, Bois and Buchloh signal Worringer's debt to Lipps' theory of empathy, as well as to Alois Riegl's approach to artistic will,<sup>147</sup> and mention the similarities Worringer observes between primitive and modern art – two instances revealing that, in situations of restlessness and fear, human beings tend to adopt an abstract approach to art-making.<sup>148</sup>

For Lewer in *Post-Impressionism to World War II* (2006), Worringer appears more as an art critic than as a historian or theoretician of art.<sup>149</sup> Noting the significant role of critics in delineating the terms of early twentieth-century aesthetic discussions, Lewer points to Worringer in particular and, from the perspective of the twenty-first century, writes that he makes an unfashionable topic for art historical attention.<sup>150</sup> She nevertheless acknowledges Worringer's widespread influence at the beginning of the twentieth century, and finds that Worringer addressed 'primitive' art, the condition of alienation, and abstraction as generative force, in terms relevant for the art of his age.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid., 65. Also see Read, *A Concise History of Modern Painting*. Also, Herbert Read, 'The Reconciling Image' in *The Forms of Things Unknown: Essays towards an Aesthetic Philosophy*, ed. Herbert Read (Cleveland and New York: Meridian Books, 1963).

<sup>145</sup> Foster et al., *Art Since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism*, 86.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> Lewer, *Post-Impressionism to World War II*, x.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid., 57-58.

Katharina Lorenz and Jas' Elsner mention that Worringer's approach to psychological matters includes racist overtones.<sup>152</sup> In ' "On the Relationship of Art History and Art Theory": Translators' Introduction' (2008), Lorenz and Elsner remark that racism informs Worringer's angle on artistic will in both *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic*. However, they do not see Worringer as a '... real apostle of a Nazi version of *Kunstwollen*'.<sup>153</sup>

In ' "Pushing the Limits of Understanding": The Discourse on Primitivism in German *Kulturwissenschaften*, 1880-1930' (2008), Doris Kaufmann regards Worringer as a historian of the similarity between 'primitive' art and modern art (especially abstraction).<sup>154</sup> *Abstraction and Empathy*, Kaufmann notes, reflected the interest of Worringer's contemporaries in psychological matters; Worringer, like Kandinsky for instance, addressed the relationship between artists and their epoch, between artistic form and content in *Abstraction and Empathy*.<sup>155</sup>

The approach of Worringer signalled a shift in early twentieth-century efforts of appraising the aesthetic value of 'primitive' art, Kaufmann observes.<sup>156</sup> She explains that intuition assisted the early twentieth-century art historical interpretation of temporally remote epochs.<sup>157</sup> In her words: 'Art historians attested with pathos to the imagination, the capacity

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<sup>152</sup> Katharina Lorenz and Jas' Elsner, ' "On the Relationship of Art History and Art Theory": Translators' Introduction', *Critical Inquiry*, 35, No. 1, 2008, 37. In their text, Lorenz and Elsner address Erwin Panofsky's essay, 'On the Relationship of Art History and Art Theory: Towards the Possibility of a Fundamental System of Concepts for a Science of Art' (1925); Worringer's name features in their article for the purpose of illustrating 'racism' as operational in art writing. Concerning Panofsky's approach to *Kunstwollen* (an approach acknowledging Riegl's definition of the concept) Lorenz and Elsner write: 'With some prescience, Panofsky notes that "the will to unveil analogies can easily lead to interpreting the phenomenon in question in capricious and even brutal ways" (p. 65) – which may be said to foresee some of the racist and Nazi uses to which the notion of a collective will came to be put only after a decade or so after this essay was published.' Lorenz and Elsner, ' "On the Relationship of Art History and Art Theory": Translators' Introduction', 37. As Lorenz and Elsner note, though, Worringer had completed *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic* before Panofsky published his essay, so Panofsky's prescience with regard to the Nazi approach to analogy may extend from 1925 onwards, but not towards *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic*, two books published between 1908 and 1910. Panofsky might have had the texts of Worringer in mind when mentioning the impulsiveness of analogical thinking. However, he did not refer specifically to Worringer's writings in ' "On the Relationship of Art History and Art Theory" '. Tempting as it might be to associate Worringer's explorations with hermeneutic caprice and brutality, the issue of race as made visible in his books is far too complex to be approached as 'racism' only; it requires further investigation to an extent that footnotes do not have the space to accommodate.

<sup>153</sup> Lorenz and Elsner, ' "On the Relationship of Art History and Art Theory": Translators' Introduction', 37.

<sup>154</sup> Doris Kaufmann, ' "Pushing the Limits of Understanding": The Discourse on Primitivism in German *Kulturwissenschaften*, 1880-1930', *Studies in the History and Philosophy of Science*, 39, No. 3, 2008, 436.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, 138.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, 439.

for empathy, and to the personality of the researcher as a solution to the epistemological problem of “foreign times and foreign art”.<sup>158</sup> Worringer, Kaufmann points out, conducted his research within a context where scholarly investigation sought to highlight eternal, unchanging aspects of art that arise in the course of time, but survive time’s passage. Such approaches to art-making could be encountered in ethnographic museums at the turn of the twentieth century. Preparing to write *Abstraction and Empathy*, Worringer had indeed visited Paris in 1906 and had spent time at the Trocadéro Museum, a place where he could experience pre-Renaissance art directly and where, according to his 1948 foreword, the thoughts that took shape in *Abstraction and Empathy* first came into being.

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<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

**Gazing in the mirror of history: Worringer's forewords to *Abstraction and Empathy*  
and *Form in Gothic***

Worringer gives an enticing account of the occasion that sparked his interest in researching towards *Abstraction and Empathy*. In his 1948 foreword to the book, Worringer includes his reminiscence of a day at the Trocadéro Museum in Paris. Setting an unremarkable stage for an event that proved crucial for the direction of his dissertation (namely, Georg Simmel's visit of Trocadéro), Worringer writes:

A grey forenoon destitute of all emotional atmosphere. Not a soul in the museum. The solitary sound: my footsteps ringing in the wide halls in which all other life is extinct. Neither does any stimulating force issue from the monuments, cold plaster reproductions of medieval cathedral sculpture. I compel myself to study 'the rendering of drapery'. Nothing more. And my impatient glance is frequently directed towards the clock.<sup>1</sup>

The disengagement Worringer experienced at the Trocadéro Museum seems to reflect the lifelessness of the setting. Wide halls, monuments, and plaster reproductions appear grey and cold to him; medieval cathedral sculpture – a topic Worringer approached with much sensitivity in *Abstraction and Empathy* –<sup>2</sup> does not seem to appeal to Worringer in 1906. Against a background skilfully depicted as dull, Worringer highlights the exhilaration occasioned by Simmel's visit. In *Abstraction and Empathy*, Worringer employs similarly strong contrasts when articulating the relationship between the urge to empathy and the urge to abstraction. On the one hand, the urge to empathy arises in response to organic aspects of nature, to vitality, happiness and beauty;<sup>3</sup> on the other hand, the urge to abstraction requires the elision of lifelike features, giving artistic expression to a state of restlessness and fear inspired by the complexity of phenomena.<sup>4</sup> Worringer makes visible his attention to

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<sup>1</sup> Worringer and Kramer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, viii-ix.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 118-120.

<sup>3</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 14-15.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 15-16.

emotional effect in his reminiscence from 1948; he relies on the same strategy of articulating strong contrasts as in *Abstraction and Empathy*.<sup>5</sup>

### **1908: first foreword to *Abstraction and Empathy***

At different points in time, Worringer wrote new forewords for *Abstraction and Empathy*. These short texts bring to light an array of discursive strategies also observable in Worringer's books. For instance, in his foreword to the first edition of *Abstraction and Empathy* (Munich, September 1908),<sup>6</sup> Worringer finds fault with his newly published book: he mentions that he has already outgrown his research, and that he is strongly aware of its deficiencies.<sup>7</sup> In *Abstraction and Empathy*, Worringer argued that abstraction-oriented art reveals a need for distancing from a world that artists regard as troubling.<sup>8</sup> Exigent towards his own writing, Worringer distances himself from his recent research in his first foreword. His criticism of, and distancing from, his own ideas becomes an integral part of his method of inquiry in *Form in Gothic* (1910).<sup>9</sup>

Worringer's 1908 foreword addresses the distribution and reception of *Abstraction and Empathy* in positive terms. Mentioning that readers interested in art and culture received his book well and encouraged him to make it publically available,<sup>10</sup> Worringer remarks that his contemporaries considered his studies relevant. Magdalena Bushart brings historical evidence that supports his claims. In 'Changing Times, Changing Styles: Wilhelm Worringer and the Art of His Epoch', Bushart cites Elisabeth Erdmann-Macke (1888-1978) – the wife of painter August Macke (1887-1914) – who remembers that early twentieth-century artists found inspiration in Worringer's books. According to Erdmann-Macke:

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<sup>5</sup> Worringer and Kramer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 14-18.

<sup>6</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, xiii-xiv.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, xiii.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 15-22.

<sup>9</sup> Worringer and Read, *Form in Gothic*, 2-3.

<sup>10</sup> Regarding the reception of Worringer's work in his time, Magdalena Bushart notes that academics were reticent with regard to the theses advanced in *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic*, but that Worringer's books met with popular success instead. See Bushart, 'Changing Times, Changing Styles: Wilhelm Worringer and the Art of His Epoch', 69-71.

... [T]he books by Worringer that appeared at that time, *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form Problems in the Gothic*, had an enthusiastic circle of well-informed followers among young artists; most of them bought a copy or lent and borrowed it among themselves. Finally, for once, there was an academic who was receptive to and understanding of these new ideas, who would perhaps step up for them and defend them against so many conservatively inclined art historians, who rejected from the outset everything new and unusual, or didn't even bother with it to begin with.<sup>11</sup>

Although Worringer did not focus on the art of his contemporaries in either *Abstraction and Empathy* or *Form in Gothic*,<sup>12</sup> Erdmann-Macke underscores that, for early twentieth-century artists,<sup>13</sup> Worringer's works bridged the past and present in art.

Franz Marc (1880-1914) also appreciated the ideas of Worringer. In a letter to Kandinsky from February 1912, Marc mentioned the disciplined approach of Worringer to writing, and noted Worringer's contribution would be much needed in the *Blue Rider Almanac*. 'I am just reading Worringer's *Abstraktion und Einfühlung* [*Abstraction and Empathy*], a good mind whom we need very much. Marvellously disciplined thinking, concise and cool, extremely cool',<sup>14</sup> Marc wrote to Kandinsky. The almost complete absence of contemporary artists from *Abstraction and Empathy* did not influence Marc's opinion on Worringer's text and its qualities. The 'cool', distanced approach adopted by Worringer in *Abstraction and Empathy* actually appealed to Marc. Marc's insistence that Worringer be associated with the Blue Rider indirectly draws attention to the relevance of Worringer's work for artistic inquiries at the beginning of the twentieth century.

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>12</sup> Worringer mentions artists such as Adolf Hildebrand (1847-1921), Ferdinand Hodler (1853-1918), and Auguste Rodin (1840-1917) in *Abstraction and Empathy*. See Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 22, 84, 90, 136, 137. No mention of contemporary artists is made in *Form in Gothic*.

<sup>13</sup> Erdmann-Macke may have had in mind the artists associated with the Expressionist movement, such as Kandinsky, Marc, Münter, Robert Delaunay (1885-1941), Ernst Ludwig Kirchner (1880-1938), Heinrich Campendonk (1889-1957), Albert Bloch (1882-1961), Erich Heckel (1883-1970), Eugen Kahler (1882-1911), Emil Nolde (1867-1956), Max Pechstein (1881-1955), Alfred Kubin (1877-1959), Thomas von Hartmann (c. 1883 - 1956), and David Burliuk (1882-1967). See Klaus Lankheit, *The Blaue Reiter Almanac* (London: Tate, 2006), 11-29, 261-266.

<sup>14</sup> See Wassily Kandinsky, Franz Marc, and Klaus Lankheit, *The Blaue Reiter Almanac* (London: Tate, 2006), 30. Also, according to Bushart, Walter Müller-Wulckov regarded *Abstraction and Empathy* as a document that justified in theory the current changes in art. See Bushart, 'Changing Times, Changing Styles: Wilhelm Worringer and the Art of His Epoch', 70-71.

Worringer was certainly aware of the artistic investigations of his time, as ‘The Historical Development of Modern Art’ (1911) reveals. In his 1911 essay, he suggested that contemporary art actually inspired art historical research. He did not specify whether his observation applied to his colleagues, in general, or to himself in particular, but his suggestion is clear: academic writers kept an eye on artistic developments at the beginning of the twentieth century.<sup>15</sup>

In his 1908 foreword, Worringer allows for a defining feature of his approach to art history and theory to emerge. He mentions his intention of publishing *Abstraction and Empathy* in order to foster debate.<sup>16</sup> The publication of his research is for him an occasion for lively, stimulating and instructive dialogue. Thus the importance Worringer assigns to the reception of his writing comes to surface. Although he researches the art of the past and draws little attention to the present in *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic*, Worringer nevertheless emphasizes the relational,<sup>17</sup> contemporary aspects involved by his approach to writing art history and theory. His 1908 foreword shows Worringer reaching towards his readers.

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<sup>15</sup> Worringer’s ‘The Historical Development of Modern Art’ is further discussed in this thesis in ‘“The Historical Development of Modern Art” (1911): Worringer’s early response to Expressionism’.

<sup>16</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, xiii.

<sup>17</sup> For Worringer, relationality can manifest in terms of opposition as well as interplay. In *Abstraction and Empathy*, Worringer emphasizes the importance of distinguishing between modes of art-making; he finds that differentiation supports clarification in contexts laden with uncertainty. Ibid., 26-27, 30-31. For instance, he traces sharp distinctions between the urge to empathy and the urge to abstraction at the beginning of his book. ———, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 4, 6, 14. Nevertheless, Worringer discusses empathy and abstraction as a pair. He continues to employ pairings throughout *Abstraction and Empathy*, where he brings together ancient Egyptian and ancient Greek art, ancient Greek art and Gothic art, contrasting between them in his analyses. Like in the case of psychological urges, Worringer establishes the particularities of antithetic elements by setting them in relationship – even though he frames such relationships negatively. The relational aspect of Worringer’s discourse thus comes to the fore. For the purposes of this thesis, ‘relationality’ is defined as a phenomenon of connectedness, observable in lived situations and art-making. This definition follows the research of Stephen A. Mitchell, who regards relationality as the intersubjective dimension observable in psychoanalytical situations. S. A. Mitchell argues that even the critics of relationality start from accepting its indisputable existence and pervasive influence. In the words of S. A. Mitchell: ‘We are so much embedded in our relations with others that those very relations are difficult to discern clearly. We are so in the thick of relationality that it is almost impossible to appreciate fully its contours and inner workings.’ Stephen A. Mitchell, *Relationality: From Attachment to Intersubjectivity* (Hillsdale, New Jersey: The Analytic Press, 2000), ix-xiii, xiii.

### 1910: *Abstraction and Empathy*, third foreword

As early as November 1910, *Abstraction and Empathy* was published for the third time.<sup>18</sup> Its reprinting confirmed to Worringer the success of his ideas. In his 1910 foreword, Worringer points to the relevance of his thought for artists and contemporary writers on art; he does not provide details concerning the artistic explorations of his time, but notes the effort of artists to articulate new expressive directions.<sup>19</sup> Underscoring that artistic practice reaches towards abstraction from ‘inner developmental necessity’,<sup>20</sup> Worringer signals the preoccupation of his contemporaries with personal artistic expression. As noted in his 1908 foreword, Worringer considers *Abstraction and Empathy* ‘merely experimental,’<sup>21</sup> yet mentions the significant extent to which the thoughts advanced in his book resonated with the interests of the public of his time. He highlights the insufficiency of the Classical framework influential in the writing of art history and evaluation of art,<sup>22</sup> and observes that many of his contemporaries are equally critical towards this standard of value.

The 1910 foreword notes the negative response of Worringer’s contemporaries to abstraction-oriented art.<sup>23</sup> Although Worringer’s observations may have been grounded in the reality of his day, his emphasis of the tension between his thought and its reception also serves a rhetorical purpose.<sup>24</sup> By claiming that abstract art met with little understanding during his time, Worringer indirectly points to the merits of his book, where he bestows great attention upon examining the urge to abstraction in various historical, cultural and geographical

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<sup>18</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, xiv-xv.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 14. The artistic movement emergent at the time of Worringer’s writings is Expressionism. Worringer’s relationship to Expressionism surfaces in his texts, ‘The Historical Development of Modern Art’ (1911) and *Current Questions on Art* (1921).

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, xiv.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* Nevertheless, Worringer also points out that *Abstraction and Empathy* was written from a scientific perspective. His tendency of combining scientific and experimental aspects of research is brought to fruition in ‘Historical Methods,’ the opening chapter from *Form in Gothic*.

<sup>22</sup> In the opening pages of *Abstraction and Empathy*, Worringer claims that empathy – a psychological process of rapprochement he recognizes in Greek Classical art, for instance – cannot account for all modes of art-making. (*Ibid.*, 4.) This claim provides Worringer with a starting point for his argument, also connecting his research with the approach to art cultivated by his contemporaries. (———, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 10-11.)

<sup>23</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, xiv.

<sup>24</sup> Regarding Worringer’s rhetoric in *Abstraction and Empathy*, see Waite, ‘Worringer’s *Abstraction and Empathy*: Remarks on Its Reception and on the Rhetoric of Its Criticism’, 28-29. Also, as *Abstraction and Empathy* foregrounds, opposition allows Worringer to provide clear boundaries for abstraction and representation.

contexts. As in *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic*, Worringer strengthens and animates his statements by placing them within an oppositional framework.

Connecting *Abstraction and Empathy* to *Form in Gothic* in his 1910 foreword, Worringer notes that *Form in Gothic* applies his findings from *Abstraction and Empathy* to ‘... that complex of abstract art which is closest to us’,<sup>25</sup> namely Gothic art.<sup>26</sup> *Form in Gothic* is also published in 1910; since Worringer regards it as a sequel to *Abstraction and Empathy*, he writes that he has decided not to revise his debut book.<sup>27</sup>

### 1918 and 1919: *Form in Gothic* forewords

In his brief forewords to the fourth and fifth editions of *Form in Gothic* (February 1918, and September 1919 respectively), Worringer emphasizes his reluctance towards readdressing earlier texts. He points out that the new editions of *Form in Gothic* comprise no changes, since modifications to his text could be interruptive;<sup>28</sup> he invites critical opinion on his writing, yet cautions that his responses will be included only in future publications.<sup>29</sup> A doubling of the initial number of illustrations for *Form in Gothic* –<sup>30</sup> accompanied once more

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<sup>25</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, xv.

<sup>26</sup> In *Form in Gothic*, Worringer emphasizes the psychological rather than historical aspects of Gothic in his definition of this approach to art-making (Ulrich Weisstein disapproves of Worringer’s decision, as noted, in the current thesis, in ‘Questioning Worringer: critical discussions on the writings of Worringer and his association with the Expressionist movement’.) According to Worringer, historical Gothic (c. 1150-1500, an approach to art-making, or style, particularly visible in Northern and Central Europe) is more limited than psychological Gothic. Psychological Gothic, Worringer explains, can be already be recognized in the Hallstatt (also ‘Halstatt,’ Early Iron Age, c. 900-400 B.C.) and La Tène (Late Iron Age, c. 450-50 B. C.) periods, in the art of the Migration Period (c. 400-800 A. D.), in Merovingian art (c. 450-751), Romanesque art (c. 1000-1137 A. D.), and in Baroque art (c. 1600-1750). He writes: ‘We repeat, then, that in our opinion the art of the entire Western world, in so far as it had no direct share in antique Mediterranean culture, was in its inmost essence Gothic and remained so until the Renaissance [c. 1300-1600], that great reversal of the Northern development: that is to say, its immanent will to form, often scarcely to be recognized in its outward expression, is the very same which has to receive its clear, untroubled, and monumental expression in mature historical Gothic... And so Gothic, as a term in the psychology of style, also extends beyond the period implied in the academic use of the term, right down to the present day.’ See Worringer and Read, *Form in Gothic*, 37-38. Worringer thus extends the domain of the psychological Gothic throughout history, hinting to the visibility of Gothic influence on the art of his time.

<sup>27</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, xv.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, xiv.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.* The presence of illustrations in *Form in Gothic* and their absence in *Abstraction and Empathy* reflects, by contrast, the self-standing quality of *Abstraction and Empathy*. To a certain extent, Worringer’s debut book emphasizes his interpretations of art rather than the correlation between his argument and actual artworks

by no text modifications – is a distinctive feature of the 1919 edition of the book, as Worringer points out.

Worringer saw the fourth and fifth editions of *Form in Gothic* appear after the critical comments of Richard Hamann on his book. In a 1915 review of Worringer's *Form in Gothic* for Max Dessoir's *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und Allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft* [*Journal of Aesthetics and Art History*],<sup>31</sup> Hamann appraised Worringer's writings from the perspective of early twentieth-century academic practices. For Hamann, Worringer's *Form in Gothic* was certainly relevant for its epoch, but did not respond to scholarly requirements. Hamann connected Worringer's *Form in Gothic* to contemporary art-making, acknowledging the artistic qualities of *Form in Gothic*, but also voicing his reservation with regard to the academic aspects of Worringer's inquiry. Worringer appeared as a creative writer more than as a scholar to Hamann. In Hamann's words:

And so we appreciate the book [i. e., *Form in Gothic*] and estimate its value: as a document of a new consciousness in search of a style, as intellectual-spiritual [*geistig*] adherent of a new artistic movement, to which the Gothic and primitive art, linearity and surface ornament signify a new value... Just as Worringer describes Gothic structures, so appear the works of Expressionists and Cubists, and as a manifesto of Expressionism, as an artistic product, not as a scholarly achievement, one will have also to give this work its due, which was written by someone who is modern, knowledgeable, extremely impressive and probably only too persuasive with words [*vielleicht der Worte nur zu mächtiger Mensch*]. Time will tell whether [or not] the expressionism of this book will have stood up longer than the art that now already invokes it for legitimation [*die sich schon jetzt auf ihn beruft*].<sup>32</sup>

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(Worringer does include a Practical Section in *Abstraction and Empathy*, where he discusses art from a historical, generalizing perspective).

<sup>31</sup> In 1910, Worringer mentions having previously published 'Transcendence and Immanence in Art' with Dessoir's *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und Allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft*. See Worringer and Kramer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, xv.

<sup>32</sup> Richard Hamann's words, translated by Neil Donahue, are cited by Magdalena Bushart in Bushart, 'Changing Times, Changing Styles: Wilhelm Worringer and the Art of His Epoch', 71. The text from which Bushart has extracted these words is Hamann's 'Rezension zu Wilhelm Worringers 'Formprobleme der Gotik' ', *Zeitschrift für Ästhetik und Allgemeine Kunstwissenschaft* 10 (1915), 357-61, 360f.

Although he questions the scholarly component of Worringer's research, Hamann recognizes that *Form in Gothic* provides intellectual-spiritual support to contemporary Expressionist and Cubist artists. Worringer, in *Form in Gothic*, offered critics like Hamann an opportunity for dissatisfaction with his academic approach. The first chapter of *Form in Gothic*, 'Historical Methods,' includes Worringer's claim that objectivity in the writing of art history could only surface from personal responses to art, namely from a widening of Ego (a term that appears capitalized in the 1957 edition of Worringer's text). In its expanded form, Ego would comprise, according to Worringer, a positive part, as well as its opposite. Worringer intends to account for the contributions of both these parts of Ego to his writings.<sup>33</sup>

Casting a shadow of doubt on Worringer's research methods, Hamann nevertheless underscores the personal qualities of Worringer. Among these qualities, Hamann singles out Worringer's capacity to elicit and generate emotion. Worringer would further demonstrate his ability to foster empathic connections in his 1948 foreword to *Abstraction and Empathy*.

#### **1948: *Abstraction and Empathy* republished**

When *Abstraction and Empathy* was published again in May 1948, it included an extensive foreword by Worringer.<sup>34</sup> Worringer took the opportunity to mention his resonance with early twentieth-century interests in readdressing aesthetic standards.<sup>35</sup> In this respect, he maintained he saw himself as '... the medium of the necessities of the period'.<sup>36</sup> Noting the 'continually effective vitality' of *Abstraction and Empathy*,<sup>37</sup> Worringer regarded his debut book as an occasion for remembering his early efforts; he recognized in its reprinting an opportunity to place his thought under the critical scrutiny of his now mature gaze.

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<sup>33</sup> See Worringer and Read, *Form in Gothic*, 2-3. Worringer's approach to Ego extends his reliance on opposition as previously articulated in *Abstraction and Empathy*. Art historical and theoretical discourse, Worringer argues, can become objective only by accounting for the antithetic viewpoints of Ego and its negative counterpart. The current thesis examines this topic in 'History and Ego: Worringer's approach'.

<sup>34</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, viii-xiii.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, vii.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, vii, viii.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, vii. In *Abstraction and Empathy*, Worringer associates the term 'vitality' with organic life. See, for instance, ———, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 25, 33.

The 1948 foreword reveals Worringer's frequent recourse to the language of animate life –<sup>38</sup> a significant stylistic feature for a writer mostly associated with the defence of abstraction and its processes of distancing.<sup>39</sup> Geoffrey C. W. Waite, in 'Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy*: Remarks on Its Reception and on the Rhetoric of Its Criticism' (c. 1995 [1981]), points to the organic metaphors Worringer employs to encourage the emotional participation of his readers.<sup>40</sup> Waite thus draws attention to the empathy-reliant, connective, invested aspects of Worringer's discourse – a surprising set of features in a book that defends the merits of abstraction. Worringer's narrative of the coming into being of *Abstraction and Empathy* follows, Waite perceptively notes, the coordinates of a complete life cycle, from insemination to death.<sup>41</sup> Indeed, Worringer is attentive to his own 'living development,'<sup>42</sup> and, as he mentions in *Form in Gothic*, focuses on providing '... a living interpretation' of art.<sup>43</sup> His cultivation of dynamic, animating features of text draws attention to his interest in the world, and in the opinions of his public.

Worringer does not seek to prove the validity of his earlier thought in his 1948 foreword. *Abstraction and Empathy* has become a historical document for him; he regards it – possibly without modesty – as '... a paper that ... has probably run into more editions than any other doctorate thesis can ever have done.'<sup>44</sup> Nevertheless, having written this work seems strangely impersonal for Worringer in 1948. According to him: 'The compass of my instinct had pointed in a direction inexorably preordained by the dictate of the spirit of the age.'<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> 'Animate' is an attribute of organic and dynamic forms. In *Abstraction and Empathy*, Worringer recognizes the animation of living creatures, as well as the animation of objects rendered in the Classical style. See Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 98, 133. The term 'animate' is also employed by Worringer in *Form in Gothic*. (Worringer and Read, *Form in Gothic*, 8, 14, 32, 105.)

Worringer considers that Greek art has the quality of animation. He writes: '... Greek art animated this lifeless nature of stone, making it a wonderfully expressive organism.' ———, *Form in Gothic*, 105.

<sup>39</sup> Regarding the positioning of Worringer's approach and ideas, see, for instance, Worringer and Kramer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, ix, xiii. Also, Andreas Michel, 'Our European Arrogance': Wilhelm Worringer and Carl Einstein on Non-European Art', *Amsterdamer Beiträge zur Neueren Germanistik*, 56, No. 1, 2004, 145-146. Also, Juliet Koss, 'On the Limits of Empathy', *The Art Bulletin*, 88, No. 1, 2006, 147-148.

<sup>40</sup> Waite, 'Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy*: Remarks on Its Reception and on the Rhetoric of Its Criticism', 29-31.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>42</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, viii.

<sup>43</sup> Worringer and Read, *Form in Gothic*, 4.

<sup>44</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, ix.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, vii-viii.

Worringer prefers to highlight the temporal and historical circumstances that fostered the publication of *Abstraction and Empathy*, instead of focusing on individual achievements.

According to Worringer's 1948 foreword, his ideas in *Abstraction and Empathy* were applied in early twentieth-century art.<sup>46</sup> In 1910, Worringer had a different opinion on this matter; he emphasized that, although the 'inner topicality' of *Abstraction and Empathy* had made it relevant to early twentieth-century artists, art-making had reached abstract expression independently, through 'inner developmental necessity'.<sup>47</sup> Yet for an artist such as Gabriele Münter (1877-1962) – the partner of Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944) before the First World War –<sup>48</sup> the impact of Worringer's thought on modern art was beyond doubt.<sup>49</sup> She wrote to

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., vii. Worringer does not provide further information on this topic in *Abstraction and Empathy, Form in Gothic* or 'The Historical Development of Modern Art', mentioning no early twentieth-century artworks where he could discern the influence of his ideas. Franz Marc and Gabriele Münter (as following paragraphs note) acknowledge having read Worringer's work and appreciate Worringer's thought. Although the impact of his books is highlighted in the writings of Münter and Marc, the extent of Worringer's influence on them remains unaddressed. In the case of Friedrich Nietzsche's influence on Expressionist artists, for instance, Donald Gordon supplies specific evidence: he mentions a fragment of text by Nietzsche that inspired the naming of *Die Brücke*, and also notes that Erich Heckel made a woodcut portraying Nietzsche. See Donald E. Gordon, *Expressionism: Art and Idea* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 11-18. The connection between Nietzsche and Expressionism is easier to trace; this is not the case with Worringer. Worringer himself proves elusive on the relationship between inner artistic development and the influence of his works on early twentieth-century artists. To my knowledge, only Marc and Münter are cited with regard to their opinion on Worringer in current English publications on Expressionism. The direct connections between Worringer's explorations and the art of his time thus become difficult to establish. However, *Abstraction and Empathy* certainly answers the aesthetic and artistic preoccupations of Worringer's contemporaries, as Marc and Münter confirm. We have also seen that Erdmann-Macke draws attention to the enthusiasm of early twentieth-century artists for the writings of Worringer (although, like Worringer, Erdmann-Macke does not mention the artists she has in mind). Additionally, Worringer's connections with the artists of his time are made visible in occasions such as: his participation to Reinhard Piper's *The Struggle for Art: The Answer to the "Protest of German Artists"* (1911); the presentation at Gereon Club, Cologne (founded by Emmy Worringer, the sister of Wilhelm), of the First Exhibition of the Editors of the *Blaue Reiter* (1912); the invitation Worringer received to contribute to the second volume of the Blue Rider Almanac; and his addressing recent Expressionist art in *Current Questions on Art* (1921). See Klaus Lankheit, *The Blaue Reiter Almanac* (London: Tate, 2006), 17-18, 30. Also, Carl Vinnen, 'Quousque Tandem' in *German Expressionism: Documents from the End of the Wilhelmine Empire to the Rise of National Socialism*, eds. Rose-Carol Washton Long, Stephanie Barron, and Ida Katherine Rigby (New York: Maxwell Macmillan Canada, 1993 [1911]), 6-7. Also, Wilhelm Worringer, 'The Historical Development of Modern Art' in *German Expressionism: Documents from the End of the Wilhelmine Empire to the Rise of National Socialism*, eds. Rose-Carol Washton Long, Stephanie Barron, and Ida Katherine Rigby (New York: Maxwell Macmillan Canada, 1993 [1911]), 9-12. Also, Rose Carol Washton-Long, Stephanie Barron, and Ida Katherine Rigby, *German Expressionism: Documents from the End of the Wilhelmine Empire to the Rise of National Socialism*, 286-287. Further connections between Expressionist theory and art are drawn in the second decade of the twentieth century by Worringer's acknowledged followers, Paul Fechter and Hermann Bahr.

<sup>47</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, xiv.

<sup>48</sup> Münter is known to have been an informed participant to the circles where Kandinsky gravitated. See, for instance, Wassily Kandinsky, Annegret Hoberg, and Gabriele Münter, *Wassily Kandinsky and Gabriele Münter: Letters and Reminiscences, 1902-1914* (Munich and New York: Prestel, 1994). Also, Shulamith Behr, *Women Expressionists* (New York: Rizzoli, 1988).

Worringer in 1952: ‘We know one another now ever since the beginnings of the postimpressionist developments in art, for which you have helped prepare the ground. From those early years, I still have my old copy of your book *Abstraction and Empathy*, which had such an animating effect at that time.’<sup>50</sup>

The 1948 foreword to *Abstraction and Empathy* reveals once more Worringer’s attention to his readership. As in his 1908 foreword, Worringer offers *Abstraction and Empathy* for discussion,<sup>51</sup> thus emphasizing the dialogic nature of his practice. Regarding his position towards *Abstraction and Empathy* as neutral in 1948, he claims he expects to find out from his current readership whether his book is still relevant for them. Worringer’s former distancing from his research is now accompanied by a clearly asserted strategy of rapprochement: namely, by Worringer’s interest in his public.

### **1957: a new edition of *Form in Gothic***

In the foreword to the 1957 edition of *Form in Gothic*, as in 1910, Worringer mentions that *Abstraction and Empathy* had prepared the ground for *Form in Gothic*.<sup>52</sup> Most of his readers remember him for his debut books, Worringer notes, despite his having readdressed his early ideas in subsequent publications. While disagreeing with the preferences of the public, Worringer explains that the reasons for writing the 1957 foreword are personal and emotional. In his words:

Understandably, his [i. e., Worringer’s] common sense and his better knowledge do not make it easy for him to say an unreserved yes to this hasty judgment of posterity [regarding the preference of the public for *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in*

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<sup>49</sup> For further connections between Worringer and early twentieth-century research and art-making, see, for instance, Donald E. Gordon, *Expressionism: Art and Idea* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987). Also, Geoffrey Christophe Perkins, *Contemporary Theory of Expressionism* (Bern: H. Lang, 1974). Also, Donahue, *Invisible Cathedrals: The Expressionist Art History of Wilhelm Worringer*.

<sup>50</sup> Münter is cited by Magdalena Bushart in Bushart, ‘Changing Times, Changing Styles: Wilhelm Worringer and the Art of His Epoch’, 82.

<sup>51</sup> Worringer and Kramer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, viii.

<sup>52</sup> Worringer and Read, *Form in Gothic*, xv.

*Gothic*]. Yet happily, there is left in him yet another authority, which finds this easier: It is his heart.

Therefore this foreword can only express how much his heart rejoices in the fact that with this new edition an opportunity is offered to a new generation of English readers, to participate in the fine venture, to be young again, together with him, the author.<sup>53</sup>

Distancing and connectivity reach a paradoxical combination in Worringer's 1957 foreword. Stepping back from his previous as well as current writing, Worringer refers to himself in the third person in 1957. Nevertheless, he also introduces an empathic nuance in his text: he invites readers to join young Worringer in the journey of discovery that was for him *Form in Gothic*. Appealing to his readers' emotions but resorting to distancing nevertheless, Worringer employs the strategies that, in *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic*, support the emergence of representational and abstract art. Empathy, or emotional connection, is a characteristic of representational art for Worringer, while abstraction requires the distancing of artists from the world. The forewords Worringer wrote from 1908 to 1957 subtly echo the angle of his approach to abstraction and empathy, interweaving the strategies of discourse that shape his books. Like *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic*, Worringer's forewords make visible his partially remote, partially emotive perspective, his emphasis on clear theoretical differentiations as well as his attention to the passionate life of his texts.

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

## Worringer's approach to the writing of art history and theory

*Abstraction and Empathy* promises to articulate clear distinctions:<sup>1</sup> significantly, the first of these consists in Worringer's differentiation between the aesthetics of the work of art and the aesthetics of natural beauty.<sup>2</sup> When rendered in artworks, the beauty of nature does not necessarily make the work of art beautiful, Worringer explains. '... [T]he specific laws of nature have, in principle, nothing to do with the aesthetics of natural beauty', according to him.<sup>3</sup> Worringer makes visible his focus on art-making rather than nature, as well as his preference for underscoring separations between the elements of his inquiry.

Nature is '... the visible surface of things' for Worringer.<sup>4</sup> Although he mentions his intention to discuss art rather than nature in his book, Worringer frequently employs nature as a term of comparison in his analyses. Thus, *Abstraction and Empathy* pairs beauty and nature, associating them with the urge to empathy and the art of representation.<sup>5</sup> Beauty, according to Worringer, is the value that people see in artworks;<sup>6</sup> more specifically, the pleasure onlookers derive from engaging with art.<sup>7</sup> Following Lipps, he argues that beauty as observed in art offers its viewers possibilities of experiential rapprochement.<sup>8</sup> Form in art is beautiful, Worringer notes, when it displays 'organic-vital' characteristics,<sup>9</sup> even in inorganic,

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<sup>1</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 3.

<sup>2</sup> Worringer does not define aesthetics in *Abstraction and Empathy*, yet employs it in a sense that resonates with Alexander Baumgarten's use of the term. In his *Reflections on Poetry* (1735), Baumgarten (1714-62) considers aesthetics to be the science that inquires into things as known through senses. See Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, *Reflections on Poetry* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1954 [1735]), 78. Worringer extends on Baumgarten's definition in *Abstraction and Empathy*, arguing that, in aesthetics as in psychology, objects as apprehended through senses are real only insofar as they are animated by the interest of their viewers. See Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 6-7.

<sup>3</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 3.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 3, 4, 7, 17, 27, 88, 101-102, 118.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. For the purposes of this thesis, empathy is defined as experiential rapprochement.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 17.

crystalline,<sup>10</sup> abstract contexts. For Worringer as for Riegl, beauty can therefore characterise abstraction-inclined artworks.<sup>11</sup>

In *Abstraction and Empathy*, Worringer does not attempt to explain the relationship between viewing, nature and beauty, but seeks to illuminate the very conditions that foster the emergence of art.<sup>12</sup> Regarding these conditions, Worringer explains that modern aesthetics,<sup>13</sup> which operates from the perspective of subjectivism, discusses art in connection with empathy. He notes that one of the philosophers who approached empathy in his writings on aesthetics is Theodor Lipps, a former professor of his.<sup>14</sup> Worringer refers to Lipps' thought throughout *Abstraction and Empathy*.

The theory of empathy, Worringer sets out to demonstrate, cannot be employed to discuss all approaches to art-making.<sup>15</sup> He aims to cultivate a subjectivist approach in his book and focuses on viewers, examining their responses to art.<sup>16</sup> From this perspective, Worringer

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<sup>10</sup> Jennings draws attention to the social and political context of Worringer's preference for the inorganic. In his words: 'The importance of the anorganic for both Worringer and [Walter] Benjamin must surely be understood as a reaction against the stress on organicism, vitality, and wholeness that dominates the "philosophy" of the German right from vitalism to Nazism.' Jennings, 'Against Expressionism: Materialism and Social Theory in Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy*', 99.

<sup>11</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 4, 17, 18, 105. Worringer draws attention to Riegl's association of beauty with inorganic, crystalline form. For Riegl, the crystalline approximates the highest form of beauty. (———, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 19-20.) In *Abstraction and Empathy*, Worringer employs the term 'crystalline' in the same sense as Riegl.

<sup>12</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 3-4.

<sup>13</sup> Worringer employs the term 'modern' to refer to events or practices observed in the early years of the twentieth century. (Ibid., 13, 26, 28.) Focusing on modernity in Germany, Françoise Forster-Hahn points to the diverse and antithetic forces active in German culture around the turn of the twentieth century. Forster-Hahn notes the tensions between patriotism and internationalism, tradition and innovation, fine arts and popular arts, and mentions the German preference for the polemic approach. A significant aspect of modernity as discussed by Forster-Hahn is the rise of independent artists' associations and private galleries, as well as of publications and publishing houses advocating recent art movements. See Françoise Forster-Hahn, ed., *Imagining Modern German Culture, 1889-1910* (Washington and Hanover: National Gallery of Art and the University Press of New England, 1996), 9-10. At the Paris World Fair from 1900, for example, the participation of Germany revealed an interest in conservatism as well as modernism. See, for further details, Forster-Hahn, 'Constructing New Histories: Nationalism and Modernity in the Display of Art' in Françoise Forster-Hahn, *Imagining Modern German Culture, 1889-1910* (Washington and Hanover: National Gallery of Art and the University Press of New England, 1996), 77. However, Worringer gives 'modern' times a wide span in *Abstraction and Empathy*; he considers the 'modern standpoint' to apply to 'our generation,' yet also places the beginning of modern art in the Renaissance. (———, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 28, 37.) When this thesis mentions the term 'modern' independently of Worringer's opinion, the term 'modern' refers to the period in history that begins in 1900, following Foster et al., *Art Since 1900: Modernism, Antimodernism, Postmodernism*.

<sup>14</sup> Lynton, 'Expressionism', 42.

<sup>15</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 4.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

explains that empathy can account for only one aspect of relating to the world. He claims that aesthetics can only achieve comprehensiveness once it has included the view from the standpoint opposite to empathy – more specifically, once aesthetics has begun to address for abstract approaches to art-making.

Writing about empathy from a perspective that brings together art-making and aesthetics, Worringer presupposes that empathy characterizes aesthetic as well as artistic feeling.<sup>17</sup> Before him, Immanuel Kant (a philosopher who influenced Worringer's methodology) pointed to the creativity of the judgment of taste in his *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (1790). Positing that the judgment of taste relied on imagination and understanding,<sup>18</sup> Kant observed the active engagement of human imagination with the world.

### **Immanuel Kant and Theodor Lipps: creativity, aesthetics and experience**

Kant regards imagination as a key power of the mind in *The Critique of the Power of Judgment*; for him, imagination supports the grasping of objects, and the placing of intuitions besides concepts in response to art. In judgments of taste, Kant notes that imagination does not simply reflect the world. According to him: '... [I]f in the judgment of taste the imagination must be considered in its freedom, then it is in the first instance not taken as reproductive as subjected to the laws of association, but as productive and self-active (as the authoress of voluntary forms of possible intuitions)'.<sup>19</sup> Kant considers that imagination plays a generative role in the shaping of the discourse of taste. Aesthetic judgment is presented as a creative activity in *The Critique of the Power of Judgment*.

The connection between creativity and contemplation, between art-making and aesthetics, is also signalled by Lipps. In his *Aesthetics* (1903), Lipps argues that the process of stylisation presupposed contemplating and then articulating the general laws of form as observed in

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> For instance, Immanuel Kant and Paul Guyer, *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000 [1790]), 34 (First Introduction), 76 (Introduction, VII), 78 (Introduction, VIII).

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 124 (General remark on the first section of the analytic).

given objects.<sup>20</sup> Eliciting the generality of form relied, for Lipps, on interrupting the connection between objects intended for stylisation and their particular surroundings; this activity was based on understanding. Lipps wrote: ‘In order to deduct or select the most general laws of natural formation from a given form, I must have first mastered this form through inner reflection. Selecting also means understanding.’<sup>21</sup> Lipps illuminates another aspect of the encounter between aesthetics and art-making: he posits that artistic activity is preceded by reflection – in other words, by aesthetic judgment.

Following Kant and Lipps, Worringer connects art-making, viewing, and feeling, from the very beginning of *Abstraction and Empathy*. As his demonstration progresses, Worringer pursues his explorations without signalling his transitions from the theoretical perspective of aesthetics to the practical perspective of art-making. Art-making and aesthetics are equally creative fields for Worringer. Later in his career, Worringer rebalances the relationship between contemporary art-making and theory in favour of theoretical inquiries.<sup>22</sup> Yet in *Abstraction and Empathy* Worringer discusses aesthetics and art-making without asserting the differences between their domains.

Worringer, assuming an experiential viewpoint in *Abstraction and Empathy*, highlights the contrast between two urges that define two ways of approaching aesthetics: the ‘urge to empathy,’ and the ‘urge to abstraction.’<sup>23</sup> He explains: ‘Just as the urge to empathy as a pre-assumption of aesthetic experience finds its gratification in the beauty of the organic, so the urge to abstraction finds its beauty in the life-denying inorganic, in the crystalline or, in general terms, in all abstract law and necessity.’<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Lipps, *Estetica. Psihologia Frumosului și a Artei*, 290-291. Lipps’s *Aesthetics* [*Ästhetik. Psychologie des Schönen und der Kunst*] was published in 1903 at Leopold Voss (Leipzig and Hamburg). The writings of Lipps still await their publication in English. For the current thesis, I have translated Lipps’ thoughts into English from the 1987 Romanian version of Lipps’ *Aesthetics*.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 291. Lipps also points to the aesthetic imposition of geometric laws onto natural objects – he is critical of this process, which he does not regard as stylisation. For him, stylisation consists in setting form free from particularity and accident. (———, *Estetica. Psihologia Frumosului și a Artei*, 288-289.)

<sup>22</sup> In *Current Questions on Art* (1921), Worringer comments that Expressionist art-making has become less innovative than science or writing. In these particular circumstances, Worringer applauds the creativity of theoretical domains. See Long, Barron, and Rigby, *German Expressionism: Documents from the End of the Wilhelmine Empire to the Rise of National Socialism*, 286-287. Also, from the current thesis, ‘*Current Questions on Art* (1921): Worringer revisits Expressionism’.

<sup>23</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 4.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

From the perspective of the psychological processes involved, Worringer's antithesis makes sense. The urge to empathy could be regarded as a tendency to rapprochement, to being in close contact with the world by means of observation, reflection and art-making, whereas the urge to abstraction could be considered a tendency towards distancing, towards stepping away from the world. In terms of implied motion, Worringer's title hints to two directions ('away from' and 'towards') that are indeed antithetic, yet that emerge in response to the same point of reference: the world as experienced by viewers and artists. Abstraction may be associated by Worringer with a tendency of leaving the world behind, yet it still takes shape in the world, in terms specific to it. Common ground thus surfaces between empathy and abstraction from the very start of Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy*.

Worringer establishes further commonalities between the urge to empathy and the urge to abstraction by referring both to beauty. Arguing that the urge to empathy manifests in acknowledgment of the beauty of organic aspects of the world,<sup>25</sup> he also notes the possible associations of beauty with abstraction.<sup>26</sup> For Worringer, when spectators and artists enjoy art, they find it beautiful;<sup>27</sup> abstract art, where practiced, is also regarded as beautiful,<sup>28</sup> much like representational art in his early twentieth-century context.<sup>29</sup> Worringer differentiates between the psychological responses of human beings to the world, but also points to the satisfaction derived from appreciating art – a feeling common to viewers of all times and places. Empathy, as Worringer argues towards the end of his book, is possible not only in the case of representation-reliant art, but also in the case of abstraction-oriented art.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 4, 7, 10, 14, 27, 101-102.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 16-20, 42, 94-95.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 16-17.

<sup>29</sup> Andreas Michel points out that Worringer actually favours modes of art-making he regards as abstract, such as Oriental art. See Michel, ' "Our European Arrogance": Wilhelm Worringer and Carl Einstein on Non-European Art', 161.

<sup>30</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 106-121.

## Empathy: Friedrich Theodor Vischer and Robert Vischer

For Worringer, empathy presupposes experiencing an object in the world, as it were, from within the object itself.<sup>31</sup> The process of empathy requires viewers to transpose themselves within objects by means of imagination, thus assuming the perspective of the experienced objects. Worringer refers to the thought of Lipps regarding empathy, yet also mentions the writings of Robert Vischer (1847-1933) in this regard.<sup>32</sup> Expanding upon the aesthetic investigations conducted by his father, Friedrich Theodor Vischer (1807-87),<sup>33</sup> R. Vischer inquired into the connections between form and emotion in 'On the Optical Sense of Form: A Contribution to Aesthetics' (1873).

The research conducted by Friedrich Theodor Vischer on psychological and formal aspects of emotional response to the world had provided his son, Robert, with a starting point for his own explorations. Upon revising his earlier writings on aesthetics, F. T. Vischer had noted that, even in the absence of human beings, of historical and narrative contexts, the experiencing of emotion was still possible, and relied on simple comparisons. In his words:

Consider first the beauty of landscape, which is so strangely analogous and related to the beauty of music. Here light and colour affect us through inorganic forms and yet they do so in such a way that the landscape as a whole appears to us a mirror image of our own emotional state. This act, whereby we believe that we encounter our own interior life in what is inanimate, rests quite simply on a comparison. What is physically bright is compared to what is spiritually or emotionally bright, the dark and gloomy to dark and gloomy moods, and so forth. One sees that language, too, employs the same words, which it derives pictorially from nature. The comparison is

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 5-6.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 136.

<sup>33</sup> Robert Vischer, 'On the Optical Sense of Form' in *Empathy, Form, and Space: Problems in German Aesthetics, 1873-1893*, eds. Harry Francis Mallgrave and Eleftherios Ikonomou (Santa Monica, California and Chicago, Illinois: Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1994 [1873]), 89.

drawn so unconsciously and instinctively that we, far removed from thinking of it as a mere ‘resemblance’, attribute emotional states as predicates to inanimate objects.<sup>34</sup>

For F. T. Vischer, the connection between self and nature could be explained by means of perceived, and subsequently intuited, similarities. Resemblance, F. T. Vischer commented, was not a compulsory feature for establishing connections between human beings and inanimate objects; belief, intuition and emotion sufficed.

In ‘On the Optical Sense of Form’ (1873), R. Vischer also noted: ‘... [T]hose forms devoid of emotional life... are supplied with emotional content that we – the observers – unwittingly transfer to them.’<sup>35</sup> R. Vischer, like F. T. Vischer, observed that the human mind constantly found resemblances between the inner world and the outer world.<sup>36</sup> To account for this process of imaginative engagement, R. Vischer proposed the use of a generic term, ‘empathy’ [*Einfühlung*]. ‘Empathy’ could acquire various nuances in specific perceptual and emotive contexts, as R. Vischer observed.<sup>37</sup>

R. Vischer explained that human imagination projected itself onto organic and inorganic forms in order to experience itself.<sup>38</sup> Having defined imagination as the common ground of emotion, representation and will,<sup>39</sup> R. Vischer noted that imagination expanded visual sensations.<sup>40</sup> He distinguished between immediate (prompt, instinctive) visual sensations and responsive (encompassing, dynamic) visual sensations.<sup>41</sup> Associating such sensations with immediate and responsive feelings,<sup>42</sup> R. Vischer remarked that immediate sensations, when

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<sup>34</sup> Friedrich Theodor Vischer, ‘Critique of My Aesthetics’ in *Art in Theory, 1815-1900: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, eds. Charles Harrison, Paul Wood, and Jason Gaiger (Oxford and Malden: Blackwell, 1998 [1866]), 689.

<sup>35</sup> Vischer, ‘On the Optical Sense of Form’, 89.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 104.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 102. R. Vischer had also referred to imagination as to an activity through which indistinct sensations acquired specific forms. In his words: ‘Imagination is an act by which we mentally simulate something that previously existed as a vague content of our sensations as sensuous, concrete form.’ (———, ‘On the Optical Sense of Form’, 99.) Imagination is a hybrid and fluid medium for R. Vischer. (———, ‘On the Optical Sense of Form’, 102.)

<sup>40</sup> Vischer, ‘On the Optical Sense of Form’, 101.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 92, 96, 102, 106. For R. Vischer, sensations are life impulses that make visible the accord between human beings and their world in a basic form. According to him: ‘Sensation is the most primitive impulse of life and out of it evolve the more distinct acts of the imagination, volition and cognition, and it thus constitutes the most primitive form of the sense of universal coherence.’ (———, ‘On the Optical Sense of Form’, 109.)

<sup>42</sup> Vischer, ‘On the Optical Sense of Form’, 107.

succeeded by responsive sensations, intensified and became attentive feelings. Attentive feelings were the basis of empathy, according to R. Vischer. Feelings, he argued, open more towards the world; their expansion gave rise to emotion – an altruistic mode of relating. In its turn, emotion led to empathy. He explained that the emotions of fellow human beings moved the empathic observer as profoundly as personal experiences.<sup>43</sup>

Empathy fostered the fusion of observer and observed in imagination,<sup>44</sup> R. Vischer pointed out. For him, empathic viewers explored objects from inside out: they concentrated on the core of objects, gazing upon themselves from the standpoint of objects, and then returned in imagination back to their own selves. In a certain respect, empathy as seen by R. Vischer implied abandoning the self;<sup>45</sup> Worringer also recognized this aspect of empathy in his debut book, where he noted that, in aesthetics, empathic contemplation required to a distancing from the self.<sup>46</sup> Yet, for the purposes of his argument, Worringer prioritized the association of empathy with the tendency towards naturalism or representation in art-making.

In *Abstraction and Empathy*, Worringer connects the capacity for empathy to a widespread – yet not exclusive – approach to aesthetics. Viewers, according to him, can empathise with objects they consider beautiful. Beauty (or the value viewers discover in art) offers a pleasurable experience, Worringer explains. In his words: ‘Aesthetic enjoyment is objectified self-enjoyment. To enjoy aesthetically is to enjoy myself in a sensuous object diverse from myself, to empathise myself into it.’<sup>47</sup> Emphasizing the active role of the experiencing self in the process of empathy, Worringer reveals his interest in subjectivism from the first pages of *Abstraction and Empathy*.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 109-110.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 109.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 108.

<sup>46</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 24.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>48</sup> For the purposes of this thesis, subjectivism refers to an interest in aspects of personal, or inner, experience. Worringer does not explain the term ‘subjectivism’ from a philosophical perspective, and, apart from mentioning Lipps, makes no reference to philosophers or bodies of work he regards as subjectivist.

## Heinrich Wölfflin: embodiment and expression

In his 'Prolegomena to a Psychology of Architecture' (1886), Heinrich Wölfflin also inquires into the direct link between form and personal experience. Worringer, who draws attention to Wölfflin's views on uniformity and regularity in art, signals the emphasis placed by Wölfflin on the physical aspects of uniformity, and the intellectual aspects of regularity.<sup>49</sup> Yet, although he writes in praise of regularity himself, Worringer approaches the personal experiencing of form from a different perspective: he associates regularity with abstraction and instinct, and connects representation with empathy and with the enjoyment of the world.

Wölfflin, like Worringer, acknowledges the contribution of R. Vischer to the exploration of empathy. As Wölfflin points out, R. Vischer considers that the main vehicle of empathy is imagination. Expanding on R. Vischer's research, Wölfflin pays particular attention to the role of the human body in empathic experience, and on physical expressiveness.<sup>50</sup> He explores emotional expression in architecture, and seeks to pinpoint the principles that enable the connection between architectural form and expression.<sup>51</sup>

Human beings, Wölfflin explains, regard the world in terms of lifelikeness, or animation, because they themselves are alive.<sup>52</sup> He observes that, in general, viewers project their own feelings onto the beings, situations or phenomena they observe. This instinct is fundamental in art, Wölfflin notes; in its absence, art would not exist. According to Wölfflin:

We read our own image into all phenomena. We expect everything to possess what we know to be the conditions of our own well-being. Not that we expect to find the appearance of a human being in the forms of inorganic nature: we interpret the physical world through the categories (if I may use this term) that we share with it. We also define the expressive capability of these other forms accordingly.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 64. Also see '“Common to all”: form for Kant and Worringer’.

<sup>50</sup> Heinrich Wölfflin, 'Prolegomena to a Psychology of Architecture' in *Empathy, Form, and Space: Problems in German Aesthetics, 1873-1893*, eds. Harry Francis Mallgrave and Eleftherios Ikonomou (Santa Monica, California and Chicago, Illinois: Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1994 [1886]), 154.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 149.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 152.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

For Wölfflin, the actual representation of objects is not the only mode of connection between human beings and the world. He signals that art-making may account for the world yet diverge from representational practice. In *Abstraction and Empathy*, Worringer also notes that representation (or naturalism) was distinct from imitation;<sup>54</sup> he finds that naturalism reflects not natural models in their details, but the feelings of aesthetic pleasure artists experience with regard to their surroundings.<sup>55</sup>

If Worringer gives primacy to the role of feelings in *Abstraction and Empathy*, Wölfflin focuses on materialization in *Prolegomena to a Psychology of Architecture*. Wölfflin names the common physical characteristics of human beings and inanimate elements in his book; in stones as in people, he observes weight, equilibrium, and solidity at work. These characteristics, Wölfflin explains, can acquire expressive nuances. Matter is not an indifferent recipient for the human gaze in Wölfflin's *Prolegomena to a Psychology of Architecture*.<sup>56</sup>

Grounding his observations in human physiology, Wölfflin points to the close connection between embodiment and expression. Expression is more than merely suggestive of inner activity for Wölfflin; in his words: 'Expression is, rather, the physical manifestation of the mental process. It does not exist only in the tension of facial muscles or in the movements of the extremities but extends to the whole organism.'<sup>57</sup> Wölfflin defends the concreteness of the connection between inner, psychological responses to the world and their outward expressive manifestations; to human emotions, he assigns a psychological starting point that finds physical expression.

Wölfflin argues that, by imitating outward expression, human beings come to experience emotion. Imitation thus leads to empathy, according to Wölfflin. Where Wölfflin sees in imitation a physically based process conducive to the understanding of emotions, Worringer approaches imitation critically, from the perspective of its role as a process of art-making.<sup>58</sup> Yet for Wölfflin imitation offers the possibility of self-forgetting that, like Worringer, he

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<sup>54</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 29-30.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 27-28.

<sup>56</sup> Wölfflin contrasts matter and form in *Prolegomena to a Psychology of Architecture*; for him, matter is formless and heavy, while form is the condition of expression. Wölfflin, 'Prolegomena to a Psychology of Architecture', 150, 159.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 155.

<sup>58</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 51.

considers crucial in aesthetic appreciation.<sup>59</sup> Imitation, an embodied way towards will-less experiencing according to Wölfflin, has Worringer's empathic self-projecting (or the attribution of expression to observed elements in the world) as its counterpart.<sup>60</sup>

Pleasant as well as unpleasant effects could accompany the articulation of form, Wölfflin noticed: viewers enjoy wavy lines and dislike zigzags, for instance. Wölfflin finds that gentleness in the apparent movement of line yields positive responses.<sup>61</sup> On the other hand, he observes that when formal balance seems to be lacking, human beings tend to interpret artistic form negatively. Negative responses are amplified by the impossibility to account rationally for artistic form, according to him. In Wölfflin's words:

... it is also known that a severe injury to the equilibrium can have a depressing effect. We ourselves feel fear and anxiety when the restful effect of balance cannot be found. I am reminded in this connection of an engraving by Dürer, *Melencolia I*, in which we see a brooding woman staring at a block of stone. What does it mean? The stone block is irregular and irrational; it cannot be defined with compass and with ciphers. But there is more. When one looks at this stone, does it not appear to be falling? Surely! And the longer we look at it the more we are drawn into this restlessness.<sup>62</sup>

### **Objects, feelings, and aspects of empathy**

Like R. Vischer and Wölfflin, Worringer inquired into the situations where the connection between viewers and objects is not pleasurable. Such a connection involves the opposition of viewers to experienced objects. According to Worringer: '... the self-activation demanded of me by a sensuous object may be so constituted that, precisely by virtue of its constitution, it cannot be performed by me without friction, without inner opposition... [T]here arises a

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 24-25. Wölfflin, 'Prolegomena to a Psychology of Architecture', 156-157.

<sup>60</sup> Wölfflin, 'Prolegomena to a Psychology of Architecture', 176.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 150.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 173.

conflict between my natural striving for self-activation and the one that is demanded of me. And the sensation of conflict is likewise a sensation of unpleasure derived from the object.’<sup>63</sup>

Where relating to objects in the world becomes difficult for viewers, Worringer recognizes negative empathy at work. He observes that the inner opposition of viewers to art objects results in experiential displeasure. Following Lipps, Worringer focuses on the positive as well as negative aspects of empathy.<sup>64</sup> However, negative empathy as discussed by Worringer does not cancel experiencing: it presumes that viewers relate actively to objects, albeit on more difficult grounds than in the case of positive empathy.<sup>65</sup>

Positive and negative empathy bring objects into being, according to Worringer. According to him, the existence of objects in the world depends on the inner activity of viewers;<sup>66</sup> as long as the attention of viewers animates them, objects exist, Worringer posits. His perspective reflects the thoughts of Lipps, according to whom objects become visible to spectators because they begin by empathising with objects. Differentiating between objects as apparent in scientific reflection, and objects as apparent in everyday life, Lipps explains that, in scientific reflection, viewers can employ their will and concentrate on objects in order to unify their multiple facets.<sup>67</sup> On the other hand, Lipps notes that, in everyday life, objects claim the attention of viewers due to the empathy experienced by viewers towards them.

An object in everyday life, Lipps remarks, appears as a self-standing unity if its viewer thinks of this object as a unity. In his words: ‘The object becomes a unity in itself – that is, independent from my activity of concentrating it into a unity – as long as I *allow* this directly felt unity I have empathised into it (or a reflexion of this unity) to become a unity in my thoughts as well.’<sup>68</sup> When viewers empathise with objects in everyday life, Lipps observes,

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<sup>63</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 6.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> The distinction between positive and negative empathy, as well as Worringer’s replacing ‘negative empathy’ with ‘abstraction,’ is further examined in the current thesis in ‘Representation and abstraction in Worringer’s *Abstraction and Empathy*’. For the indebtedness of Worringer to Lipps regarding the conditions that generate positive and negative empathy, see Lipps, *Estetica. Psihologia Frumosului și a Artei*, I, 33-34.

<sup>66</sup> Lipps, who inspired Worringer’s perspective on objects, further discusses the viewer-dependent existence of objects in the world in ‘Objects and empathy’. (Ibid., I, 221-224.)

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 221.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 222.

they unify objects by means of feeling; viewers need to think of objects as unitary for these objects to assume individual quality.

Worringer, like Lipps, highlights the connection between objects and the inner activity of viewers; yet in the writings of Worringer the emotional aspects of empathy come to the fore. Central to his investigation from *Abstraction and Empathy* is the following remark: ‘Aesthetic enjoyment is objectified self-enjoyment.’<sup>69</sup> When aesthetically active, Worringer argues, viewers enjoy projecting their feelings on objects in the world; their tendency to activity thus receives positive expression.

Positive empathy is one of the results of the apperceptive process, according to Worringer.<sup>70</sup> Worringer does not explain the term ‘apperceptive;’ however, Lipps discusses ‘apperception’ extensively in his *Aesthetics*. According to Lipps, apperception is internalized perception. Lipps writes: ‘This taking into account, this understanding, this inner realization (and through it, this given efficient becoming, specific to a process or to a psychic experience connected to life) is what I call “apperception”.’<sup>71</sup> In other words, Lipps considers apperception a form of perception that has been internally processed by viewers; apperception consequently leads to increased understanding, and to an intensification of experience.

When Worringer employs the term ‘apperception,’ he signals his indebtedness to the thought of Lipps, as well as his intention to emphasize inner, personal aspects of experience. The enjoyment of objects in the world is, for Worringer, a fundamental aesthetic response. However, Worringer does not limit his inquiry to addressing positive experiential aspects. In *Abstraction and Empathy*, he provides his readers a pathway for the aesthetic appreciation of abstraction, a form of art-making he connects to negative empathy. *Form in Gothic* expands Worringer’s engagement with inner, personal aspects of experience; in this book, Worringer

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<sup>69</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 7. Juliet Koss points to the repetition of Worringer’s statement in *Abstraction and Empathy*. She observes that, by its fifth occurrence in Worringer’s text, the connection between personal enjoyment and the world of objects pointed to Worringer’s suggestion that abstraction needed its aesthetics, much like empathy. (Koss, ‘On the Limits of Empathy’, 146-148.)

<sup>70</sup> In Worringer’s earlier words: ‘Apperceptive activity becomes aesthetic enjoyment in the case of positive empathy, in the case of the unison of my natural tendencies to self-activation with the activity demanded of me by the sensuous object.’ Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 7.

<sup>71</sup> Lipps, *Estetica. Psihologia Frumosului și a Artei*, 30.

cultivates an approach to the writing of art history that emphasizes personal intuition, speculation and interpretation rather than the organization and processing of historical data.

### **Worringer: subjectivity and objectivity**

In *Form in Gothic*, Worringer explains his point of view regarding the role of personal aspects of experience in conducting art historical inquiries. He regards explorations that employ references to historical facts as having only experimental value, and argues that, in fact, personal perspective guides inquiries regarded as objective.<sup>72</sup> In the words of Worringer: ‘The earnest endeavour of the historian to reconstruct the spirit of the past from the materials at his disposal is at best but an experiment, conducted with unsuitable means. For however faithfully we may strive to compel ourselves to an apparent objectivity, the exponent of historical knowledge remains our own Ego with its temporal limitations and restrictions.’<sup>73</sup> Working with historical evidence gives only the appearance of objectivity for Worringer; the interpretation of historical data is bound to be restricted by personal perspective.

Worringer is painfully aware of the boundaries of human objectivity.<sup>74</sup> For his own inquiries, he chooses the path of hypothesising and intuition to the alternative he regards as ‘... a one-sided, subjective forcing of objective facts’.<sup>75</sup> He accepts that his hypotheses trace broad outlines for an experimental type of inquiry fostered by instinct, more precisely by a thirst for knowledge.<sup>76</sup> Thus, the key role of personal perspective surfaces once more in Worringer’s argument. Describing his process of writing art history, he notes:

Into the darkness of facts, no longer explicable by the inadequate data available to us, this instinct is only able to penetrate by cautiously constructing a network of lines of possibilities of which the points of orientation can only be very roughly indicated by means of concepts directly opposite to this data. Since we are instinctively aware that

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<sup>72</sup> Worringer employs the term ‘objective’ to refer to scientific and academic forms of inquiry. A contrasting term for ‘objectivity’ could be ‘subjectivism’ as employed in *Abstraction and Empathy* (in Worringer’s debut book, subjectivism referred to a focus on aspects of personal experience.)

<sup>73</sup> Worringer and Read, *Form in Gothic*, 1.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

all knowledge is merely indirect – fettered as it is by the time-conditioned Ego – no possibility of widening the capacity for historical knowledge exists other than by widening our Ego. Now such an extension of the field of knowledge is not possible in practice, but only by virtue of an ideal auxiliary construction of purely antithetical application.<sup>77</sup>

Instinct guides Worringer's work as an art historian. He explains that instinct traces speculative connections between historical data and concepts directly opposed to them. To articulate the relationship between historical data and theoretical concepts in his inquiry, Worringer uses the strategy of opposition, a significant component of his approach to writing art history and theory; he also refers to the successive predominance of representational and abstract modes of art-making respectively, throughout history.<sup>78</sup> One epoch may thus be distinguished from the next by means of opposition too, according to Worringer.

First articulated in *Abstraction and Empathy* and then in *Form in Gothic*, the strategy of opposition plays a role as significant as personal perspective in Worringer's inquiries. Worringer sees knowledge as indirect and limited by the Ego; the capitalization of this term in the revised edition of *Form in Gothic* from 1957 further emphasizes the role of personal perspective in his writings. He argues that when Ego opens to the world, the ability to cultivate knowledge increases. He considers that the expansion of knowledge is possible in theory on the basis of opposition, or antithesis.

Worringer employs two key elements to construct his argument in *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic*: personal perspective, and the strategy of opposition. His emphases on subjectivism and Ego reveal the unconventional aspects of his approach to the writing of art history; they also help to explain the wide interest his thoughts attracted at the beginning of

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Also see Jennings in this respect, who writes: '... [H]e [i. e., Worringer] proposes a pattern of regular alternation between abstract and empathetic eras; there is in this sense no progress or development but only a repeated return through variation on one of the two dominant modes. We find in Worringer, then, a kind of history at a standstill, or history with a repetition compulsion.' Jennings, 'Against Expressionism: Materialism and Social Theory in Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy*', 100.

the twentieth century, as well as the criticism his academic colleagues directed towards his inquiries.<sup>79</sup>

Contemporary researchers such as Andreas Michel highlight the unusual perspective Worringer has on art historical inquiry. Like Worringer, Michel employs strong, rhetorically effective terms of characterisation; Michel thus depicts vividly the role of Worringer's writings in his epoch. Michel considers Worringer a 'rogue' art historian '... with a penchant for philosophical speculation'.<sup>80</sup> Addressing the revision of European views on art at the beginning of the twentieth century, Michel focuses on the writings of Worringer and Carl Einstein (1885-1940).<sup>81</sup> He explains his characterisation of Worringer and Einstein as follows:

I call them [i. e., Worringer and Einstein] rogue art historians because their writings violate the scientific etiquette of sobriety, fairness, and objectivity. These texts [i. e., Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy* and Einstein's *Black Sculpture* (1915)] read more like position statements in a culture war. It is for this reason that their texts – especially Worringer's – have had much larger currency and exerted far greater influence in the aesthetico-political debates of the first decades of the twentieth century than the writings of more conventional art historians.<sup>82</sup>

Michel draws attention to Worringer's departure from the expected approach to writing art history, as well as to the political echoes generated by Worringer's thought in the early years of the twentieth century. Worringer's approach to the writing of art history is reflected in his use of terminology, which seems speculative to Michel;<sup>83</sup> the first terms Michel cites to exemplify his claim are 'abstraction' and 'empathy.'

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<sup>79</sup> For the perspective of Richard Hamann on Worringer's *Form in Gothic*, see, for instance, 'Gazing in the mirror of history: Worringer's forewords to *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic*'.

<sup>80</sup> Michel, ' "Our European Arrogance": Wilhelm Worringer and Carl Einstein on Non-European Art', 143.

<sup>81</sup> The work of Carl Einstein, Worringer's influence on Einstein, and the political – especially racial – aspects of Worringer's work would require extensive investigation; such investigation is outside the scope of this thesis.

<sup>82</sup> Michel, ' "Our European Arrogance": Wilhelm Worringer and Carl Einstein on Non-European Art', 143.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 146.

## **Empathy, abstraction and representation in Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy***

Cultivating the hypothesising, intuitive, speculative aspects of his inquiries, Worringer prefers subjectivism to objectivity, and favours the strategy of opposition when articulating his point of view. His choice of key terms reflects his perspective: 'empathy' and 'abstraction' are, according to him, antithetic tendencies rooted in the personal responses of artists to their world. For Worringer, artists experience urges to (or needs for) empathy or abstraction. In his words:

The need for empathy can be looked upon as a presupposition of artistic volition only where this artistic volition inclines toward the truths of organic life, that is toward naturalism in the higher sense.... Recollection of the lifeless form of a pyramid or of the suppression of life that is manifested, for instance, in Byzantine mosaics tells us at once that here the need for empathy, which for obvious reasons always tends toward the organic, cannot possibly have determined artistic volition. Indeed, the idea forces itself upon us that here we have an impulse directly opposed to the empathy impulse, which seeks to suppress precisely that in which the need for empathy finds its satisfaction. This counter-pole to the need for empathy appears to us to be the urge to abstraction.<sup>1</sup>

### **Empathy and abstraction: Lipps and Worringer**

For Worringer, the urge to empathy manifests where organic life attracts the attention of artists. On the other hand, Worringer considers that modes of art-making that tend towards abstraction could not have been initiated by an urge to empathy.<sup>2</sup> Worringer looks into the

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<sup>1</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 14.

<sup>2</sup> As following sections of this thesis show, Worringer's use of the term 'abstraction' poses significant difficulties to contemporary researchers. 'Abstraction,' for Worringer, is connected to a psychological tendency of distancing from the world, but also to a mode of art-making where bringing to light inner thoughts and feelings is prioritized. Worringer, who considers that the urge to abstraction '... stands at the beginning of every art', recognizes that different degrees of abstraction are visible in art-making, and that many forms of abstraction-oriented art can be recognized throughout history. (See Worringer and Kramer, *Abstraction and Empathy*, 15, 42-43.) Herbert Read, the translator of *Form in Gothic*, agrees with Worringer, emphasizing that abstraction informs all approaches to art-making. In his words: 'We must not be afraid of the word "abstract". All art is primarily abstract.' See Herbert Read, *The Meaning of Art* (London: Faber and Faber, 1972), 33.

experiential grounds of art-making, and finds that antithetic needs lead to antithetic artistic manifestations.

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Eighteenth and nineteenth-century researchers such as Kant, Hegel and Schopenhauer discuss the experience of psychological distancing as well as abstract aspects of art-making in their works, yet (as this thesis explains) provide interpretations of abstraction that differ from the one Worringer proposes in *Abstraction and Empathy*. (See, from the current thesis, 'Predecessors, critics, supporters'.) Twentieth-century researchers place less emphasis than Worringer and Read on the role of abstraction in art-making, underscoring instead the variety of abstraction-oriented approaches. For instance, Frank Whitford notes that 'abstraction' may nowadays point to concrete art, pure art, constructed art, non-figurative art, to Kandinsky's non-objective art, or to Mondrian's Neo-Plasticism. Whitford draws attention to the wide coverage of the term 'abstraction' in the late twentieth century; for him, 'abstraction' cannot be regarded as a specific, historically delimited, style. He writes: 'Abstraction does not describe a style of painting. It is not a word like "Baroque", for example, which is applied to the roughly similar work of a large number of artists to define what it is that they all have in common. Abstraction is not a style but an attitude. Potentially, there are as many types of abstract art as there are artists. No stylistic definition, however broad, can embrace the work of painters as different as Kandinsky and Malevich, Mondrian and Pollock.' See Frank Whitford, *Understanding Abstract Art* (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1987), 8-9. Different characteristics of abstraction (such as flatness, a tendency towards interdisciplinary connections, an emphasis on colour, a focus on compositional principles) are recognized by Whitford in the late nineteenth century as well as in the twentieth century. Whitford points to the compositional emphasis on flatness in Édouard Manet's *Olympia* (1866). He notes that James Abbott McNeill Whistler traced parallels between painting and musical composition when titling the 1867-72 portrait of his mother *Arrangement in Grey and Black*. Paul Gauguin, Whitford notes, emphasized the decorative aspects of an imagined scene in *Vision after the Sermon: Jacob Wrestling with the Angel* (1888). Citing Van Gogh, Whitford signals the importance of colour as expressive means in *Night Café* (1888); in the words of Van Gogh: 'I have tried to express the terrible passions of humanity by means of red and green.' (See Van Gogh as cited in Whitford, *Understanding Abstract Art*, 75.) Georges Seurat, on the other hand, sought to highlight principles of art-making, as Whitford shows. According to Seurat: 'Harmony is the analogy of contrary and of similar elements of *tone*, of *colour* and of *line*, considered according to their dominants and under the influence of light in gay, calm, or sad combinations. (Seurat as cited in Whitford, *Understanding Abstract Art*, 80.) Maurice Denis also highlighted, as early as 1890, the flatness and chromatic order that inform painting; he wrote: 'It must be remembered that any painting – before being a war horse, a nude woman, or some anecdote, is essentially a flat surface covered with colours and arranged in a certain order.' (Denis as cited in Whitford, *Understanding Abstract Art*, 83.) Whitford continues by addressing the early twentieth-century Cubist emphasis on the paintings' surface, the Futurists' interest in rendering movement, and the geometrical compositions of Suprematism and De Stijl. (Whitford, *Understanding Abstract Art*, 97-113.) However, Whitford recognizes one key division between varieties of abstraction: he considers that abstract art can be regarded as either organic or geometric. (Whitford, *Understanding Abstract Art*, 128.) He sees these categories as loose, yet his binary, antithetic approach brings to mind Worringer's preferred framing of the abstraction-representation relationship in *Abstraction and Empathy*. For further inquiries into the definition of abstraction, see, among many other books: Alfred H. Barr's *Cubism and Abstract Art* (1975) (where Barr, echoing Worringer, defines abstract art as an effect of the impulse to take distance from nature, and distinguishes between near-abstractions and pure abstractions); Mark Rosenthal's *Abstraction in the Twentieth Century: Total Risk, Freedom, Discipline* (1996) (where Rosenthal notes the heterogeneity of abstract art in modernism and postmodernism, pointing to summarizing, abbreviating and stylising as methods of abstraction); Briony Fer's *On Abstract Art* (1997) (where Fer addresses the relationship between abstraction and representation and mentions abstraction's inclusiveness, exclusiveness, and repressive tendencies); Mel Gooding's *Abstract Art* (2001) (where Gooding considers all art – since it departs from naturalistic depiction – to be abstract); Frances Colpitt's *Abstract Art in the Late Twentieth Century* (2002) (where Colpitt contrasts the conventional tendencies of representation and oppositional leanings of abstraction, noting that, in late modern times, abstraction reaches a non-developmental stage). See Alfred Hamilton Barr, *Cubism and Abstract Art* (London: Secker & Warburg, and the Museum of Modern Art, 1975 [1936]), 11, 19. Also, Mark Rosenthal, *Abstraction in the Twentieth Century: Total Risk, Freedom, Discipline* (New York: Guggenheim Museum Publications, 1996), 1. Also, Briony Fer, *On Abstract Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 5. Also, Mel Gooding, *Abstract Art* (London: Tate Publishing, 2001), 6-9. Also, Frances Colpitt, *Abstract Art in the Late Twentieth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), xv-xvi.

‘Empathy’ and ‘abstraction’ are features that point to (inner) psychological urges as well as to (outer) artistic processes in Worringer’s *Abstraction and Empathy*; they have a wide coverage, but remain to a certain extent ambiguous in Worringer’s book. Worringer employs them to point to aspects of inner experience, as well as to their manifestation in art-making: he does not distinguish between aesthetics and art in his discussions from *Abstraction and Empathy*.<sup>3</sup>

Both ‘abstraction’ and ‘empathy’ are addressed in Lipps’ *Aesthetics*. For instance, Lipps defines abstraction as an aspect of form, rather than as a particular mode of art-making. He contrasts, for instance, the abstract generality of form and the concrete specificity of form.<sup>4</sup> He gives historical priority to neither. Worringer, who regards abstraction as the artistic result of an urge, writes: ‘Thus the urge to abstraction stands at the beginning of every art’.<sup>5</sup> For him, the need for abstraction precedes the need for representation, and art that relies on empathy follows abstraction-oriented art. Worringer discusses abstraction and empathy as personal aspects of experience, as modes of art-making, but also as processes in temporal succession.<sup>6</sup>

Unlike Worringer, Lipps believes that schematization precedes the articulation of abstract generality as well as concrete specificity.<sup>7</sup> According to him: ‘... [F]rom a temporal perspective, precedence is assumed neither by concrete specificity in its individual form, nor by abstract generality, but by the schema, by the highlighting of generality: for instance, by

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<sup>3</sup> Geoffrey C. W. Waite points to the dual (perceptual and creative) perspective Worringer assumes in *Abstraction and Empathy*. He writes: ‘Now, his *text’s* awareness of this displacement from a psychology of perception to a psychology of creativity coincides in direct proportion to *Worringer’s* failure to make it explicit.’ See Waite, ‘Worringer’s *Abstraction and Empathy*: Remarks on Its Reception and on the Rhetoric of Its Criticism’, 29. However, if the influence of Kant on the writings of Worringer and Lipps is taken into account, and if Kant’s approach to imagination (on which empathy relies, and which Kant sees as both perceptual and creative) is considered, then Worringer’s addressing art-viewing and art-making without distinguishing between them could be regarded as an undefended pre-assumption of his inquiry. Not separating the perceptual and artistic directions of his argument diminishes the analytical credibility of Worringer’s text; however, the inclusiveness of his perspective actually expands the appeal of *Abstraction and Empathy*. (In support of the above, also see Kant and Guyer, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 124-125. Also, for Worringer’s process of creative interpretation of the Gothic line, see Worringer and Read, *Form in Gothic*, 43.)

<sup>4</sup> Lipps, *Estetica. Psihologia Frumosului și a Artei*, 292.

<sup>5</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 15.

<sup>6</sup> In order to reinforce the opposition between abstraction and empathy, Worringer associates abstract-oriented art with Oriental practices, and empathy-reliant art with Occidental art-making. He contrasts not only between types of experience and modes of art-making, but also between geographical locations. The connections traced by Worringer between art-making and geography further highlight social, economic and political aspects of modernity which need to make the topics of self-standing inquiries.

<sup>7</sup> Lipps, *Estetica. Psihologia Frumosului și a Artei*, 292.

emphasis on the essential features that accidentally catch the eye of the viewer.’<sup>8</sup> For Worringer, abstraction results from a specific urge; in his words: ‘... [T]he urge to abstraction is the outcome of a great inner unrest inspired in man by the phenomena of the outside world’.<sup>9</sup> Where Lipps deemphasizes the contrast between concrete specificity and abstract generality by drawing attention to schematization, Worringer prefers to build his argument from *Abstraction and Empathy* around the opposition of empathy and abstraction.

However, Lipps notes that the articulation of form takes opposite directions in the course of history, acquiring either increasingly individualizing aspects or increasingly generalizing aspects.<sup>10</sup> Lipps focuses predominantly on experiencing in his *Aesthetics*; nevertheless, he addresses the process of art-making when discussing the evolution of stylisation. With regard to stylisation, Lipps discusses art-making and aesthetics without signalling their differentiations, much like Worringer in *Abstraction and Empathy*. Lipps highlights the flexibility of art-making processes through time, as when he writes:

If evolution reaches a certain limit, then, in particular cases, progress may take place from abstract law to the multitude of individual structures in nature, and vice-versa. A play of lines may initially be nothing more than a play of lines; however, ramifications assume vegetal characteristics in time; the end of a line becomes the head of a human or animal, or the shape of a flower; rosettes emerge from circles; and so forth. In other instances, the more or less perfect form that has been fashioned following nature is successively turned into abstract geometrical shapes. After all, the law of form has been intentionally extracted, by means of stylisation, from natural forms.<sup>11</sup>

Abstraction can develop animated, organic aspects, whereas natural elements may inspire the creation of geometric, abstract forms, Lipps notes. Worringer agrees with Lipps’ views, accepting that the transition between abstraction-oriented and empathy-reliant art is

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 15.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 292.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

possible;<sup>12</sup> however, for Worringer, abstraction initiates art-making.<sup>13</sup> Placing the urge to abstraction at the root of art-making in general, Worringer also associates abstraction with a particular form of relating with the world. According to him: ‘The less mankind has succeeded, by virtue of its spiritual cognition, in entering into a relation of friendly confidence with the appearance of the outer world, the more forceful is the dynamic that leads to the striving after this highest abstract beauty.’<sup>14</sup> Worringer considers that abstraction-oriented art – where negative empathy is easily recognizable – signals the lack of confidence human beings experience in their relationship with their environment. For Lipps, natural forms and geometric forms stand apart, yet both can foster empathic connections and enjoyment.

Although geometric lines are not connected to the natural world, their particular characteristics still derive from nature, Lipps observes.<sup>15</sup> He explains that viewers can enjoy both natural and geometric forms if they can access forms empathically. According to Lipps:

The geometric line differs from the natural object precisely because it cannot be found in nature... Yet this contrast [i. e., between geometric forms and natural objects] does not prevent that something that pleases us in natural objects, and geometric forms respectively, from appearing to us as one and the same... What pleases us in these two cases is thus not only freedom, but the very same freedom; namely, the complete, unbounded experiencing of the inner essence of forms.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> For instance, Worringer discusses lifelike and abstract approaches to drapery in Northern Pre-Renaissance art. (Ibid., 116-117.) Worringer addresses ‘primitive’ art and the psychological profile of its makers in relation to the world and to the Classical age in Worringer and Read, *Form in Gothic*, 15, 17-19. He writes about ‘Classical Man’ and the adjustment of people to the world, as well as about the balance between instinct and reason, in ———, *Form in Gothic*, 21-22.

<sup>13</sup> Worringer may seem to disagree with Lipps’s differentiation between stylisation and abstraction; however, in ‘Naturalism and Style’, Worringer equates abstraction and style, much like he had equated positive empathy with empathy earlier in his thesis. Simplifying Lipps’s distinctions creates greater ambiguity in Worringer’s *Abstraction and Empathy*, as this section points out.

<sup>14</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 17.

<sup>15</sup> Lipps, *Estetica. Psihologia Frumosului și a Artei*, 276. Lipps writes about the mechanical forces recognizable in geometric lines and forms: ‘Mechanical forces are natural forces, yet in the geometric line and in geometric forms in general they are dissociated from nature and its endless changes, and brought towards inner contemplation.’ The connection of mechanical and natural, organic elements informs Worringer’s approach to Gothic art. (Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 48, 72-73, 112-113.)

<sup>16</sup> Lipps, *Estetica. Psihologia Frumosului și a Artei*, 276-277.

Antithetic elements such as geometric and natural forms find common ground in human experience for Lipps, more precisely in the pleasure of the viewers who observe them. Lipps had defined this unconditional enjoyment of inner aspects of being or behaviour as empathy,<sup>17</sup> an activity of inner participation to the world external to the self.<sup>18</sup> Empathy, Lipps explains, brings along joy, which signals inner resonance of onlookers with experienced situations. Complete empathy is possible when viewers are fully absorbed by the subject, object or event they contemplate, Lipps notes.<sup>19</sup>

Worringer, following Lipps, distinguishes between positive and negative empathy at the beginning of *Abstraction and Empathy*.<sup>20</sup> However, the largest part of his text does not reinforce the distinction between positive and negative aspects of empathy, but contains references to empathy only. Worringer, in almost all contexts, associates empathy with the positive aspects of the process of transposition, contemplation, and enjoyment. He employs the term ‘abstraction’ instead of ‘negative empathy’ as his demonstration advances, implicitly connecting abstraction to the responses of artists who, according to him, regard the world as tormenting and changeable.<sup>21</sup>

In *Abstraction and Empathy*, Worringer claims that, with regard to works of art, only positive aspects of empathy tend to be highlighted. He writes: ‘In relation to the work of art also, it is this positive empathy alone which comes into question. This is the basis of the theory of empathy, in so far as it finds practical application to the work of art.’<sup>22</sup> Worringer does not provide details regarding specific inquiries that approach the arts from the perspective of positive empathy exclusively. However, he cites from Lipps to illustrate the perspective that he considers generic in the examination of the arts.<sup>23</sup>

Worringer discusses the ideas of Lipps to justify his own use of the term ‘empathy.’ For Worringer, ‘empathy’ refers only to the positive aspects of transposition and enjoyment as observable in the arts. Yet Lipps approaches empathy from a complex perspective. Positive

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 132-133.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 133.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 147.

<sup>20</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 6.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 16-27, 34-36, 40-46.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

and negative empathy are aspects of positive and negative experiencing, according to Lipps, who actually recognizes the variety of empathic experience. Explaining empathy from a viewer-oriented perspective, Lipps notes that negative empathy emerges when viewers observe behaviours they find offensive; noting such behaviours is in itself an imposition that viewers strive to oppose, since the perceived offence appears to be an utter negation of the personality of the viewer. Lipps writes:

For instance, as I have mentioned above, I see a person gazing not proudly, but arrogantly. I feel the arrogance in his gaze. Not only do I represent to myself this inner behaviour or adjustment, not only do I acquire knowledge of this behaviour, but this behaviour is also imposed on me, forcing its entrance into my field of feeling. However, I have an inner response to this imposition. My inner essence denies it; I feel in the arrogant gaze a vital negation, a vital holding back, a negation of my personality. Thus and only thus can arrogance offend me. My feeling of displeasure is based on this negative form of empathy. The same process takes place when an inner behaviour that contradicts the essence of my perspective is being imposed to me. Negative empathy is a negation of positive empathy, much like negative judgment is a negation of positive judgment.<sup>24</sup>

Lipps argues that negative and positive empathy are experiential aspects of the same process. Like Worringer, Lipps offers equivalents for the significant phrases in his text: he also defines 'positive empathy' as 'sympathetic empathy.' He connects beauty to positive (or sympathetic) empathy, and ugliness to negative empathy; for him, regarding objects as beautiful or ugly depends on experiencing positive or negative empathy. He explains:

We can also define positive empathy as sympathetic empathy. As the object of sympathetic empathy is beautiful, so the object of negative empathy is ugly. And there is nothing ugly that exists in the absence of negative empathy, and nothing beautiful that exists in the absence of positive empathy. The feeling of beauty is a feeling of positive vital activation which I experience in a sensuous object; it is the objectified feeling of my self-affirmation, or of affirming life. The feeling of ugliness

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<sup>24</sup> Lipps, *Estetica. Psihologia Frumosului și a Artei*, 162.

is the objectified feeling of my being denied, or the experienced and objectified feeling of negating life.<sup>25</sup>

For Lipps, beauty and ugliness are consequences of viewers' emotional connection with specific points of focus (be these people or objects). Positive empathy makes points of focus appear beautiful, and negative empathy makes points of focus appear ugly. Lipps' perspective is crucial for Worringer's argument in *Abstraction and Empathy*; however, Worringer gives a partial reading to Lipps' thought, implicitly equating abstraction with negative empathy and ugliness.

Worringer specifies that he does not intend to go into the details of Lipps' argument; this permits him to avoid underscoring the distinction Lipps traces between positive and negative empathy. Instead, Worringer claims he intends to question the premise that the process of empathy (undifferentiated as positive and negative in the largest part of his book) is the ground of all modes of art-making.<sup>26</sup> He chooses to address the process of empathy in generic terms, and equates 'positive empathy' with 'empathy' in his ensuing demonstrations.

Even though Worringer's 'empathy' includes only the positive aspects of Lipps' 'empathy,' the concept of 'negative empathy' does not disappear from Worringer's field of inquiry. Worringer stops mentioning the phrase 'negative empathy' after the first pages of *Abstraction and Empathy*, yet continues to refer to it in different terms. For instance, Worringer argues that art that is not Classical (namely, not Greek, Roman, or of Renaissance inspiration) and not European (not 'modern Occidental,' in Worringer's terms) cannot be discussed from the perspective of 'empathy.' Approaches to art that are not derived from European Classicism exhibit characteristics Worringer introduces as negative in comparison with Classical and European models. Worringer notes:

It [i. e., the theory of empathy] is of no assistance to us, for instance, in the understanding of that vast complex of works of art that pass beyond the narrow framework of Graeco-Roman and modern Occidental art. Here we are forced to

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 7.

recognise that quite a different psychic process is involved, which explains the peculiar, and in our assessment purely negative, quality of that style.<sup>27</sup>

Modes of art-making that are not European or Classical have a negative quality, according to Worringer. Following Worringer's earlier line of thought, such modes of art-making could be said to elicit not positive empathy, but negative empathy – at least for Worringer and for the readership he has in mind.

Having already associated the 'urge to empathy' with the process of empathy in general, and having discussed the life-denying, negative aspects of the 'urge to abstraction',<sup>28</sup> Worringer approaches 'positive empathy' as 'empathy,' and 'negative empathy' as 'abstraction' after the first pages of *Abstraction and Empathy*.

By replacing the phrase 'negative empathy' with the term 'abstraction,' Worringer highlights the common ground of these processes: namely, their influence on art-making. However, 'empathy' and 'negative empathy' retain their experiential, psychological, viewer-oriented associations more than 'abstraction' does in Worringer's text. When Worringer begins to refer to 'abstraction' as to a mode of art-making,<sup>29</sup> he brings forth the differences between the experiences of art-making and viewing. For instance, when referring to Eastern art,<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 4-6.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 16-17, 19-21, 35-39.

<sup>30</sup> At the time of his writing *Abstraction and Empathy*, Worringer would have had the chance to engage with Oriental art as exhibited for European viewers in the early years of the twentieth century. For the purposes of this thesis, I would like to note that Worringer's own angle on the art of the East serves the purposes of his demonstration. Oriental art-making provides, for Worringer, a significant alternative to Western practices. Mary Gluck, who considers *Abstraction and Empathy* an exceptional manifesto, notes the connections between Orientalism and primitivism around the turn of the twentieth century. She writes: 'Both [i. e., 'the Primitive' and 'the Orient'] were distillations of empirical realities and cultural fantasies through which Europeans attempted to create alternate identities that lay outside the frame of Western modernity.' (Gluck, 'Interpreting Primitivism, Mass Culture and Modernism: The Making of Wilhelm Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy*', 150.) Gluck also points to the work of Edward Said on Orientalism. For Said, the term 'Orientalism' draws attention less to the Orient itself than to the Western views on and approaches to it; he highlights the need of the West to define itself in contrast to the East. See Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979 [1978]), 1-2. In the words of Said: '... European culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient as a sort of surrogate and even underground self.' (Said, *Orientalism*, 3.) Said mentions the wide, imprecise coverage of the term 'Orient'. (———, *Orientalism*, 17.) He does not refer to Worringer in his text, yet remarks that, in contrast to Great Britain and France, Germany developed a scholarly Orientalism; he explains: 'What German Oriental scholarship did was to refine and elaborate techniques whose application was to texts, myths, ideas, and languages almost literally gathered from the Orient by imperial Britain and France.' (———, *Orientalism*, 19.) Worringer's perspective on Oriental art is illuminated in retrospect by the writings of Said and Gluck: they confirm that Worringer's approach to the art of the East reflects his antithetic methodology rather

Worringer argues that empathy does not operate as in Western contexts, and leads to different artistic results. He observes:

The happiness they [i. e., peoples of the East] sought from art did not consist in the possibility of projecting themselves into the things of the outer world, of enjoying themselves in them, but in the possibility of taking the individual thing of the external world out of its arbitrariness and seeming fortuitousness, of eternalising it by approximation to abstract forms and, in this manner, of finding a point of tranquillity and a refuge from appearances.<sup>31</sup>

For Worringer, art in Eastern cultures relies on interrupting the connections between world and objects, and on emphasizing the fundamental characteristics of objects.<sup>32</sup> He points out that the abstract forms thus reached offer their makers a place of respite from the tumult of changing appearances. Finding the defining characteristics of objects ‘by approximation to abstract forms’ signals artistic involvement rather than contemplation. Worringer now discusses abstraction from the perspective of art-makers;<sup>33</sup> however, the term ‘abstraction’ retains its capacity to point to aesthetic distancing and contemplation.

‘Empathy’ and ‘negative empathy’ draw attention to viewer-oriented experiencing in Worringer’s *Abstraction and Empathy*.<sup>34</sup> Instead, Worringer associates ‘abstraction’ with the

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than his actual engagement with the places and particularities of Eastern art. Although Worringer frames the art of the Orient in negative terms, he signals its remarkable contribution to the history of art-making. Eastern art and abstraction play a paradoxical part in *Abstraction and Empathy*: they are valued participants to a relationship of comparison where Worringer presents them negatively in order to intensify their qualities.

<sup>31</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 16.

<sup>32</sup> Worringer comments admiringly on Japanese art, for example. (Ibid., 55.) He refers frequently to Oriental art in *Abstraction and Empathy*. (———, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 15, 46-48, 51-77, 93, 97, 107, 125, 135.) Discussing Arabian art, the Jewish view of culture, and Assyrian reliefs, Worringer particularizes his references to the Orient and its artistic practices. (———, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 62, 98, 127, 142.) For him, Byzantine art provides a bridge between Western and Eastern tendencies. (———, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 93, 96-101, 104, 106, 110.)

<sup>33</sup> The intuitive, speculative aspect of Worringer’s inquiry comes to the fore in fragments such as the one above, since Worringer was not involved in the practice of art himself. However, this citation highlights Worringer’s effort to source out psychologically grounded explanations for modes of art-making that enjoyed, according to him, little appreciation and understanding during his time.

<sup>34</sup> For instance, when Worringer explains naturalism in terms of empathy, he associates empathy with an aesthetic rather than artistic perspective. In his words: ‘Its psychic presupposition [i. e., the psychic presupposition of naturalism], as can be clearly understood, is the process of empathy, for which the object nearest to hand is always the cognate organic, i. e. formal processes occur within the work of art which correspond to the natural organic tendencies in man, and permit him, in aesthetic perception, to flow

experience of viewing as well as art-making.<sup>35</sup> Worringer presents yet another angle on these terms in a chapter entitled ‘Naturalism and Style’,<sup>36</sup> where he connects ‘naturalism’ to ‘empathy,’ and ‘style’ to ‘abstraction.’<sup>37</sup> He explains naturalism as an artistic materialization of the urge to empathy, and style as a reflection of the urge to abstraction in art.<sup>38</sup> Yet ‘naturalism’ and ‘style’ still expose the differences between experiencing as viewing and experiencing as art-making.

### **From aesthetics to art-making: naturalism and style**

The term ‘naturalism’ brings along associations with a nineteenth-century approach to art-making;<sup>39</sup> this term is descriptive (it emphasizes connections with nature), and tends to refer to a preference for organic themes and motifs (according to Worringer),<sup>40</sup> rather than to a process of art-making as such. ‘Style’ (the equivalent Worringer offers for ‘abstraction’)

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uninhibitedly with his inner feeling of vitality, with his inner need for activity, into the felicitous current of this formal happening.’ Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 33. Later in *Abstraction and Empathy*, Worringer discusses ornament, highlighting that the need for empathy infuses the abstract line of the Vitruvian scroll; in this case, the need for empathy reveals its effect on Worringer’s own response to art. (———, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 66.)

<sup>35</sup> See, for instance, Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 41-45, 57, 60-61.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 26-50.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 26, 34.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>39</sup> Worringer explains that he selected the term ‘naturalism’ due to its association with the arts, and that he intends to use it ‘... in the widest sense.’ (*Ibid.*, 27.) Regarding the term ‘naturalism,’ Hildebrand, to whose thought Worringer refers in the first pages of *Abstraction and Empathy*, sees naturalism as associated with the imitation of Nature (the capitalisation is Hildebrand’s); according to him, naturalism is an approach to studying the organic world that must nevertheless expand from imitating to creating unitary forms and compositions. (Hildebrand, *The Problem of Form in Painting and Sculpture*, 11-12.) As the current thesis shows, Hildebrand is less critical than Worringer towards imitation. In a contemporary approach to naturalism, John House draws attention to the cultural inflections of the term, which he does not connect to imitation. According to House: ‘Any notion of naturalism, however, depends on cultural assumptions. There has never been a consensus about what constitutes naturalistic representation, even during the past two hundred years when something like our present-day notions of “nature” has been current... In compositional terms, the idea of the “natural” was best invoked by making the picture look as if it had not been “composed” at all.’ See John House, ‘Framing the Landscape’ in *Critical Readings in Impressionism and Post-Impressionism: An Anthology*, ed. Mary Tompkins Lewis (California: University of California Press, 2007), 86.

<sup>40</sup> Also see House, ‘Framing the Landscape’, 86.

points more readily to the observable results of the process of art-making;<sup>41</sup> in this sense, it remains a term as generic as ‘abstraction’.<sup>42</sup>

In *Abstraction and Empathy*, ‘empathy’ and ‘abstraction,’ or ‘naturalism’ and ‘style,’ articulate partial rather than polar contrasts. ‘Empathy’ and ‘abstraction’ point to the engagement of human beings with the world, even when Worringer recognizes them in geographically removed artistic approaches.<sup>43</sup>

Endeavouring to bring to light the roots of art-making, Worringer had explained ‘abstraction’ and ‘empathy’ as opposite psychological processes. He had introduced ‘naturalism’ and ‘style’ as artistic manifestations of the urge to empathy and abstraction respectively.<sup>44</sup> However, his contrast between ‘naturalism’ and ‘style’ reveals his interest in the common ground of these terms: namely, artistic form. For Worringer, form is, as we have seen, ‘... that higher condition of matter’.<sup>45</sup> Had artistic form been of minor consequence to Worringer’s purposes, he could have employed the oppositional pairing of ‘empathy’ and ‘abstraction’ throughout his book. Instead, Worringer selects the terms ‘naturalism’ and ‘style’ to address precisely the artistic manifestations of psychological urges, and looks at art where he could recognize ‘naturalism’ and ‘style’ at work.<sup>46</sup> The strategy of opposition as employed by

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<sup>41</sup> Worringer associates ‘style’ with the psychological urge to abstraction. Stylization is also discussed by Lipps in his *Aesthetics*. According to Lipps, stylization ‘... is neither addition nor simple omission, but detachment. Stylization is not a form of negation, but of artistic recognition; it is not the cause of constraint, but of liberation... In the most general sense, stylization means distancing, for artistic purposes, from the simple duplication of things in nature. Stylization especially means the materialization of the essential features of objects found in nature; this contrasts with such copying of objects that does not differentiate between essential and unessential elements of the rendition.’ (Lipps, *Estetica. Psihologia Frumosului și a Artei*, 289.) Worringer follows Lipps closely in his own approach to style (and implicitly abstraction) in art. In this thesis, the term ‘style’ is explored in connection to the writings of Worringer.

<sup>42</sup> Worringer uses the term ‘style’ generically in *Abstraction and Empathy*. In contrast, the term ‘style’ acquires historical particularity in the case of the Dutch movement of the nineteen-twenties, ‘De Stijl’ [‘The Style’]. See H. Henkels, ‘De Stijl’, in *Grove Art Online. Oxford Art Online*.

<sup>43</sup> Worringer later explains that both empathy and abstraction inform a mode of art-making such as Gothic. See, for instance, Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 112. Waite draws attention to Worringer’s rhetorical approach, signalling that geographical distance is a figure of discourse actually pointing back towards the art-making within Worringer’s context. (Waite, ‘Worringer’s *Abstraction and Empathy*: Remarks on Its Reception and on the Rhetoric of Its Criticism’, 22-23.)

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 32. Regarding the formal aspects of naturalism and style as explained by Worringer, see, for instance, Worringer’s approach to the ‘evolution of artistic experience’ in ‘Naturalism and Style’, where Worringer discusses artistic form and process as manifestations of artistic will. ———, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 34-44.

<sup>46</sup> For instance, Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 4, 13-14, 25, 26, 34, 42, 45, 98, 101, 103.

Worringer with regard to abstraction and empathy, naturalism and style, succeeds in serving the purposes of definition and clarification;<sup>47</sup> yet the processes of ‘abstraction’ and ‘empathy’ become difficult to regard as opposites after Worringer’s discussions of Gothic art.<sup>48</sup>

### **W. J. T. Mitchell and Juliet Koss about empathy**

Worringer’s employment of terms such as ‘empathy’ and ‘abstraction’ poses significant problems to the contemporary researchers of his work. Twentieth-century writers on art have often cast critical glances towards Worringer’s multifaceted terminology in *Abstraction and Empathy*. For instance, W. J. T. Mitchell and Juliet Koss expose the negative aspects of the process of empathy, inquiring into its definition, span and contemporary relevance.

In *What Do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images* (2005), Mitchell prefers to connect ‘abstraction’ with intimacy rather than ‘empathy.’<sup>49</sup> Approaching abstraction in its contemporary aspect, he explains that, if the abstraction of today is to explore its possibilities from new angles, it is unlikely to benefit from revisiting the process of empathy and its associated aesthetics.<sup>50</sup>

Mitchell describes Worringer’s discussion of abstract art from *Abstraction and Empathy* as influential;<sup>51</sup> he highlights that the connection Worringer traces between ‘primitive’ and modern art relies on their common need for distancing, on their evocation of the fear of space, and on their negation of empathy. Empathy, as seen by Worringer, is a process that relies on imitation and compensation, Mitchell argues. In his words:

Empathy is both a mimetic and a compensatory relation between the beholder and the object. Mimetic in that the beholder... “becomes what he beholds,” his language – a meaningless, repetitious “chattering,” just as abstract, nonreferential, and

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<sup>47</sup> See, from the current thesis, ‘Worringer’s approach to antithesis: contexts, connections, differences’.

<sup>48</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 112-121.

<sup>49</sup> For Mitchell, intimacy can be shared much more than empathy. See W. J. T. Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 230.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 230, 236.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 229.

autofigurative with respect to language as the painting is with respect to paint. Compensatory in that the beholder makes up for the silence of the image by supplying what it lacks, what it seems to need or demand, a voice adequate to its visual purity. An aesthetics of empathy, then, is a kind of negation of a negation when it encounters abstraction – the negation of a visual alienation associated with voyeurism and “seeing without being seen,” a scenario in which the work of art does not need the spectator, even “turns away” from the spectator...<sup>52</sup>

In Mitchell’s argument, empathy exposes the ground it shares with embodiment and narrative. Imitation and compensation reveal two sides of empathy that make it less likely to support contemporary abstraction-oriented inquiries, according to Mitchell.<sup>53</sup> For him, empathy is associated with the domain of aesthetics, and negates abstraction. Inverting the negative and positive associations from Worringer’s debut book, Mitchell highlights the ‘negative’ role of empathy: as he remarks, empathy denies the alienation Worringer had recognized in abstract art-making. Mitchell, like Worringer, shows his distrust in empathy,<sup>54</sup> employing a strategy of opposition to distinguish between empathy and abstraction.

The negative aspects of empathy are also emphasized by Juliet Koss in ‘On the Limits of Empathy’ (2006). For Koss, empathy is an experience that unbalances the viewer. Citing the words of R. Vischer, Koss explains that empathizing involves an object and an observer, and has an impact on both. Koss notes:

Vischer used the term [i. e., empathy] to describe the viewer’s active perceptual engagement with a work of art... This reciprocal experience of exchange and transformation – a solitary, on-on-one experience – created, as it were, both viewer

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 230.

<sup>53</sup> In his *Aesthetics*, Lipps noted that empathy could be considered the inner side of imitation. (Lipps, *Estetica. Psihologia Frumosului și a Artei*, 144.) However, Lipps re-examined his claim and explained that, while imitation was a wilful action manifested externally, empathy was an inner wilful action based on emotional experience. Unlike Mitchell, Lipps ultimately finds that empathy is distinct from imitation. Worringer also distinguishes carefully between imitation (which he regards as external to art-making) and naturalism (which he associates with the urge to empathy) in *Abstraction and Empathy*. (Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 11-12, 21, 26-29, 32.)

<sup>54</sup> Even though Mitchell regards empathy as a process contemporary abstract practices would not be advised to incorporate, he points out that looking at abstract art today must not shy away from acknowledging the temptations of empathy. (Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images*, 234.) The gap between looking and art-making surfaces in Mitchell’s approach to empathy and abstraction much like in Worringer’s *Abstraction and Empathy*.

and object, destabilizing the identity of the former while animating the latter. Physical, emotional, and psychological, the process of *Einfühlung* placed the spectator at the center of aesthetic discourse.<sup>55</sup>

Empathy, in R. Vischer's time, highlighted the role of the viewer in aesthetic experience according to Koss.<sup>56</sup> She maintains that empathy featured as a process that animated objects in R. Vischer's approach; however, empathy also required a shift of the centre of personal awareness from people onto objects. A significant change in the rapport between onlookers and the world thus took place, leading to an unstable positioning of viewers. Like Mitchell, Koss draws attention to the negative potential of empathy: she sees in the imaginative engagement of viewers with objects in the world (works of art included) a loss of balance, and a threat to human identity.<sup>57</sup>

Tracing the rise and decline of the concept of empathy in writings on art around the beginning of the twentieth century, Koss examines Worringer's ideas at length. She argues that *Abstraction and Empathy* took a significant step towards questioning the role of empathy in art,<sup>58</sup> and that the concept of empathy had lost currency by 1925.<sup>59</sup> However, Koss mentions that empathy '... remained central to the understanding of spectatorship throughout the twentieth century, and was merely reworked to accommodate shifts in the status of spectators and the objects to which they attended.'<sup>60</sup> Koss observes that empathy has

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<sup>55</sup> Koss, 'On the Limits of Empathy', 139.

<sup>56</sup> With regard to the estrangement that the process of empathy (according to Koss) brings along, Vischer indeed observes that empathy '... leaves the self in a certain sense solitary.' See Vischer, 'On the Optical Sense of Form', 108. However, Vischer also emphasizes that empathy, or emotional engagement, actually leads to a selfless appreciation of and care for the world. In the words of Vischer: 'As I think abstractly and learn to see myself as a subordinate part of an indivisible whole, my feeling expands into emotion. Thus I am mentally affected by a personal injury or satisfaction to the extent that it can be conceived as a weakening or strengthening of the universal harmony. The instinct for happiness discovers that the only magical secret of satisfaction is care for the general human welfare. Thus we rise from the simple love of self to a love of family and species (race) and from there to absolute altruism, philanthropy, and the noble sentiments of civic awareness.' (———, 'On the Optical Sense of Form', 109-110.)

<sup>57</sup> In this thesis, the term 'image' refers to the recognizable visualisation or rendition of beings, objects, situations or phenomena in the world. Likewise, I consider that the term 'imagination' points to the ability of the human mind to reconstruct or construct objects, beings, situations or phenomena. 'Imagination,' in my understanding, relies on embodied, sensuous experiencing, but is not limited to the exact rendition of such experiencing.

<sup>58</sup> Koss, 'On the Limits of Empathy', 145-152.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 151-152.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 152.

continued to inform writings on art, despite the negative associations it acquired from the time of Worringer onwards.

If recent research has re-examined the concept of empathy from critical perspectives, it has also signalled the changes the concept of abstraction has undergone since Worringer's time. For Mitchell, 'abstraction' is a mode of art-making associated with a significant modernist strand of inquiry, where religious, scientific, and political echoes interweave.<sup>61</sup> Mitchell underscores that modernist abstraction questioned representation, and aimed to depict reality from a different perspective. Instead, twenty-first century abstraction is a much quieter pursuit than the abstraction-oriented art of the early 1900s, according to Mitchell. Contemporary abstraction, Mitchell observes, does not need to resort to empathy, emotion or subjectivity, since it can rely on its democratic, emplaced, everyday aspects. Mitchell muses:

The sort of contemplative, concentrated seeing demanded by abstraction needn't be associated with a regression to empathy, sentimentality, and (heaven forbid) private, bourgeois subjectivity. The democratizing of abstraction, its availability as a vernacular artistic tradition, offers access to a space of intimacy in which new collective and public subjectivities might be nurtured... Its operations [i. e., the operations of abstraction] will have to be quiet, modest, and patient. Its apologists will have to be willing to listen to the uninitiated, not just lecture them. If the picture speaks Danish, someone will have to translate it for us; if it depends on ironic, knowing allusions to special knowledges, they will have to be explained. Abstraction will serve us best, in other words, if it takes Milton's advice to himself, resigning itself to "stand and wait," not for an artistic messiah, but for a new community of beholders and new forms of intimacy made possible by a very old artistic tradition.<sup>62</sup>

From the viewer-oriented perspective of Mitchell, contemporary as well traditional forms of abstraction can provide an occasion for the cultivation of public forms of subjectivity, for dialogic exchanges rather than specialist monologues. He points out that, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, abstraction does not translate into the assertion of artistic singularity, but into the attention contemporary communities of viewers direct towards it. Empathy, in his

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<sup>61</sup> Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want? The Lives and Loves of Images*, 223-224, 231.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 236.

opinion, does not need to inform abstraction-oriented modes of art-making. Nevertheless, Mitchell highlights that contemporary abstraction makes possible both subjective engagement and public dialogue.

Today, the terms ‘abstraction’ and ‘empathy’ are approached from different angles than in the time of Worringer. Worringer’s thoughts and preoccupations still echo in contemporary writings on art. However, researchers such as Mitchell and Koss associate ‘empathy’ with viewer responses to art, and consider ‘abstraction’ a method of art-making but also a self-standing artistic modality. For Worringer, ‘empathy’ and ‘abstraction’ were specific psychological urges that manifested in art that emphasized ‘naturalism’ (in the case of ‘the urge to empathy’) or ‘style’ (in the case of ‘the urge to abstraction’). The gap between the terminology employed by Worringer, and twenty-first century interpretations of terms such as ‘abstraction’ and ‘empathy,’ has widened with the passage of time.

### **Abstraction and representation: Clement Greenberg, Frances Colpitt**

In contemporary writings on art, the term ‘abstraction’ tends to stand in contrast to terms such as ‘figuration’ or ‘representation’.<sup>63</sup> Frances Colpitt addresses these differentiations in *Abstract Art in the Late Twentieth Century* (2002), noting that writers now connect ‘representation’ and ‘abstraction’ even in their antithetic definitions of these terms. Colpitt notes: ‘Armed with complex theories of representation beyond the mimetic correspondence of an image to its real-world model, contemporary critics reject the oppositional relationship

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<sup>63</sup> Worringer also refers to ‘figurative art’ in *Abstraction and Empathy*, and employs the term ‘figure’ in his discussions of representational art. (For instance, Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 23, 53, 64, 69, 84-85, 88-89, 90, 92, 109-110, 116-118.) According to Worringer, figurative art is associated with the most valued approaches to art practice during his time. He observes: ‘... [F]igurative art is one-sidedly preferred as the so-called higher art, and every clumsily modelled lump, every playful scribble, as the first revelations of art, are made the starting point of art historical interpretation’. (———, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 51.) However, the term ‘figure’ appears in Worringer’s *Abstraction and Empathy* in association with geometry as well; see, for instance, ———, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 87.

of abstraction and representation, although they may continue to define one in terms of the other.’<sup>64</sup>

Mentioning another equivalent of the term ‘abstraction,’ namely ‘non-representation,’ Colpitt explains that, before the rise of non-representational art as such, Worringer had discussed empathy (or naturalism) and abstraction in terms of antithesis.<sup>65</sup> Colpitt questions the antithesis of abstraction and representation by citing Clement Greenberg (1909-94), who did not regard representation and abstraction as opposites. Indeed, in ‘Abstract and Representational’ (1954), Greenberg explains:

It is widely assumed that in the fine arts the representational as such is superior to the non-representational as such: that, all other things being equal (which they never are), a work of painting or sculpture that exhibits a recognizable image is always to be preferred to one that does not... The embattled defenders of abstract art reverse the argument by claiming for the non-representational that absolute virtue and inherent superiority which the majority see in the representational... To hold that one kind of art is invariably superior or inferior to another kind is to judge before experiencing. The whole history of art is there to demonstrate the futility of rules of preference laid down beforehand – the impossibility of anticipating the outcome of aesthetic experience.<sup>66</sup>

Greenberg observes that, for a large number of viewers, a difference in value separates representational art and non-representational (or abstract) art – a situation comparable to Worringer’s experience at the beginning of the twentieth century. For his contemporaries, Worringer argued, representational art that followed Classical norms was valued aesthetically;<sup>67</sup> hence he emphasized the merits of abstraction in *Abstraction and Empathy*. In his turn, Greenberg finds that later twentieth-century viewers still defend one mode of art-

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<sup>64</sup> Frances Colpitt, *Abstract Art in the Late Twentieth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 154.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>66</sup> Clement Greenberg, ‘Abstract and Representational’ in *The Collected Essays and Criticism. 3: Affirmations and Refusals, 1950-1956*, ed. John O’Brian (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1993 [1954]), 186-188.

<sup>67</sup> For example, Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 10-15.

making or the other, relating to abstraction and representation hierarchically. However, he posits that experience should constitute the ground of aesthetic judgment.

As Colpitt argues, Greenberg notes that representation and abstraction do not differ fundamentally, although abstract art brought along a re-examination of painting as a mode of art-making.<sup>68</sup> Approaching representation and abstraction as opposite or hierarchical modes of art-making is a questionable angle on exploring their relationship, for Greenberg as for Colpitt. Worringer, in *Abstraction and Empathy*, appears to defend the antithesis of abstraction and representation, yet, as his demonstration advances, analyses a variety of artistic instances where abstract-representational interplay is visible.

In order to bridge the temporal gap between Worringer's explorations and contemporary approaches to writing on art, the current thesis pairs and contrasts the terms 'abstraction' and 'representation' rather than 'abstraction' and 'empathy.' The employment of contrasting terms such as 'abstraction' and 'representation' has its disadvantages and advantages. Among disadvantages, readers could count, firstly, Worringer's not referring to the antithesis between 'abstraction' and 'representation' in particular, and secondly, the wide, non-specific coverage of the term 'representation.' However, although he does not contrast 'representation' and 'abstraction' as such, Worringer mentions the term 'representation' throughout his text; he does so even before referring to the term 'empathy.'

The first instance when Worringer mentions the term 'representation' occurs in his discussion of the difference between the beauty of art and the beauty of nature. In the first pages of *Abstraction and Empathy*, Worringer writes: 'It is therefore not a matter of, for example, analysing the conditions under which the representation of this landscape appears beautiful, but of the analysis of the conditions under which the representation of this landscape becomes a work of art.'<sup>69</sup> Worringer thus associates 'representation' with the artistic rendition of the world as seen, adding a note that comments on Hildebrand's particular perspective on art-making: namely, his Architectonic Method, a pathway towards surpassing simple imitation

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<sup>68</sup> Colpitt, *Abstract Art in the Late Twentieth Century*, 154.

<sup>69</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 3-4. In this thesis, reference is made to the terms 'representation' and 'abstraction' as employed in the 1957 translation Michael Bullock provided for *Abstraction and Empathy*. The life of these terms in Worringer's books is therefore examined from the perspective of Bullock's translation. Further research could focus on the exploration of the gaps emergent between the English and German versions of Worringer's text.

by rendering the formal unity of natural models.<sup>70</sup> At the beginning of Worringer's text, the term 'representation' invites further inquiry into particular contexts and processes of art-making.

Worringer uses the term 'representation' (or the phrase 'artistic representation') in contexts where he writes about art-making in general; in such contexts, he uses the phrase 'artistic representation.'<sup>71</sup> Various passages from *Abstraction and Empathy* mention, for instance, the representation of space, the approximation of representation to the plane, the representation of material individuality, round-sculptural and free-sculptural representation, and the representation of the human figure.<sup>72</sup>

*Abstraction and Empathy* also draws attention to particular aspects of representation. Worringer discusses 'impressionistic representation' and its emphasis on appearances, adding historical nuance to the term 'representation.'<sup>73</sup> Citing Riegl, Worringer points to 'realistic representation' that assumes decorative purposes, and to the representation of animals and human beings.<sup>74</sup> Worringer associates the urge to empathy primarily with 'naturalism' in *Abstraction and Empathy*; however, he also tends to connect the artistic manifestation of the urge to empathy with the term 'representation.'

When discussing the urge to abstraction, Worringer explains it finds manifestation in the '... strict suppression of the representation of space and exclusive rendering of the single form.'<sup>75</sup> He points out that abstraction-oriented art can emerge in conditions where artists willingly renounce the representation of the three dimensions of space. According to Worringer, abstraction highlights regularity, and results from obliterating the connections between artists and their world. He associates 'abstraction' with pure, absolute values of form (as found, for

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<sup>70</sup> Hildebrand's understanding of art is briefly approached in 'Representation and abstraction in art-making', from the current thesis.

<sup>71</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 21, 28.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 21-22, 37, 42, 44, 84, 89, 109, 117.

<sup>73</sup> Worringer does not mention Impressionist artists in *Abstraction and Empathy*, nor does he discuss particular Impressionist works. Instead, he refers to the subjectivity of Impressionism, and to its cultivation of appearance rather than objectivity. (*Ibid.*, 38.)

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

instance, in geometrical regularity), with a distancing from natural models, and with a focus on presenting the material individuality of objects.<sup>76</sup>

‘Representation’ and ‘abstraction’ are not the terms Worringer chooses to articulate the polar contrast between psychological urges as reflected in modes of art-making; however, ‘abstraction’ and ‘representation’ belong in groups of concepts that Worringer introduces as opposites. This thesis employs the terms ‘representation’ and ‘abstraction’ to discuss Worringer’s text with the understanding that ‘representation’ and ‘abstraction’ are not perfect equivalents for ‘empathy’ or ‘naturalism’ on the one hand, and ‘style’ on the other. ‘Abstraction’ and ‘representation’ retain their experiential associations in my approach, much like in Worringer’s *Abstraction and Empathy*; like Worringer, I consider both modes of art-making reliant on the responses of artists to their environments. However, the connections between the terms ‘representation’ and ‘abstraction’ are strengthened in my inquiry, since their pairing can emphasize the connections both these terms have with art-making, as well as with processes of rapprochement and distancing.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 20-21.

<sup>77</sup> Instead of the terms ‘representation’ and ‘abstraction,’ the terms ‘representing’ and ‘abstracting’ could have been predominantly employed in this thesis. ‘Representing’ and ‘abstracting’ would have further emphasized an active involvement with art-making. However, to maintain a closer connection to Worringer’s *Abstraction and Empathy*, the terms ‘representation’ and ‘abstraction’ were preferred at this stage of inquiry.

## Representation and abstraction in art-making: Worringer's perspective

In *Abstraction and Empathy*, Worringer dedicates his attention to two antithetic psychological urges: the urge to empathy and the urge to abstraction. For him, these urges (or tendencies) lead to different results in art.<sup>1</sup> The urge to empathy (shaped by artistic will) manifests as representational art, whereas the urge to abstraction (also influenced by will), fosters the emergence of abstract art. Having approached the two psychological urges as antithetic in *Abstraction and Empathy*, Worringer extends their oppositional framing to the discussion of abstraction-oriented art, and representation-reliant art.<sup>2</sup> Yet his analysis highlights the contrasts as much as the connections between representation and abstraction in art-making.

'Every style represented the maximum bestowal of happiness for the humanity that created it', Worringer notes in the first pages of *Abstraction and Empathy*.<sup>3</sup> Approaching the term 'style' from a generic perspective, Worringer observes that, despite their diverse approaches to art-making, artists of all times have a recognizable common goal: they seek to provide occasions for enjoyment and satisfaction through their art. Worringer notes that art-making can lead to the creation of different styles (or, in a generic sense, to formally distinct approaches to art-making). Each of these styles is significant for its viewers and creators, despite aesthetic differences. Accepting the variety of artistic expression at an early stage of his inquiry, Worringer prepares the ground for his discussion of an alternative to representational art: abstraction.

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<sup>1</sup> With regard to the relationship between psychological urges and modes of art-making in Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy*, Michael Jennings remarks that the psychic states manifested in representational or abstract art are first filtered through the will of artists. In other words, will intermediates between psychological urges and their expression in art, according to Jennings. Jennings, 'Against Expressionism: Materialism and Social Theory in Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy*', 89. For a further discussion of the role of will in Worringer's inquiry, see 'A matter of will: Schopenhauer and Worringer on life and art'.

<sup>2</sup> The art that Worringer associates with abstraction at the beginning of the twentieth century includes Egyptian pyramids (where the geometric aspect of abstraction comes to the fore), as well as the work of early twentieth-century painter Ferdinand Hodler (whose paintings have strong representational aspects). This thesis proposes not to regard the terms 'abstraction' and 'representation' as polar opposites, but to highlight the points of meeting and exchange between the modes of art-making to which they refer. Phrases such as 'abstraction-oriented art' and 'representation-reliant art' are employed to signal that Worringer's views on representation and abstraction differ from today's approach to the same terms.

<sup>3</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 13.

In 'Naturalism and Style', Worringer articulates the opposition of style and naturalism, or, following his associations, of abstraction and empathy, as observed in the art of Antiquity. He underscores that naturalism (or representation that focuses on aspects of nature) plays a significant role in art-making as well as in aesthetics at the beginning of the twentieth century. Apart from being a specific approach to making art, naturalism provides a measure for contemporary judgments of artistic value, Worringer explains. He remarks that, in his time, art is regarded as having aesthetic value if it operates from a naturalist perspective. Style (or abstraction), Worringer notes, occupies a minor place in the attention of his contemporaries. Worringer's purpose in *Abstraction and Empathy* was to question the aesthetic supremacy of naturalism, an approach to art relying on the truthful response to life in its organic, animated aspects.<sup>4</sup>

### **Adolf Hildebrand: nature, form, imitation and artistic self-sufficiency**

Before Worringer, artist Adolf Hildebrand (1847-1921) examined the impact of the natural world on artworks in *The Problem of Form in Painting and Sculpture* (1893).<sup>5</sup> The first note Worringer introduces in *Abstraction and Empathy* refers to the thought of Hildebrand; for Worringer, Hildebrand's work and writings maintained that, in art, attention could be directed to the relationship between nature and beauty, but also to the conditions that turn a simple rendering of the world into art.<sup>6</sup> With Hildebrand's observations in mind, Worringer emphasizes his own interest in art, as well as his intention of questioning current modes of art-making.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 10-11. In Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy*, the terms 'organic' and 'animated' point to lifelike characteristics visible especially in the natural world.

<sup>5</sup> In *Abstraction and Empathy*, Worringer cites Hildebrand with regard to the artist's thoughts on 'cubic' qualities in sculpture (which Hildebrand considers indicative of an initial stage in art-making), and with regard to Hildebrand's employment of the term 'architectonic' (by which Hildebrand points to abstraction-oriented, structural, compositional, constructive preoccupations in art-making). When discussing the attempts of sculptors to bridge representational and abstract tendencies, Worringer refers to Hildebrand's approach as assertive of material individuality, unity and tactility. (Ibid., 22-23, 84, 90, 136.)

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 3-4, 136.

‘The activity of plastic art takes possession of the object as something to be illumined by the mode of representation’,<sup>7</sup> Hildebrand notes in *The Problem of Form in Painting and Sculpture*. Although Hildebrand cultivates Classically oriented form in his sculptural work,<sup>8</sup> Worringer refers to the words of Hildebrand in order to contextualize his own questioning of representation as exclusively committed to the model provided by Classical art.

In *The Problem of Form in Painting and Sculpture*, Hildebrand contrasts actual and perceptual form, explaining that forms as seen deliver more visual information than forms as such.<sup>9</sup> Perceptual form, Hildebrand comments, incorporates size, lighting, or colour, and emerges as a result of the changing relationships between such elements.<sup>10</sup> He focuses on representational art in his text; however, like Worringer, he is critical towards exact imitation in painting and sculpture.<sup>11</sup> ‘In true Art, the actual form has its reality only as an effect’, Hildebrand observes.<sup>12</sup> His approach to form signals that art must maintain a certain degree of distance from the models it represents. From his own representational perspective, Hildebrand draws attention to the abstract considerations that actually feed into the work of representational artists around the turn of the twentieth century.

Hildebrand, in his foreword to the third edition of *The Problem of Form in Painting and Sculpture*, introduces sculpture and painting as imitative arts that rely on the rendering of the natural world. Yet, although he notes the connections between painting, sculpture and nature, he also mentions the complexity of their relationship. Hildebrand points to the problems artists encounter when they attempt to render the world starting from direct observation. Even though Hildebrand considers sculpture and painting as imitative to a certain extent, he remarks that imitation alone is insufficient in art-making. He writes:

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 136.

<sup>8</sup> For a brief glance towards the work of Hildebrand, see Eric MacLagan, ‘Adolf Hildebrand’, *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs*, 38, No. 217, 1921. Also, Harry Francis Mallgrave and Eleftherios Ikonomou, eds., *Empathy, Form, and Space: Problems in German Aesthetics, 1873-1893* (Santa Monica, California and Chicago, Illinois: Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1994), 29-38.

<sup>9</sup> Mallgrave and Ikonomou mention that Conrad Fiedler, Hildebrand’s friend, inspired Hildebrand’s views on form, much like Fiedler had been inspired by his conversations with Hildebrand. (Mallgrave and Ikonomou, eds., *Empathy, Form, and Space: Problems in German Aesthetics, 1873-1893*, 29-30.)

<sup>10</sup> Hildebrand, *The Problem of Form in Painting and Sculpture*, 36-37.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 45.

Sculpture and painting are, indeed, imitative inasmuch as they are based on a kind of study of Nature. And this in a way ties down the artist; for it follows that the problems of form with which he has to deal when imitating emanate directly from his perception of Nature. But if these problems and no others be solved, i. e., if the artist's work claims attention merely on these grounds, it can never attain a self-sufficiency apart from Nature. To gain such self-sufficiency the artist must raise the imitative part of his work to a higher plane, and the method by which he accomplishes this I should like to call the Architectonic Method. Of course, I do not here use the word **architectonic** in its ordinary special significance. As in a drama or symphony, so here our perception enables us to realize a unity of form lacking in objects themselves as they appear in Nature. It is the quality essential to this realization which I wish to denote by the term **architectonic**.<sup>13</sup>

Hildebrand considers the natural world a crucial element in art-making; indeed, nature is a rich source of motifs for artists. Capitalizing the term 'Nature,'<sup>14</sup> Hildebrand draws further attention to the indebtedness of artists to their environment. Nevertheless, he notes that painting and sculpture need to aim towards self-sufficiency, towards standing their own ground in front of Nature.

For works of sculpture or painting to be able to assert themselves as such, Hildebrand suggests artists need to give to forms a unity that their appearance in Nature does not have. A certain degree of distancing from Nature supports art-making, according to him; this preoccupation with form is beneficial in art. Nevertheless, where Hildebrand explains the limits of imitation in art-making, Worringer considers that art cannot include imitation.

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 11-12.

<sup>14</sup> Hildebrand does not define the term 'Nature' in his foreword to the third edition of *The Problem of Form in Painting and Sculpture*, yet employs it so as to point to the environment where artists find inspiration. For him, the realm of Nature can be considered a territory where three-dimensional objective form can be observed. (Ibid., 17.)

## **Imitation, naturalism, empathy and abstraction in *Abstraction and Empathy***

Worringer articulates a decisive contrast between imitation and naturalism in *Abstraction and Empathy*. Naturalism, he explains, reflects the resonance of artists with life in its organic, animated aspects.<sup>15</sup> Instead, imitation makes visible the delight of artists in creating copies of models from nature.<sup>16</sup> Despite his earlier support for an open-minded approach to different styles in art-making, Worringer shows little tolerance towards imitation in art. For him, imitation is a measure of technical skill only – it is thus less likely than naturalism to promote genuine inquiries into the artistic rendering of the world. Imitation offers insufficient grounds to be addressed from the perspective of aesthetics, according to Worringer.<sup>17</sup>

A focus on imitation informed the art practices of the epochs between Renaissance and the early twentieth century, Worringer observes; the consequences of cultivating imitation, Worringer argues, are undesirable in art-making and writing on art alike.<sup>18</sup> Imitation cannot be considered a relevant expression of the urge to empathy, according to him.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, Worringer finds that only naturalism can be effectively contrasted with style (or abstraction) in approaches to art for which aesthetics can account.<sup>20</sup>

The urge to empathy (filtered through will) generates art that celebrates life, according to Worringer. He explains that style (a wilful manifestation of the urge to abstraction, opposed to naturalism) requires the suppression of life instead.<sup>21</sup> Interpreting the urge to abstraction from a negative perspective, Worringer reinforces the psychological contrast between abstraction and empathy. He reaffirms the contrast of empathy and abstraction in the examples he provides regarding the artistic expression of these urges. For instance, tracing connections between the need for abstraction and the psychological fear of space,<sup>22</sup> Worringer explains that the fear of space is the outcome of the insecurity human beings experience in their surroundings. Abstract art proves a reflection of such insecurity, according to

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<sup>15</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 27-28.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 11-12.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* Also, ———, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 20-21, 26-27, 29.

<sup>18</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 29.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>20</sup> In this respect, Worringer emphasizes the necessity to account for ‘an aesthetics of form’ in art-making, as only successfully realized form can confirm the aesthetic value of art. (*Ibid.*, 30-31.)

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

Worringer; he finds that the need for tranquillity experienced by Oriental artists urges them to divest objects of their transitory characteristics, to approximate the form of these objects, and to render them as abstract.<sup>23</sup> In his words:

The happiness they [i. e., the people of the East] sought from art did not consist in the possibility of projecting themselves into the things of the outer world, of enjoying themselves in them, but in the possibility of taking the individual thing of the external world out of its arbitrariness and seeming fortuitousness, of eternalizing it by approximation to abstract forms and, in this manner, of finding a point of tranquillity and a refuge from appearances. Their most powerful urge was, so to speak, to wrest the object of the external world out of its natural context, out of the unending flux of being, to purify it of all its dependence upon life, i. e. of everything about it that was arbitrary, to render it necessary and irrefragable, to approximate it to its *absolute* value.<sup>24</sup>

According to Worringer, Eastern art favours processes of extraction, detemporizing, approximation, and purification. Worringer finds that, as a mode of art-making, abstraction relies on approximation; in Eastern art, for instance, Worringer claims that abstraction cancels detailing which could reveal the passage of time or the relationships between objects and places.<sup>25</sup>

Worringer, associating abstraction with the exclusion of elements that hint to life in the world, also connects this mode of art-making to formal and compositional properties such as regularity, symmetry, geometrical features, and occasionally formal rhythm.<sup>26</sup> He observes

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 16-17.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Worringer's approach to Oriental art serves the purposes of his argument in *Abstraction and Empathy*. This aspect of his writing has been discussed in 'Empathy, abstraction and representation in Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy*'.

<sup>26</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 17-20. For the purposes of this thesis, 'life in the world' (or life as observed in environments where human beings dwell) refers to phrases frequently employed by Worringer, such as organic life, or animated life. By 'formal' I understand an attribute pertaining to form; in *Abstraction and Empathy*, Worringer associates form with regularity, and considers form a characteristic of matter. The term 'compositional' refers to the composition of a work of art, especially of a painting; it points to the organization of elements that constitute representational or abstract paintings (for instance, the placement of, and relationships that develop between, elements of environment, animal or human figures, or objects; alternatively, the interaction of lines, colours and shapes in a picture). 'Regularity' is associated by Worringer with the impulse towards abstraction and towards geometrical expression in art (he

the tendency of abstraction not to employ models from nature, but to suppress three-dimensional aspects, and render clearly delineated, single, flat forms. Abstraction, as analysed by Worringer, reveals that artists can regard objects as self-reliant material elements rather than as participants to a three-dimensional, time-bound, fluctuating environment.<sup>27</sup>

### **Ferdinand Hodler: exactness and expressiveness, emotion and parallelism**

According to Worringer, a tendency towards abstraction in painting is visible in the early twentieth-century practice of Ferdinand Hodler (1853-1918), one of the few contemporary artists Worringer mentions in *Abstraction and Empathy*. In the early years of the twentieth century, Hodler, who had been exhibiting extensively in the last decades of the nineteenth century, proved to have an influence on Expressionist artists, according to Peter Selz.<sup>28</sup> For instance, in his *Letters from Munich* (1909-10), Kandinsky characterized the work of Hodler as ‘serious and powerful,’<sup>29</sup> and singled out Hodler’s melodic approach to composition in *On the Spiritual in Art* (1912).<sup>30</sup>

By the time of Worringer’s preparing *Abstraction and Empathy*, Hodler’s work was receiving national and international recognition for large-scale works such as *Night* (1890), *Lake Geneva from Chexbres* (1895) (Fig. 1), and *The Retreat from Marignano* (1898).<sup>31</sup> Artur

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contrasts regularity with uniformity, where the urge to empathy begins to be felt). See ———, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 64-65. Worringer connects ‘symmetry’ to stylisation, especially when stylisation acquires ornamental value; an example of symmetry is offered, Worringer explains, by the figure of the circle in Egyptian art. See ———, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 58-68. ‘Rhythm,’ according to Worringer, can be recognized in ornaments as approached by Classical Greek artists (for instance, in the ornamental figure of the festoon, or in the acanthus motif); it reflects ‘rest in motion’. Rhythm connects to empathy, even in abstract contexts, where it asserts organic aspects of form. See ———, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 72-74.

<sup>27</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 21-22.

<sup>28</sup> Selz mentions the impact of Hodler’s work on Egon Schiele, Emil Nolde, and Alexei von Jawlensky (the latter being one of Kandinsky’s friends). (Selz, *Ferdinand Hodler*, 15.)

<sup>29</sup> Kandinsky, Lindsay, and Vergo, *Kandinsky. Complete Writings on Art*, I, 58.

<sup>30</sup> Melodic (or rhythmic) compositions, according to Kandinsky, are constructions with a simple inner sound. (Ibid., 217.)

<sup>31</sup> Selz, *Ferdinand Hodler*, 13-15, 128. For instance, Hodler had won the first prize in the Calame Competition (Geneva) in 1874 and 1883, a third prize in the same competition of 1887, and a second prize in 1895. He had received an honorary award in the competition of the National Institute of Geneva (1876), had exhibited at the *Salon du Champ-de-Mars* in Paris (1891), and had been awarded the first prize in the Swiss National Museum Competition of 1897. He had also received a gold medal at the Paris World Exhibition (1900), and had shown

Weese, the supervisor of Worringer's thesis at the University of Bern, was in contact with Hodler and wrote about him, according to Magdalena Bushart.<sup>32</sup> Acknowledging the merits of Hodler's work in the terms of his inquiry from *Abstraction and Empathy*, Worringer explained that Hodler's paintings exemplified an abstract orientation in art-making.

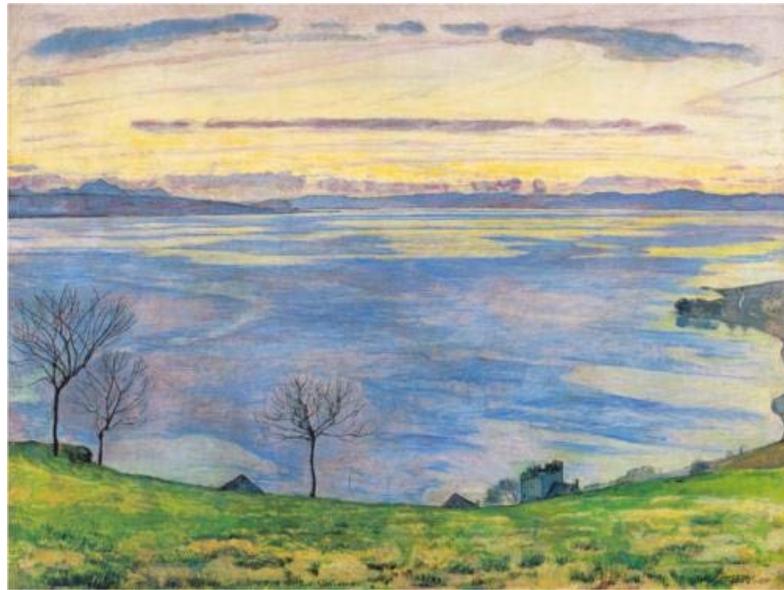


Fig. 1. Ferdinand Hodler. *Lake Geneva on the Evening in Chexbres*. 1895. oil on canvas. 100.5 x 130 cm. Private collection.

The art of Hodler, Worringer argued, baffled turn-of-the-twentieth-century audiences who regarded '...beauty and truth to nature as a precondition of the artistically beautiful'.<sup>33</sup> Hodler did not rely on the imitation of nature exclusively, Worringer maintained.<sup>34</sup> Indeed, Hodler's words from one of his 1874-76 notebooks reinforce Worringer's observation.<sup>35</sup> Listing ten key compositional requirements a painter must meet, Hodler writes:

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his works in the nineteenth exhibition of the Vienna Secession (1904). See Ferdinand Hodler et al., *Ferdinand Hodler: Landscapes* (Zürich and London: Scalo and Thames & Hudson, 2004), 183-184.

<sup>32</sup> Bushart, 'Changing Times, Changing Styles: Wilhelm Worringer and the Art of His Epoch', 78.

<sup>33</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 137.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 10, 137.

<sup>35</sup> Selz, *Ferdinand Hodler*, 111. Hodler's words are quoted from a selection of his writings compiled and edited by Jura Brüscheiler and translated by Madeline Jay. The citation above is based on the transcription of C. A. Loosli, and, according to Loosli, belongs in a text entitled 'The Painter's Decalogue' (1874-75). Loosli places the writing of Hodler's 'Decalogue' between 1875 and 1876; Brüscheiler disagrees. Pointing to Hodler's paintings, *The Student* (1874) and *The Schoolboy* (1875), Brüscheiler argues the date of the 'Decalogue' must have been an earlier one. Brüscheiler notes that the original version of 'The Painter's Decalogue' is untraceable.

2. The painter must practice seeing nature as a flat surface.
3. He must divide, in a sensible, deliberate way, with all the mathematical accuracy he can muster, the part of the surface he wishes to render into geometrical planes.
4. When he has thus divided his surface he will place in it the outline of the object he is reproducing, as concisely as possible.
5. The outline constitutes an expressive feature and an element of beauty in itself. It constitutes the foundation of all later work and therefore must be strong and accurate.
6. The more concise the outline, the stronger it will be.<sup>36</sup>

For Hodler, painting relies on recognizing how three-dimensional vistas could be rendered as flat, on dividing surfaces into geometrical planes, and on simple and accurate outlining. Although his works are representational, Hodler asks of artists to attend to the abstract components of pictorial composition. Having studied at the Geneva School of Fine Arts (1872-78) with Barthélemy Menn (1815-93) – himself formerly taught by Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres (1780-1867) –<sup>37</sup>, Hodler, like Menn,<sup>38</sup> paid particular attention to line and form in pictorial composition.<sup>39</sup> Ingres had also explained the role of line and exactness as elements of expression; in his notebooks (c. 1820-78), he had explained: ‘Expression in painting demands a very great science of drawing; for expression cannot be good if it has not been formulated with absolute exactitude... Thus the painters of expression, among the moderns, turn out to be the greatest draftsmen... Expression, an essential element of art, is

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 127.

<sup>38</sup> Richard A. Moore, 'Academic "Dessin" Theory in France after the Reorganization of 1863', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 36, No. 3, 1977, 147, 174. Moore notes the influence of Menn on Hodler. He writes: ‘In Switzerland as well the influence of *dessin* in the post-Reorganization period served to reinforce a preexistent academic Beaux-Arts tradition. A more articulate utilization of *dessin géométral* was evident in Frédéric Gillet, *Resumé sommaire d'une méthode de dessin*, Geneva, 1867... Gillet was a professor at the École Municipale, but his book reflects the method of the Geneva École des Beaux-Arts, where Barthélemy Menn taught in the late 60s and early 70s. It was Menn who was instrumental in teaching Ferdinand Hodler, after he enrolled at the École in 1872, how to apply the *aplomb* [i. e., ‘a formal or structural vertical accent, which when projected to infinity, passed through the centre of the world’] to the painting of human figures so as to achieve an unprecedentedly monumental, even architectural, effect.’

<sup>39</sup> Selz, *Ferdinand Hodler*, 16.

therefore intimately bound up with form.’<sup>40</sup> For Ingres and Menn, contemplating the role of line and form in picture-making, and then allowing them to articulate representational compositions was an integral aspect of their practice. Hodler further explored this line of thought on art-making.

The abstract aspects of representational pictures become visible in Hodler’s own works. In a painting such as *Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau in the Morning Sun* (1908) (Fig. 2), for instance, Hodler depicts a landscape from nature, yet gives priority to planes and chromatic separations when representing it. Focusing on a natural vista, Hodler suggests spatial three-dimensionality through the transition from darker, chromatically assertive passages in the foreground to lighter and flatter areas in the background. His attention to communicating depth of space shows his representational intent. However, the painting renders the monumental mass of cliffs and rocks, allowing effects of light as observed on mountain surfaces to shape emplaced materiality rather than the fleetingness of appearances or the passage of time. Clouds travel in rows parallel to the horizontal edges of the picture, paradoxically reinforcing the stability of the composition. Repetition and parallelism articulate a powerfully representational image, yet reveal the abstraction-oriented preoccupations of the painter at the same time.



Fig. 2. Ferdinand Hodler. *Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau in the Morning Sun*. 1908. oil on canvas. 67 x 46 cm. Private collection.

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<sup>40</sup> Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres, 'From *Notebooks*' in *Art in Theory 1815 - 1900. An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, eds. Charles Harrison, Paul Wood, and Jason Gaiger (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, c. 1820-1848), 184.

Hodler and Worringer assume comparably complex approaches to representation and abstraction in art. In ‘The Mission of the Artist,’ a lecture given to the Friends of Fine Arts Society [*Société des Amis des Beaux Arts*] in Fribourg (12 March 1897), Hodler explains his views on representation. For him as for Worringer, the art of representation (or reproduction, in Hodler’s own terms) reflects the connection of artists with the world. In *Abstraction and Empathy*, Worringer notes the confidence representational artists have in their environment, their sensuous appreciation of it, and their joyful state of mind in front of nature.<sup>41</sup> Hodler also draws attention to the emotions artists working with representation experience in response to their world. According to Hodler:

We reproduce what we love... Emotion is one of the first causes which impels a painter to create a work of art. He wants to convey the charm of a landscape, of a human being, of nature, which has moved him so deeply. The impressions he receives from the outside leave on him more or less deep and lasting traces, and the choice he makes determines the character of his work and his own character as a painter.<sup>42</sup>

Emotional and ethical aspects characterise representation, Hodler maintains: the choice of subject-matter impacts the making of art as well as the character of the artist. Art-making and being in the world stand in powerful connection for Hodler, who focuses on depicting gestures and attitudes reflective of inner states in many of his paintings.

*Emotion*, a work by Hodler from 1900 (Fig. 3), creates a sense of visual resonance between figure and landscape. The paths to the left and to the right of the figure echo the shape of her shoulders and position of her arms. Hodler employs tints and tones of blue to render the dress of his protagonist as well as the mountains in the distance; while depicting gesture and pose, his painting makes visible an inner state experienced in natural surroundings. Pictorial form and the expression of emotion amplify each other in Hodler’s approach.

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<sup>41</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 45-46.

<sup>42</sup> Selz, *Ferdinand Hodler*, 119.



Fig. 3. Ferdinand Hodler. *Emotion [Ergriffenheit]*. 1900. oil on canvas. 70 x 115 cm. Vienna. Österreichische Galerie Belvedere.

Where Worringer sees abstraction as a mode of distancing from the world,<sup>43</sup> Hodler looks at the world in abstract terms, yet engages with it at the same time. For Worringer, abstract art arises when artists feel the need for peace and rest in a destabilising world; accordingly, they approximate objects to abstract forms. The resulting geometrical compositions thus reflect anguished or restless states of mind, Worringer argues.<sup>44</sup> On the other hand, Hodler seems to be at peace with the world when discovering the abstract components of natural motifs. He associates parallelism with unity in 'The Mission of the Artist,' where he notes:

Parallelism, whether it is the main feature of the picture or whether it is used to set off an element of variety, always produces a feeling of unity. If I go for a walk in a forest of very high fir trees, I can see ahead of me, to the right and to the left, the innumerable columns formed by the tree trunks. I am surrounded by the same vertical line repeated an infinite number of times. Whether those tree trunks stand out clear against a darker background or whether they are silhouetted against a deep blue sky, the main note, causing that impression of unity, is the parallelism of the tree trunks.<sup>45</sup>

A painting like Hodler's *Forest Brook at Leissingen* (1904) (Fig. 4), for instance, balances variety and unity. The different shapes, tonalities and surface textures of stones and boulders

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<sup>43</sup> For instance, see Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 16-17.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> Selz, *Ferdinand Hodler*, 123.

introduce an element of variety and visual dynamism. At the same time, the rhythm established by the line of trees in the middle ground adds a sense of unity and repetition to his picture. Abstract aspects of composition come to the fore in Hodler's otherwise representational painting.

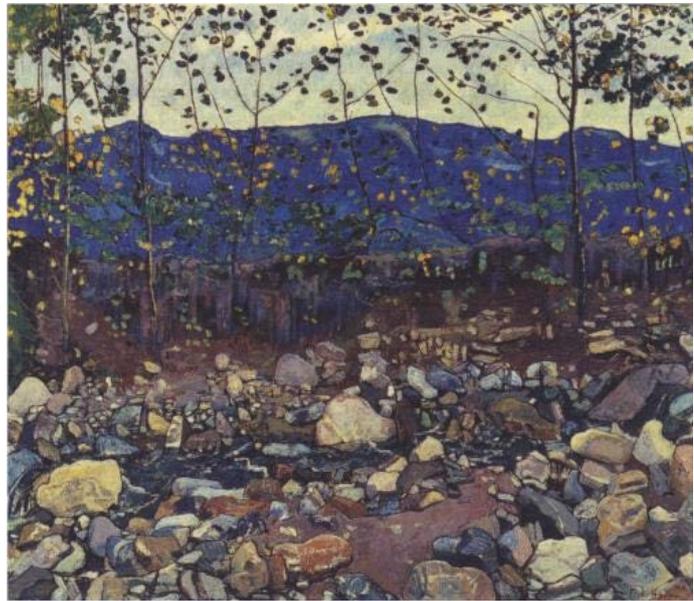


Fig. 4. Ferdinand Hodler. *Forest Brook at Leissingen*. 1904. oil on canvas. 88.5 x 101.5 cm. Zurich. Kunsthaus.

For Worringer, abstract art approximates objects, thus showing their unchanging, enduring aspects. He argues that abstraction can be attained when artists do not render the three-dimensionality of space, when they avoid subjective elements, and when they do not allude to the passage of time. Associating abstraction with 'absolute,' 'eternal,' 'crystalline' qualities of form, Worringer notes that abstraction is most clearly observable in art that employs geometric components. Free from its connections with the world, geometric abstraction nevertheless displays characteristics also recognizable in inorganic matter.<sup>46</sup> Yet Worringer's discussions of Gothic in *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic* also reveal his

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<sup>46</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 35, 37. With regard to the crystalline fundament of organic matter in Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy*, Joseph Masheck remarks: '[I]t is worth considering that the understanding of specifically organic structure as crypto-crystalline on even the molecular level was only established with August Kekulé's hypothetical hexagon of the benzene ring of organic chemistry, in Worringer's childhood. What, after all, in the entire universe, is more literally organic than the metaphorically crystalline benzene ring?' Masheck, 'Abstraction and Apathy: Crystalline Form in Expressionism and in the Minimalism of Tony Smith', 48-49.

sensitivity to the coexistence between abstraction and representation, as further sections of this thesis highlight.

To better delimit the domain of abstraction, Worringer contrasts it with representation – the mode of art-making that emerges in response to the urge to empathy.<sup>47</sup> He explains that viewers can regard three-dimensional renditions of models from nature as distressingly changeable; therefore, three-dimensionality cannot become a feature of abstraction. Appearances as rendered in Impressionism, for instance, do not reveal the enduring qualities of models; according to Worringer, abstraction cannot be associated with Impressionism.<sup>48</sup> Worringer finds that the emphasis of Impressionism on optical qualities communicates uncertain, changeable aspects of the world. Also, three-dimensional space – articulated through shading and foreshortening in painting –<sup>49</sup> suggests the temporality of and connections between depicted objects and phenomena;<sup>50</sup> it cannot inform abstract art-making, Worringer argues.

Abstraction uses single forms set free from their dependence on space relations, while representation makes visible three-dimensional connections, according to Worringer.<sup>51</sup> He underscores that representation, unlike abstraction, relies on optical renditions that account for changes, appearances, atmosphere, depth of space, and the passage of time. Artists working with representation allude to spatial depth through techniques such as shading and foreshortening, which amplify spatial effects.<sup>52</sup> Observing that compositional elements succeed each other and combine in representational art, Worringer exposes the temporal and spatial aspects of representation.

Representational works exhibit lifelike qualities such as animation (or dynamism of form and composition) for Worringer; due to their fostering the process of empathy, they become reflections of human experience. Worringer had already pointed out that representation (or naturalism) was an artistic manifestation of the urge to empathy. He emphasized that the urge

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<sup>47</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 38.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> For the purposes of this thesis, shading is defined as the technique of rendering light fall and shadows as observed on chosen models or environments, and foreshortening as the technique of suggesting depth effects in the rendition of models or environments.

<sup>50</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 38-39.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

to empathy informed naturalist art; in response to naturalism, viewers resonated with the world, and artists engaged in the communication of their emotions towards organic life. In his discussion of the difference between naturalism and imitation, Worringer draws attention to the effect empathy, as experienced by viewers, has on the interpretation of works of art. He observes:

... naturalism alone is accessible to aesthetic evaluation. Its psychic presupposition, as can be clearly understood, is the process of empathy, for which the object nearest to hand is always the cognate organic, i. e. formal processes occur within the work of art which correspond to the natural organic tendencies in man, and permit him, in aesthetic perception, to flow uninhibitedly with his inner feeling of vitality, with his inner need for activity, into the felicitous current of this formal happening.<sup>53</sup>

For Worringer, empathy emerges especially in response to organic, lifelike characteristics; naturalist (or representational) art encourages an empathic response from the part of viewers. Empathy surfaces when art-viewing relies on a correspondence between feeling and form, Worringer argues.<sup>54</sup> Details, descriptions and narratives as rendered in representational art seem less important to Worringer than the approach to form proposed by representation. Worringer approaches representation from a perspective that underscores its abstract, ‘stylistic’ characteristics.<sup>55</sup>

Hodler had also addressed the abstract-formal content of representational work in the notes sent to one of his friends, poet and art critic Louis Duchosal (1862-1901), around 1891.<sup>56</sup> Bearing in mind paintings from his oeuvre such as such as *Night* (1890), *Tired of Living* (1892), or *The Disillusioned* (1892) – also known as *The Saddened Souls*, or *The Saddened Geniuses* –, Hodler mentioned that in his work he intended to emphasize the resemblances

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>54</sup> Worringer’s opinions on the correspondence between the emotions of viewers and the form of artworks may have been inspired by Lipps’ thoughts. In his *Aesthetics*, Lipps distinguishes between ‘general apperceptive empathy’ and ‘empirical empathy.’ He argues that, while general apperceptive empathy emerges when the forms of objects are acknowledged, or considered generically, empirical empathy occurs in response to the viewer’s active engagement with such forms. For instance, Lipps finds that the active side of empathy causes viewers to relate differently to a vertical line when they trace and respond to its descent, and its ascent respectively. (Lipps, *Estetica. Psihologia Frumosului și a Artei*, 270-273.)

<sup>55</sup> The relationship between form, representation and abstraction is briefly addressed in ‘“Common to all”: form for Kant and Worringer’.

<sup>56</sup> For further details on Hodler’s text as well as on its uncertain dating, see Selz, *Ferdinand Hodler*, 116.

rather than the differences between human beings. Rendering generic unity and harmony were more important to him than depicting the world in its details. In the words of Hodler:

I want to attain a powerful unity, a religious harmony. What I wish to express, to stress, is that which is the same for us all, what makes us alike; the resemblance between human beings.

Art has increasingly moved away from that conception since the Egyptian period. The Greeks, then the Romans, introduced more and more variety (variety within symmetry, with Michelangelo and Raphael). The present period is completely invaded by variety. Resemblances between human beings, large and simple harmonies are not translated. Technical preoccupations, small preoccupations are all that painters think about, instead of the whole. But art on a small scale is unreal.

I start from the great unity of life. There may be differences, but even more there are analogies...

I ignore accidental reality, small effects, witty traits, little sparks. The style of painting is subordinated to the form. I do away with whatever could distract the spectator from the whole.<sup>57</sup>

For Hodler, representational painting needed to underscore resemblances, commonalities, analogies, unity, harmony; his views on representational practice reveal his preference for potentially abstract elements of art-making, such as the cultivation of formal generality through simplification and elision of details.

Four years after the 1891 notes, Hodler painted *Eurythmy* (1895) (Fig. 5), a work where the principles he had drawn around 1891 receive persuasive expression. *Eurythmy* employs human and vegetal motifs, yet also asserts Hodler's preoccupations with compositional aspects of form. Thin tree trunks emphasize the vertical edges of the painting; between them, Hodler depicts a procession of monk-like figures clad in white. Providing his protagonists outward and inward grounds for shared expression, Hodler shows the monks walking in

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 115.

silence. He represents the distinct personality and strongly identifying facial features of each of his characters. Unity and harmony of mood – features that also highlight the representational qualities of Hodler’s composition – are counterbalanced by his attention to compositional simplicity, repetition and parallelism. Abstract generality and representational specificity both inform Hodler’s picture.



Fig. 5. Ferdinand Hodler. *Eurythmy* [*Eurhythmie*]. 1894-95. oil on canvas. 166 x 244 cm. Bern. Kunstmuseum.

Like Hodler, Worringer is attentive to both abstract and representational characteristics of art. Although he distinguishes between abstraction and representation, contrasting them at length, Worringer still observes and analyses their shared grounds. Hodler considers the interweaving of abstract and representational aspects fundamental in painting; he observes and explains the key qualities of art-making without delineating their theoretical differences. Instead, Worringer focuses on the differentiations between representation and abstraction; for instance, he notes that, when art ceased to rely on renditions of three-dimensional space, it started to emphasize verticality and horizontality. In the words of Worringer: ‘Avoidance of the representation of space and suppression of depth relations led to the same result, i. e. restriction of the representation to extension vertically and horizontally.’<sup>58</sup> Associating representation with the rendition of three-dimensional space and depth in art, Worringer highlights a point of passage between representation and abstraction: he emphasizes that two-

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<sup>58</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 39.

dimensional aspects of art-making surface as soon as artists renounce alluding to three-dimensionality.

### **Distinctions and transitions: Alois Riegl on the art of antiquity**

To support his views on the transition from representation to abstraction in art-making, Worringer cites Riegl concerning the art of Antiquity. The people of Antiquity found the world and its objects confusing, according to Riegl;<sup>59</sup> they represented objects as self-standing material unities in order to avoid uncertainty.<sup>60</sup> Worringer mentions the insights of Riegl into the ancient perspective on the representation of objects.<sup>61</sup> As quoted by Worringer in *Abstraction and Empathy*, Riegl argues that, to represent material individuality clearly, the artists of Antiquity needed to emphasize height and width rather than depth and space.<sup>62</sup> For Riegl, the horizontal and vertical dimensions were sufficient to render self-standing objects.

In *Late Roman Art Industry* (1901), Riegl had pointed to three phases in the arts of Antiquity: the tactile phase, the tactile-optical phase, and the optical phase. The tactile phase manifested in Egyptian art; artworks of this phase highlighted planes (or flat surfaces), the proximity of viewers to such planes, and the symmetry of compositional elements. Riegl also pointed to an intermediate, tactile-optical phase, as observable in Classical Greek art; artists working during this phase still emphasized planes and the connection of elements within planes, but softened their approach to symmetry, and included foreshortenings, half-shadows, as well as

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<sup>59</sup> Worringer's openly acknowledged debt to Riegl with regard to the analysis of artistic processes throughout history is as extensive as Worringer's reliance on Lipps' analysis of empathy. Worringer tends to agree with the opinions of Riegl; yet exceptions to Worringer's approval of Riegl's thought can also be found in *Abstraction and Empathy*. (Ibid., 56, 58, 68, 70-71, 95-96.)

<sup>60</sup> Alois Riegl and Rolf Winkes, *Late Roman Art Industry* (Roma: G. Bretschneider, 1985 [1901]), 21.

<sup>61</sup> Margaret Iversen focuses on Riegl's views on style. She explains: 'For Riegl, different stylistic types, understood as expressions of a varying *Kunstwollen*, are read as different ideals of perception or as different ways of regarding the mind's relationship to its objects and of organizing the material of perception. Art displays people's reflexiveness of the mind/world or subject/object relationship. To put it in terms Riegl would not have used, art makes explicit the implicit values and presuppositions that structure people's experience of the world.' See Margaret Iversen, *Alois Riegl: Art History and Theory* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1993), 8. Iversen also points to Gombrich's critical views on Riegl, as expressed in *Art and Illusion* (1960). Gombrich, Iversen notes, signals the possible totalitarian inflections of Riegl's perspective on style as the manifestation of collective rather than personal tendencies in art. Riegl addressed the historical aspects of the judgment of taste, Iversen writes; she mentions that Riegl's analyses included forms of art previously addressed only in archaeology and anthropology, and argues that Worringer follows in Riegl's footsteps. (Ibid., 4, 6-7.)

<sup>62</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 41-42.

expressions of mental states.<sup>63</sup> In the optical phase of ancient art (noticeable in the time of the Late Roman Empire), Riegl explained that individual forms acquired a certain degree of three-dimensionality, although artists placed such forms within planes; however, the deep shadows that divided planes and blurred edges suggested an artistic interest in sight as well as subjectivity.<sup>64</sup>

Riegl approached the art of antiquity from the perspective of aesthetics in *Late Roman Art Industry*; he privileged the senses of touch and sight in his analyses. Distinguishing between tactile and optical phases of art-making, he highlighted their middle ground as made visible in Classic Greek art. With regard to the intermediate, tactile-optical phase of the art of Antiquity, Riegl wrote:

The absolute purpose in the visual arts is still to awake a perception of tactile impenetrability as a condition for material individuality; the coherent and tactile connection of the partial planes should not be interrupted; on the other side, the eye is now the most important recording organ allowed to perceive the existence of the projecting partial forms; these are mainly disclosed through shadows. To perceive them the eye has to move a little from the *Nahsicht* [i. e., the proximate, the tactile]: not too far away, so that the uninterrupted tactile connection of the parts are no longer visible (*Fernsicht*) [i. e., the visually distant, the optical], but rather to the middle between *Nahsicht* and *Fernsicht*; we may call it *Normalsicht* [i. e., normal vision]. This kind of perception, which characterizes the second stage in ancient art, is tactile-optical and, from the optical point of view, more precisely *normalsichtig*; its purest expression is the classical art of the Greeks.<sup>65</sup>

For Riegl, the tactile and optical approaches to art found common ground in tactile-optical Greek Classicism. Sight – the sense that accounts for distance, according to Riegl – needed adjusting in order to reach the stage of ‘normal vision’ of the tactile-optical phase. ‘Normal vision’ required a greater degree of distance than ‘the tactile,’ and a lesser degree of distance than ‘the optical,’ indirectly revealing abstract as well as representational components of art-

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<sup>63</sup> Riegl and Winkes, *Late Roman Art Industry*, 25-26.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 26-27.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

making. When addressing artworks of the tactile, tactile-optical, and optical phases of Antiquity, Riegl discussed representational elements (such as the rendering of space and depth) alongside abstract elements (such as the emphasis on tactility, planes, formal individuality and materiality). He was aware of a middle ground between representational and abstract elements.<sup>66</sup>

In the time of Riegl and Worringer, Hildebrand also looked into the relationship between sight and touch in art-making.<sup>67</sup> When explaining his Architectural Method in *The Problem of Form in Painting and Sculpture*, Hildebrand had emphasized the role of senses in art. He drew particular attention to sight and touch, noting that these two senses are specific to the human eye. According to him:

The artist's activity consists, then, in further developing such of his faculties as provide him with spatial perception, namely his faculties of sight and touch. These two different means of perceiving the same phenomenon not only have separate existence in our faculties for sight and touch, but are united in the eye. Nature having endowed our eyes so richly, these two functions of seeing and touching exist here in a far more intimate union than they do when performed by different sense organs. An artistic talent consists in having these two functions precisely and harmoniously related.<sup>68</sup>

Asserting that the human eye brought together touching and seeing, Hildebrand pointed out that the union of seeing and touching was particularly important in the domain of the arts. Riegl, like Hildebrand, addressed the union of touch and sight; in *Late Roman Art Industry*, Riegl found that the 'normal vision' recognizable in the art of ancient Greece depended on the balancing of distance and proximity, and on the cooperation of seeing and touching.

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<sup>66</sup> Nevertheless, Iversen mentions that the confrontation of opposites is highlighted in Riegl's later works; she points to the influence of Hegel's *Aesthetics* in this regard. See Iversen, *Alois Riegl: Art History and Theory*, 10.

<sup>67</sup> Iversen notes that Riegl was influenced by Hildebrand's approach to 'near' and 'distant' views, as explained by Hildebrand in *The Problem of Form in Painting and Sculpture* (1893). She regards Hildebrand's perspective as also echoed in Wölfflin's linear and painterly from *Principles of Art History* (1915). (Ibid., 9.)

<sup>68</sup> Hildebrand, *The Problem of Form in Painting and Sculpture*, 14.

Following Riegl, Worringer noted the differences between the art of ancient Egypt and the art of ancient Greece respectively.<sup>69</sup> However, Worringer underscored the contrast between ancient Greek and Egyptian approaches to art-making, associating them with representational and abstract strategies in *Abstraction and Empathy*.<sup>70</sup> Like Riegl, Worringer offered his own intuitive interpretation of the artistic motivations that fostered the creation of art in Antiquity. Yet, unlike Riegl, Worringer emphasized imagination over observation in his approach to ancient art; for him, representation was associated with reconstructing the world within two-dimensional boundaries. Activities Worringer connected with abstraction (such as taking distance from the world and rendering two-dimensional rather than three-dimensional characteristics) also informed the making of representational works. In Worringer's view, representational art-making proves to rely on processes of abstraction. The polar antithesis between abstraction and representation thus becomes increasingly difficult to uphold as Worringer's demonstration advances.

### **Abstraction: representational inflections**

In *Abstraction and Empathy*, Worringer inquires into the two conditions that support the emergence of abstraction:<sup>71</sup> two-dimensionality (where planes are asserted), and the bringing together of natural models and abstract elements (such as geometric forms of crystalline

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<sup>69</sup> Iversen draws attention to Worringer's debt to Riegl; like Margaret Olin in *Forms of Representation in Alois Riegl's Theory of Art* (1992), Iversen considers Worringer to be a representative of Expressionist art history. Iversen sees Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy* as 'popularizing and reductive', and criticizes Worringer's transcendental tendencies, as well as Worringer's approach to types of mankind (primitive man, classical man and oriental man) in *Form in Gothic*. See Iversen, *Alois Riegl: Art History and Theory*, 14. Also, Margaret Rose Olin, *Forms of Representation in Alois Riegl's Theory of Art* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992), xxii. Olin points to Riegl's influence on Worringer regarding his use of the term 'style,' which Worringer employs in *Abstraction and Empathy* to refer to abstraction in art-making. Olin finds Worringer's approach to form in *Abstraction and Empathy* to be 'mystical', and discusses the relevance of Riegl's thought in connection with Worringer's approach to form and its significance in art. *Ibid.*, 86, 180, 189.

<sup>70</sup> Worringer contrasts ancient Greek and Egyptian art, finding in them clear examples of representational and abstract approaches to art-making. However, he does not associate Greek art with representation, and Egyptian art with abstraction, throughout *Abstraction and Empathy*. Worringer observes, for instance, that representational and abstract tendencies coexisted in Egyptian art. (Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 12.) Worringer does not point to specific works or epochs with regard to Egyptian art; the contrast between the art of ancient Egypt and the art of ancient Greece retains its generality in *Abstraction and Empathy*, where it serves a specific purpose: to support Worringer's theory on abstraction and empathy.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 41-42.

regularity).<sup>72</sup> Thus, abstraction does not rely on the complete exclusion of representational elements for Worringer, who observes that art-making may be characterized by different degrees of abstraction. In Egyptian art, abstraction was most visible, according to him, since artists transmuted three-dimensional relationships into two-dimensional relationships, and showed the geometric qualities of models from nature. Citing Riegl, Worringer notes the abstract features of ancient Egyptian art: regularity and strict proportionality, geometric treatment of motifs, unity and continuity of outlines.<sup>73</sup>

However, Worringer acknowledges abstraction as manifest to different degrees in different cultural contexts. He notes, for instance, that artworks could meet the second key condition of the emergence of abstraction only: they could connect models from nature to geometric elements, allowing appearances as observed in the world to still inform art-making.<sup>74</sup> Worringer recognizes that the urge to empathy operates alongside the urge to abstraction in such contexts; he further discusses their coexistence in Gothic art.<sup>75</sup>

Gothic art provides Worringer the opportunity to examine the meeting of representational and abstract tendencies in a historical context. Observing that tendencies towards abstraction and tendencies towards representation meet in Romanesque and Gothic style, Worringer focuses on Medieval sculpture for exemplification. He considers that the coexistence of representational and abstract elements in Medieval sculpture generates an artistic hybrid which combines realism (as expressed in typical, or particularizing, features) and abstraction (as observed in basic, elementary forms). In the words of Worringer:

This realism [i. e., of Medieval sculpture] had now come to terms, in Romanesque and Gothic art, with the purely formal-abstract artistic volition. This led to an odd hybrid formation. The typifying imitation impulse seized upon the heads of the figures as the seat of expression of the soul; the drapery that suppressed all corporeality, however, remained the province of the abstract artistic urge.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 42-43.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 106-121.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 118.

A certain degree of ambivalence characterizes Worringer's approach to abstraction throughout *Abstraction and Empathy*. For instance, Worringer argues that, in art-making, the guiding impulse is the urge to abstraction. The world presents a picture laden with uncertainty for him: this provides abstraction its point of emergence. He considers that, if art-making is to offer an opportunity for rest in the midst of changes, it has to strive towards abstraction – more specifically, towards geometric abstraction. Offering no definition for 'geometric abstraction,' Worringer nevertheless employs this phrase to refer to art that highlights geometric characteristics to various degrees. Abstraction, according to him, can be informed by representational elements, even when it aspires towards the crystalline qualities of geometry.<sup>77</sup>

Worringer mentions the pyramids of Egypt as examples of fully articulated geometric abstraction. He notes: 'Our reasons for terming the pyramid the perfect example of all abstract tendencies are evident. It gives the purest expression to them. In so far as the cubic can be transmuted into abstraction, it has been done here. Lucid rendering of material individuality, severely geometric regularity, transposition of the cubic into surface impressions: all the dictates of an extreme urge to abstraction are here fulfilled.'<sup>78</sup> Nevertheless, he argues that the urge to abstraction goes through yet another phase, during which artists keep referring to the world around them, yet attempt to render observed objects as independent from it. According to him:

The primal artistic impulse has nothing to do with nature. It seeks after pure abstraction as the only possibility of repose within the confusion and obscurity of the world-picture, and creates out of itself, with instinctive necessity, geometric abstraction. It is the consummate expression, and the only expression of which man can conceive, of emancipation from all the contingency and temporality of the world-picture. Then, however, he feels the urge also to wrest the single thing out of the outer world, which captures his interest in outstanding measure, from its unclear and bewildering connection with the outer world and thereby out of the course of happening: he wishes to approximate it, in its rendering, to its material individuality, to purify it of whatever it has of life and temporality, to make it as far as possible

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 40-42.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 91.

independent of both the ambient external world and of the subject – the spectator – who desires to enjoy in it not the cognate-organic, but the necessity and regularity in which, with his attachment to life, he can rest as in the abstraction for which he has yearned and which is alone accessible to him.<sup>79</sup>

Worringer thus signals the twofold commitments made visible in abstraction-oriented art: firstly, the tendency of artists to seek complete freedom from a world of changes; secondly, the interest of artists in the world around them, and their effort to reshape its observed phenomena. In both cases, abstract art develops in response to the world, albeit through distancing and transformation. The grounds for the urge to empathy are still available, to a certain degree, within Worringer's abstraction-oriented art.

The urge to empathy and the urge to abstraction support the articulation of Worringer's subjectively oriented perspective in *Abstraction and Empathy*. Aesthetic objectivity, or the open-minded interest in a world considered external to the self, is of less interest to him. Art, according to him, reflects the relationships between human beings and their environments; he intends to explore how the world influences art-viewing and art-making by focusing on emotional aspects of responding to the world.

Worringer is critical towards early twentieth-century aesthetics. Although he thinks that contemporary aesthetic explorations account for the subjective dimension involved in the making and viewing of art, he argues that focusing exclusively on empathy does not suffice. Tendencies towards empathy are associated by Worringer with the making of, or response to, Classical Greek art; in *Abstraction and Empathy*, it is his purpose to show that artworks emerge from perspectives that are subjective, yet not necessarily reflective of the principles of Classicism.

### **Worringer and Classicism**

Classicism offers Worringer an opportunity to articulate the antithesis between representation and abstraction; therefore, it remains under scrutiny throughout Worringer's *Abstraction and*

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 44.

*Empathy*. During epochs where Classicism was the predominant approach to art-making, Worringer argues, a balance between understanding and instinct was attained.<sup>80</sup> However, he emphasizes that, in fact, the relationship between human beings and the world is characterized not by confidence or harmony, but by fear.<sup>81</sup> For example, he points to the ‘...disputation between man and the outer world’ in ‘Transcendence and Immanence in Art’,<sup>82</sup> a text that allows him to revisit and further clarify his claims from *Abstraction and Empathy*.

Highlighting the common ground established by Classicism between instinctive and rational approaches to the world, Worringer expresses his distrust towards the integrative, harmonizing approach he associates with Classicism. In his words: ‘The Classical state of soul, in which instinct and understanding no longer represent irreconcilable opposites, but are fused together into an integral organ for the apprehension of the world, has narrower boundaries than our European arrogance admits.’<sup>83</sup> Worringer is critical towards the bringing together of opposites as he observes them in European culture, and notes the limitations of European Classicism throughout *Abstraction and Empathy*. For him, Classical tendencies reach completion in the work of Immanuel Kant.<sup>84</sup> Worringer makes only brief references to Kant’s work in *Abstraction and Empathy*; however, *Abstraction and Empathy* relies on Kant’s perspective when establishing the connection between inner experience and predetermined aesthetic categories of form.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 128-129.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 129-130.

<sup>82</sup> Worringer and Kramer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 128.

<sup>83</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 130.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 30.

## Part 2: Predecessors, critics, supporters

### ‘Common to all’: form for Kant and Worringer

The writings of Immanuel Kant provide a point of reference for the end of Classical culture, according to Worringer.<sup>1</sup> Yet Worringer’s critical views on Classicism do not affect his reliance on Kant’s thought;<sup>2</sup> in fact, Worringer refers to Kant when addressing the question of form in *Abstraction and Empathy*. Distinguishing between narrative and formal strands in art is obligatory in contemporary aesthetic analyses, Worringer argues.<sup>3</sup> He explains that various modes of art-making require writers to employ different terms and methods. For him, aesthetics, more than anything, must focus on an examination of form. Form, according to Worringer, offers an aesthetic foundation to personal experience – it provides a point of reference to aesthetic feelings of pleasure and displeasure,<sup>4</sup> and opens common grounds for interpretation. Worringer writes:

In other words, discussion must always be confined to an aesthetics of form, and we can speak of aesthetic effect only where inner experience moves within universal aesthetic categories – if we may carry over onto the province of aesthetics this expression of Kant's for *a priori* forms. For only in so far as it appeals to these categories, to these elementary aesthetic feelings, which are common to all men even if variously developed, does the character of necessity and inner regularity adhere to

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., 130.

<sup>2</sup> Worringer departs from Kant’s perspective when arguing, for example, for the strict separation between art and nature, and when focusing his research primarily on art. (Ibid., 3-4.) From this point of view, Worringer’s thought comes closer to the views of G. W. F. Hegel (1770-1831). In his *Lectures on Fine Art* (1820-29), Hegel explains: ‘... [T]he beauty of art is *higher* than nature. The beauty of art is *beauty born of the spirit and born again*, and the higher the spirit and its productions stand above nature and its phenomena, the higher too is the beauty of art above that of nature.’ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and T. M. Knox, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975 [1820-29]), 2. Examining the applications of the power of judgment in the domain of nature had been a primary concern for Kant; he had established that the principles of judgment suited for natural inquiries could be extended to art as well. In the first version of his introduction to *The Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Kant explains that, if the judging of natural beauty occurs according to certain principles, then these principles are also applicable to the judging of art. Kant and Guyer, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 55. (See ‘Preface to the first edition, 1790’.) In the second version of his introductory texts to the Third Critique, Kant posits that for the reflective power of judgment nature and art are equivalent topics. ———, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 57, 82. (Preface, and Introduction, IX).

<sup>3</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 30.

<sup>4</sup> Worringer and Kramer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 5-6.

the artistic object; and it is this character alone which justifies us in making a work of art the subject of aesthetic-scientific investigation.<sup>5</sup>

Readdressing the intent of his investigation, Worringer (who had begun his argument by criticizing contemporary aesthetics) states his commitment not only to a psychological framework, but also to an aesthetic perspective. Aesthetics, which Kant regards as the domain of the judgment of taste,<sup>6</sup> provides Worringer with the opportunity to engage with fundamental aspects of artworks, and to emphasize the subjectivity of his own argument. In *The Critique of the Power of Judgment* (1790), Kant had associated taste with subjectivity,<sup>7</sup> and with the feeling of pleasure and displeasure in response to the beautiful object;<sup>8</sup> he had found form to be a key element of aesthetic consideration.<sup>9</sup>

For Kant, purposive form (or *forma finalis*) was a key quality of objects.<sup>10</sup> Yet the purposiveness of form as observed in objects did not have to meet an end, and did not result from wilful action or rational deduction.<sup>11</sup> Viewers could simply reflect on form and recognize its purposiveness, without attaching a specific purpose to it.<sup>12</sup> Positing that aesthetic judgments were based on the form taken by the purposiveness of objects,<sup>13</sup> Kant argued that aesthetic satisfaction became communicable when it addressed an object's form of purposiveness.<sup>14</sup> He thus found that aesthetic judgment relied on contemplating form and communicating about it.

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<sup>5</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 30-31.

<sup>6</sup> Kant and Guyer, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 57-58 (Preface).

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 48-49 (First Introduction), 79 (Introduction, VIII).

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 73-77 (Introduction, VI-VII).

<sup>9</sup> Further inquiry into Kant's views on subjectivity, taste, pleasure and displeasure, as well as into the echoes of Kant's views in *Abstraction and Empathy*, need to make the topic of a different investigation – they require extensive focus. Kant's approach to form is briefly discussed in order to contextualize Worringer's research and shed light on the relationship between representation and abstraction in *Abstraction and Empathy*.

<sup>10</sup> Kant and Guyer, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 105. See § 10: 'On purposiveness in general'.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 106. See § 11: 'The judgment of taste has nothing but the *form of the purposiveness* of an object (or of the way of representing it) as its ground'.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 106-107. See § 12: 'The judgment of taste rests on *a priori* grounds'.

## Form, beauty, charm and emotion

According to Kant, form provided ground for the judgment of the beauty of an object.<sup>15</sup> The beautiful – a quality of objects that generated pleasure in the absence of concepts of reason –<sup>16</sup> invited contemplation and gave the mind of viewers an enjoyable task. ‘We linger over the consideration of the beautiful because this consideration strengthens and reproduces itself’,<sup>17</sup> Kant noted. For him, beauty concerned form and invited impartial judgment,<sup>18</sup> while charm and emotions hinted to sensuous gratification, and arose interest rather than disinterestedness.<sup>19</sup> Aesthetic judgment had to remain uninfluenced by agreeableness, Kant explained, yet mentioned that charms were often considered beautiful. Where charm took the place of beauty, aesthetic judgment depended on personal satisfaction rather than on the contemplation of form.

In ‘The Experience of Art is Paradise Regained: Kant on Free and Dependent Beauty’ (1994), Denis Dutton points out that, where Kant distinguishes between charms and emotion on the one hand, and form on the other, he begins to complicate his previously unproblematic approach to aesthetic judgment.<sup>20</sup> Once Kant accepts that charms and emotion can be connected to judgments of taste, he includes daily aspects of response to beauty in his approach to aesthetic judgment. Claims of purity and freedom are increasingly difficult to sustain in *The Critique of the Power of Judgment* from §13 onwards, according to Dutton.

## Senses and form

Accepting that senses generate diverse experiences, Kant questioned the capacity of sensations (which he defined as representations provided by senses) to offer solid ground for

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 106.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 103-104. See § 9: ‘Investigation of the question: whether in the judgment of taste the feeling of pleasure precedes the judging of the object or the latter precedes the former’. Also, ‘The definition of the beautiful drawn from the second moment’.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 107. See § 12: ‘The judgment of taste rests on *a priori* grounds’.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 107-108. See § 13: ‘The pure judgment of taste is independent from charm and emotion’.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Denis Dutton, ‘The Experience of Art is Paradise Regained: Kant on Free and Dependent Beauty’. This essay is unpaginated at <http://www.denisdutton.com/kant.htm> (unabridged version), and paginated in *The British Journal of Aesthetics*, 34, 1994, 226-241 (abridged version).

aesthetic accord between viewers.<sup>21</sup> He observed that viewers could communicate about the form of objects with much more certainty than when discussing their sensations. Form offered better ground for aesthetic judgment, Kant found,<sup>22</sup> yet also argued that both sensation and form could offer a starting point for aesthetic judgment as long as viewers were able to communicate their personal feelings on art to the largest audience conceivable. This was the key requirement of aesthetic judgment, according to him. In his words:

The universal communicability of the sensation (of satisfaction or dissatisfaction), and indeed one that occurs without concepts, the unanimity, so far as possible, of all times and peoples about this feeling in the representation of certain objects: although weak and hardly sufficient for conjecture, this is the empirical criterion of the derivation of taste, confirmed by examples, from the common ground, deeply buried in all human beings, of unanimity in the judging of forms under which objects are given to them.<sup>23</sup>

According to Kant, communicating about beauty in generally understood terms was possible because humanity was in fundamental agreement regarding forms and their aesthetic qualities. Where Kant underscored the common ground between viewers from all cultures and epochs, Worringer emphasized cultural and historical differentiations. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Worringer wrote in defence of abstraction – a mode of art-making not favoured by his contemporaries. Worringer accepted this situation, yet made it his goal to explain to his readers how abstraction could be approached.<sup>24</sup> Echoing the negative responses

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<sup>21</sup> Kant and Guyer, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 109. (See § 14: ‘Elucidation by means of examples’.) Kant’s definition of sensation can be found at ———, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 92. (See § 3: ‘The satisfaction in the agreeable is combined with interest’.) Kant distinguishes between objective sensation (or perception of an object as available to senses) and subjective sensation (or feeling, according to which an object provides satisfaction but not cognition). The judgment of taste relies on the feelings of the viewer, Kant explains. (———, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 103. See § 9: ‘Investigation of the question: whether in the judgment of taste the feeling of pleasure precedes the judging of the object or the latter precedes the former’.) Sensation confirms the union between satisfaction and beauty in the judgment of taste. (———, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 104. See § 9.) It also registers the effect of the playful exchange between imagination and understanding. (———, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 104. See § 9.) Sensation is the real in perception for Kant. (———, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 171. See § 39: ‘On the communicability of a sensation’.)

<sup>22</sup> Kant and Guyer, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 108-109. See § 14: ‘Elucidation by means of examples’.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 116. See § 17: ‘On the ideal of beauty’.

<sup>24</sup> Dutton draws attention to Kant’s insight that disagreement in criticism may signal that writers are highlighting different characteristics of the same work. In the words of Dutton: ‘Some disputes between critics are doubtless irresolvable. But Kant is correct in supposing that many can be settled at least to the extent that it can be shown that *apparently disagreeing critics are actually talking about different aspect of the same work of art*. Glenn Gould’s imaginative artistry may not necessarily be to everyone’s liking; there is no question, however, that

of his public to abstraction-oriented art,<sup>25</sup> Worringer presented abstraction from a negative perspective in *Abstraction and Empathy*. His discourse aimed to offer his audience the possibility to come to terms with a less expected type of form.

The generality and simplicity of form make it both accessible and describable, as Kant and Worringer observe. Form is ‘organic-vital’ (or ‘organic’), and associated with beauty and nature in *Abstraction and Empathy*.<sup>26</sup> In naturalist art, Worringer explains, models from nature provide a basis for the expression of the ‘will to form’, which is guided by the interest of artists in organic life.<sup>27</sup> Worringer regards even representational works of art from Antiquity and the Renaissance in terms of their remarkable formal qualities.<sup>28</sup>

### **Wölfflin and Worringer: beauty, form, matter and will**

Wölfflin, like Worringer, had signalled the connections between form and lifelikeness in ‘Prolegomena to a Psychology of Architecture’ (1886). For Wölfflin, formal beauty relies on the very conditions that make organic life possible. He writes: ‘Thus I maintain that all the decrees of formal aesthetics concerning *beautiful form* are nothing other than the *basic conditions of organic life*.’<sup>29</sup> Wölfflin draws attention to the self-projecting tendencies of human beings. In general, people find beauty in forms that seem to sustain life (their life also, by association) according to him. Judging objects as beautiful, Wölfflin posits, is linked to the lifelikeness such objects exhibit.

A ‘force of form’ is at work in the living world, Wölfflin observes.<sup>30</sup> The encounter between matter and the ‘force of form’ is dynamic and oppositional, he explains: it exposes the wilful

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some music critics failed to understand the nature of Gould’s art. There are many analogous episodes in the history of the arts, especially when we consider the reception of abstraction in painting at the end of the nineteenth century. (Very much the eighteenth-century aesthete, Kant himself viewed painting as essentially representative and would undoubtedly have been horrified by abstract expressionism.)’ See Dutton, ‘The Experience of Art is Paradise Regained: Kant on Free and Dependent Beauty’.

<sup>25</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, xiv, 137.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 17, 27-28, 48.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>29</sup> Wölfflin, ‘Prolegomena to a Psychology of Architecture’, 160.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.

emergence of form from matter.<sup>31</sup> Yet Wölfflin also underscores that form cannot exist without matter, and that matter could be said to long for form.<sup>32</sup> In his words: ‘The perfect form, for its part, presents itself as an entelechy, that is, as the actualization of the potential inherent in this matter.’<sup>33</sup> For Wölfflin, active engagement with matter results in the articulation of form. Wölfflin posits that form wilfully, organically structures matter, thus allowing for the emergence of beauty. Formal beauty is, according to Wölfflin, an expression of will.

In *Abstraction and Empathy*, Worringer, like Wölfflin, inquires into the relationship between beauty, form and artistic will. Worringer acknowledges the expression of will specific to naturalism (or representation), an approach to art-making most of his contemporaries associate with beauty. However, he analyses artistic will as expressed in representation in order to reinforce the contrast between the tendency towards naturalism and the tendency towards style (or abstraction) in art-making.

The associations traced by Worringer between ‘form’ and abstraction are numerous in *Abstraction and Empathy*. He writes, for instance, about ‘[t]he lifeless form of a pyramid’,<sup>34</sup> about objects rendered generic through ‘... approximation to abstract forms’,<sup>35</sup> about regular art forms of great purity and beauty,<sup>36</sup> about ‘... the single form set free from [three-dimensional] space’,<sup>37</sup> about geometrical form providing structure to inorganic elements,<sup>38</sup> about linear-geometric, absolute, and abstract-crystalline forms.<sup>39</sup> Employed by Worringer in general discussions on art, as well as in contexts where representational art-making is highlighted, the term ‘form’ nevertheless acquires predominantly abstract connotations in *Abstraction and Empathy*.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 159-160.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 160.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 14.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 17-21.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 36, 37, 52.

<sup>40</sup> For the role of form in Worringer’s *Abstraction and Empathy* (for instance, organic and inorganic form), see Michel, ‘“Our European Arrogance”: Wilhelm Worringer and Carl Einstein on Non-European Art’. Also, Joshua Dittrich, ‘A Life of Matter and Death: Inorganic Life in Worringer, Deleuze and Guattari’, *Discourse*, 33, No. 2, 2011.

## Regularity and uniformity

Worringer notes that, when generic aesthetic categories make the focus of investigation, they necessarily bring to light key formal features of artworks. According to him, aesthetic reflection comes first; if successful, it reveals qualities such as ‘necessity’ and ‘inner regularity’ in art.<sup>41</sup> Worringer regards aesthetic qualities as specific to the perspective of the contemplating viewer rather than to the contemplated objects themselves.<sup>42</sup> Only art that responds to aesthetic discourse by revealing its own inner coherence can become the topic of aesthetic investigation, Worringer explains. From his point of view, Worringer signals that writing initiates and fosters the resonance between art and reflection.

In *Abstraction and Empathy*, Worringer draws attention to the regularity of form. For him form is, as we have seen, ‘... that higher condition of matter... whose inner essence is regularity, whether this regularity is simple and easily surveyed, or as differentiated as the laws governing the organic, of which we have no more than an inkling.’<sup>43</sup> Citing Riegl on Egyptian art,<sup>44</sup> Worringer elicits geometric abstraction as a remarkable example of regularity.<sup>45</sup> Worringer associates the regularity of geometric art with nothing less than abstract beauty –<sup>46</sup> a paradoxical turn of phrase, since Worringer, claiming to adopt the perspective of his contemporaries, previously associated beauty primarily with the organic, naturalist art of representation.<sup>47</sup> ‘Highest’ in abstraction and ‘purest’ in form, geometrical art and its regularity invite Worringer’s admiration. Regularity can be recognized in art seeking to set itself free from the threatening fluctuations of the world, Worringer argues.<sup>48</sup>

For Worringer, regularity is a significant quality of form that holds a definite place in art-making. Regularity emerges from instinct rather than from intellectual understanding – it is

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<sup>41</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 30-31. The term Worringer employs for the relationship between reflection and art is ‘adherence:’ he signals the connection between interpretation and art, but, in *Abstraction and Empathy*, does not privilege interpretation yet: he only assigns it a generative role in the relationship with art.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 6-7.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 7, 10, 14.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 18, 23, 36, 42, 44.

an artistic manifestation of the search for the ‘thing in itself’, according to him.<sup>49</sup> In his words: ‘We have more justification for assuming that what we see here is a purely instinctive creation, that the urge to abstraction created this [regular] form for itself with elementary necessity and without the intervention of the intellect. Precisely because intellect had not yet dimmed instinct, the disposition to regularity, which after all is already present in the germ-cell, was able to find the appropriate abstract expression.’<sup>50</sup> Worringer, as previous paragraphs have noted, argues that the pinnacle of abstraction is geometric, regularity-reliant art, which provides a noteworthy alternative to representation.<sup>51</sup>

Worringer further explores the distinction between uniformity and regularity by reference to the writings of Wölfflin.<sup>52</sup> In physical, organic sequences, Wölfflin observes uniformity at work; Worringer notes that Wölfflin connects regularity with intellectual organization. Indeed, Wölfflin addresses two kinds of aesthetic pleasure in *Prolegomena to a Psychology of Architecture* (1886): the pleasure experienced in response to rhythmic, repetitive organic functions (such as breathing or walking), and the pleasure derived from engaging with geometrical figures or architecture (he points to angles, squares and pyramids).<sup>53</sup> Wölfflin posits that the human body is indifferent to pleasure derived from concepts; for him, physical and intellectual enjoyment stand in contrast.

Yet Worringer does not ignore Wölfflin’s mention of possible connections between inner activity and physical expression. In *Prolegomena to a Psychology of Architecture*, Wölfflin suggests that inner, psychological activities and outer, physical activities may take place simultaneously rather than in sequence.<sup>54</sup> Wölfflin finds the parallelism of psychological processes and outer expression possible, although he notes such a parallelism is largely uncharted at the time of his writing.

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 18-19.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 64-66.

<sup>53</sup> Wölfflin, 'Prolegomena to a Psychology of Architecture', 163. In their translation, Mallgrave and Ikonomou employ the terms ‘regularity’ and ‘lawfulness’ to contrast between physical, organic rhythm and intellectual, conceptual organization. Bullock, who signals the terminological difficulties involved in the translation of Worringer’s *Abstraction and Empathy*, uses ‘uniformity’ in connection to organic features, and ‘regularity’ so as to point to conceptual organization. (Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 64.)

<sup>54</sup> Wölfflin, 'Prolegomena to a Psychology of Architecture', 157.

Wölfflin, Worringer observes, points to the reflection of intellectual processes into the physical realm. Nevertheless, Wölfflin does not recognize the contribution of intellectual activity to actual art-making.<sup>55</sup> Intellectual aspects matter in art, Wölfflin explains, when they account for the intention (or will) that artists make visible in their approach to form.<sup>56</sup> In other words, Wölfflin recognizes that artistic form is modelled by the intentions of artists. Wölfflin sees a specific form of will at work in the art of his time, for instance. Seeking to offer entertainment, late nineteenth-century art promotes asymmetry, according to Wölfflin. He muses:

... [A] peculiar need of our time also compels us towards asymmetry in our domestic and decorative arts. The rest and simplicity of stable equilibrium have become tedious; emphatically, we seek movement and excitement – in short, the conditions of imbalance... The modern penchant for high mountains, for the most powerful masses without rule or law, may be traced back in part to a similar urge.<sup>57</sup>

Wölfflin's observation regarding contemporary preferences for emphatic, dynamic art echoes in Worringer's discussion of Gothic and its departure from Classical balance. However, unlike Wölfflin, Worringer chooses to explore the connections between pleasure, vitality and soul in *Abstraction and Empathy*.<sup>58</sup> Mentioning his allegiance to the thought of Theodor Lipps in this respect, Worringer is indirectly critical towards Wölfflin's association of organic vitality and embodiment. Worringer relies on Lipps' discussion of empathy instead. For Lipps, empathy is apperception: a process of sense-based observation and inner understanding that takes place in the soul of viewers.<sup>59</sup>

However, the discussion of Wölfflin's ideas allows Worringer to suggest that uniformity could be connected to the urge to empathy, while regularity could be associated with the urge

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 163.

<sup>56</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 163-164.

<sup>57</sup> Wölfflin, 'Prolegomena to a Psychology of Architecture', 173.

<sup>58</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 65. Wölfflin had nevertheless recognized the propensity of human beings to interpret architectural form as expressive. See Wölfflin, 'Prolegomena to a Psychology of Architecture', 176. Yet, as Worringer implies, for Wölfflin empathy found a more tangible ground in the embodied form rather than the soul of viewers.

<sup>59</sup> Lipps, *Estetica. Psihologia Frumosului și a Artei*, 30-32, 36-37, 39, 49. For Lipps, soul has a differentiated unity; it participates to perception and hosts apperception. ———, *Estetica. Psihologia Frumosului și a Artei*, 50-54.

to abstraction.<sup>60</sup> No expression, or lifelike quality, can be found in regularity, Worringer explains. Instead, he argues that uniformity may exhibit expression in the case of interwoven linear patterns as observable in Greek ornamental forms (for instance, in spirals and Vitruvian scrolls).<sup>61</sup>

Worringer proposes that abstraction and empathy actually meet in Greek ornament, a geometrically oriented approach to art-making. He remarks: ‘In this manner the mature geometric style achieves a miraculous equipoise between the elements of abstraction and of empathy.’<sup>62</sup> The passage of time as recorded by the history of art encourages the creation of a bridge between empathy and abstraction, two art-making tendencies Worringer had introduced as polar opposites in the first pages of his book.

Uniformity and regularity interweave in Classical Greek ornament, Worringer observes. According to him: ‘... the Greek wavy line is both uniform and regular, and to this extent still conforms to the abstract need; but in so far as this regularity, in contradistinction to the Egyptian regularity, is an organic one (Lipps calls it mechanical), it appeals, first and foremost, with the whole sense of its being, to our empathy impulse.’<sup>63</sup> Once more, Worringer draws attention that, in art, theoretically antithetic elements actually coexist: for instance, regularity acquires lifelike qualities in the Greek wavy line, thus encouraging empathic responses.

Nevertheless, Worringer’s perspective continues to change shape. Worringer explains that the interplay of opposites is specific to only certain phases in history; different epochs see the rise of tendencies towards opposition, or duality, for instance. Writing about ‘primitive’ times,<sup>64</sup> Worringer argues that, in their struggles to make sense of the world, artists created works that emphasized regularity. ‘Primitive’ artists attempted to provide opportunities for peaceful contemplation in otherwise unpredictable environments, in Worringer’s opinion. He remarks: ‘... [I]t is as though the instinct for the “thing in itself” were most powerful in

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<sup>60</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 65.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

primitive man.’<sup>65</sup> In support of his views on the emergence of abstraction in art, Worringer refers to the writings of Schopenhauer. Schopenhauer’s inquiries provide to Worringer a framework for the questioning of representation in art-making, as well as an indirect opportunity to defend abstract art as an expression of subjective, personal experience.

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

## A matter of will: Schopenhauer and Worringer on life and art

To Schopenhauer as cited by Worringer, the world is an illusion: ‘... a transitory and in itself unsubstantial semblance’.<sup>1</sup> Schopenhauer’s reflections are occasioned by his discussion of the philosophy of Kant, which he admires but also criticizes in *The World as Will and Representation* (1819).<sup>2</sup> Kant’s most significant philosophical contribution consists, according to Schopenhauer, in having distinguished transitory phenomena from things-in-themselves. Summarizing Kant’s findings, Schopenhauer notes: ‘This world that appears to the senses has no true being, but only a ceaseless becoming; it is, and it also is not; and its comprehension is not so much a knowledge as an illusion.’<sup>3</sup> Alongside Kant, Schopenhauer mentions his own distrust in the capacity of knowledge to account for the world, especially when knowledge relies on data collected by senses.

In experiencing the world, human beings are burdened by their connection with the wilful self, Schopenhauer argues. He explains that the silencing of will dispels the bitter, extreme demands of the world on human beings, leaving room for contemplation. Only when human beings resolve their inner conflicts and annihilate the voice of will can they hope to find peace and attain a state of knowing, according to Schopenhauer. In his words:

Such a man who, after bitter struggles with his own nature, has at last completely conquered it, is then left only as pure knowing being, as the undimmed mirror of the world. Nothing can distress or alarm him anymore; nothing can any longer move him; for he has cut all the thousand threads of willing which hold us bound to the world, and which as craving, fear, envy, and anger drag us here and there in constant pain. He now looks back calmly and with a smile on the phantasmagoria of this world which was once able to move and agonize even his mind... Life and its forms merely float before him as a fleeting phenomenon, as a light morning dream to one half-

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid. Also, Arthur Schopenhauer and E. F. J. Payne, *The World as Will and Representation*, vol. 1 (New York: Dover Publications, 1969 [1819]), 419.

<sup>2</sup> Schopenhauer notes his admiration of Kant’s philosophy, but also investigates it critically; see Schopenhauer and Payne, *The World as Will and Representation*, xv, 413-534. The examination of Schopenhauer’s reading of Kant offers rich ground for self-standing inquiry, yet extends well beyond the scope of this thesis.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 419.

awake, through which reality already shines, and which can no longer deceive; and, like this morning dream, they too vanish without any violent transition.<sup>4</sup>

Worringer points to Schopenhauer's thought in his own discussion of the conditions that foster the making of abstract art.<sup>5</sup> During 'primitive' times,<sup>6</sup> Worringer speculates, artists felt helpless in their relationship with their surroundings. Their response to contexts Worringer presents as destabilizing took shape in works exhibiting a tendency toward abstraction – towards taking distance from unstable environments. According to Worringer, this tendency had its roots in the difficulty artists experienced when confronted with a world they did not understand.<sup>7</sup> Artists at the beginning of the twentieth century responded to the world like their 'primitive' peers, in Worringer's opinion – except that his contemporaries did not lack knowledge, but willingly renounced it.<sup>8</sup>

### **Distancing, urges, and will**

Concluding the theoretical section of *Abstraction and Empathy*, Worringer draws attention to the role that distancing from the world plays in aesthetics. He argues that the most important requirement of aesthetics, and a condition of happiness, is distancing (or, in his terms, 'self-alienation').<sup>9</sup> Kant's perspective on the grounds of aesthetic judgment (namely, on purposiveness without a specific end as its distinctive characteristic) echoes in Worringer's

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 390-391.

<sup>5</sup> In *Abstraction and Empathy*, Worringer examines the impact life in the world has on the viewing and making of art. Schopenhauer's perspective on human existence inspires him in this respect. Both Schopenhauer and Worringer subscribe to a philosophy of life that addresses forces for which reason cannot account (for instance, will and urges). For an account of the philosophy of life that influenced the writings of Worringer, see Dittrich, 'A Life of Matter and Death: Inorganic Life in Worringer, Deleuze and Guattari', 243-244, 248, 256, 260-261.

<sup>6</sup> Mary Gluck points to the early twentieth-century connection between 'primitivism' and exoticism, noting her interest in interpreting 'primitivism' as a cultural experience specific to Europeans. She discusses Worringer's disengagement with the art at the Trocadéro Museum in the early years of the twentieth century, yet also emphasizes that ethnographic museums created an image of 'primitivism' for European artists and viewers. See Gluck, 'Interpreting Primitivism, Mass Culture and Modernism: The Making of Wilhelm Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy*', 151-157.

<sup>7</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 17-19.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 24-25.

assertion.<sup>10</sup> Yet, with regard to aesthetic distancing, Worringer notes his debt to Schopenhauer instead.

Schopenhauer's writings provide to Worringer an analogy for a key opposition in *Abstraction and Empathy*: namely, the opposition between distancing from the world (specific to abstraction) and distancing from the self (associated with empathy).<sup>11</sup> As previous sections have noted, empathy presupposes enjoying an object from the perspective of the object itself for Worringer.<sup>12</sup> Empathy requires the imaginative transposition of the viewer within the object; hence, it implicitly leads to a loss of focus on the contemplating viewer.<sup>13</sup> To have an empathic experience means taking distance from the contemplating self, according to Worringer. Empathy, like abstraction, is actually informed by distancing in his view. *Abstraction and Empathy* thus offers distancing as a shared psychological component of tendencies towards empathy and abstraction respectively.<sup>14</sup>

Pointing to the role of distancing in *The World as Will and Representation*, Schopenhauer notes its psychological effect, and its significance in aesthetics. He observes that aesthetic pleasure implies the achievement of an inner state of selfless contemplation. In his words: '... aesthetic pleasure in the beautiful consists, to a large extent, in the fact that, when we enter a state of pure contemplation, we are raised for the moment above all willing, above all desires and cares; we are, so to speak, rid of ourselves.'<sup>15</sup> Worringer singles out this strand of Schopenhauer's argument, emphasizing that Schopenhauer's perspective on aesthetic contemplation involves freedom from will, as well as a distancing from the world – the actual territory where will can be seen at work.

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<sup>10</sup> Kant and Guyer, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 79, 91, 111, 120. See: Introduction (VIII); § 3: 'The satisfaction in the agreeable is combined with interest'; § 15: 'The judgment of taste is independent from the concept of perception'; § 17: 'On the ideal of beauty'.

<sup>11</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 137.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 5, 24.

<sup>13</sup> Worringer follows Lipps with regard to explaining empathy and its operation. See, from the current thesis, 'Worringer's approach to the writing of art history and theory'.

<sup>14</sup> Holdheim points to Worringer's bridging of opposites at the end of the theoretical section of *Abstraction and Empathy*; he regards it as 'a new artistic monism', and as a temptation that Worringer defeats. (Holdheim, 'Wilhelm Worringer and the Polarity of Understanding', 342.)

<sup>15</sup> Schopenhauer and Payne, *The World as Will and Representation*, 390.

In *Abstraction and Empathy*, Worringer explains that art emerges as a materialization of artistic will, or volition, and has its roots in artists' emotional responses to the world.<sup>16</sup> The psychological state of artists manifests in particular needs, or urges, Worringer points out; these urges shape artistic will in its expression. He writes:

By the feeling about the world I mean the psychic state in which, at any given time, mankind found itself in relation to the cosmos, in relation to the phenomena of the external world. This psychic state is disclosed in the quality of psychic needs, i. e. in the constitution of the absolute artistic volition, and bears outward fruit in the work of art, to be exact in the style of the latter, the specific nature of which is simply the specific nature of the psychic needs.<sup>17</sup>

Psychological states generate urges, which in turn shape artistic will, Worringer observes. According to him, artistic will mediates between urges and their expression in art. Beauty, for instance, reflects the fulfilment of artistic will, according to Worringer;<sup>18</sup> as his inquiry from *Abstraction and Empathy* advances, he emphasizes the connection between will and art-making, assigning greater importance to will than to the connection with objects in the world. In the words of Worringer: '... [W]e recognize as only secondary the role played by the natural model in the work of art, and assume an absolute artistic volition, which makes itself the master of external things as mere objects to be made use of, as the primary factor in the process that gives birth to the work of art'.<sup>19</sup>

Human will drives life forward,<sup>20</sup> Worringer argues; its activity compels people to engage with objects in the world.<sup>21</sup> When this engagement takes the form of empathy, viewers are set free from the self. According to Worringer: 'In empathising this will to activity into another

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<sup>16</sup> Jennings signals that will intermediates between psychic needs and their effect in art. Jennings, 'Against Expressionism: Materialism and Social Theory in Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy*', 89. Worringer could, but does not, propose a synonymy between 'instinct' and 'absolute artistic volition', a concept Riegl had discussed in *Leading Characteristics of Late Roman Kunstwollen*. Following Riegl, Worringer defines 'absolute artistic volition' as '... latent inner demand which exists *per se*, entirely independent of the object and of the mode of creation.' The definition provided by Worringer thus reveals it is possible to trace connections between 'instinct' and 'absolute artistic volition' in *Abstraction and Empathy*.

<sup>17</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 13.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 33-34.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

object... we are in the object. We are delivered from our individual being as long as we are absorbed into an external object, an external form, with our inner urge to experience.’<sup>22</sup> Worringer notes that art comes into being when artists follow their will, and have artistic creation as a conscious goal.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 10.

## Riegl and artistic will

To reinforce his observations regarding artistic will, Worringer turns to the work of Riegl,<sup>1</sup> signalling the emphasis his predecessor places on will rather than skill in art.<sup>2</sup> As has been previously noted, Worringer finds that will is a catalyst of art-making, and that it has a decisive impact on artistic expression.<sup>3</sup> Contrasting Riegl's emphasis on will [*Wollen*] with Gottfried Semper's championing of ability in art-making,<sup>4</sup> Worringer adopts Riegl's perspective on artistic will [*Kunstwollen*] when analyzing the relationship between abstraction and representation.<sup>5</sup>

Riegl observed in his introduction to *Late Roman Art Industry* (1901) that the operations of artistic will could be noted predominantly in architecture or in the crafts, especially where figurative elements were absent.<sup>6</sup> He also explained the concept of *Kunstwollen* in his earlier essay, *Leading Characteristics of Late Roman Kunstwollen* (1893). According to Riegl, late Roman art was characterized by the expression of a specific *Kunstwollen*, which influenced all forms of artistic production. In the words of Riegl from 1893:

To obtain an understanding of the nature of late antique art (that is the art of the middle and late Roman period) we may study individual monuments or the surviving literary sources. In either case, we obtain an insight of the same basic proposition: that there was in general at that time only one direction for the *Kunstwollen* to take. This force dominated all four divisions of the visual arts [i. e., architecture, sculpture, painting and the crafts] equally, appropriated every purpose and material to its artistic meaning [*Kunstzweck*] and with fixed independence chose in every case the appropriate technique for the envisioned work of art. There is support for this interpretation of the nature of late antique art in the fact that the *Kunstwollen* of

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<sup>1</sup> In the introduction to his translation of Riegl's *Late Roman Art Industry*, Winkes notes that different degrees of intensity are associated with 'will' and 'volition' in Riegl's text. Hence 'volition' is approached by Winkes as the more emphatic term of the two. The term 'volition' also features extensively in Michael Bullock's translation of *Abstraction and Empathy*. However, I employ the term 'will' in this section, in order to refer generically to the expression of intention in art.

<sup>2</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 9.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 8-9.

<sup>5</sup> For a discussion of the relationship between the theories of Semper and Riegl respectively, see Rolf Winkes in Riegl and Winkes, *Late Roman Art Industry*, XVI-XXI.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

antiquity, especially in the final phase, is practically identical with other major forms of expression of the human *Wollen* during the same period.<sup>7</sup>

### **Will, perception, inner drive, and art-making**

Riegl considers that will determines artistic purpose in every epoch, including the choice of materials and techniques.<sup>8</sup> Human volition operates purposefully, with the intention of generating subjective satisfaction, according to him. Like Schopenhauer, Riegl is sensitive to the impact of will on the relationship between observers and observed: he distinguishes between will-less, passive contemplation and will-driven, active desire in *Leading Characteristics of Late Roman Kunstwollen*. He explains:

All such human *Wollen* is directed towards self-satisfaction in relation to the surrounding environment (in the widest sense of the word, as it relates to the human being externally and internally). Creative *Kunstwollen* regulates the relation between man and objects as we perceive them with our sense; this is how we always give shape and colour to things (just as we visualize things with the *Kunstwollen* in poetry). Yet man is not just a being perceiving exclusively with his sense (passive), but also a longing (active) being. Consequently, man wants to interpret the world as it can most easily be done in accordance with his inner drive (which may change with nation, location and time). The character of this *Wollen* is always determined by what may be termed the conception of the world at a given time [*Weltanschauung*] (again in the widest sense of the term), not only in religion, philosophy, science, but also in government and law, where one or the other form of expression mentioned above usually dominates.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Donald Preziosi, *The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 159.

<sup>8</sup> Riegl and Winkes, *Late Roman Art Industry*, IXI-XX. Winkes signals that Riegl's use of the term *Kunstwollen* may have been influenced by a familiarity with Sigmund Freud's work. *Wollen*, Winkes explains, is a term stronger than 'will' [*Willen*]. According to Winkes, *Wollen* emphasizes the 'deeply rooted sources' of human will more than *Willen* does.

<sup>9</sup> Alois Riegl, 'Leading Characteristics of Late Roman *Kunstwollen*' in *The Art of Art History: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Donald Preziosi (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1893), 159-160.

Riegl sees will as dependent on time and place. According to him, expressions of will demonstrate progress from one age to another.<sup>10</sup> He observes the effects of will on human history and institutions, yet also highlights the psychological, subjective components of will.<sup>11</sup> Worringer, who refers extensively to Riegl's thought in *Abstraction and Empathy*,<sup>12</sup> employs the concept of artistic will as delineated by Riegl in his writings. In agreement with Riegl on the purposefulness of artistic will, Worringer comments: '... every work of art is simply an objectification of this *a priori* existent artistic volition'.<sup>13</sup> Worringer, like Riegl, emphasizes that artistic will assumes different forms through time; this perspective supports Worringer's questioning of representation at the beginning of the twentieth century.

In *Abstraction and Empathy*, Worringer approaches both representation and abstraction in terms of will, and engages with the art of the past by accounting intuitively for the psychological processes involved in art-making. He shows that pleasure constitutes the aim of artistic will, and that artistic will changes with the passage of time.<sup>14</sup> According to Worringer, artistic will gives rise to tendencies towards empathy or abstraction, which materialize in representational (naturalist) or abstract (style-driven) art. In the words of Worringer:

When applied to the product of artistic volition, the two poles of artistic volition, which we sought to define and whose mutual frontiers we endeavoured to fix in Chapter One, correspond to the two concepts naturalism and style... Indeed it is our intention, having associated the concept naturalism with the process of empathy, to associate the concept style with the other pole of human artistic experience, namely the urge to abstraction.<sup>15</sup>

Worringer, as previous sections have outlined, assigns antithetic positions to abstraction and representation. Riegl also recognizes that changes in will generate different approaches to art-

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<sup>10</sup> See Riegl, Riegl and Winkes, *Late Roman Art Industry*.

<sup>11</sup> Jennings notes that Riegl does not inquire into the specific connection between psychic states, artistic will, and artworks. Jennings, 'Against Expressionism: Materialism and Social Theory in Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy*', 89.

<sup>12</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 9, 19, 21, 37-40, 55-58, 68, 73-76, 81, 86, 91, 93, 95-98, 104, 136.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 9-11.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 9-13.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 26, 34.

making. For instance, Riegl accounts for two forms of will in *Leading Characteristics of Late Roman Kunstwollen*: one form of will finds satisfaction in representational pictures, while another form of will seeks personal, inner expression. Riegl writes: ‘Obviously, an inner relation exists between a *Wollen*, which is directed toward a pleasurable visualisation of things through the visual arts, and that other *Wollen* which wants to interpret them as much as possible according to its own inner drive. In antiquity this relationship can be traced everywhere.’<sup>16</sup>

Noting that divergent artistic tendencies can coexist within the same historical epoch, Riegl nevertheless underscores the historical connection between potentially antithetic approaches to art-making. On the other hand, Worringer’s *Abstraction and Empathy* begins by placing representation and abstraction in opposition. Worringer argues that representation reflects a form of will functioning in accord with its environment, while abstraction expresses a drive towards taking distance from the world.<sup>17</sup> His preference for the rhetoric of binary opposition distances his approach from Riegl’s thought, yet effectively traces the boundaries between abstraction and representation.

Nevertheless, Worringer remains open to the shared ground between representation and abstraction, even though he contrasts these modes of art-making at the beginning of *Abstraction and Empathy*. At various points of his demonstration, Worringer observes that the urge to empathy and the urge to abstraction, as well as the art forms they generate, emerge in response to the world; he also notices the interaction of urges and approaches to art-making in the course of history.<sup>18</sup> Worringer writes: ‘For we find the need for empathy and the need for abstraction to be the two poles of human artistic experience, in so far as it is accessible to purely aesthetic evaluation. They are antitheses which, in principle, are mutually exclusive. In actual fact, however, the history of art represents an unceasing disputation between the two tendencies.’<sup>19</sup> In his discussion of urges towards empathy and abstraction as manifest in art, Worringer thus distinguishes between (theoretical) principles and (historical) facts. According to him, abstraction and representation (the artistic outcomes of urges

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<sup>16</sup> Riegl, ‘Leading Characteristics of Late Roman *Kunstwollen*’, 159-160.

<sup>17</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 14-20.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 24-25, 48, 51-121.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

towards abstraction and empathy) can be regarded as opposite from the perspective of theory, and as dialogue partners in art-making. Worringer interweaves historical and theoretical viewpoints throughout *Abstraction and Empathy* – a decision that enriches his text, bringing to light its fundamental duality.<sup>20</sup>

Worringer's early twentieth-century thoughts on abstraction and representation is addressed by Rudolf Arnheim (1904-2007) in his book, *Visual Thinking* (1970), as well as in 'Wilhelm Worringer on Abstraction and Empathy', an essay initially published in 1967 and revised for Arnheim's *New Essays on the Psychology of Art* (1984). For Arnheim, Worringer is a theoretician of the opposition between abstraction and empathy, and a defender of abstraction. Yet Arnheim casts critical glances towards both these aspects of Worringer's approach.

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<sup>20</sup> Holdheim finds that Worringer remains balanced in his negotiation of the relationship between representation and abstraction. (Holdheim, 'Wilhelm Worringer and the Polarity of Understanding', 340.) If abstract-representational balance appears difficult to maintain in *Abstraction and Empathy*, Masheck comments that Worringer did not aim for such elegance in the first place. (Masheck, 'Abstraction and Apathy: Crystalline Form in Expressionism and in the Minimalism of Tony Smith', 41.)

## Abstraction, representation, opposition: Worringer and Rudolf Arnheim

Arnheim questions Worringer's approach to abstraction in *Visual Thinking* (1970).<sup>1</sup> According to Arnheim, abstraction provides common ground for the activities of perceiving ('the grasping of significant form')<sup>2</sup> and thinking. He addresses the negative implications of the term 'abstraction,' which suggests drawing away or withdrawing,<sup>3</sup> and associates abstraction with a process of distillation from complex givens.<sup>4</sup> In his words: 'Any phenomenon experienced by the mind can acquire abstraction if it is seen as a distillate of something more complex. Such a phenomenon can be a highly rarefied pattern of forces or it can be an event or object in which the relevant properties of a kind of event or object are strikingly embodied.'<sup>5</sup> Arnheim observes that abstraction highlights key relations of form, and can assume remarkable expression in this process.

Worringer had also noted the emphasis abstraction placed on basic elements of art-making. He had addressed the elemental aspect of the urge to abstraction in *Abstraction and Empathy*, dissociating abstraction from intellectual activity. According to him: '... [T]he urge to abstraction created this form [i. e., abstract form] for itself with elemental necessity and without the intervention of the intellect.'<sup>6</sup> For Worringer, abstraction emerged as the artistic expression of a fundamental need; abstraction could be associated with the stirrings of instinct rather than with the activity of the mind. By contrast, Arnheim sees abstraction as not only linked to thinking, but also as a bridge between human thought and the work of senses.

Arnheim draws attention to the connective and cognitive aspects of abstraction. For him, abstraction is the result of distillation, of eliciting the key features of complex objects, events, phenomena. He argues that abstraction brings together and makes visible properties shared by various objects.<sup>7</sup> Grasping structural features by means of abstraction stabilizes perception,

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<sup>1</sup> Rudolf Arnheim, *Visual Thinking* (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 1970), 188.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 140.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 153.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 156.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 19. Also, regarding the 'elementary aesthetic feelings' Worringer (following Kant) wishes to examine, see ———, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 30-31.

<sup>7</sup> Arnheim, *Visual Thinking*, 157.

and gives cognition a starting point, according to Arnheim.<sup>8</sup> Abstraction, for him, is a process fundamental to intellectual life; on the basis of abstraction, Arnheim argues, generalization can take place.<sup>9</sup>

### **Withdrawal, productive thinking, and abstraction**

Finding the connection between abstraction and withdrawal decisively articulated in Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy*,<sup>10</sup> Arnheim is critical towards Worringer's point of view. In *Visual Thinking*, Arnheim notes the importance of abstraction in intellectual life, as well as in relating to the world. Withdrawal from engaging with the world may give rise to abstraction, but not necessarily, Arnheim comments. He doubts that abstract thinking needs to rely on a negative response to experience. In his words: 'The notion that abstraction entails a withdrawal from direct experience also threatens to misrepresent the attitude of productive thinking towards reality. It suggests that in order to show that a person is capable of truly abstract thinking he must ignore, defy, or contradict the life situation in which he finds himself.'<sup>11</sup>

For Arnheim, productive thinking (or thinking that engages with the world) relies on abstraction – a process that, as we have seen, requires the mind to observe objects, situations or phenomena in their complexity, and to elicit their key elements. Arnheim questions the strict association of abstraction with a preference for withdrawal from experience. He explains:

To be sure, there is an important connection between withdrawal and abstraction. When the mind removes itself from the complexities of life, it tends to replace them with simplified, highly formalized patterns. This shows up in the "unrealistic" speculations of secluded thinkers or the ornamentation of artists out of touch with the direct challenges of reality. Extreme examples can be found in the speech and

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 161.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 188-189.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 188.

drawing of schizophrenics. But although withdrawal often leads to abstraction, the opposite is by no means true. If one asserts that abstraction requires withdrawal, one risks subjecting the mind to the conditions under which thinking cannot function; one will also fail to acknowledge genuine thinking when it is concerned with problems posed by direct experience.<sup>12</sup>

Arnheim partially acknowledges Worringer's viewpoint from *Abstraction and Empathy*. He maintains that stepping back from the world leads to simplification and to the articulation of patterns of form, as Worringer demonstrated.<sup>13</sup> However, Arnheim also underscores that abstraction cannot be considered a consequence of withdrawal exclusively. He mentions the significance of the association of abstraction with thinking, implying that forms of thinking which genuinely respond to the challenges of experience actually rely on abstraction. For Arnheim, abstraction needs to be considered in its role of fundamental mode of looking at, thinking about, and responding to the world.

### **Re-examining *Abstraction and Empathy***

In 'Wilhelm Worringer on *Abstraction and Empathy*' (1967, revised 1984), Arnheim addresses Worringer's work at greater length than in *Visual Thinking*. He acknowledges that *Abstraction and Empathy* was an influential book on the theory of art –<sup>14</sup> a text with immediate, far-reaching effect, despite Worringer's focus on historical examples rather than on instances of early twentieth-century art-making.<sup>15</sup> Drawing attention to Worringer's debt to the psychologically inclined aesthetics of the nineteenth century,<sup>16</sup> Arnheim reframes the relationship between empathy and abstraction from his own point of view. Worringer claimed that empathy exerted a key influence on art-making throughout the history of art, and that the aesthetics of his time had reinforced the general preference for empathy-reliant art.<sup>17</sup> He

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 189.

<sup>13</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 34-37.

<sup>14</sup> Rudolf Arnheim, *New Essays on the Psychology of Art* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1984), 51.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>17</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 3-8.

defended the aesthetics of abstraction in *Abstraction and Empathy*, providing a theoretical apparatus for the interpretation of abstraction in art, as well as a historical background for its transformations through time. Arnheim acknowledges the merits of Worringer's book, yet sheds a different light on the relationship between empathy and abstraction. According to Arnheim:

... it [i. e., *Abstraction and Empathy*] proposed a striking relation between two psychological concepts: one of them, abstraction, a two-thousand-year old tool for the understanding of human cognition; the other, empathy, a relatively recent outgrowth of Romantic philosophy. By describing the two concepts as antagonists, Worringer sharpened and restricted their meaning in a way that has remained relevant to their discussion in psychology as well as in aesthetics.<sup>18</sup>

Approaching abstraction and empathy as psychological concepts, Arnheim nevertheless reverses Worringer's perspective: to Arnheim, empathy does not appear as a dominant psychological and aesthetic force, as it did to Worringer in *Abstraction and Empathy*. Abstraction, on the other hand, interests Arnheim due to its active associations with knowing and understanding.<sup>19</sup>

Arnheim actually shares an interest in abstraction with Worringer. However, he does not highlight the characteristics of abstraction by placing abstraction and empathy in antithesis. Although Arnheim focuses less on empathy in his essay, he recognizes the effectiveness of Worringer's addressing empathy in his own investigations. Arnheim notes the powerful effect of Worringer's placing empathy and abstraction in an antithetic relationship.

However, the distinction Worringer articulates between imitation and naturalism (two aspects of representation) is excessive for Arnheim.<sup>20</sup> He refers to nineteenth-century art-making to reframe Worringer's discussion of naturalism and imitation. Arnheim finds representational art as practiced in the nineteenth century to be a literal, or mechanic, approach to rendering in

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<sup>18</sup> Arnheim, *New Essays on the Psychology of Art*, 51.

<sup>19</sup> Arnheim offers a definition of representation in 'Inverted Perspective and the Axiom of Realism', where he writes: 'By definition, representational art derives its subject matter from nature. This implies that at least to some extent the shapes used for such representation must also be taken from the observation of nature since otherwise the depicted subjects would remain unrecognizable.' (Ibid., 159.)

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 53.

the case of most artists; like Worringer,<sup>21</sup> he signals the negative impact of a long-term reliance on imitation in art. In his words:

Only through a weakening of the inborn sense of form was it possible to produce painting and sculpture that conformed to the doctrine of imitation literally and mechanically and thereby created a threat to art. If one looks at the art of the nineteenth century – not as we know it from the work of the great survivors, but for the typical attitude as manifested in the average products of the time and the practices of drawing teachers – one realizes that the threat was very real. Worringer’s emphasis on the distinction is not the fruit of dispassionate historical scrutiny but an act of defense. Consciously or not, in reacting to the present danger, he was fighting the battle of modern art.<sup>22</sup>

Arnheim is on the side of Worringer with regard to representational practices at the beginning of the twentieth century. He empathises with Worringer’s claims, underscoring Worringer’s engagement with the challenges of early twentieth-century art. Although he mentions the almost complete silence of Worringer with regard to early twentieth-century artistic practices, Arnheim also highlights Worringer’s attention to the pulse of art-making at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Regarding abstraction, Arnheim observes that *Abstraction and Empathy* may reflect the general frame of thought of Worringer’s time.<sup>23</sup> He points not only to the decisive separation between imitation and naturalism that Worringer traces in *Abstraction and Empathy*, but also to Worringer’s view that abstraction is the outcome of anxiety, or of the emotion of fear.<sup>24</sup> Indeed, Worringer associates abstraction with the ‘dread of space,’ which he compares with the pathological fear of open places.<sup>25</sup> Such a psychological response signals, according to Worringer, the discomfort of human beings in environments they find unfamiliar or threatening.

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<sup>21</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 29.

<sup>22</sup> Arnheim, *New Essays on the Psychology of Art*, 53.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 57-58.

<sup>25</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 15-16.

Worringer also explains the ‘dread of space’ in terms of the human response to a tormenting world of phenomena. He connects the ‘dread of space’ with abstract modes of art-making – for instance, with Oriental art.<sup>26</sup> Worringer notes the distrust of Eastern civilizations towards reason and intellect.<sup>27</sup> Contrasting intellect and instinct in *Abstraction and Empathy*, Worringer observes the position occupied by Eastern art with regard to cognition. He writes: ‘Their spiritual dread of space [i. e., the dread of space of the peoples of the East], their instinct for the relativity of all that is, did not stand, as with primitive peoples, *before* cognition, but *above* cognition.’<sup>28</sup> Worringer thus associates abstraction with an acknowledgment of relativity, and with the transcendence of intellectual forms of knowledge – two key aspects of early twentieth-century thought.<sup>29</sup>

From a later twentieth-century perspective that provides him the benefit of distance, Arnheim shows that lifelike qualities feature in approaches to art-making associated by Worringer with abstraction. For instance, Arnheim points to a doctrine of Chinese painting that requires the brushstrokes of painters to be informed by vitality,<sup>30</sup> as well as to the belief of modern abstract painter Piet Mondrian (1872-1944) that art must reveal the enduring vital aspects of existence.<sup>31</sup>

Associating Worringer’s thought with the dichotomy between representation and abstraction primarily, Arnheim remarks: ‘... [A]n intense inner expression of life is evident in styles of art whose abstractness is supposed to be due to an escape from the organic, for instance in African and Romanesque sculpture’.<sup>32</sup> Arnheim emphasizes that abstract art-making as seen by Worringer contains elements that seem to hint to organic life. Bringing to light the imperfection of the abstract-representational antithesis Worringer seeks to articulate,

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<sup>26</sup> Worringer’s association of abstraction with Oriental art serves the purpose of underscoring the stylistic difference of abstraction from art created in the Classical tradition. As a result, abstraction can acquire a memorable image that may appear less threatening due to its allegedly removed point of origin. Also see, from the current thesis, ‘Empathy, abstraction and representation in Worringer’s *Abstraction and Empathy*’.

<sup>27</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 16.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> See, for instance, Thomas J. Harrison, *1910: The Emancipation of Dissonance* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 18-24. Also see Thomas Baldwin, *The Cambridge History of Philosophy, 1870-1945* (Cambridge, U. K. and New York, U. S. : Cambridge University Press, 2003), 67-73, 98-101, 107-115.

<sup>30</sup> Arnheim, *New Essays on the Psychology of Art*, 59.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

Arnheim draws attention to the interweaving rather than to the separation of representational and abstract characteristics in art-making.

However, abstract-representational connections had not left Worringer indifferent. In *Abstraction and Empathy*, Worringer recognizes representational tendencies in the predominantly abstract Romanesque art, for instance. He underscores that Romanesque style leaves little space for organic expression,<sup>33</sup> yet that lifelike features inform it nevertheless. According to Worringer:

Like Doric, it [i. e., the Romanesque style] too repudiated every impulse to empathy. We are confronted by a somewhat compressed, calm, serious architectural structure, in the details of which, however, the development to come is already disclosed. The living tendencies are already contained in the system of flying buttresses, in the rib-vaulting, and in the clusters of pillars. That which is here trying to force itself through on a foreign substratum later becomes the sole and decisive factor... Thus arose the Gothic style, which gradually conquered the whole North-west of Europe.<sup>34</sup>

Continuing to observe the relationship between abstraction and representation in Gothic, Worringer explains the transition from early Gothic (where abstract tendencies predominate) towards the later, calmer, increasingly lifelike Gothic, where the influence of Italian Renaissance and its emphasis on the human body can be felt.<sup>35</sup> Arnheim highlights the oppositional approach Worringer takes to abstraction and empathy, yet, in doing so, accounts for the dominant theoretical direction of Worringer's argument only.

Arnheim concludes his essay with an emphasis on the merits of Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy*. To Arnheim, Worringer's book appears as a manifesto for modern art; Worringer's association of abstraction and negative empathy, or abstraction and 'dread of space,' appear less defining to Arnheim than the positive aspects of Worringer's views on abstraction. Nevertheless, Arnheim remains unsympathetic towards Worringer's preference for approaching empathy and abstraction mainly by means of antithesis, due to the consequences of such a methodological choice. He explains:

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<sup>33</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 110.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 111-112. Also, ———, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 116.

<sup>35</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 119-121.

The historical merit of Worringer's manifesto consists in his having proclaimed non-realistic form a positive creation of the human mind, intended and able to produce lawful visual order. His bipolarity of naturalistic versus nonnaturalistic art, however, promoted not only an artificial split in the history of art but also an equally precarious psychological antagonism between man's concern with nature and his capacity for creating organized form. It is a dichotomy that continues to haunt the theoretical thinking of our century in the somewhat modified guise of the distinctions between perceptual and conceptual art, schematic and realistic art, artists who depict what they see and others who cling to what they know, art of the How and art of the What.... Our own thinking has yet to meet the challenge of accounting for the wider range of ways in which the arts represent the world of human experience with the help of organized form.<sup>36</sup>

Arnheim's *New Essays on the Psychology of Art* appeared in 1984; three years earlier, Gilles Deleuze published *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*. Unlike Arnheim, Deleuze writes from a perspective that mostly acknowledges Worringer's points of view. Worringer provides a seminal approach to Gothic art for Deleuze. In his contextualisation of the work of twentieth-century painter Francis Bacon (1909-92), Deleuze refers to Worringer's books when reflecting on the specific dynamic of Gothic (or Barbarian) line. Like Worringer, Deleuze employs the rhetoric of opposition in his discussion of the relationship between Gothic, Egyptian and Classical Greek approaches to art-making; he allows his reliance on the precedent set by Worringer to surface at various points of his demonstration. However, Deleuze questions the association between representation and painting, and argues in favour of abstraction from a different angle than Worringer in *Abstraction and Empathy*.

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<sup>36</sup> Arnheim, *New Essays on the Psychology of Art*, 61-62.

## **The relationship between abstraction and representation: highlights from Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy*, and Gilles Deleuze's *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation***

In *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation* (1981), Gilles Deleuze inquires into the pictorial practice of Bacon, addressing its aspects from the simplest to the most complex.<sup>1</sup> 'All these aspects, of course, coexist in reality',<sup>2</sup> Deleuze writes. Nevertheless, like Worringer, Deleuze distinguishes between various layers of artistic activity in order to underscore theoretically significant elements in the work of his artist of choice. Unlike Worringer, however, Deleuze constructs his theories on the basis of Bacon's paintings and series. In support of his argument from *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, Deleuze creates a complex web of contextual references that brings together the domains of psychiatry,<sup>3</sup> psychology,<sup>4</sup> aesthetics,<sup>5</sup> and philosophy,<sup>6</sup> to name but a few. Deleuze writes about compositional elements specific to the art of painting as made visible in the oeuvre of Bacon,<sup>7</sup> as well as about key figures and styles that further illuminate Bacon's work.<sup>8</sup>

Worringer features in Deleuze's *Francis Bacon* as a theorist of Gothic art. For Deleuze, Worringer provides the definition of Gothic, as well as a contrast between Gothic and Classical art.<sup>9</sup> Deleuze notes that, in principle, Classical art can be contrasted with Gothic art. Like Worringer, he recognizes the value of contrast: he assigns the articulation of contrast

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<sup>1</sup> Gilles Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation* (London: Continuum, 2004 [1981]), ix.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> For instance, Deleuze discusses sensation as connected to the nervous system of the subject and to observed objects at the same time. (Ibid., 34-35.) Also, Deleuze follows Antonin Artaud in explaining the existence of a form of embodiment that precedes representation and recognizable organic form: the 'body without organs.' See Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, 44-45. Also, Deleuze addresses the 'hysteria' (i. e., the excessive presence) of the body without organs, which lacks not organs, but their organization. See———, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, 44-45.

<sup>4</sup> Deleuze addresses affects (sensations and instincts – but not feelings, according to him), vital emotion (which he describes as a 'nervous wave'), and the absence of will as readable in Bacon's pictorial marks. See Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, 39, 45, 100-101.

<sup>5</sup> Like Riegl before him, Deleuze addresses the tactile (or haptic, according to Deleuze) functioning of the eye, which encourages the emergence of haptic space. (Ibid., 122-123, 133.)

<sup>6</sup> Deleuze refers to the thought of Kant and Hegel, for instance. (Ibid., 81, 178, 182.)

<sup>7</sup> For instance, Deleuze defines composition as '... an organization... in the process of disintegrating'. (Ibid., 129.) Deleuze also addresses the optical qualities of abstract forms; he sees them belonging in a space that no longer needs the tactility of making. (———, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, 103.) Also, he gives ample attention to the Figure, which can be a person or a group evolving against an isolating, non-narrative, amphitheatre-like space. (———, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, 1-6.)

<sup>8</sup> The work of Cézanne is discussed at length by Deleuze. See Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, 34-43, 111-121. Gothic art also attracts the attention of Deleuze; (———, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, 129-131.)

<sup>9</sup> Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, 46.

between different modes of art-making to the domain of theoretical principles. However, Deleuze finds that art cannot always sustain the contrast between ‘nonorganic’ (abstract) Gothic and ‘organic’ (representational) Classicism. For instance, he observes that Classical art can be ‘figurative’ (when it includes represented objects, events, phenomena), or abstract (when it makes visible geometric forms).<sup>10</sup>

### **Classical ornament and Gothic line**

In *Abstraction and Empathy*, Worringer discussed the representational aspects of Classical art, associating it with the urge to empathy, with naturalism, and with ancient Greek culture.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, he also found that Classical art made visible a meeting of abstract and representational features in the case of ornament. Classical art, according to Worringer, brought together the enlivenment of Mycenaean style (c. 1900 – c. 1100 B. C., Bronze Age Greece) and the geometric strictness of Dipylon style (a mode of art-making the emergence of which Worringer associated with the Doric migration from 1150 B. C.).<sup>12</sup> In the words of Worringer:

We recall that the principle of Mycenaean art was that of enlivenment, of naturalism, whereas the Dipylon style exhibits a marked abstract tendency. Classical art now seems to us to embody a grand synthesis of these two elements, with a clear preponderance of the naturalistic element... This balance between the Mycenaean components and the Dipylon components, this balance between naturalism and abstraction, brought to maturity that altogether felicitous result which we call Classical Greek art.<sup>13</sup>

For Worringer, the synthesis of naturalism (or representational art depicting the natural world) and abstraction became visible in the Classical art of Greece. Despite the dominance of naturalistic elements in Greek Classicism, Worringer noticed that balance informed the

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<sup>10</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 46.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 71.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 71-72.

relationship between abstraction and representation. He compared Greek and Egyptian art, exploring their differences and continuing to address the relationship between representational ('organic,' 'living,' 'vital') tendencies, and abstract ('geometric,' regularity-oriented, rest-oriented) tendencies in Classical Greek ornament. In his words:

Classical Greek ornament, compared with Egyptian, shows in place of geometric regularity an organic regularity whose most sublime goal is rest in motion, living rhythm or rhythmic liveliness, in which our vital sensations can immerse themselves with complete happiness. There is no trace of naturalism in the menial sense, no trace of copying nature. We see before us pure ornament on an organic fundament.<sup>14</sup>

Like Worringer, Deleuze draws attention to another territory where abstract and representational tendencies combine: Gothic art. Deleuze is interested in the dynamism and intensity of Gothic; he argues that, in Gothic painting, representational vitality is recognizable in abstract geometry or decoration. According to him, Gothic line does not describe forms, but registers movement and generates complex relationships. Deleuze writes:

It [i. e., the geometry of the pictorial line in Gothic painting] is a geometry no longer in the service of the essential and eternal, but a geometry in the service of "problems" or "accidents," ablation, adjunction, projection, intersection. It is thus a line that never ceases to change direction, that is broken, split, diverted, turned in on itself, coiled up, or even extended beyond its natural limits, dying away in a "disordered convulsion": there are *free marks* that extend or arrest the line, acting beneath or beyond representation. It is thus a geometry or decoration that has become vital and profound, on the condition that it is no longer organic: it elevates mechanical forces to sensible intuition, it works through violent movements.<sup>15</sup>

Deleuze observes the peculiar dynamic of Gothic line, which generates opportunities for the exploration as well as questioning of pictorial form. Gothic line creates forms and relationships: its pictorial presence is that of a force actively responding to a will that appears to be its own. The movement of geometric line in Gothic painting seems mechanical to

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 72.

<sup>15</sup> Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, 46.

Deleuze; Worringer also recognized mechanical rather than organic aspects in the design of Gothic cathedrals in *Abstraction and Empathy*.<sup>16</sup> Like Worringer, Deleuze finds no organic features in the Gothic line, which he nevertheless regarded as lively, intuitive (that is, non-cognitive) and violent (that is, physical and forceful). For Worringer as for Deleuze, representational characteristics such as vitality can inform abstraction-oriented artistic practices, even where imitative renderings of organic forms are absent.

Worringer also discusses Gothic line (or Northern line) in *Form in Gothic*. Contrasting Classical ornament and Gothic ornament, Worringer notes that, where Classical ornament is symmetrical, additive, restful, structured and rhythmically measured,<sup>17</sup> Northern ornament is active, multiplicative, accelerating, formless, ceaseless, and a-centric.<sup>18</sup> Movement seems mechanical and violent in Northern geometry, according to Worringer.<sup>19</sup> Worringer sees a potential for infinite development in the ceaseless, regular repetitions of Northern ornament. With regard to Northern ornament, Worringer notes:

A continually increasing activity without pauses or accents is set up and repetition has only the one aim of giving the particular motive a potential infinity. The infinite harmony of the line hovers before Northern man in his ornament: that infinite line which gives no pleasure, but which stuns and compels us to helpless surrender. If, after contemplating Northern ornament, we close our eyes, all that remains to us is a lingering impression of a formless, ceaseless activity.<sup>20</sup>

For Worringer, the harmony specific to Northern ornament relies on the dynamic of its line. This type of line, Worringer observes, is intensely active and difficult to comprehend. Previously, Worringer had connected representation with rationality, sensuousness, and confidence in the natural world, and abstraction with tendencies towards transcendence, spirituality, and distrust of the world as presented by senses.<sup>21</sup> In the Gothic line, he finds a non-cognitive, mechanical, ever-intensifying movement that asserts its immediate physicality while attempting to transcend the world. In other words, Northern line as seen by Worringer

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<sup>16</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 114.

<sup>17</sup> Worringer and Read, *Form in Gothic*, 55, 57.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 55-57.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 55-56.

<sup>21</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 45-47.

interweaves aspects of representation and abstraction beyond the point where they could account for either mode of art-making alone.

### **Non-organic dynamism in Gothic art**

Deleuze also inquires into the close connection of abstract and representational aspects of art-making. He follows Worringer in focusing on the generic features of Gothic art (or, according to Deleuze, Barbarian art). Remembering Worringer for his discussion of Northern line as potentially infinite in its changes of direction, or in its violent return towards itself,<sup>22</sup> Deleuze argues that Gothic or Barbarian art transcends representation through its non-organic dynamism. He explains:

Barbarian art goes beyond organic representation in two ways, either through the mass of the body in movement, or through the speed and changing direction of the flat line. Worringer discovered the formula of this frenetic line: it is a life, but the most bizarre and intense kind of life, a *nonorganic* vitality. It is an abstraction, but an expressionistic abstraction. It is thus opposed to the organic life of classical representation, but also to the geometric line of Egyptian essence, and the optical space of luminous apparition.<sup>23</sup>

The specificity of Gothic consists, according to Deleuze, in its achieving a paradoxical combination of representational and abstract aspects of art-making, where representation is surpassed and abstraction is infused with vitality. Like Worringer, Deleuze employs the rhetoric of opposition to underscore the key characteristics of Gothic art. Gothic art is distinct from both Classical art and Egyptian art for him, as we have seen before; furthermore, Deleuze considers that Gothic art cannot be associated with the rendition of three-dimensional, optical space. He points to the strokes [*traits*] that Gothic art makes visible, and notices their connection to the hand of the artist – more generally, to the body of the artist now present in mark-making, yet in excess of its strictly physical frame. Highlighting the role

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<sup>22</sup> Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, 129.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 129-130.

of hands and eyes in Gothic art, Deleuze muses: 'It is as if a purely manual space were taking its revenge, for if the eyes that judge still maintain their accuracy, the hand that manipulates has discovered how to free itself from them.'<sup>24</sup>

Associating Classical representation with an emphasis on the sense of sight, and on optical organization,<sup>25</sup> Deleuze explains that representation relies on intellectual deliberation and accuracy. In contrast, Gothic art draws attention to a type of space where the role of the artist's hand comes to the fore. However, Deleuze argues that the opposition of sight and touch in the articulation of pictorial space should not be maintained, since both senses contribute to the questioning of Classical representation.<sup>26</sup> He comments that the effects of touch and sight (as observable in manual and optical pictorial spaces) can generate complex associations and relationships. Like Worringer, Deleuze remains open to the connections between elements he discusses in terms of contrast.

For Worringer as for Deleuze, Gothic art brings to light many instances where representational and abstract tendencies combine. Worringer, in *Form in Gothic*, explains that Northern (or Gothic) art associates an abstract approach to line and a representational approach to actuality (which, according to Worringer, is arbitrary, chaotic, and does not coincide with nature).<sup>27</sup> He points out that Gothic art engages with actuality, unlike the art of Classicism, which avoids rendering its turmoil. For instance, Worringer finds representational elements of actuality contributing to the otherwise abstract approach to Gothic animal ornament. He explains:

Northern art, on the other hand [i. e., in contrast with the art of Classical culture], was evolved from the conjunction of an abstract linear speech with the reproduction of actuality. The first stage of this conjunction is exhibited in the Northern animal ornament. The specific expression of line and its spiritual, non-sensuous mode of expression were in no way weakened by this interpolation of motives from actuality, for the natural, the organic, was still completely concealed in this actuality; and only

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 131.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 125.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 131.

<sup>27</sup> Worringer and Read, *Form in Gothic*, 60.

the admission of such *organic* values of expression could have weakened the abstract character of the drawing.

On the other hand, this abstract character of the line could readily be amalgamated with values of actuality; indeed, these motives of actuality could, as we have seen, be evolved, even involuntarily, from this abstract linear fantasy. For what is characteristic of any impression of actuality reaches us in a kind of linear “shorthand,” of which the single lines contain a summary expressive value far exceeding the function of the line as a mere indication of outline.<sup>28</sup>

### **Painting, representation and abstraction according to Deleuze**

For Worringer, abstract and representational tendencies are in conjunction in Gothic art; Deleuze, in *Francis Bacon*, examines the particularities of abstract-representational interactions as observed in Bacon’s approach to painting. With Bacon’s work and words in mind, Deleuze begins by explaining the difficult relationship between representation and painting. Painting is an art that aims to be independent of representation, according to Deleuze. He writes:

Painting has neither a model to represent nor a story to narrate. It thus has two possible ways of escaping the figurative: toward pure form, through abstraction; or toward the purely figural, through extraction and isolation. If the painter keeps to the Figure, if he or she opts for the second path, it will be to oppose the “figural” to the figurative. Isolating the Figure will be the primary requirement. The figurative (representation) implies the relationship of an image to an object that it is supposed to illustrate; but it also implies the relationship of an image to other images in a composite whole which assigns a specific object to each of them. Narration is the correlate of illustration. A story always slips into, or tends to slip into, the space between two figures in order to animate the illustrated whole. Isolation is thus the

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 60-61.

simplest means, necessary though not sufficient, to break with representation, to disrupt narration, to escape illustration, to liberate the Figure: to stick to the fact.<sup>29</sup>

Deleuze dissociates representation and narration from the art of painting. He connects representation with the figurative (in other words, with the recognizable rendition of figures in the world), observing that the figurative links images to objects (by means of illustration), as well as images to other images.<sup>30</sup> The distinction Deleuze operates between the figurative (representation) and the figural as observed in the paintings of Francis Bacon allows the philosopher to remodel the relationship between representation and abstraction.

Representation, for Deleuze and Worringer, is associated with optical organization and organic (lifelike) qualities.<sup>31</sup> Deleuze finds that Classical representation relies on distance (made visible through depth of field), on perspective (which presupposes the variation of viewpoints, and the overlapping of planes), on the differentiation of planes from the background to the foreground of the picture, and on the incorporation of accident.<sup>32</sup> Following Riegl,<sup>33</sup> Deleuze mentions that representation is tactile-optical: it brings together the sense of sight and the sense of touch, yet subordinates the tactile (or haptic, in Deleuze's terms) function of the eye to the optic. Figuration, Deleuze notes, is a result of representation.<sup>34</sup>

Abstraction, Deleuze goes on to explain, creates a space that is still optical, yet emphasizes transformation. For Deleuze, pictorial abstraction works with light-dark relationships, and disintegrates representation-oriented organization.<sup>35</sup> He associates abstraction with modern painting and with a departure from figurative art, signalling the difficulty of the separation from representational practices.<sup>36</sup> Like Worringer,<sup>37</sup> Deleuze regards abstraction as spiritual. Abstraction is ascetic, Deleuze considers, and becomes so by a reductive journey towards

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<sup>29</sup> Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, 2-3.

<sup>30</sup> In this thesis, the term 'image' indicates that visual likeness informs the relationship between beings, objects, events or phenomena, and their representation.

<sup>31</sup> Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, 125-126.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 122-123.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 126.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 129.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>37</sup> See, for instance, Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 18, 34-35.

optical, non-tactile, non-manual forms.<sup>38</sup> The distancing that Worringer recognizes in abstraction also reflects in Deleuze's discussion of abstraction as symbolic code relying on oppositions of form.<sup>39</sup> Deleuze explains that abstraction articulates a pure optical space following binary rules. In his words:

It [i. e., abstraction] is the code that is responsible for answering the question of painting today: What can save man from "the abyss," from external tumult and manual chaos? Open up a spiritual state for the man of the future, a man without hands. Restore to man a pure and internal optical space, which will perhaps be made exclusively of the horizontal and the vertical... The hand is reduced to a finger that presses on an internal optical keyboard.<sup>40</sup>

Where Worringer connects abstraction to geometry, Deleuze sees abstraction as a code activated through the selection of opposing units. Mechanical characteristics of abstract processes become visible in the Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy*;<sup>41</sup> in his turn, Deleuze exposes the almost touch-free regularity of abstraction. Abstraction, Deleuze argues, is not a code imposed on painting, but a code elaborated through painting.<sup>42</sup>

Yet, according to Deleuze, the spectrum of abstract art also includes a manual form of abstraction: Abstract Expressionism or *Art Informel* [Informal Art]. The chaotic, contour-free mode of painting practised by Jackson Pollock (1912-56) and Morris Louis (1912-62) challenges the eye but highlights the role of the hand in art-making, Deleuze remarks.<sup>43</sup> He agrees that Worringer is the inventor of the word 'expressionism' –<sup>44</sup> an approach to art Deleuze contrasts with the organic symmetry of Classicism. However, while the writings of Worringer may have provided inspiration to the Expressionist movement at the beginning of the twentieth century, the word 'expressionism' has proved to have an uncertain parentage.

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<sup>38</sup> Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, 103.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 104.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> After discussing the connection between abstraction and geometrical regularity, Worringer cites Lipps with regard to the mechanical aspects of the geometric line. See Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 20.

<sup>42</sup> Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, 117.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 104-105.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 190.

### Part 3: Around Expressionism

#### The words of Worringer: ‘Expressionism’ at the beginning of the twentieth century

Writers on art have frequently linked the work of Worringer with the growth and decline of German Expressionism (1905-20),<sup>1</sup> an art movement comprising a wide variety of practices that unfolded in the first decades of the twentieth century. However, the connections between the writings of Worringer and German Expressionism are problematic to trace in *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic*. These books do not mention Expressionism, do not point to artists considered to be Expressionists, and include only few notes concerning early twentieth-century makers and approaches to art-making. In his forewords to *Abstraction and Empathy*, Worringer nevertheless maintains that he resonated with the artistic interests of his time, that artists found his works relevant, that he sensed and addressed ‘... the necessities of the period’,<sup>2</sup> and that his findings were applied in early twentieth-century art. Worringer’s approach to early twentieth-century artistic practices and practitioners remains generic; therefore, the exact degree of his influence on the early twentieth-century artists is difficult to establish.

Worringer focuses on the development of his own argument in *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic*, adducing time-tested historical data in support of his theory. He avoids defending Expressionism directly; however, in both books, the significance of expression comes to the fore in his discourse. The approach of Worringer to topics of concern for German Expressionists (such as artistic will, the necessity of direct expression in art, and the interest in simplified, intensified, reworked form) discourage the separation of *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic* from Expressionist explorations at the beginning of the twentieth century. On the other hand, specific connections between Worringer’s argument in *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic*, and early twentieth-century Expressionist art-making, remain challenging to retrieve. Contemporary researchers illuminate various aspects

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<sup>1</sup> Writers use the term ‘Expressionism’ in its capitalized as well as lowercase form. In my approach, the word ‘Expressionism’ is capitalized, following Long, Barron, and Rigby, *German Expressionism: Documents from the End of the Wilhelmine Empire to the Rise of National Socialism*. However, where sources I have consulted employ the term ‘Expressionism’ in lowercase, I cite or refer to the word ‘Expressionism’ in its lowercase form.

<sup>2</sup> Worringer, Wilhelm, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style* (New York: International Universities Press 1953 [1908]), vii, viii.

of the links between Worringer's writings and German Expressionism, adding nuance to the topic but reaching no consensus.

For instance, Herbert Read finds that Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic* had a key influence on the development of German Expressionist art;<sup>3</sup> Read nevertheless offers no start and end date for the movement in his *Concise History of Modern Painting* (1969). The artists whose works announce or give rise to Expressionism include, according to Read, Christian Rohlf's (1849-1938), Ferdinand Hodler (1853-1918), James Ensor (1860-1949), Edvard Munch (1863-1944), Alexei von Jawlensky (1864-1941), Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944), Emil Nolde (1867-1956), and Ernst Barlach (1870-1938).<sup>4</sup>

The beginnings and demise of German Expressionism prove complicated to pinpoint for contemporary researchers; Paul Vogt and Horst Uhr consider Worringer's 1920 speech at the Goethe Society in Munich as the end of the movement.<sup>5</sup> According to Vogt, Expressionism extends between 1905 (the year of the formation of the Dresden *Die Brücke* [The Bridge] group, which included Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Erich Heckel, Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, and Fritz Bleyl as founding members), and 1920 (the year of Worringer's Munich speech that, in 1921, became *Current Questions on Art*). Uhr reinforces the temporal boundaries asserted by Vogt with regard to the Expressionist movement.<sup>6</sup> Counting Kirchner, Heckel, Schmidt-Rottluff, and Max Pechstein among *Die Brücke* Expressionists, Uhr points to the aesthetic preoccupations with pictorial structure manifest in the works of Expressionist artists after 1920; he notes the increased traditionalism of later Expressionism, which, he finds, renounced early Expressionist intensity.

For Shulamith Behr, David Fanning and Douglas Jarman, Expressionism is difficult to define both chronologically and in terms of style;<sup>7</sup> they reject the idea that Expressionism could reach an end, thus indirectly agreeing with Worringer's perspective on the capacity of style to

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<sup>3</sup> Read, *A Concise History of Modern Painting*, 52, 64-66.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>5</sup> Paul Vogt, *Expressionism: German Painting, 1905-1920* (New York: H. N. Abrams, 1980), 8, 15.

<sup>6</sup> Horst Uhr, *Masterpieces of German Expressionism at the Detroit Institute of Arts* (New York: Hudson Hills Press in association with the Detroit Institute of Arts, 1982), 25. Also, ———, *Lovis Corinth*, *California Studies in the History of Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 129.

<sup>7</sup> Shulamith Behr, David Fanning, and Douglas Jarman, *Expressionism Reassessed* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1993), 2.

exceed historical boundaries and surface in various epochs.<sup>8</sup> Behr, Fanning and Jarman see Expressionism as extending between 1905 and 1925 (the year of the first ‘*Neue Sachlichkeit*’ [New Objectivity] show in Mannheim). Expressionism was most recognizable as a movement between these years, Behr, Fanning and Jarman argue. They do not agree to emphasize the death of Expressionism, and highlight the impact of the movement instead. In their words: ‘But to speak of Expressionism as being “dead”, or to attempt to limit its chronological span, is, in any case, to misrepresent the power and the influence which this amorphous, theoretically ill-defined movement has had.’<sup>9</sup>

Behr, Fanning and Jarman’s perspective contrasts the position Worringer adopted regarding Expressionism in 1921.<sup>10</sup> To Worringer, Expressionist art appeared less interesting early in the second decade of the twentieth century; however, although he underscored the ineffectiveness of artistic Expressionism in *Current Questions on Art* (1921), for most researchers from the English-speaking world, discussions of Expressionism rely on Worringer’s thought from *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic*.<sup>11</sup>

The association of Worringer’s writings with Expressionism has its grounds:<sup>12</sup> Worringer employs the term ‘expression’ extensively throughout *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic*.<sup>13</sup> A key element in aesthetic inquiries as well as art-making, ‘expression’ provides

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<sup>8</sup> Worringer and Read, *Form in Gothic*, 37.

<sup>9</sup> Behr, Fanning, and Jarman, *Expressionism Reassessed*, 2.

<sup>10</sup> Worringer had underscored the lack of experimentalism of later Expressionist art in *Current Questions on Art* (1921). See Wilhelm Worringer, ‘From *Current Questions on Art*’ in *German Expressionism: Documents from the End of the Wilhelmine Empire to the Rise of National Socialism*, eds. Rose-Carol Washton Long, Stephanie Barron, and Ida Katherine Rigby (New York: Maxwell Macmillan Canada, 1993 [1921]), 284-287.

<sup>11</sup> The influence of Worringer’s thought on early twentieth-century German artists offers rich grounds for further inquiry. For instance, the emphasis on opposition in Worringer’s *Abstraction and Empathy*, and the oppositional perspective adopted by artists regarded as Expressionists, could be explored at length. Donald E. Gordon points to this research possibility. With regard to the rhetoric of opposition in the context of Expressionist art-making, Gordon notes: ‘Expressionists knew with certainty not what they wanted, but what they opposed. Their post-industrial aspiration was a protest against the capitalist and mechanistic values of their own industrial era. Just what the post-industrial age would be, however, was never clear.’ Also see Holdheim, ‘Wilhelm Worringer and the Polarity of Understanding’. This topic needs in-depth investigation, but exceeds the scope of the current thesis, which examines briefly only the writings and paintings of Hodler and Kandinsky.

<sup>12</sup> As previously noted, the word ‘Expressionism’ is capitalized in this study. However, Gordon draws attention to the un-capitalized use of the word in English usage. (Gordon, *Expressionism: Art and Idea*, 174.)

<sup>13</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 21, 27, 32, 37, 44, 51, 53, 66, 76-78, 81-82, 84, 89, 91, 94, 96, 98, 100-103, 108-118, 127, 133-134. Also, Worringer and Read, *Form in Gothic*, 7-8, 11-13, 17, 32, 36, 38, 40-44, 60-68, 79-81, 88-92, 106-110, 113-117, 127-130, 134-138, 153-167, 171-173, 176-177, 180.

outer form to inner experiences.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, as *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic* reveal, Worringer and Expressionist artists share an interest in intense, subjective responses to the world.

However, although a preoccupation with expression is visible in the inquiries of Expressionists and the writings of Worringer, Worringer does not address or define the Expressionist art movement in *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic*. He refers to Expressionist artists in 1911, in 'The Historical Development of Modern Art'; yet 'Expressionism,' a term that suggests the emergence of shared characteristics in early twentieth-century artworks and approaches to art-making, is employed in a variety of contexts before and around the turn of the twentieth century.

In his study from 1966, 'On the Origin of the Word "Expressionism"', Gordon notes that the word 'Expressionism' was not employed by the *Brücke* artists in reference to their painting practices.<sup>15</sup> Instead, Gordon traces the origin of the word 'Expressionism' to turn-of-the twentieth-century France – a hypothesis approached critically by Geoffrey Perkins in 1974,<sup>16</sup> and further addressed by Marit Werenskiöld in 1984.<sup>17</sup> Gordon discusses the earliest

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<sup>14</sup> Regarding art forms oriented towards expression, Vogt addresses the key characteristics of the term 'expressive' as applicable to early twentieth-century art. Vogt writes: 'Under "Expressive" we can include German Expressionism which extended from the primitive to the cosmic-romantic, and which sought, through a passionate scrutiny of the visible world, to heighten reality into a pictorial counterreality. The work of both Matisse and Kandinsky confirms this: Matisse united the ego and the world in the intellectual synthesis of the picture; Kandinsky's newfound symbols pushed out the boundaries of visible reality and touched on the borderline between man's existence and the cosmic order. He could scarcely convey discoveries of this subtlety by a less sophisticated expressive technique, hence Kandinsky's mistrust of Northern Expressionism. Marc's German pan-emotionalism, which was rooted in Romanticism, and Kandinsky's synthesis of colour harmonies found in contemporary French Orphic painting the inspiration they needed for the theoretical and practical cultivation of the resources of colour and form. The aesthetics of the *Blaue Reiter*, with elements of both Expressionism and Constructivism, were directed at the picture as an independent organism and formal unit.' See Paul Vogt, *Expressionism: German Painting, 1905-1920* (New York: H. N. Abrams, 1980), 24. Levine underscores the defining characteristics of Expressionism; according to him, Expressionism emerges out of despair, rejects Classicism and Realism, sees art as a means for the individual to communicate with humanity, seeks community, and emphasizes two themes: regression and apocalypse. See Frederick S. Levine, *The Apocalyptic Vision: The Art of Franz Marc as German Expressionism* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), 2-3. Also, Stephen Eric Bronner, and Douglas Kellner, *Passion and Rebellion: The Expressionist Heritage* (South Hadley, Massachusetts: J. F. Bergin, 1983), 4-11.

<sup>15</sup> Donald E. Gordon, 'On the Origin of the Word "Expressionism"', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 29, 1966, 369.

<sup>16</sup> Perkins, *Contemporary Theory of Expressionism*, 12-18. For Perkins, the possibility of an English origin for the word 'Expressionism' seems equally valid. (———, *Contemporary Theory of Expressionism*, 15, 20n18.)

<sup>17</sup> Marit Werenskiöld, *The Concept of Expressionism: Origin and Metamorphoses* (Oslo and New York: Universitetsforlaget and Columbia University Press, 1984), 5-13. Werenskiöld mentions that Daniel-Henry Kahnweiler did not accept that the term 'Expressionism' was first used in 1901 by Hervé (she agrees with

associations of the word 'Expressionism' with the teachings of Gustave Moreau (1826-98), the writings of Henri Matisse (1869-1954) and Louis Vauxcelles (1870-1943), as well as with the eight paintings of Julien-Auguste Hervé,<sup>18</sup> titled '*Expressionismes*' and shown at the *Salon des Indépendants* [Salon of Independent Artists] in 1901.<sup>19</sup> Following his discussion of Matisse's writings, Gordon explains that, in early twentieth-century France, the word 'expression' referred specifically to the emphasis of artists on self-expression.<sup>20</sup> He notes that the word 'Expressionism' is also employed in connection with the presence of the work of French artists in early twentieth-century Germany;<sup>21</sup> the paintings of eleven French artists were displayed in the twenty-second Berlin Secession exhibition (April 1911) in a gallery labelled '*Expressionisten*', according to him.<sup>22</sup>

Regarding the responses to 'Expressionism' in the press of the time, Gordon highlights the hostility of the press to Expressionist artists –<sup>23</sup> an emphasis contested by Perkins, who argues that positive responses to the works of French artists were also published.<sup>24</sup> Gordon notes Worringer's support of 'Synthetists and Expressionists' in 1911.<sup>25</sup> No further discussion regarding Worringer's association with Expressionism occurs in 'On the Origin of the Word "Expressionism"'.<sup>26</sup>

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Kahnweiler on this matter). She notes the presence of the term 'Expressionist' in 1850 in Britain, in 1878 in the United States of America, and, in May 1910, in the German art journal *Kunst und Künstler* [Art and Artist], where Aby Warburg commented on the 'Expressionist' graphic art of the Late Middle Ages. Werenskiöld also points to the use of the term by Carl David Moselius in the Swedish press (20 March 1911) before the term appeared in Germany. (Werenskiöld, *The Concept of Expressionism: Origin and Metamorphoses*, 7-8, 12.)

<sup>18</sup> Werenskiöld mentions that nine paintings of Hervé were shown at *Salon des Indépendants*. See Werenskiöld, *The Concept of Expressionism: Origin and Metamorphoses*, 7.

<sup>19</sup> Gordon, 'On the Origin of the Word "Expressionism"', 368-371. Also, Perkins, *Contemporary Theory of Expressionism*, 13-14. Gordon notes that the Salon was led by Georges Seurat (1859-91), Paul Signac (1863-1935) and Henri-Edmond Cross (1856-1910).

<sup>20</sup> Gordon, 'On the Origin of the Word "Expressionism"', 371.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Also, Perkins, *Contemporary Theory of Expressionism*, 14.

<sup>23</sup> Gordon, 'On the Origin of the Word "Expressionism"', 371-373.

<sup>24</sup> Perkins, *Contemporary Theory of Expressionism*, 15-16.

<sup>25</sup> Gordon, 'On the Origin of the Word "Expressionism"', 373.

<sup>26</sup> However, Gordon readdresses the associations between Worringer and Expressionism in 1987. On this occasion, he discusses Worringer's preoccupations with spirituality at the time when Expressionists such as Emil Nolde, Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, and Erich Heckel approached religious themes. He also mentions Worringer's defence of the German tendency – visible in Expressionism – to respond to existing modes of art-making. Gordon discusses Worringer's approach to empathy, as well as the role of empathy in Expressionist self-portraits (for instance, in the practices of Egon Schiele, Oskar Kokoschka, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner or Max Beckmann); he addresses Worringer's criticism of Expressionism in 1920, and Worringer's

Expressionism, according to Gordon, is a word used with increasing frequency after 1911. Paul Fechter, Gordon notes, mentions his indebtedness to Worringer's *Form in Gothic in Expressionism* (1914),<sup>27</sup> and goes on to employ the word 'Expressionism' in connection to German art-making, more precisely in connection with the city of Dresden and with the artists of *Die Brücke* and *Der Blaue Reiter* [Blue Rider].<sup>28</sup>

The word 'Expressionism,' according to Gordon, has grown to acquire the connotations of the German concept of *Ausdruckskunst* (which Gordon proposes to translate as 'emotionalism') in German-speaking contexts.<sup>29</sup> Common interests and aims united German critics and writers between 1914 and 1923 with regard to Expressionism, according to Gordon; nevertheless, he maintains that Expressionism remained an ambiguous term, and did not point to a unitary artistic attitude at the time.<sup>30</sup> In other words, Gordon questions the unity of Expressionism as an art movement (Perkins agrees with this perspective),<sup>31</sup> and emphasizes the more pronounced cohesiveness of Expressionism in art writing and criticism.

Gordon adds new findings to his research from 1966 in *Expressionism: Art and Idea* (1987).<sup>32</sup> He notes that the word 'Expressionism' was increasingly applied to discussions of German art starting with the International Exhibition of the *Sonderbund* [Special League] in Cologne (May 1912).<sup>33</sup> He also attributes the invention of the label 'Expressionism' to Budapest-born, Paris-residing art history student, Antonin Matějček (1889-1950).<sup>34</sup> The term 'Expressionism,' Gordon signals, was also used by Carl David Moselius (1890-1968), a newspaper critic writing about a Swedish group of painters – *De unga* [Young Ones] – in a review from 20 March 1911.<sup>35</sup> In 1987, Gordon remarks that Worringer's approach inspired

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1911 analysis of '... a modern art of "expression" (*Ausdruck*)' which inspired Fechter's book on *Expressionism* (1914). (———, *Expressionism: Art and Idea*, 48-49, 70, 106, 128, 140, 168, 176.)

<sup>27</sup> Gordon refers to an edition of Fechter's work where Fechter acknowledges the influence of Worringer on page four. (———, 'On the Origin of the Word "Expressionism" ', 377.) Also see Perkins, *Contemporary Theory of Expressionism*, 16-17.

<sup>28</sup> Donald E. Gordon, 'On the Origin of the Word "Expressionism"', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 29, 1966, 376-378.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 378-380. Also, regarding the connection between Worringer and the will-to-expression [*Ausdruckswollen*], see Gordon, *Expressionism: Art and Idea*, 176.

<sup>30</sup> Gordon, 'On the Origin of the Word "Expressionism" ', 384.

<sup>31</sup> Perkins, *Contemporary Theory of Expressionism*, 18.

<sup>32</sup> Gordon, *Expressionism: Art and Idea*, 174-176.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 176.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 175.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 175-176.

the art of the early twentieth century, and contributed significantly to Fechter's analysis of *Expressionism*.<sup>36</sup>

Worringer plays a modest role in Gordon's 1966 approach to the early years of the Expressionist movement; 'On the Origin of the Word "Expressionism"' mentions Worringer as a supporter of contemporary 'Synthetists and Expressionists'. However, in 1987, Gordon dwells more on the relevance of Worringer's writings in connection to Expressionism. Worringer appears as a supporter, then critic, of German Expressionism in both 'On the Origin of the Word "Expressionism"', and *Expressionism: Art and Idea*.

Like Gordon in 1966, Wolf Dieter Dube traces the term 'Expressionism' back to Hervé, Matisse and Vauxcelles.<sup>37</sup> Dube also signals that, on the occasion of the 1911 Berlin Secession Exhibition, gallery dealer Paul Cassirer (1871-1926) referred to a painting by Max Pechstein as fitting under the heading of 'Expressionism' rather than 'Impressionism;' <sup>38</sup> however, Dube questions the veracity of this information. In his account of Expressionism, Worringer (whom Dube considers a theorist of influence at the beginning of the twentieth century) is mentioned for his having referred to French artists exhibited in Germany as 'expressionists'.<sup>39</sup> Dube, like Gordon, draws no further attention to Worringer's role in the articulation of the Expressionist movement in Germany.

Instead, Geoffrey Perkins argues that Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic* play a major role in the formulation of Expressionist theories.<sup>40</sup> In his *Contemporary Theory of Expressionism* (1974), Perkins writes that Worringer's account of the psychology of Northerners, as well as his perspective on Gothic architecture, exerted a considerable influence on twentieth-century approaches to Expressionism,<sup>41</sup> despite Worringer's not referring to Expressionism in either *Abstraction and Empathy* or *Form in Gothic*.<sup>42</sup> Perkins

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 176-177.

<sup>37</sup> Wolf Dieter Dube, *The Expressionists* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1972), 18.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Perkins, *Contemporary Theory of Expressionism*, 48.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>42</sup> According to Perkins, Peter Selz mentions Worringer's use of the term 'Expressionism' in *Form in Gothic* (Ibid., 17, 55). Also see Peter Selz, *German Expressionist Painting* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1957), 13. (Discussing Worringer's *Form in Gothic*, Selz writes: 'Worringer finally linked Expressionism with the German Gothic tradition.') In the edition of *Form in Gothic* I have consulted (1957 [1912]), 'expression' is a very frequently employed word, even in chapter titles such as 'Transcendentalism of

explains that Worringer provided a direct presentation of already formulated ideas that made his books relevant to early twentieth-century aesthetic and artistic issues,<sup>43</sup> and notably popular in the epoch (in 1919, according to Perkins, nine editions of *Abstraction and Empathy* had been printed, and the readers of *Form in Gothic* had seen twelve editions published by 1920).<sup>44</sup>

With regard to the early reception of *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic*, Perkins points to the existence of contrasting attitudes towards Worringer's thought. He believes that the positive and negative responses to the books of Worringer actually reflect the professional bias of his critics. According to Perkins: 'Those who rejected his [i. e., Worringer's] theories tended to be trained and established art historians, those who adopted them, art critics, poets and artists. It was from these latter groups, of course, that the majority of the theories of Expressionism came.'<sup>45</sup> Perkins thus emphasizes Worringer's specific research standpoint, which, though academic, opened towards the interests of coeval writers and artists.

Perkins draws attention to aspects of Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic* that supported the formulation of Expressionist theories.<sup>46</sup> Early twentieth-century aesthetics focused on an art of naturalism exclusively, Worringer had argued; Perkins underscores Worringer's views regarding the counterproductive emphasis on Classical, Renaissance and naturalist aesthetic values in a Northern context. Further inspiration for Expressionist writers could have derived, Perkins maintains, from the contrast Worringer traced between naturalism and style, as well as from Worringer's defence of non-naturalist, instinctive modes of art-making. For Perkins, Worringer is 'the leading champion of the cause', a key writer supporting Expressionism in the first decade of the twentieth century. According to Perkins:

Proceeding from the belief that since the Renaissance art had become more and more superficial, that society itself had become more and more individualistic and

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the Gothic World of Expression;' although I have found no mention of the term 'Expressionism' in the 1957 [1910] edition, Worringer's text presents the word 'expression' as a term of constant reference. Worringer's use of the word 'expression' in *Form in Gothic* could not have been indifferent to the cultural and artistic context where he developed his thoughts.

<sup>43</sup> Perkins, *Contemporary Theory of Expressionism*, 55.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 55.

fragmented, and that the artist, thrown back upon himself, had become increasingly isolated within that society, Worringer was, in 1910, one of the most ardent preachers of the need for a new form of art. This art, he felt, should satisfy spiritual, not sensuous needs, and should seek to restore the connection between artist and society, indeed to shift the emphasis from society to community, for only the community was capable of sustaining a monumental, spiritual form of art.<sup>47</sup>

Perkins thus portrays Worringer as highly aware of the complex cultural, social, psychological and artistic dynamics of his context. Worringer's writings were, for Perkins, a definite source of inspiration to Expressionists.

Further contextualising the emergence and development of Expressionism in 'Brücke, German Expressionism and the Issue of Modernism' (2011), Rose-Carol Washton Long observes that Expressionism, a term employed in German art criticism, incorporated various influences.<sup>48</sup> Long points out that the use of the term accounted for the impact of recent French artistic inquiries on German art, and hinted to its connections with 'primitive' art, Gothic art, and the painting of old masters such as Michelangelo (1475-1564) or Matthias Grünewald (1470-1528).<sup>49</sup> Worringer, according to Long, employed the term 'Expressionism' to refer to innovative German and French artistic explorations; as she underscores, Worringer considered the Gothic a phenomenon extending beyond historical and national boundaries.<sup>50</sup> From Long's perspective, Worringer appears as a writer sensitive to the transnational tendencies of the Gothic, and supportive of the intercultural aspects of Expressionism. While *Form in Gothic* still comprises passages where Worringer defends the German characteristics of Gothic in particular,<sup>51</sup> his openness towards contemporary artistic developments in Germany and abroad emerges with clarity in 'The Historical Development of Modern Art'.

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<sup>47</sup> Perkins, *Contemporary Theory of Expressionism*, 56.

<sup>48</sup> Regarding the sources of Expressionism, Gordon finds six groups of relevant sources: Late Impressionism, Symbolism, *Jugendstil* [Youth Style]; *Fauvism*, Cubism, Orphism, Futurism; German Gothic art, German Romanticism; tribal art (African and Oceanic); folk art, naive art, children's art; non-Western art (Islamic and Oriental). (Gordon, *Expressionism: Art and Idea*, 70.)

<sup>49</sup> Rose-Carol Washton Long, 'Brücke, German Expressionism and the Issue of Modernism' in *New Perspectives on Brücke Expressionism: Bridging History*, ed. Christian Weikop (Farnham, Surrey, and Burlington, V. T.: Ashgate, 2011), 12.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>51</sup> 'For the Germans, as we have seen, are the *conditio sine qua non* [i. e. indispensable condition] of Gothic', Worringer writes. See Worringer and Read, *Form in Gothic*, 180. Also, ———, *Form in Gothic*, 141-142.

## **‘The Historical Development of Modern Art’ (1911):**

### **Worringer’s early response to Expressionism**

While *Abstraction and Empathy* (1908) and *Form in Gothic* (1910) contain only few references to the art of Worringer’s epoch, ‘The Historical Development of Modern Art’ – a polemical text explaining and defending contemporary artistic developments in Germany – addresses early twentieth-century art-making, placing it in historical perspective. Worringer’s text appeared in *The Struggle for Art: The Answer to the “Protest of German Artists”*, an anthology published by Reinhard Piper at the initiative of Wassily Kandinsky and Franz Marc. Kandinsky, according to Magdalena Bushart, proposed that Worringer edit *The Struggle for Art*; Worringer preferred to support the publication by contributing his essay, ‘The Historical Development of Modern Art’ instead.<sup>1</sup>

*The Struggle for Art* included texts by artists Max Liebermann (1847-1935), Lovis Corinth (1858-1925), Max Slevogt (1868-1932), Gustav Klimt (1862-1918), Christian Rohlfes (1849-1938), Max Pechstein (1881-1955), Henry van der Velde (1863-1957), Franz Marc (1880-1916), Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944), and August Macke (1887-1914). Writers such as Wilhelm Worringer (1881-1965), Wilhelm Hausenstein (1882-1957), Hans Tietze (1880-1954), Gustav Pauli (1866-1938), and Alfred Lichtwark (1852-1914) also contributed to *The Struggle for Art*. The words of collector Karl Ernst Osthaus (1874-1921), dealer Paul Cassirer (1871-1926), as well as collector, dealer and writer Wilhelm Uhde (1874-1947) feature in Piper’s publication as well.<sup>2</sup>

In his collection of essays entitled *The Protest of German Artists* (1911), Carl Vinnen (1863-1922), a landscape artist and Berlin Secession member,<sup>3</sup> questioned the acquisition of French art in Germany.<sup>4</sup> He also criticized contemporary German art. ‘*Quousque Tandem*’ [‘When,’ or ‘For How Long’],<sup>5</sup> Vinnen’s essay from *The Protest of German Artists*, highlighted a

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<sup>1</sup> Bushart, ‘Changing Times, Changing Styles: Wilhelm Worringer and the Art of His Epoch’, 78-79.

<sup>2</sup> Kandinsky, Lindsay, and Vergo, *Kandinsky. Complete Writings on Art*, 105-106.

<sup>3</sup> Long, Barron, and Rigby, *German Expressionism: Documents from the End of the Wilhelmine Empire to the Rise of National Socialism*, 5-6.

<sup>4</sup> Vinnen points to the *Somderbund* alliance with French avant-garde art, as well as to the acquisition of Monet’s *Lady in a Green-Black Dress* by director Gustav Pauli for the Bremen Museum. Vinnen, ‘*Quousque Tandem*’, 6-7.

<sup>5</sup> The title of Vinnen’s essay could have been inspired by the first oration of Marcus Tullius Cicero for the Roman Senate; Cicero’s speech was directed against Lucius Sergius Catilina, who was attempting to destabilize

pattern of acquisition that seemed to favour artists from abroad. Pointing to the works of French artists such as Claude Monet (1840-1926), Alfred Sisley (1839-99), Camille Pissarro (1830-1903), and Vincent van Gogh (1853-90), Vinnen noted that their paintings had been purchased at high prices in Germany.<sup>6</sup> Vinnen underscored his admiration of French art, which he had researched during his stay Paris; nevertheless, he considered the German focus on French art-making excessive and threatening, mentioning in particular the speculative aspects of the entrance of French pictures in public and private German collections.<sup>7</sup> The paintings of Paul Cézanne (1839-1906), for instance, attracted Vinnen's criticism: he regarded them as drawing too much attention to the artist himself, due to their excessive assertion of personal style.<sup>8</sup> If national aspects of art were to be encouraged, Vinnen argued that local approaches were to be cultivated.<sup>9</sup>

In 'The Historical Development of Modern Art', Worringer addresses Vinnen's perspective, which Worringer considers specific to their time.<sup>10</sup> Historical necessity, according to Worringer, reflects in contemporary modes of art-making. The passage of time has to bring along artistic change, Worringer argues; he maintains that a distancing of contemporary art-making from Impressionism as explored in the works of Claude Monet and Pierre-Auguste Renoir (1841-1919) is to be historically expected. In *Abstraction and Empathy*, Worringer claimed that the relationship between human beings and the objects rendered in art changed throughout time;<sup>11</sup> he criticised the widespread opinion that the urge towards art-making was the same in all epochs.<sup>12</sup> For him, inner experiences lead, at different points in history, to different artistic effects.<sup>13</sup> In 'The Historical Development of Modern Art', Worringer

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the Roman government at the time. Cicero opens his oration against Catilina with the following rhetoric question: 'Quo usque tandem abutere, Catilina, patientia nostra?' ['When, O Catiline, do you mean to cease abusing our patience?'] See Marcus Tullius Cicero, 'First Oration against Lucius Catilina: Delivered in the Senate' in *The Orations of Marcus Tullius Cicero*, ed. C. D. Yonge (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1856 [63 B. C.]). If the oration of Cicero was indeed Vinnen's inspiration, then Vinnen's indirect reference to a Classical source further emphasizes the political dimension of his perspective on the contemporary art world.

<sup>6</sup> Vinnen, 'Quousque Tandem', 7.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 5-6.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>10</sup> Wilhelm Worringer, 'The Historical Development of Modern Art' in *German Expressionism: Documents from the End of the Wilhelmine Empire to the Rise of National Socialism*, eds. Rose-Carol Washon Long, Stephanie Barron, and Ida Katherine Rigby (New York: Maxwell Macmillan Canada, 1993 [1911]), 10.

<sup>11</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 37.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 30. Worringer follows Hegel when asserting the intrinsic development of art. In his *Aesthetics* (1820-29), Hegel had noted: '... [T]he individual arts too, independently of the art-forms which they objectify [i. e., the

mentions that a new generation of painters in Paris follows not the Impressionists, but rather Paul Cézanne, Vincent van Gogh, and Henri Matisse. French artists participating in this new direction of inquiry share many interests, Worringer notes; this gives unity to a movement that remains unnamed in ‘The Historical Development of Modern Art’.<sup>14</sup>

When visiting Paris around 1905 (that is, before having begun his work on *Abstraction and Empathy*), Worringer had the opportunity to become familiar with the works of Cézanne, Van Gogh and Matisse. The paintings of French artists were shown and purchased in Germany in the early years of the twentieth century, as Vinnen mentions in *The Protest of German Artists*, so Worringer’s opinion on contemporary French art could have taken shape in Germany even before his visit to France. Paul Cassirer, the Berlin-based gallery owner and art historian,<sup>15</sup> exhibited works by Cézanne (in 1900, 1904 and 1906),<sup>16</sup> and by Van Gogh (between 1901 and 1914),<sup>17</sup> as well as Matisse’s drawings (in 1907).<sup>18</sup> For the French and German public of the early twentieth century, Cézanne, Van Gogh and Matisse were significant – if not applauded – participants to pictorial explorations that departed from representational traditions.

Cézanne, Van Gogh and Matisse addressed their creative processes in writing, often in response to the inquiries of fellow artists. Less inclined towards theorising on painting, Cézanne was probably the least willing communicator of the three. Nevertheless, his letters provide glimpses into his opinions on art and pictorial practices, as subsequent sections of this thesis show. For Cézanne, painting required an intense focus on nature as well as an

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symbolic, the classical and the romantic], have in themselves a development, a course which, considered rather abstractly, is common to them all. Each art has its time of efflorescence, of its perfect development as an art, and a history preceding and following this moment of perfection. For the products of all the arts are the works of the spirit and therefore are not, like natural productions, complete all at once with their specific sphere; on the contrary, they have a beginning, a progress, a perfection, and an end, a growth, blossoming, and decay.’ (See Hegel and Knox, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, 614.) Concerning early twentieth-century art, Worringer connects its progress to leaving Impressionism behind. In the 1920s, Worringer would also signal the decline of Expressionism in *Current Questions on Art* (1921).

<sup>14</sup> Worringer, ‘The Historical Development of Modern Art’, 10.

<sup>15</sup> ‘Guide to the Cassirer Collection, 1906-1933.’ Stanford: Department of Special Collections, Stanford University Libraries, 1999, 2-3.s

<sup>16</sup> Horst Uhr, *Louis Corinth* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 130. Also, John Rewald, *Cézanne: A Biography* (New York: H.N. Abrams, 1986), 270. Also, Françoise Cachin et al., *Cézanne* (New York: H.N. Abrams and The Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1996), 567.

<sup>17</sup> Jill Lloyd and Michael Peppiatt, *Van Gogh and Expressionism* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2007), 12.

<sup>18</sup> Hilary Spurling, *The Unknown Matisse: A Life of Henri Matisse: The Early Years, 1869-1908* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 378.

awareness of the geometrical aspects of composition; his early twentieth-century works – for instance, his depictions of Mont Sainte-Victoire – make increasingly visible his emphasis on structure and repetition, and the interweaving of representational and abstract characteristics.

Van Gogh, on the other hand, wrote with confidence and enthusiasm, expressing his views on ethical, social and behavioural matters in his correspondence.<sup>19</sup> Soon after Van Gogh's death in 1890, his writings were published in *Mercure de France*. Émile Bernard – one of the artists to whom Cézanne wrote in the early years of the twentieth century – made available to the French public, between 1893 and 1897, extracts from the letters he had received from Van Gogh.<sup>20</sup>

Worringer certainly had the opportunity to explore Van Gogh's writings in French, as well as in German. *Kunst and Künstler* (the magazine of Bruno Cassirer, Paul Cassirer's cousin), also featured selections from Van Gogh's letters in 1904 and 1905. In 1906, aiming to reach an even wider audience, Bruno Cassirer issued *Vincent van Gogh, Letters*, an anthology of Van Gogh's late correspondence.<sup>21</sup> Van Gogh's views on art were therefore familiar to German readers by the time Worringer published 'The Historical Development of Modern Art', so Worringer's associating current explorations in art-making with the name of Van Gogh highlighted the lineage and relevance of recent French and German art-making.<sup>22</sup>

Van Gogh's letters argue passionately for artistic issues that interest him; his remarkable directness intensifies both the generosity and critical edge of his comments. In a letter to Bernard from around 26 November 1889,<sup>23</sup> for instance, Van Gogh praises Bernard's

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<sup>19</sup> For an introduction to Van Gogh's letters and their biographical and art-historical role, see Leo Jansen, Hans Luijten, and Nienke Bakker, *Vincent van Gogh: The Letters*, Vol. 6 (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2009), 15-31. Van Gogh's admiration for Cézanne, as well as for an impressive number of painters from various schools and of diverse nationalities – including Impressionists such as Monet and Pissarro – is mentioned in Stolwijk et. al., *Vincent's Choice: Van Gogh's Musée Imaginaire*, 29-30, 34-35.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> In April 1908 (during the year when *Abstraction and Empathy* was published) Van Gogh's works were shown in Munich twice: at Galerie Zimmermann, and then at *Moderne Kunsthandlung* [Dealers of Modern Art]. Van Gogh's solo show from *Moderne Kunsthandlung* travelled to Emil Richter's gallery in Berlin, where, according to Lloyd and Peppiatt, the artists of *Die Brücke* attended the exhibition. See Lloyd and Peppiatt, *Van Gogh and Expressionism*, 18.

<sup>23</sup> Leo Jansen, Hans Luijten, and Nienke Bakker, *Vincent van Gogh: The Letters*, Vol. 5 (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2009), 146-153.

*Adoration of the Shepherds* (1889) and points to its faults in the same paragraph.<sup>24</sup> ‘[O]ne has to look for the possible, the logical, the true’,<sup>25</sup> Van Gogh notes, displeased with the improbable aspects of the scene Bernard imagines. Instead, Van Gogh finds Bernard’s *Breton Women in the Meadow* (1888) convincingly composed, simple and dignified. Bernard’s use of colour, which Van Gogh regards as naive, pleases the latter; Van Gogh also compliments the clear delineation, planar divisions, and strong colour contrasts in Bernard’s *Red Poplars* (1887).<sup>26</sup> For Van Gogh, representational subject-matter needs to be believably rendered; however, his comments bring to light his focus on abstract aspects of painting, such as the organization of a picture into planes, its levels of contrast, and the clarity of its colours.

Observing nature and focusing on representing it brings peace of mind to Van Gogh.<sup>27</sup> In his own words: ‘... [B]y working very calmly, beautiful subjects will come of their own accord; it’s truly first and foremost a question of immersing oneself in reality again, with no plan made in advance’.<sup>28</sup> Attentive engagement with the process of painting yields good representational works, according to Van Gogh; in the descriptions he gives to his paintings, his deeply felt connection to the natural world acquires psychological inflections.<sup>29</sup> Worringer writes that representation relies on the resonance of artists with their surroundings in *Abstraction and Empathy*;<sup>30</sup> his remark certainly applies to Van Gogh’s artistic process.

Representation, in Van Gogh’s works, reflects his dedication to rendering the world as observed. On the other hand, Van Gogh expresses his fear of abstraction in his letter to Bernard from November 1889. Abstraction, Van Gogh thinks, would have a softening effect

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 146.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 146-148.

<sup>27</sup> Also see, in this respect, Chris Stolwijk, Sjraar van Heugten, Leo Jansen, Andreas Blühm, and Nienke Bakker, *Vincent's Choice : Van Gogh's Musée Imaginaire* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2003), 26-27.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 148.

<sup>29</sup> Mentioning a work in progress in 1899, Van Gogh writes to Bernard: ‘... [T]he first tree is an enormous trunk, but struck by lightning and sawn off. A side branch thrusts up very high, however, and falls down again in an avalanche of dark green twigs. This dark giant – like a proud man brought low – contrasts, when seen as the character of a living being with the pale smile of the last rose on the bush, which is fading in front of him... You’ll understand that this combination of red ochre, of green saddened with grey, of black lines that define the outlines, this gives rise a little to the feeling of anxiety from which some of my companions in misfortune often suffer, and which is called “seeing red”.’ Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Wilhelm Worringer and Hilton Kramer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee and Elephant Paperbacks, 1997 [1908]), 45-46.

on him.<sup>31</sup> He dislikes abstraction in his own work as much as in the work of others; he criticises Bernard for his choice of ‘abstract,’ biblical subject-matter, and praises his work from life instead. Van Gogh regards some of his own explorations as abstract, but draws attention to the challenges such an approach to art-making brings along for him. In his words to Bernard: ‘When Gauguin was in Arles, I once or twice allowed myself to be led into abstraction, as you know, in a woman rocking a cradle, a dark woman reading novels in a yellow library, and at that time abstraction seemed an attractive route to me. But that’s enchanted ground, – my good fellow – and one soon finds oneself up against a wall.’<sup>32</sup> Van Gogh thus recognizes that his access to creativity is connected to the representational approach, namely to the close relationship between observation and artistic representation. Abstraction (a process Worringer links with tendencies of distancing from the world in *Abstraction and Empathy*)<sup>33</sup> belongs to the domain of enchantment according to Van Gogh; for him, art needs to assert and explore its connection with reality.

Van Gogh’s understanding of abstraction prevents him from crediting it in his own paintings. Unlike Worringer, who recognizes and addresses the creative potential of processes of abstraction in *Abstraction and Empathy*, Van Gogh hesitates with regard to paintings he considers abstract, as well as with regard to subject-matter removed from everyday reality (such as biblical scenes). However, while Van Gogh describes his representational work in emotionally rich terms, he also highlights abstract aspects of painting in his letters. He mentions, for instance, his painting of olive trees to Bernard; in this canvas, colour appears as a key compositional element. Van Gogh writes to Bernard: ‘So at present I am working in the olive trees, seeking the different effects of a grey sky against yellow earth, with dark green note of the foliage; another time the earth and foliage all purplish against yellow sky, then red ochre earth and pink and green sky.’<sup>34</sup> Van Gogh’s attention to colour juxtapositions and contrasts defines his approach to the rendition of olive trees; he explains to Bernard that the symbolic power of a scene may well rely on the careful, invested depiction of simple subject-

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<sup>31</sup> Leo Jansen, Hans Luijten, and Nienke Bakker, *Vincent van Gogh: The Letters*, Vol. 5 (New York: Thames & Hudson, 2009), 153.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 148. Jansen, Luijten and Bakker show that Van Gogh is referring to *Augustine Roulin* (‘*La Berceuse*’) (1889), and to *Woman Reading a Novel* (1888). A higher degree of abstraction is visible in Van Gogh’s approach to depicting human figures, as well as in his approach to flatter, chromatically assertive backgrounds. However, his protagonists remain recognizable, and his paintings representational.

<sup>33</sup> Worringer and Kramer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 16-17.

<sup>34</sup> Jansen, Luijten, and Bakker, *Vincent van Gogh: The Letters*, Vol. 5, 148.

matter.<sup>35</sup> Abstract aspects of painting such as Van Gogh's focus on colour play a significant role in his representational compositions.

In *Olive Grove* (1889) (Fig. 6), a painting Van Gogh completed around the time of his letter to Bernard, the representation of landscape makes visible the intensely vital rhythm of brushwork. The natural elements Van Gogh depicts are, without exception, activated by visible brushstrokes that reveal Van Gogh's interpretation of light direction, intensity and expansion, warmth, mass, solidity and distance. Through Van Gogh's brushwork, the entire surface of *Olive Grove* seems to vibrate. The sun, the remote mountains, the land, the olive trees and their shadows, are rendered by Van Gogh as brushstroke clusters juxtaposed with varying inflected planes. For tree trunks and their branches, for the disk of the sun and sometimes for the dunes in the grove, Van Gogh indicates the margins of planes by decisive outer contours. Unblended lines and clearly observable paint application bring to the fore the abstract component of Van Gogh's representational painting.

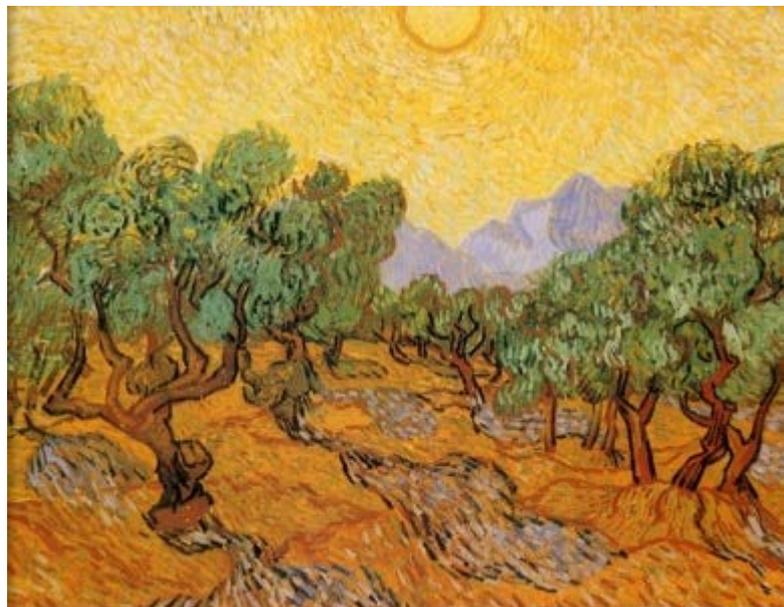


Fig. 6. Vincent van Gogh. *Olive Grove*. 1889. oil on canvas. 73.6 x 92.7 cm. Minneapolis. Minneapolis Institute of Arts.

Van Gogh is a representational artist whose strong emotional connection to his subjects animates landscape and highlights its intrinsic energy. However, the visual impact of his paintings relies on his decisive handling of composition, paint application and colour division

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 146-8.

– namely, on the abstract aspects of his pictorial process. Worringer, in ‘The Historical Development of Modern Art’, considers Van Gogh’s art exemplary for early twentieth-century explorations characterised by sincere, dedicated and personal approaches to painting.<sup>36</sup> For Worringer, Van Gogh’s preference for pictorial representation is less significant, in early twentieth-century contexts, than the painter’s focus on communicating emotion through his art.

Alongside Van Gogh, Worringer mentions Henri Matisse as an influence on contemporary artists in ‘The Historical Development of Modern Art’. Matisse, who held works by Cézanne and Van Gogh in his personal collection,<sup>37</sup> exhibited his own drawings, paintings and sculptures since 1901 at the Salon of the Independents [*Salon des Indépendants*], Berthe Weill Gallery, and Autumn Salon [*Salon d’Automne*], and had had his first solo exhibition at Ambroise Vollard’s gallery in 1904.<sup>38</sup> By the time of his publishing ‘Notes of a Painter’ in *The Great Review* [*La Grande Revue*] (25 December 1908),<sup>39</sup> Matisse had opened his own academy (1908-11);<sup>40</sup> his paintings had been acquired by the French state and by private collectors.<sup>41</sup> Matisse’s ‘Notes of a Painter’ was translated into Russian and German by 1909; Worringer had an opportunity to acquaint himself with the art as well as writings of Matisse before the publication of his own ‘The Historical Development of Modern Art’ in 1911.

In ‘Notes of a Painter’, Matisse explains that a connection exists between all the works in his oeuvre, even when his approach has changed over time. Apparent stylistic inconsistency is, Matisse implies, the result of reflection – therefore, of artistic growth. Expression follows thinking for Matisse; when his ideas change, so does his art.<sup>42</sup> Although Matisse believes that painters are best introduced by their own work,<sup>43</sup> he underscores the link between thinking and expressive completeness in his paintings.<sup>44</sup> Worringer, whose *Abstraction and Empathy*

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<sup>36</sup> Rose-Carol Washton Long, Stephanie Barron, and Ida Katherine Rigby, *German Expressionism: Documents from the End of the Wilhelmine Empire to the Rise of National Socialism* (New York: Maxwell Macmillan Canada, 1993), 9-10.

<sup>37</sup> John Elderfield, *Henri Matisse: A Retrospective* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1992), 86-87.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 181.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 180.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

<sup>42</sup> Henri Matisse, ‘Notes of a Painter’ in *Matisse on Art*, ed. Jack Flam (Oxford: Phaidon, 1973 [1908]), 35.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 35-36.

was published in 1908 (like 'Notes of a Painter'), draws attention to his own interest in the conditions that bring art into being.<sup>45</sup> The beauty of art is less compelling for Worringer than the actual process of art-making and the contexts that trigger it. Worringer shares with Matisse a preoccupation with the experiences and processes that lead to art-making rather than with the result of art-making alone.

The composition of pictures is itself expressive for Matisse;<sup>46</sup> it supports the rendering of feeling through figure placement, through the relationships of positive and negative space, through proportions.<sup>47</sup> Compositions must include only necessary elements, according to the painter, and must be modified expressively in response to different surface formats.<sup>48</sup> When beginning to work, Matisse notices he tends to record sensations that he tries to stabilise during later stages of painting. Sensations must come to reflect the artist's state of mind; in Matisse's words: 'I want to reach that state of condensation of sensations which makes a painting.'<sup>49</sup> For him, capturing impressions but not reworking and defining them (as he assumes Impressionist artists like Monet and Sisley do) is insufficient;<sup>50</sup> he seeks to render the basic features of his motifs, in search for '... a more lasting interpretation'.<sup>51</sup> Matisse's turning away from Impressionism resonates with Worringer's coeval views from *Abstraction and Empathy*.<sup>52</sup> For Worringer, impressionist representation emphasizes the changeable aspects of the world, while abstract art highlights '... a value of necessity and eternity' in art-making.<sup>53</sup> Worringer writes in favour of abstraction throughout *Abstraction and Empathy*;

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<sup>45</sup> Worringer and Kramer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 3-4.

<sup>46</sup> Matisse, 'Notes of a Painter', 36.

<sup>47</sup> Despite the clarity of his thought, Matisse's work did not meet with unanimous appreciation in the early years of the twentieth century. The painter's approach to form and composition was regarded by art critic Maxime Girieud, in 1905, as stylistically varied to the point of inconsistency; Girieud contrasted the practices of Matisse and Van Gogh in this respect, noting that Van Gogh focused exclusively on the development of his art, while Matisse assimilated techniques from other painters. Alastair Wright explains: 'The suspicion was that Matisse was deliberately trying to be new'; this search for novelty resulted, according to art critic Charles Morice in 1903, in deliberate deformation and awkwardness. Maurice Denis, in 1905, also found Matisse's painting attenuated, in emotional terms, when compared with the work of Van Gogh. See Alastair Wright, *Matisse and the Subject of Modernism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 23-25, 70, 73, 229, 240-241. Also, Rebecca A. Rabinow, and Dorthe Aagesen, *Matisse: In Search of True Painting* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Statens Museum for Kunst, Denmark, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, 2012), 4-5, 243.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 36-37.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>52</sup> Worringer and Kramer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 38.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 43.

like Worringer, Matisse points out that taking distance from detailed renditions of reality increases the impressiveness of artworks.<sup>54</sup>

Matisse points to the division between nature and art-making; Worringer does the same in the opening pages of *Abstraction and Empathy*.<sup>55</sup> For Worringer, art and nature are independent from each other, and art is the equal of nature. Matisse, in his turn, comments from the perspective of a practising painter: 'I cannot copy nature in a servile way; I am forced to interpret nature and submit it to the spirit of the picture.'<sup>56</sup> Worringer criticises the role of imitation in art; Matisse finds he must depart from copying his motif. The picture, rather than nature, suggests the approach to the model, according to Matisse; yet (in contrast to Worringer's thoughts on abstraction)<sup>57</sup> the relationship of model and picture must be based not on tension or fear, but on harmony. However, the clear organization Worringer recognizes in abstract art is also considered by Matisse a prerequisite of his own artistic process.<sup>58</sup>

Composition and expression play key roles in the work of Matisse. If pictures have to be clearly conceived by Matisse before he begins painting, the colour tones he uses are applied instinctively, for expressive purposes.<sup>59</sup> Feeling, sensitivity and personal experiencing guide Matisse's chromatic decisions – his practice provides a persuasive answer to Worringer's requirement from *Abstraction and Empathy* that art emerge from personal, deeply felt responses to the world.<sup>60</sup> Matisse wants his art to be serene, pure and balanced;<sup>61</sup> Worringer associates such characteristics with abstraction,<sup>62</sup> yet, unlike Matisse, considers that abstract art emerges from the tension between people and their surroundings.<sup>63</sup>

Where *Abstraction and Empathy* looks predominantly into the distinction between representational and abstract modes of art-making, 'Notes of a Painter' draws attention to the

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<sup>54</sup> Matisse, 'Notes of a Painter', 37.

<sup>55</sup> Worringer and Kramer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 3.

<sup>56</sup> Matisse, 'Notes of a Painter', 37.

<sup>57</sup> Worringer and Kramer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 16-17.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid. Also, Matisse, 'Notes of a Painter', 38.

<sup>59</sup> Matisse, 'Notes of a Painter', 38.

<sup>60</sup> Worringer and Kramer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 28-30.

<sup>61</sup> Matisse, 'Notes of a Painter', 38.

<sup>62</sup> Worringer and Kramer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 36-37, 40-41.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 41.

shared grounds of abstraction and representation. Matisse mentions the often-asserted contrast between painters who work from nature (observing the world) and painters who work from imagination (without referring to the world). He writes that, in his opinion, artists may combine these approaches in their practice. Matisse explains:

Often a discussion arises as to the value of different processes, and their relationship to different temperaments. A distinction is made between painters who work directly from nature and those who work purely from imagination. Personally, I think neither of these methods must be preferred to the exclusion of the other. Both may be used in turn by the same individual, either because he needs contact with objects in order to receive sensations that will excite his creative faculty, or his sensations are already organized. In either case he will be able to arrive at that totality which constitutes a picture. In any event I think that one can judge the vitality and power of an artist who, after having received impressions directly from the spectacle of nature, is able to organize his sensations to continue his work in the same frame of mind on different days, and to develop these sensations; this power proves he is sufficiently master of himself to subject himself to discipline.<sup>64</sup>

For Matisse, the organization of an artist's sensations can develop in contact with nature, but also independently. Matisse emphasizes the importance of such organization in picture-making; whether the world or the artist's imagination is the motor of this process proves less important to him. The painter's openness to representational as well as abstract processes surfaces in 'Notes of a Painter'.<sup>65</sup> Moreover, Matisse discusses a hybrid approach to art-making, where painters start by referring to nature and then, in the absence of their motif, continue to develop their picture according to their initial response. Worringer also points to

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<sup>64</sup> Matisse, 'Notes of a Painter', 38-39.

<sup>65</sup> Abstract-representational interplay in Matisse's early twentieth-century work is also signalled by Wright, who points out: '... [T]he inconsistency of Matisse's facture, its displacement of static form by process, calls mimesis into question... Works such as *Seascape (Beside the Sea)* (summer 1905)... push the diversity of mark-making and pigment application beyond anything that can be read as a mimetic system. The deep green with which waves are denoted by blunt horizontal strokes at lower left (alternating with blue) reappears as rounded smudges of pigment marking out the tip of the rock that pushes into space from the right; it then reappears in the centre of the image, representing waves once more but now isolated among widely dispersed white strokes. None of this quite adds up to representation.' See Alastair Wright, *Matisse and the Subject of Modernism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 60-61.

the possibility of such practices in *Abstraction and Empathy*,<sup>66</sup> as well as in 'The Historical Development of Modern Art'; according to him, early twentieth-century artists may incline towards abstraction, yet need to allow representational motifs with symbolic value to inform the core of their artworks.<sup>67</sup>

Matisse's 'Notes of a Painter' were written after his pictorial explorations of 1905 in Collioure, a port at the Mediterranean Sea where he was joined by André Derain for the summer.<sup>68</sup> The Collioure series of paintings give primacy to the exploration of colour; they emphasize chromatic rhythms as discerned by the painter in his motif, as well as colour application on canvas. *Landscape at Collioure* (1905) (Fig. 7), for instance, orchestrates red-green, blue-orange complementary contrasts by means of brushstrokes that hint to the form of proximate land and distant hills, to the direction of pathways, to vegetation growth and movement.



Fig. 7. Henri Matisse. *Landscape at Collioure*. 1905. oil on canvas. 39 x 46.2 cm. New York. Museum of Modern Art.

Matisse allows the ground of his canvas to show between brushstrokes; he asserts planes mostly through colour composition and application. Chromatically complex, *Landscape at*

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<sup>66</sup> Worringer and Kramer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 42-43.

<sup>67</sup> Worringer, 'The Historical Development of Modern Art' in *German Expressionism: Documents from the End of the Wilhelmine Empire to the Rise of National Socialism*, 11-13.

<sup>68</sup> Elderfield, *Henri Matisse: A Retrospective*, 133.

*Collioure* nevertheless remains as open and direct as drawing. Matisse's picture maintains its connection to the motif that inspires it, yet, although representational, highlights abstract aspects (for instance, the distinctness and paradoxical interdependence of brushstrokes, as well as the visual rhythm of a painting that resembles drawing). Expressiveness – the result of observation and of personal responding to a motif – finds its form through the interweaving of abstraction and representation in Matisse's works from *Collioure*.<sup>69</sup>

For an artist and writer such as Vinnen, works that assert personal expressiveness draw too much attention to the painter; Vinnen criticises the art of Cézanne and Van Gogh from this point of view,<sup>70</sup> emphasizing that the attention of the German public needs to be directed towards local talent.<sup>71</sup> However, Worringer recognizes the impact of the works of painters such as Cézanne, Van Gogh and Matisse in their epoch,<sup>72</sup> and, contrary to Vinnen's ideas, argues for the continued cultivation of connections between French and German art.<sup>73</sup> 'The Historical Development of Modern Art' does not assert the differentiations between national approaches to art-making; Worringer is rather interested in finding international commonalities. Regarding contemporary art practices, he remarks they are generically characterized by '... [t]his unmistakable striving for impartiality, for a compelling simplification of form, an elemental open-mindedness about artistic representation'.<sup>74</sup> He associates contemporary art-making with 'primitivism', and notes (as he had done in

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<sup>69</sup> Regarding the paintings Matisse produced in 1905 at *Collioure* and showed at the Salon of the Independents in the same year, Wright notes that critics such as Denis associated Matisse's works, due to their brightness, with threats to perception. See Alastair Wright, *Matisse and the Subject of Modernism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 81-82, 242.

<sup>70</sup> Carl Vinnen, 'Quousque Tandem' in *German Expressionism: Documents from the End of the Wilhelmine Empire to the Rise of National Socialism*, eds. Rose-Carol Washton Long, Stephanie Barron, and Ida Katherine Rigby (New York: Maxwell Macmillan Canada, 1993 [1911]), 7.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>72</sup> Worringer, 'The Historical Development of Modern Art' in *German Expressionism: Documents from the End of the Wilhelmine Empire to the Rise of National Socialism*, 11-13.

<sup>73</sup> The cultural connections between France and Germany had actually informed, according to Ulrich Finke, nineteenth-century French culture. Finke points to the impact of German idealist thought on Romantic and Symbolist art in France, through Charles Baudelaire's familiarity with the work of Heinrich Heine. See Ulrich Finke, *German Painting: From Romanticism to Expressionism* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1974), 187. Jill Lloyd also mentions the early twentieth-century contribution of Worringer to encouraging the continuation of French-German cultural dialogues. Lloyd writes: 'In many ways Worringer circumvented the dichotomy between French and German identity by lifting the discussion onto the level of the primitive and the universal.' See Jill Lloyd, *German Expressionism: Primitivism and Modernity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 57. Lloyd notes that Worringer stands against evolutionary theories of art that assert European superiority; she draws attention to the significance of Worringer's thought for Expressionist artists, and the timeliness of his inquiries, which coincide with the early twentieth-century Gothic revival in Germany. (*Ibid.*, 147.)

<sup>74</sup> Worringer, 'The Historical Development of Modern Art', 11.

*Abstraction and Empathy*)<sup>75</sup> that such approaches are not the result of unskilled work, but the expression of a specific artistic will.<sup>76</sup> Employing the term ‘Expressionist’ in this context, Worringer connects it to his discussion of artistic will, ‘primitivism,’ and French art-making.

The work of ‘the new Parisian Synthetists and Expressionists’ kindles,<sup>77</sup> according to Worringer, the interest of contemporary artists in ‘primitive’ art. Indeed, in a letter addressed by Franz Marc to his friend August Macke, Marc’s attention to ‘primitive’ art comes to the fore. Marc, who travelled to Italy in 1902 and France in 1903 and 1907,<sup>78</sup> had the opportunity to engage with recent art and form his opinion on international artistic tendencies. He enthusiastically praised French Impressionists (Renoir, Manet, Monet, Pissarro, and Eugène Boudin were among his favourites),<sup>79</sup> and found peace in the works of Gauguin and Van Gogh,<sup>80</sup> whom he also admired. Yet, in 1911, Marc proves equally interested in tribal art as collected in ethnographic museums; he argues for the necessity to build an intellectual bridge between the explorations of the ‘primitives’ and early twentieth-century art-making. On 14 January 1911, Marc writes to Macke:

I spent some very productive time in the Ethnographic Museum in order to study the artistic methods of the “primitive peoples.”... I was finally caught up, astonished and shocked, by the carvings of the Cameroon people, carvings which can perhaps be

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<sup>75</sup> See, for instance, ———, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 8-10, 53.

<sup>76</sup> Worringer’s historical approach to new art practices at the beginning of the twentieth century brings to mind the words of Hegel regarding Romantic art. In his own discussion of genuine art-making, Hegel points to the artworks of different nations (to Indian art, for example) and different historical times (such as the Middle Ages). Hegel mentions that such works reflect common preoccupations of humankind; he also comments on the initial difficulty of accounting theoretically for less-known art. According to Hegel: ‘These works, because of their age or foreign nationality, have of course something strange about them for us, but they have a content which outsoars their foreignness and is common to all mankind, and only by the prejudice of theory could they be stamped as products of a barbarous bad taste. This general recognition of works of art which lie outside the circle and forms which were the principal basis for the abstractions of theory has in the first place led to the recognition of a special kind of art – Romantic Art, and it has become necessary to grasp the Concept and nature of the beautiful in a deeper way than was possible for those theories. Bound up with this at the same time is the fact that the Concept, aware of itself as the thinking spirit, has now recognized itself on its side, more deeply, in philosophy, and this has thereby immediately provided an inducement for taking up the essence of art too in a profounder way.’ (Hegel and Knox, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, 20-21.)

<sup>77</sup> Worringer, ‘The Historical Development of Modern Art’, 11.

<sup>78</sup> Marc’s 1903 visit to Paris lasted for six months. His 1907 departure to the French capital had as a background the death of Marc’s father and Marc’s betrothal – a marriage from which Marc took a break to leave for Paris in the night of his wedding. See Frederick S. Levine, *The Apocalyptic Vision: The Art of Franz Marc as German Expressionism* (New York: Harper & Row, 1979), 40-42.

<sup>79</sup> See Marc as cited in *ibid.*, 26.

<sup>80</sup> Marc cited in *ibid.*, 42.

surpassed only by the sublime works of the Incas. I find it so self-evident that we should seek the rebirth of our artistic feeling in this cold dawn of artistic intelligence, rather than in cultures that have already gone through a thousand-year cycle like the Japanese or the Italian Renaissance. I think I am gradually really coming to understand what matters for us if we are to call ourselves artists at all: we must become ascetics. Don't be frightened; I mean this only in intellectual matters. We must be brave and give up almost everything which until now was dear and indispensable for us good Central Europeans. Our ideas and ideals must wear a hairshirt. We must nourish them with locusts and wild honey, and not with history, if we are to issue forth from the exhaustion of our European bad taste.<sup>81</sup>

For Marc, contemporary artists need to research 'primitive' approaches to art-making; a shift in aesthetic perception is necessary, according to him, in order to correct the patterns of appreciation displayed by his epoch. 'Primitivism' can, Marc argues, open a pathway towards a renewed understanding of art. He addresses 'primitive' art and contemporary developments in art-making with an equal degree of enthusiasm. For him as for Worringer in *Abstraction and Empathy* and 'The Historical Development of Modern Art', the elemental quality of tribal art is an engaging topic for intellectual research at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Macke, the recipient of Marc's letter, proves to agree with Marc's viewpoint. In *The Blue Rider Almanac* (1912), a publication initiated by Marc and Kandinsky,<sup>82</sup> Macke reflects on form as approached in 'primitive' and contemporary art-making. Macke's interest in abstract aspects of art comes through in his text, 'Masks', where he explains the connections between form, emotion, expression and interpretation. Form does not need to be fully understood, but seen as an outcome of living, emplaced experience, Macke writes. Macke is appreciative towards form as articulated in all cultures and life situations, despite the limitations established by the aesthetics of his time. In his words:

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<sup>81</sup> Marc as cited in Jack D. Flam, Miriam Deutch, and Carl Einstein, *Primitivism and Twentieth-Century Art: A Documentary History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 39-41.

<sup>82</sup> Klaus Lankheit, *The Blaue Reiter Almanac* (London: Tate, 2006), 300.

Forms are powerful expressions of powerful life. Differences in expression come from the material, word, colour, sound, stone, wood, metal. One need not understand each form. One also need not reach each language. The contemptuous gesture with which connoisseurs and artists have to this day banished all artistic form of primitive cultures to the fields of ethnology or applied art is amazing at the very least. What we hang on the wall as a painting is basically similar to the carved and painted pillars in an African hut. The African considers his idol the comprehensible form for an incomprehensible idea, the personification of an abstract concept. For us the painting is the comprehensible form for the obscure, incomprehensible conception of a deceased person, or an animal, of a plant, of the whole magic of nature, of the rhythmical... Everywhere, forms speak in a sublime language right in the face of European aesthetics.<sup>83</sup>

Form, Macke observes, is relevant in all cultural contexts, even where it appears impossible to understand. The artist does not need form to be intellectually explainable; instead, he argues for the intrinsic power of form as observable in the materials through which it is articulated. The connection Macke traces between materials and form (rather than between form and meaning) highlights his sensitivity towards aspects of abstraction in art. In *Abstraction and Empathy* and especially in *Form in Gothic*, Worringer addressed the features of abstract form and the experiential background of artists working with abstraction, but also the specific role of stone and materiality in sculpture and architecture.<sup>84</sup> Macke, in his turn, explains the attention that form requires from an artist's viewpoint.

In 'The Historical Development of Modern Art' (1911), Worringer highlights the key features of 'primitive' art: distortion and simplification. According to him, the simplification practised by 'primitive' artists can only appeal to viewers who appreciate form rather than illusionism. Marc (who, as we have seen, praised Worringer's work to Kandinsky in 1912), and Macke (Marc's close friend and contributor to the *Blue Rider Almanac*) both admire

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<sup>83</sup> Macke as cited in Flam, Deutch, and Einstein, *Primitivism and Twentieth-Century Art: A Documentary History*, 48.

<sup>84</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 84-86, 112-113, 127-127. Also, Wilhelm Worringer and Herbert Edward Read, *Form in Gothic* (London: Tiranti, 1957 [1910]), 19, 44, 103-110, 127-129, 132-135, 141, 152-157, 160-166, 170.

tribal art around 1911; their works make visible an attention to elemental qualities of art materials, as well as an interest in reworking and simplifying form.

In *Crouching Deer* (1911) (Fig. 8), for instance, Marc's muted primaries hint to the tones and shades of wood and animal skin – materials often encountered in tribal art. Form is simplified throughout his painting, emphasizing the visual weight of his motifs, as well as his handling of space. Colour inflection highlights the placement of the animal protagonist within the canvas instead of communicating spatial recession and three-dimensionality. Although depicting a scene from nature in a recognizable manner, Marc emphasizes planes that approach flatness in *Crouching Deer*. Triangular shapes can be recognized throughout Marc's painting; they impart a geometrical aspect to form, but at the same time organize composition and communicate rhythm. Representational and abstract characteristics combine in Marc's *Crouching Deer*, as in Macke's *The Storm* (1911) (Fig. 9).



Fig.8. Franz Marc. *Crouching Deer* [*Hockend Reh*]. 1911. oil on canvas. 41.59 x 49.53 cm. Private collection.

Bringing to mind Herwarth Walden's Berlin magazine and gallery, *Sturm* [*Storm*] (where Walden defended the Expressionist practices of his contemporaries),<sup>85</sup> Macke's painting emphasizes the expressive qualities of form. Pictorial motifs connected to the vegetal and animal world suggest movement rather than strict resemblance in *The Storm*, drawing

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<sup>85</sup> Rose-Carol Washton Long, Stephanie Barron, and Ida Katherine Rigby, *German Expressionism: Documents from the End of the Wilhelmine Empire to the Rise of National Socialism* (New York: Maxwell Macmillan Canada, 1993), 56-57. Long draws attention to Macke's seminal role in the organization of the First German Autumn Salon at Walden's gallery.

attention to the vitality of the scene. Sharp and dissolving contours give Macke's work visual variety. Macke uses a similar colour palette to the one employed by Marc for *Crouching Deer*. However, in *The Storm*, tints of yellow and blue stand out more than in Marc's work; Macke's painting thus assumes a lighter aspect. The organic and geometrical forms Macke combines in his painting remain partially open due to light-dark gradations and to the smooth transition between planes. Unlike in Marc's *Crouching Deer*, formal simplification seems to contribute to the mobility and ambiguity of Macke's motifs from *The Storm*, where Macke's tendencies towards abstraction come to the fore.



Fig. 9. August Macke. *The Storm [Der Sturm]*. 1911. oil on canvas. 84 x 112 cm. Saarbrücken. Stiftung Saarlandischer Kulturbesitz.

In 'The Historical Development of Modern Art' as in *Abstraction and Empathy*, Worringer articulates a polar relationship between representational (or illusion-focused) and abstract (or form-focused) aspects of art-making. However, in the paintings of his contemporaries, abstract-representational antithesis is less visible than the reworking and simplification of form Worringer recognizes in 'primitive' art. Gabriele Münter, who was familiar with Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy* in the early years of the twentieth century,<sup>86</sup> remained a representational artist throughout her career, yet employed pictorial techniques that highlighted the abstract aspects of her pictures.

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<sup>86</sup> Münter is cited by Magdalena Bushart in Magdalena Bushart, 'Changing Times, Changing Styles: Wilhelm Worringer and the Art of His Epoch' in *Invisible Cathedrals: The Expressionist Art History of Wilhelm Worringer*, ed. Neil H. Donahue (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, c.1995), 82. Also see, from the current thesis, '1948: *Abstraction and Empathy* republished'.

For Münter, working with representation involved a certain amount of anxiety (a feeling Worringer associates with the emergence of abstraction).<sup>87</sup> Where Worringer considers representational art as a manifestation of the confidence artists have in their surroundings,<sup>88</sup> the comments of Münter on her own art reveal the hesitation that accompanies the initial stages of her process. In her 1958 interview with Edouard Roditi, Münter remarks: ‘My pictures are all moments of life – I mean instantaneous visual experiences, generally noted very rapidly and spontaneously. When I begin to paint, it’s like leaping suddenly into deep water, and I never know beforehand whether I will be able to swim.’<sup>89</sup> Münter finds that giving pictorial shape to her observations relies on her personal, instantaneous responses to her subjects; her directness is paradoxically informed by self-doubt.

In 1908, the year when Worringer published *Abstraction and Empathy*, Münter spent her summer in Murnau with Wassily Kandinsky and their mutual friends, painters Marianne Werefkin and Alexei Jawlensky.<sup>90</sup> Münter regarded her stay in Murnau as beneficial to her pictorial practice. In her words: ‘After a brief time of experimentation, I took a major leap there – from painting after nature, more or less impressionistically, to the feeling of a content to abstracting to the presentation of an extract. It was a wonderful, interesting, happy period of work with many discussions about art with the enchanting “Giselists” [i. e., Werefkin and Jawlensky, who lived on Gisela Street in Munich].’<sup>91</sup> While transiting from observational to increasingly abstract work, Münter remained connected to the world around her, finding pleasure in the company of fellow painters Werefkin and Jawlensky. Münter’s experimenting with abstraction did not seem to emerge from a need of distancing from her immediate environment (on the other hand, Worringer’s argument from *Abstraction and Empathy* associated, in theory, abstraction and distancing from the world). For Münter, the transition

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<sup>87</sup> For instance, Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 16-17, 102.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 47-48.

<sup>89</sup> Reinhold Heller and Gabriele Münter, *Gabriele Münter: The Years of Expressionism, 1903-1920* (Munich: Prestel, 1997), 56.

<sup>90</sup> Shulamith Behr points out that, at the beginning of the twentieth century, pre-industrial times and romantic values appealed to artists, who reconnected to the natural world through outdoor activities, and cultivated connections with ‘primitive’ forms of culture (folk art, for instance). Werefkin and Münter – who met in 1908 and painted the streets and surroundings of Murnau when on holiday together – certainly reflected such preoccupations in their practices and chosen pastimes, according to Behr. See Shulamith Behr, *Women Expressionists* (New York: Rizzoli, 1988), 10, 12, 36-39, 42, 46.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

towards abstraction-oriented experimentations took place in an atmosphere animated by positive emotions.

During and after their holiday in Murnau, Münter painted a number of pictures of Jawlensky, Werefkin and Kandinsky – for instance, *Jawlensky and Werefkin* (1908-09), *Listening (Portrait of Jawlensky)* (1909), and *Boating* (1910). Münter's *Portrait of Marianne Werefkin* (1909) (Fig. 10) captures, in bold colours and brushstrokes, the allure and personality of the sitter.

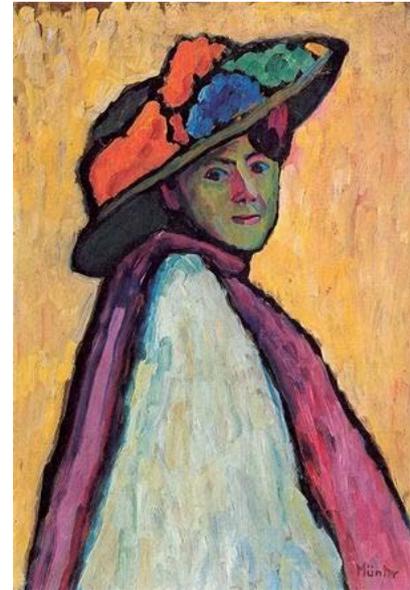


Fig. 10. Gabriele Münter. *Portrait of Marianne Werefkin*. 1909. oil on board. 81 x 55 cm. Munich. Städtische Galerie im Lenbachhaus.

Werefkin appears fascinating and decisive in Münter's painting. The elegance of Werefkin is emphasized by Münter's simple, geometric composition that draws attention to the head of the model.<sup>92</sup> Applied in large areas of the work, colours that depart from life actually support characterisation in Münter's painting. The perspective of Münter on her sitter is

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<sup>92</sup> The colourful hat Werefkin wears and the unusual red and green skin tones Münter uses remind of Matisse's earlier *Woman with the Hat* (1905). However, in Matisse's work, contrasting colours are juxtaposed almost without blending, while in Münter's portrait of Werefkin the skin tone of the protagonist is, by comparison, inflected but uniform. Münter's approach remains more indebted to representational principles than Matisse's *Woman with the Hat*. For further details regarding Münter's *Portrait of Marianne Werefkin*, see Shulamith Behr, *Women Expressionists* (New York: Rizzoli, 1988), 32. Also, John Elderfield, *Henri Matisse: A Retrospective* (New York: Museum of Modern Art and H. N. Abrams, 1992), 146.

complimentary;<sup>93</sup> rather than making visible Werefkin's age, Münter focuses on suggesting the enduring personal qualities of Werefkin.

Werefkin, a member of the Munich *Neue Künstlervereinigung* [New Artists' Association] from its early days, exhibited alongside Münter, Jawlensky, and Kandinsky since 1909. For the second show of the Association,<sup>94</sup> Werefkin prepared six canvases, among which she included *The Red Tree* (1910) (Fig. 11).

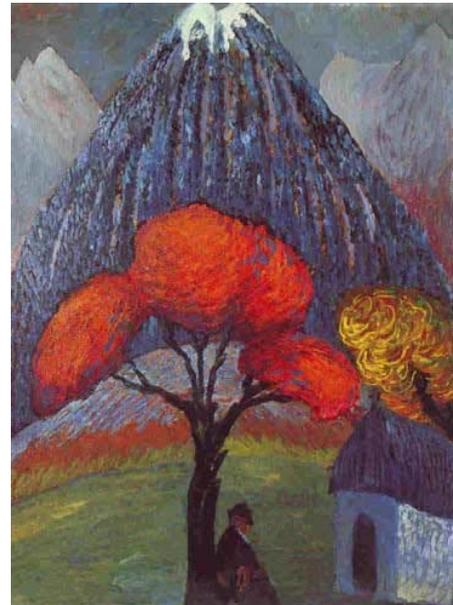


Fig. 11. Marianne Werefkin. *The Red Tree* [Die Rote Baum]. 1910. tempera on board. 76 x 57 cm. Ascona. Museo Comunale d'Arte Moderna.

The reworking and simplification of form as observed by Worringer in contemporary art become visible in Werefkin's *Red Tree* as well. Human presence (a woman resting near the central tree) is discreet in *The Red Tree*, and, like the only building in the painting, acquires symbolic rather than descriptive resonance. Suggested by tonal gradation, atmospheric

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<sup>93</sup> Behr notes that Münter admired Werefkin, who was forty-nine in 1909. Werefkin regarded herself as a living source of inspiration for other artists. In her words (cited by Behr in *Women Expressionists*): 'People have always come to tell me that I am their star, [that] they couldn't progress in life without me.' See Behr, *Women Expressionists*, 26. Werefkin tended to make an impression on her peers, Elisabeth Erdmann-Macke remarks; Erdmann-Macke remembers Werefkin as follows: 'She was an unusual, vivacious, strong personality... We saw her first as we entered Jawlensky's studio. She was turned away from us, a slender erect figure with a glaring-red blouse, a dark skirt and black patent belt, in her hair a broad taffeta bow. One thought a young girl stood there.' See Behr, *Women Expressionists*, 32.

<sup>94</sup> Kandinsky, Münter, Jawlensky, Alfred Kubin, Alexander Kanoldt, Adolf Erbslöh, Henri Le Fauconnier, Pablo Picasso, Georges Braque, André Derain, Maurice Vlaminck, Georges Rouault, Kees van Dongen also participated in the second exhibition of the New Artists' Association. See Levine, *The Apocalyptic Vision: The Art of Franz Marc as German Expressionism*, 56.

perspective is employed by Werefkin to highlight the elements of landscape in the foreground, their colours, shapes and textures.

Although Werefkin's canvas has depth, it directs attention towards brushwork and colour modulation by means of composition. In *Blue Mountain* (1908-09), Kandinsky's brushwork and hue contrast are more assertive than Werefkin's in *The Red Tree*.<sup>95</sup> This takes place because Werefkin, like Münter, shows an interest in experimenting with abstraction, yet proves to have strong commitments to representational aspects of painting.<sup>96</sup> However, in their representational works, both Münter and Werefkin interpret rather than describe their motifs. In the practices of Werefkin and Münter, personal expression or, to employ Worringer's vocabulary, 'inner experience' (a key element of art-making as signalled in *Abstraction and Empathy*),<sup>97</sup> relies on bringing to light elemental aspects of form and emotional approaches to colour.<sup>98</sup>

Nevertheless, the elemental effects observable in early twentieth-century art-making need not be strictly associated with 'primitivism,' Worringer argues in 'The Historical Development of Modern Art'. He maintains that 'primitive' art is only one of the points of access to the study of elemental effects, and regards the concern of his contemporaries with 'primitivism' to be but a stage in the artistic reformulations of his time.<sup>99</sup> For him, the current attention to 'primitivism' supports creative inquiries; the interest of artists in distant times actually brings them closer to nature, Worringer explains. Distortion as observed in the art of his time seeks to assert connections with the natural world, according to Worringer, who finds that in recent art nature does not feature as processed by reason, vision and education, but as filtered

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<sup>95</sup> For a brief discussion of Kandinsky's *Blue Mountain*, see, from the current thesis, 'Worringer's impact: *Expressionism* (1914) by Paul Fechter, and *Expressionism* (1916) by Hermann Bahr'.

<sup>96</sup> Behr notices that Werefkin regards art from an abstract perspective, yet favours the representational mode in painting. Werefkin (cited in Behr's *Women Expressionists*) writes: 'Art is a world-philosophy [*Weltanschauung*] which finds its expression in those forms, which inspire its technical means: sound, colour, form, line, word.' Behr comments: 'Despite this prescription for abstraction, when Werefkin resumed painting she pursued startlingly coloured portraits, interior genres and landscapes which invariably incorporated social themes of peasants and washerwomen.' See Behr, *Women Expressionists*, 13.

<sup>97</sup> Worringer and Kramer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 29-30.

<sup>98</sup> Behr cites Marc with regard to Werefkin's views on the role of colour in early twentieth-century art. According to Marc, Werefkin signals that colour can suggest more than illumination in painting. In Marc's words: 'Miss Werefkin said to Helmuth [Macke] recently that the Germans frequently make the mistake of taking light as colour, while colour is totally different and has, in general, little to do with light viz. illumination. This observation has sense, it is very profound and, I believe, has hit the nail on the head.' See Behr, *Women Expressionists*, 30.

<sup>99</sup> ———, 'The Historical Development of Modern Art', 12.

through emotion. The works of early twentieth-century artists are characterized, Worringer maintains, by ‘... chaste purity and symbolic affective power’.<sup>100</sup>

Worringer’s thoughts from ‘The Historical Development of Modern Art’ certainly resonate with the interests of Marc in ‘primitivism,’ in the simplicity of ‘primitive’ art, and in a renewed approach to nature. Such preoccupations informed Marc’s work before his becoming aware of Worringer’s work. As we have seen, Marc (who discovered Worringer’s *Abstraction and Empathy* in February 1912)<sup>101</sup> argues, in one of his letters to Macke from 1911, that intellectual asceticism must inform contemporary art.<sup>102</sup> Earlier on, in 1908, Marc also wrote to Piper (who published *Abstraction and Empathy* in the same year), explaining the attention he bestowed on developing intuitively his connections with the natural world.

For Marc, feeling is the guide to experiencing the life of nature. In his words from 1908: ‘I am attempting to enhance my sensibility for the organic rhythm that I feel in all things; and I am trying to feel pantheistically the rapture of the flow of “blood” in nature, in the trees, in the animals, in the air... I can see no more successful means toward an “animalisation” of art, as I like to call it, than the painting of animals. That is why I have taken it up.’<sup>103</sup> Feelings allow Marc to connect to his natural surroundings; in his depictions of animals, the materialization of such feelings finds its best expression, according to Marc. Representational works such as *Large Lenggries Horses* (1908) and *Deer at Dusk* (1909) show Marc’s attention to animal form and movement, as well as to a natural colour palette of brown, ochre, yellow and orange tints and tones.

However, after seeing Kandinsky’s work in the first New Artists’ Association exhibition (1909),<sup>104</sup> Matisse’s paintings (1910),<sup>105</sup> and the second show of the New Artists’ Association (1910),<sup>106</sup> Marc’s approach to form and colour changes. In *Horse in a Landscape* (1910) (Fig.

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Wassily Kandinsky, Franz Marc, and Klaus Lankheit, *The Blaue Reiter Almanac* (London: Tate, 2006), 30.

<sup>102</sup> Flam, Deutch, and Einstein, *Primitivism and Twentieth-Century Art: A Documentary History*, 39-41.

<sup>103</sup> Marc to Piper (8 December 1908), cited in Levine, *The Apocalyptic Vision: The Art of Franz Marc as German Expressionism*, 44.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 47. Maria, Marc’s wife, mentions the impact of the work of Kandinsky on her husband: ‘Through the experience of Kandinsky’s pictures his eyes were opened and he soon knew the reason why his works had not arrived at an effect of complete unity. He wrote at that time: “Everything stood before me on an organic basis, everything but colour.”’

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 56.

12), Marc places emphasis on colour and form rather than on the detailed representation of his subject. Still recognizable, Marc's landscape setting and animal motif are activated by barely inflected primary and secondary hues. Reds, blues, yellows and greens gain an elemental directness in *Horse in a Landscape*, emphasizing the clarity and simplicity of Marc's composition.



Fig. 12. Franz Marc. *Horse in a Landscape* [*Pferd in Landschaft*]. 1910. oil on board. 112 x 85 cm. Essen. Museum Folkwang.

Marc, like Kandinsky in *On the Spiritual in Art* (1912),<sup>107</sup> regards colour as a pictorial vehicle of meaning. He writes to Macke on 12 December 1910: 'Blue is the male principle, severe and spiritual. Yellow is the female principle, gentle, cheerful and sensual. Red is matter, brutal and heavy, the colour that has come into conflict with, and succumb to the other two... Green always requires the aid of blue (the sky) and yellow (the sun) to reduce matter to silence.'<sup>108</sup> The dominance of yellow in Marc's *Horse in a Landscape* may thus be alluding not only to the grasses of summer, but also to the experiential delight of being alive. Marc's red and blue horse – a 'male' presence anchoring the canvas – seems to contemplate the joyful expanse of 'female' yellow and pacifying green. In *Horse in a Landscape*, Marc may be focusing on chromatic composition and on the life of his motifs on canvas, but could also be exploring the relationship between materiality and spirituality, severity and happiness, female and male energies. His early twentieth-century perspective on colour is informed by his admiration for 'primitive' ways of connecting belief and artistic expression.

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<sup>107</sup> The current thesis focuses on the relationship between abstraction and representation as observed in the work of early twentieth-century artists. An examination of Kandinsky and Marc's respective views on colour needs to make the topic of a different inquiry.

<sup>108</sup> Marc as cited by Levine, *ibid.*, p. 56.

However, despite the shared grounds of contemporary and ‘primitive’ art as observable in the works of Marc, Worringer signals in ‘The Historical Development of Modern Art’ that a different sense of the inevitable animates the art of the past and the art of his epoch. For Worringer, contemporary art approaches feelings in sensuous or spiritual terms, while ‘primitive’ art communicates feelings of ambiguity towards the world.<sup>109</sup> Worringer finds greater refinement at work in the art of the early twentieth century, where knowledge is not imperfect – as Worringer sees it in ‘primitive’ epochs – but voluntarily renounced. Art that may look unskilled actually relies on the intentional abandonment of knowledge; in Worringer’s words from *Abstraction and Empathy*: ‘That which was previously instinct is now the ultimate product of cognition.’<sup>110</sup>

Turn-of-the-twentieth-century artists react against Impressionism and the European Renaissance, according to Worringer. In ‘The Historical Development of Modern Art’, he associates Renaissance and Impressionist art with factual learning, or learning from observation. This type of learning led to the impoverishment of German art, Worringer claims.<sup>111</sup> For him, German art relies, by contrast, on very different processes: it is defined by ambiguity, uncertainty, sensuousness and instinctive response to the world. Arguing against ‘the rationalization of sight’ in the first person plural, Worringer thus implies that he is empathically joining the ranks of contemporary artists and demanding, like them, that art have a powerful emotional effect, that art move viewers more than illusionism ever could.<sup>112</sup>

When addressing art from a national perspective, Worringer stands against the separatism of Vinnen, which Worringer considers a narrow and oppositional standpoint.<sup>113</sup> He observes: ‘... [W]e always take our cue first from outside Germany, ... we have always had to give up and lose ourselves first, in order to find our real selves. That has been the tragedy and the

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<sup>109</sup> Worringer, ‘The Historical Development of Modern Art’, 17-18. Worringer writes: ‘Not that primitive man sought more urgently for regularity in nature, or experienced regularity in it more intensely; just the reverse: it is because he stands so lost and spiritually helpless amidst the things of the external world, because he experiences only obscurity and caprice in the inter-connection and flux of the phenomena of the external world, that the urge is so strong in him to divest the things of the external world of their caprice and obscurity in the world-picture and to impart to them a value of necessity and a value of regularity.’

<sup>110</sup> ———, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 18.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, 28-30.

<sup>112</sup> ———, ‘The Historical Development of Modern Art’, 11.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 10, 12.

grandeur of German art from Dürer to Marées, and he who would cut our art from interaction with other art worlds is betraying our real national tradition.’<sup>114</sup>

The strategy that defines early twentieth-century art practice relies, according to Worringer, on the incorporation and transformation of symbolism.<sup>115</sup> In his words: ‘We want to push external symbolism, hailed as a national trait of German art in particular, back into the innermost centre of the artwork, in order that it might flow out from there of its own natural energy, free of every dualism of form and content.’<sup>116</sup> Worringer does not recommend that art renounce the symbolic aspects of representation; instead, he wants representational elements bearing symbolic value present at the core of contemporary artworks – in other words, representation and symbolism need to inform art-making intrinsically. Once representation becomes integrated in the art of his time, form and content can enter an effortless alliance, according to Worringer. In ‘The Historical Development of Modern Art,’ Worringer recognizes the activity of expression in current art-making as a meeting ground of representational features and abstract tendencies.

Unlike *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic*, ‘The Historical Development of Modern Art’ appraises and contextualises the efforts of early twentieth-century artists. Worringer points to key characteristics of contemporary French and German practices: simplification, an attention to the reworking of form, and an open, ‘elemental’ attitude towards art-making. Worringer’s observations from ‘The Historical Development of Modern Art’ reflect the explorations and interests of artists such as Marc (who became aware of Worringer’s *Abstraction and Empathy* in 1912), and Münter (who held Worringer’s writings in high esteem since their early days). Macke and Werefkin, also supportive of early Expressionist works, emphasized the role of form, colour and visual rhythm (rather than the importance of exact depiction) in their paintings and writings. As he observed in his forewords to *Abstraction and Empathy*, Worringer, sensitive to current art-making while engaged in researching the past, provided relevant historical and contemporary frameworks of reference for the artists of his time. Although his discussion of specific contemporary

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<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>115</sup> Worringer does not define the term ‘symbol’ in either *Abstraction and Empathy* or *Form in Gothic*, but employs it to refer to the capacity of an artistic motif to suggest a connection to an idea not represented directly. See, for instance, ———, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 59.

<sup>116</sup> ———, ‘The Historical Development of Modern Art’, 12.

practices is once more postponed in 'The Historical Development of Modern Art', Worringer highlights current artistic tendencies, pointing to key features of art-making, as well as to innovative approaches to form.

**Worringer's impact: *Expressionism* (1914) by Paul Fechter,  
and *Expressionism* (1916) by Hermann Bahr**

The inquiries of Worringer drew both direct and indirect attention to early twentieth-century art-making, and influenced the work of writers interested in Expressionism. For instance, Reinhart Piper, who published Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy* in 1908, also issued Paul Fechter's book, *Expressionism [Der Expressionismus]*, in 1914. Acknowledging the influence of Worringer's *Form in Gothic* on his own approach to *Expressionism*,<sup>1</sup> Fechter wrote: 'I was pleased, since there it was, what was all had long looked and wished for, and had found nowhere... We received from Wilhelm Worringer... finally solid ground beneath our feet for the constant meeting with the modern art that we considered and valued as our art, as the art of our generation of the eighties.'<sup>2</sup> Indeed, Worringer and Fechter hold similar points of view on historical, theoretical and methodological matters.

For Fechter as for Worringer, Impressionism seems an art practice of the past in 1914, due to the emphasis Impressionists place on the study of nature.<sup>3</sup> The alternative to Impressionism, Fechter claims, was the decorative; like Kandinsky, he is dismissive towards it.<sup>4</sup> Fechter summarizes the preoccupations of contemporary artists by citing three rallying calls: 'abandon nature!', 'back to the picture!', and 'back to emotion!'.<sup>5</sup> Following Worringer, Fechter encourages his contemporaries to rely less on the imitation of the world as observed; instead, he recommends that artists focus on rendering their emotions, as well as on particularities of picture-making (such as the relationship between lines, forms and colours on canvas). Fechter, much like Worringer in *Abstraction and Empathy* and 'The Historical Development of Modern Art',<sup>6</sup> notes that art-making does not involve only skill, but also

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<sup>1</sup> See, for instance, Gordon, 'On the Origin of the Word "Expressionism" ', 377. (Gordon mentions that Fechter refers to the influence of Worringer on the fourth page of *Expressionism*.) Also see Bushart, 'Changing Times, Changing Styles: Wilhelm Worringer and the Art of His Epoch', 70. Bushart refers to Fechter's *Menschen auf meinen Wegen*, Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1955, 292.

<sup>2</sup> Paul Fechter's words are cited in Bushart, 'Changing Times, Changing Styles: Wilhelm Worringer and the Art of His Epoch', 70.

<sup>3</sup> Paul Fechter, 'From *Expressionism [Der Expressionismus]*' in *German Expressionism: Documents from the End of the Wilhelmine Empire to the Rise of National Socialism*, eds. Rose-Carol Washton Long, Stephanie Barron, and Ida Katherine Rigby (New York: Maxwell Macmillan Canada, 1993 [1914]), 81.

<sup>4</sup> Kandinsky, Lindsay, and Vergo, *Kandinsky. Complete Writings on Art*, I, 197-199. Kandinsky's *On the Spiritual in Art*, where Kandinsky discusses the effect of ornament on contemporary viewers, had also been published by Piper. Also, Fechter, 'From *Expressionism [Der Expressionismus]*', 81, 83.

<sup>5</sup> Fechter, 'From *Expressionism [Der Expressionismus]*', 81-82.

<sup>6</sup> Worringer, 'The Historical Development of Modern Art', 10-11.

will, need, and an awareness of temperament (or, according to Fechter, of the ‘disposition of the soul’).<sup>7</sup> He regards contemporary art as generically expressionistic.<sup>8</sup>

In *Abstraction and Empathy*, Worringer drew attention to artists’ emotional responses to environment;<sup>9</sup> Fechter also addresses the importance of emotion in his own book. ‘The essential meaning of art always consists in expressing in a concentrated, direct way – the only possible way – the emotion arising from human existence on earth. The significance of Expressionism lies in this insight’, Fechter writes.<sup>10</sup> When inquiring into the responses of artists to the world, Fechter echoes Worringer; however, where Worringer generalizes, Fechter connects his observations specifically to the Expressionist movement.

Like Worringer, Fechter relies on antithetic terms when structuring his argument;<sup>11</sup> he distinguishes between two strands of Expressionist practice, namely extensive and intensive Expressionism. Intensive Expressionism is associated by Fechter with the work of Kandinsky, and extensive Expressionism with Pechstein’s art-making.<sup>12</sup> Extensive Expressionism, Fechter explains, allows artists to articulate their response to the world through depiction – a strategy that brings to light the personal resonance of creators with the deepest aspects of their motifs. Keeping the work of Pechstein in mind,<sup>13</sup> Fechter observes:

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<sup>7</sup> ‘Need’, in the vocabulary of Worringer, is a synonym of ‘urge’, or ‘tendency’. Like Fechter, Worringer signals the importance of the disposition of the soul in art-making; he notes his interest in a ‘history of the feeling about the world’, and in disposition of the soul (or, in his vocabulary, *état d’âme*) in *Abstraction and Empathy*. For instance, Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 13, 47.

<sup>8</sup> Fechter, ‘From *Expressionism [Der Expressionismus]*’, 82.

<sup>9</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 14-17. Addressing the emotional responses of human beings to given environments had been one of Worringer’s major preoccupations in *Abstraction and Empathy*.

<sup>10</sup> Fechter, ‘From *Expressionism [Der Expressionismus]*’, 81-82.

<sup>11</sup> Worringer approaches the relationship between representation and abstraction in art mainly in terms of opposition in *Abstraction and Empathy*. Opposition, as subsequent sections show, is Worringer’s key methodological strategy in *Abstraction and Empathy*. See, for instance, Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 5-8, 26.

<sup>12</sup> Fechter, ‘From *Expressionism [Der Expressionismus]*’, 82-83. In following sections, this thesis focuses on the work of Kandinsky from the perspective of the relationship between representation and abstraction. Further inquiries could also address the work of Pechstein from the perspective of abstract-representational interplay.

<sup>13</sup> For a review of Fechter’s book on Expressionism, see Randolph Schwabe, ‘Expressionism’, *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs*, 33, No. 187, 1918, 141. Schwabe points to Fechter’s views on the work of Pechstein, and doubts Fechter’s enthusiasm with regard to the art of Pechstein and Hans von Marées (1837-87). The place of Pechstein in Expressionism, more precisely in *Die Brücke* association, is noted by Jay A. Clarke; see Jay A. Clarke, ‘Neo-Idealism, Expressionism, and the Writing of Art History’, *Art Institute of Chicago Museum Studies*, 28, No. 1, 2002, 31-35. Using Pechstein’s example, Clarke draws attention to the German Expressionist tendency of echoing French art.

In contrast to Kandinsky, he [i. e., Pechstein] not only maintains a relation to the world, but intensifies it to the highest possible degree only just attainable by him... He thus expresses his own life as this felt existence of things, at the same time revealing their profoundest essence. Like Kandinsky, he makes contact with transcendence, but at the opposite pole. He takes the longer path, so to speak, since he first passes through the world and only then gets in touch with his inner being...<sup>14</sup>

In his *Bridge over the Seine with Small Steamer* [*Brücke über die Seine mit kleinem Dampfer*] (1908) (Fig.13), Pechstein's response to the world assumes powerful pictorial rhythms. His varied brushwork and assertive chromatic contrasts claim key compositional roles; while colour supports the organization of his picture into closer and more distant planes, paint application suggests the dynamism of the scene.

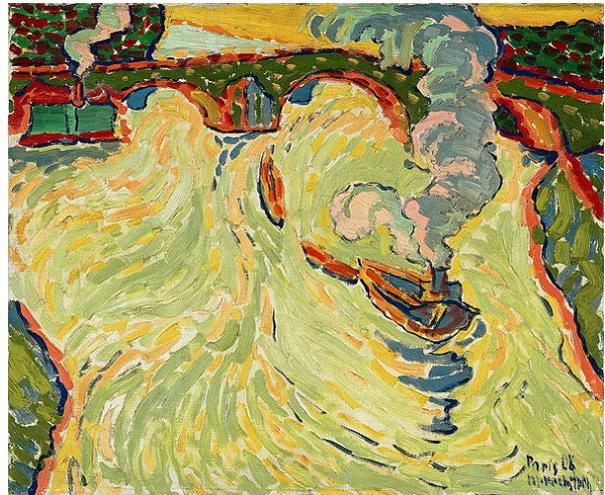


Fig. 13. Max Pechstein. *Bridge over the Seine with Small Steamer* [*Brücke über die Seine mit kleinem Dampfer*]. 1908. oil on canvas. 46.3 x 54.9 cm. Canberra, National Gallery of Australia.

Longer brushstrokes become descriptive in *Bridge over the Seine with Small Steamer*, hinting to directions of movement; shorter brushstrokes create chromatic counterpoints. As depicted by Pechstein, the waters of the river appear to flow parallel to the surface of the canvas, facing their viewers in an emphatic display of energy. Pechstein engages interpretively with his motif in *Bridge over the Seine with Small Steamer*; his brushwork depicts and at the same

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<sup>14</sup> Fechter, 'From Expressionism [*Der Expressionismus*]', 83.

time draws attention to its own abstract dance within the canvas. Observing the world takes the shape of decisive personal expression in Pechstein's approach to painting.

In Fechter's views on extensive Expressionism, artists pursue actively their relationship with the world, and representational characteristics of art-making come to the fore. Renouncing the world is not required, yet the connection between creators and their environments is intensified. Worringer's urge to empathy had a similar effect, as pointed out in *Abstraction and Empathy*; however, naturalism proved one of the most important manifestations of empathic engagement for Worringer – a mode of art-making he distinguished from both abstraction and imitation. For Fechter, an emphasis on intensification in art-making is sufficient in his analysis of extensive Expressionism in 1914, whereas, in 1908, Worringer found the contrast between imitation, naturalism and abstraction necessary in his approach to representation.

Fechter explains the process involved in intensive Expressionism by reference to the inner self of artists.<sup>15</sup> According to him, intensive Expressionism as observable in the work of Kandinsky does not require reference to the world in its external aspects. Instead, intensive Expressionist artists respond to their emotions, to their inner life and its activity – or, to echo Fechter's vocabulary, to the indefinite forms and colours they discover in their souls.<sup>16</sup> With regard to the work of Kandinsky, Fechter notes:

He [i. e., Kandinsky] finds pure spiritual substance only in the depths of his own soul – where neither idea nor reasoning has access, where a chaos of colour reigns, where experience is still unformed, shapeless, remote from conceptual reasoning and from entering any net of causal projections... it [i. e., the soul] tries to come as close as possible to the limits of transcendence by excluding everything external in order to express the emotions there in pure form and colour without the roundabout symbolism of significant objects. Thus landscapes of souls are created without any landscape

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<sup>15</sup> Fechter, 'From *Expressionism [Der Expressionismus]*', 82.

<sup>16</sup> The term 'soul' is not defined by Fechter, but occurs frequently in Kandinsky's *On the Spiritual in Art*. For the purposes of this thesis, 'soul' is considered the domain of inner life, an aspect of existence where a diversity of sensations, feelings, and emotions are brought together, in the possible (but not necessary) absence of reasoning.

features, musical states are transposed into colors and lines; the distance between emotions and expression is shortened here to its minimum.<sup>17</sup>

Writing in 1914, Fechter emphasizes the abstract aspects of Kandinsky's recent explorations. Kandinsky had indeed begun to rely less on representational motifs, and assert line, colour and form in paintings such as *Picture with a White Border* (1913), *Black Lines I* (1913), or *Bright Picture* (1913) (Fig. 14). However, Kandinsky had also worked observationally prior to and during the second decade of the twentieth century; he continued to include, in his abstraction-oriented canvases, references to motifs in the world.<sup>18</sup>

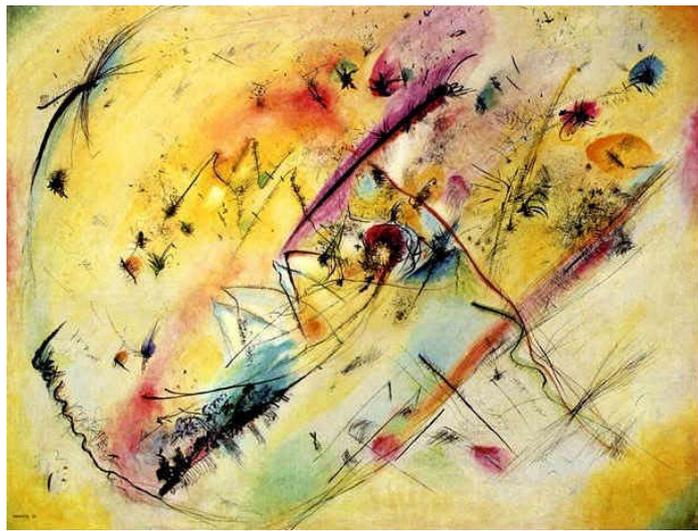


Fig. 14. Wassily Kandinsky. *Bright Picture*. 1913. oil on canvas. 77.8 x 100.2 cm. New York. The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum.

Kandinsky's relating to observed motifs informs, for instance, a painting like *Blue Mountain* (1908-09) (Fig. 15), where seated and standing figures, trees reinforcing the vertical orientation of the canvas, a distant mountain, as well as riders on horseback are clearly

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<sup>17</sup> Fechter, 'From *Expressionism [Der Expressionismus]*', 82.

<sup>18</sup> See, for instance, Elsa Smithgall's inquiry into the social, political, and artistic contexts that fostered Kandinsky's articulation of his *Painting with White Border* (1913). Elsa Smithgall, *Kandinsky and the Harmony of Silence: Painting with White Border* (Washington and New York: Phillips Collection, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 2011), 17-41. Smithgall points to Kandinsky's transformations of the horse, rider, troika (or Russian sled), landscape, Saint George and dragon motifs in his work.

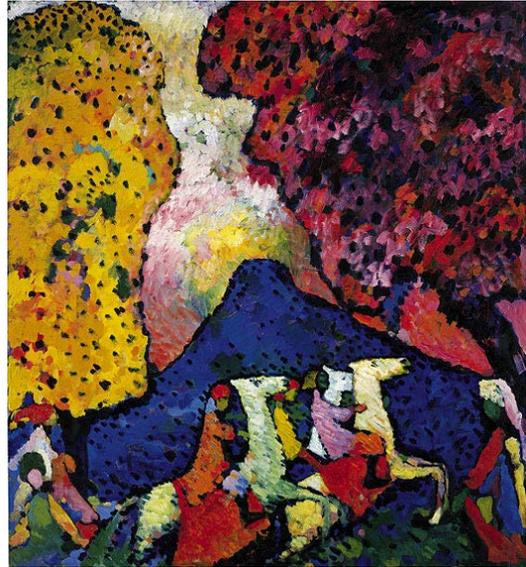


Fig. 15. Wassily Kandinsky. *Blue Mountain*. 1908-09. oil on canvas. 129.3 x 194.3 cm. New York, The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum.

discernible. Emergent in Kandinsky's early twentieth-century art,<sup>19</sup> the figure of the rider eventually becomes emblematic for the explorations encouraged by Marc and Kandinsky in the *Blaue Reiter* exhibitions of 1911, 1912 and 1914.<sup>20</sup> The representational characteristics of *Blue Mountain* draw attention to the artist's personal, emotional investment in the selection and combination of compositional elements, as well as to the abstract characteristics having already surfaced in his approach to colour and brushwork. Kandinsky's focus on the simplification of form, the vibrancy of colour, and the expression of inner life are already at work in this painting.

Intensive Expressionism, as described by Fechter and practised by Kandinsky, emphasizes the elemental aspects of colour, line and personal experience; it renounces the concepts of reason and the connections established through causal thinking, according to Fechter. He argues that, significantly, motifs in the world are not required for inspiration, since artists give form to their emotions; thus, art-making becomes more direct, more immediate in intensive Expressionism. Worringer considered that taking distance from the world is characteristic for the making and viewing of abstract art; Fechter's intensive Expressionism

<sup>19</sup> For instance, in *Russian Knight* (1902), *Blaue Reiter* (1903), *The Farewell* (1903), *The Mounted Warrior* (1903), *Sunday (Old Russian)* (1904), *A Russian Scene* (1904), *In the Forest* (1904), *Couple Riding* (1906), or *Park of St. Cloud with Horseman* (1906).

<sup>20</sup> Lankheit, *The Blaue Reiter Almanac*, 13-15.

requires artists not only to distance themselves from their surroundings, but also to immerse within the realm of the creative self.<sup>21</sup> Although Fechter approaches Expressionism by discussing its aspects in antithesis, his extensive and intensive Expressionism highlight different aspects of art-making than Worringer's representation and abstraction in *Abstraction and Empathy*.

In the works of Expressionist artists such as Pechstein, Kandinsky, Heckel, Kirchner, Schmidt-Rottluff, and Oskar Kokoschka (1886-1980), Fechter recognizes the drive of the old Gothic soul.<sup>22</sup> Like Worringer before him, Fechter finds the Gothic soul expressed in the German Baroque and Rococo,<sup>23</sup> where it assumes anti-rationalist and anti-materialist forms.<sup>24</sup> As seen by Fechter, Expressionism offers freedom from the demands of the intellect crudely used, and provides kinship between the works of Expressionist artists. The collective value of Expressionist works is more important than their personal value, Fechter maintains, especially since Expressionism arises, according to him, less from a programmatic goal than from the resonance between 'shared spiritual conditions'.<sup>25</sup> For Fechter, Expressionism is an art movement characterised by its opposition to materialism and rationalism. Abstraction and representation are both valid approaches to art-making, according to him, provided that they rely on the cultivation of personal, emotive responses to the world.

For Hermann Bahr (1863-1934) as for Fechter, Expressionism appears to be a critical response to illusionism-focused Impressionism.<sup>26</sup> Bahr, in *Expressionism [Expressionismus]*

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<sup>21</sup> With regard to Kandinsky's approach to emotion, colour and music, see Kandinsky, Lindsay, and Vergo, *Kandinsky. Complete Writings on Art*, I, 176-189.

<sup>22</sup> Fechter, 'From *Expressionism [Der Expressionismus]*', 84.

<sup>23</sup> The Gothic is recognizable in Baroque and Rococo for Fechter, and from Baroque to Merovingian art for Worringer. Worringer and Read, *Form in Gothic*, 37.

<sup>24</sup> Fechter, 'From *Expressionism [Der Expressionismus]*', 84.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Hermann Bahr, 'From *Expressionism [Expressionismus]*' in *German Expressionism: Documents from the End of the Wilhelmine Empire to the Rise of National Socialism*, eds. Rose-Carol Washton Long, Stephanie Barron, and Ida Katherine Rigby (New York: Maxwell Macmillan Canada, 1993 [1916]), 89. Also see ———, 'Expressionism' in *Primitivism and Twentieth-Century Art: A Documentary History*, eds. Jack D. Flam, Miriam Deutch, and Carl Einstein (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 2003). Worringer is a source of inspiration for Bahr as for Fechter. In *Expressionism*, Bahr writes: 'I want to tell the reader who has not noticed yet that I have our late, great explorer Alois Riegl to thank for many of my opinions, and especially Wilhelm Worringer's writings *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form Problems of the Gothic*'. Bahr, 'From *Expressionism [Expressionismus]*', 90.

(1916), connects Impressionism with Classical art;<sup>27</sup> he considers that Impressionism, like Classicism, tends towards the exclusion of inner qualities of seeing.<sup>28</sup> Among Expressionist artists attentive to inner seeing and spiritual values, Bahr mentions Matisse, Pechstein, Kokoschka, Marc and Kandinsky.<sup>29</sup> Like Worringer, Bahr considers that contemporary viewers misunderstand the art of their time; he imagines a dialogue taking place between Expressionist artists and their viewers,<sup>30</sup> and argues that difficulties arise when viewers and artists employ and define vision differently.

Bahr attempts to explain the workings of artistic vision in his book.<sup>31</sup> He connects seeing to decision-making, and emphasizes that seeing as experienced by artists requires a transformation of physical seeing into seeing as characteristic for spirit. Contrasting ‘the eye of the body’ with ‘the eye of the spirit’, Bahr underscores the importance of artists’ balancing of physical and spiritual sight. In his words:

Artistic seeing is based upon an inner decision: turning the eye of the body (to speak once again like Goethe) into the eye of the spirit; and how the artist settles this struggle is the only way in which he truly becomes an artist... The artist, who achieves complete seeing, that neither violates mankind through nature nor nature through man, but allows each their rights in both nature's work and human deeds, is one formed either in times of onesidedness, suddenly overcome by another onesidedness (Grünewald, Dürer, Cézanne), or when the artist is wilful enough to resist the onesidedness of the times equally strongly (Greco, Rembrandt).<sup>32</sup>

In adjusting the way they view the world, artists can reach a balance between will and nature, according to Bahr. He notes that complete artistic seeing brings together nature and will, and observes that such seeing arises to replace or to oppose already existent approaches. Like

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<sup>27</sup> Bahr, 'From *Expressionism [Expressionismus]*', 90. Bahr also mentions the influence of Alois Riegl on his own writings, as well as the importance of the work of Houston Stewart Chamberlain where Chamberlain compares Goethe and Kant (*Immanuel Kant: A Study and Comparison with Goethe, Leonardo da Vinci, Bruno, Plato and Descartes*, 1914).

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 89.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

Worringer, Bahr is sensitive to the generic historical contexts that shape art,<sup>33</sup> and constructs his argument by means of antithesis. Worringer signalled in *Abstraction and Empathy* that Classical art-making should not be regarded as the sole measure of artistic value;<sup>34</sup> in his turn, Bahr remarks that contemporary education in Classical art is a source of discord. He draws attention to the external preoccupations that Classical art-making encourages in its reliance on observational approaches.

Bahr sees Expressionism as connected to ‘primitive’ art rather than to Classical, representation-oriented art-making. He defines Expressionism as a movement reflecting a worldview and a collective emotional state.<sup>35</sup> Writing in 1916, Bahr accounts for the state of mind of his contemporaries during the First World War. His darkened perspective underscores the sense of urgency and necessity associated with mid-war Expressionism. In the words of Bahr:

Never was there a time shaken by such terror, by such dread of death. Never was the world so deathly silent. Never was man so insignificant. Never was he so afraid. Never was happiness so distant and freedom so dead. Misery cries out, man cries out for his soul, the entire time is a single scream of distress. Art too cries into the deep darkness, it cries for help, it cries for the spirit. That is Expressionism... So, brought very near the edge of destruction by “civilization,” we discover in ourselves powers which cannot be destroyed. With the fear of death upon us, we muster these and use them as spells against “civilization.” Expressionism provides the symbol of the unknown in us in which we confide, hoping that it will save us. It is the mark of the imprisoned spirit that tries to break out of the dungeon, a sign of alarm from all panic-stricken souls.<sup>36</sup>

Marc, one of the Expressionists admirably mentioned by Bahr,<sup>37</sup> anticipates the outbreak of the First World War in a painting from 1913, *The Fate of Animals* (Fig. 16). ‘The hour is unique. Is it too daring to call attention to the small, unique signs of the time?’, Marc writes

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<sup>33</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 112-116.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 13-21, 28-29, 45-48, 54-55.

<sup>35</sup> Bahr, ‘From *Expressionism [Expressionismus]*’, 90-91.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.

in *The Blaue Reiter Almanac* (1912),<sup>38</sup> attentive to the pace of historical changes. His canvas captures the tensions he senses in his epoch: asserting diagonal movement, the dynamism of geometrical structures takes over the natural world.<sup>39</sup> Little room for serene living remains: except for the quieter lower left corner of the work, animals are depicted in a state of turmoil and tension. Abstraction and representation, the visual protagonists of Marc's painting, turn into warring parties. In *The Fate of Animals*, innocence becomes impossible, and sacrifice inevitable. Reflecting on current events through painting and writing, Marc also takes direct part to the First World War.<sup>40</sup> His service in the German infantry is brought to an end by his death in action in the same year that sees the publication of Bahr's *Expressionism*.



Fig. 16. Franz Marc. *The Fate of Animals*. 1913. oil on canvas. 105 x 266 cm. Basel. Kunstmuseum.

Worringer, like Bahr,<sup>41</sup> draws attention to the relationship between current art and 'primitivism'.<sup>42</sup> Explaining that geometrical figures acquire symbolising value in 'primitive'

<sup>38</sup> Franz Marc, 'Two Pictures' in *The Blaue Reiter Almanac*, eds. Wassily Kandinsky, Franz Marc, and Klaus Lankheit (London: Tate, 2006 [1912]), 69.

<sup>39</sup> Marc's approach to abstract and representational aspects of painting is discussed by David Morgan in Morgan, 'The Enchantment of Art: Abstraction and Empathy from German Romanticism to Expressionism', 331. With regard to Marc's *Deer in the Forest II* (1914), Morgan describes the meeting of abstraction and representation in oppositional terms. According to him: 'Marc achieved the revelatory clash of inner and outer aspects in such visual devices as the stark contrast of surface and depth... Marc subverted but did not efface the descriptive function of line and colour. Recognizable forms are framed within broken templates that both echo the forms and distil them into an abstract geometry. Contours disintegrate and reemerge within a restless grid that oscillates between opacity and transparency. The contrast between the brilliantly coloured animal family and the violence of the abstract scheme seems to suggest a transformative event.'

<sup>40</sup> John F. Moffitt, 'Fighting Forms: The Fate of the Animals.' *The Occultist Origins of Franz Marc's "Farbentheorie"*, *Artibus et Historiae*, 6, No. 12, 1985, 124.

<sup>41</sup> Bahr, 'From *Expressionism* [*Expressionismus*]', 90-91.

art, and that such art arises in defence against the chaos of the world,<sup>43</sup> Worringer approaches the abstract, elemental components of art-making from a different perspective than Marc in *The Fate of Animals*. Geometric forms, Worringer maintains, suggest stability and provide to ‘primitive’ people a feeling of protection from confusion and fear.<sup>44</sup> However, despite the appreciation he had shown to both ‘primitive’ and contemporary explorations in ‘The Historical Development of Modern Art’, Worringer’s opinion about later Expressionist art-making changes. In 1920, he explains his current views on Expressionism in a speech for the Munich Goethe Society; published in 1921 as *Current Questions on Art*, the speech signals Worringer’s doubts regarding the vitality of recent Expressionist inquiries.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Bahr, 'From *Expressionism [Expressionismus]*', 90-91. Marc also underscores the heartfelt, genuine quality of the illustrations for Grimm’s *Fairy Tales* (1832); see Marc, 'Two Pictures', 67. Also see Franz Marc, 'The Savages of Germany' in *The Blaue Reiter Almanac*, eds. Wassily Kandinsky, Franz Marc, and Klaus Lankheit (London: Tate, 2006 [1912]), 61, 64. Marc writes: 'In this time of the great struggle for a new art we fight like disorganized “savages” against an old, established power. The battle seems to be unequal, but spiritual matters are never decided by numbers, only by the power of ideas. The dreaded weapons of the “savages” are their *new ideas*... Who are these “savages” in Germany? For the most part they are both well known and widely disparaged: the Brücke in Dresden, the Neue Sezession in Berlin, and the Neue Vereinigung in Munich... Their thinking has a different aim: To create out of their work *symbols* for their own time, symbols that belong to the altar of a future spiritual religion, symbols behind which the technical heritage cannot be seen.'

<sup>43</sup> Worringer and Read, *Form in Gothic*, 17.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 17-20.

<sup>45</sup> Charles E. Haxthausen discusses the essays Worringer publishes in German magazines of the 1920s, highlighting the emphasis Worringer now places on writing about art rather than on art. Haxthausen, 'Modern Art After "The End of Expressionism": Worringer in the 1920s', 119-134.

### ***Current Questions on Art (1921): Worringer revisits Expressionism***

For Worringer, as for Fechter and Bahr, emerging Expressionism was characterized by energy rather than logic.<sup>1</sup> Yet in the second decade of the twentieth century Worringer considers artistic Expressionism exhausted. Addressing the reasons for its decline,<sup>2</sup> Worringer looks into the creative and cognitive processes generated by the Expressionist movement.

Expressionism, according to Worringer, directed the attention of his contemporaries to Gothic, Baroque, Asian, and 'primitive' art. The examination of these historically and geographically remote approaches to art-making led, Worringer explained, to a greater understanding of basic, elemental aspects of art, and suggested the possible ancestry of Expressionism. In the words of Worringer:

We all know how much Expressionism was searching for its forebears. We know further how the lines of the great Expressionism of the past ran together and crossed each other when they passed through the small, delicate lens of our modern expressionist feeling – this passing agitation in us – and that we, receiving, recognizing – but not producing it, began to understand what elemental art is. Gothic, Baroque, primitive and Asiatic art: all suddenly revealed themselves as – it may be said, – as they never had to any generation before... And the closer they came to us as observers, the more completely they eluded us as creators.<sup>3</sup>

For Worringer, Expressionism found its historical roots in approaches to art where elementary, abstract forms were highlighted. Early twentieth-century Expressionism responded to the art of the past in a refined manner, he argued. However, like Impressionism, Expressionism was only a stage of artistic exploration, in Worringer's opinion. He claimed that Expressionist art-making did not come to reflect an understanding of artistic models

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<sup>1</sup> Bahr, 'From *Expressionism [Expressionismus]*', 285.

<sup>2</sup> Haxthausen underscores Worringer's critical focus on Expressionism in art, as well as Worringer's belief in the development of art criticism as an art form. Pointing to Worringer's rhetorical discourse, Haxthausen mentions Worringer's association of creativity with intellectuality and mind in 1921. Haxthausen, 'Modern Art After "The End of Expressionism": Worringer in the 1920s', 119-121.

<sup>3</sup> Worringer, 'From *Current Questions on Art*', 285.

offered by past epochs. In the second decade of the twentieth century, Worringer maintained that Expressionist writing and Expressionist art had begun to engage on different paths.

Lamenting recent Expressionist tendencies in art, Worringer insists that art needs to embody not decorative, but metaphysical concerns.<sup>4</sup> Worringer does mention the existence of exceptions to this trend, yet signals the general mannerism of recent Expressionist art-making. Although dismissive of Expressionist painting in 1921, Worringer still defends the possibilities inherent in Expressionist thought. He remarks:

It is difficult to capture in words and terms this atmosphere of a new spirituality equal to art in its creative capacity. It cannot be explained to somebody who does not sense it. For now we can only sense that our thinking is about to enter a new condition of totality and to acquire a new fluidity which will render the assumed polarity between creating art and thinking more invalid with every passing day... Until now we could visualise essence only through the medium of art: now we can take part in it directly through the medium of thinking, and this seems to me to be the creative achievement of our time.<sup>5</sup>

The polarity between Expressionist art-making and thought can be surpassed, Worringer suggests, through focusing on thought rather than art-making.<sup>6</sup> He proposes to resolve the conflict between opposites by eliminating one of the parties, at least for a while.<sup>7</sup> Although he does not refer to Hegel in *Current Questions on Art*,<sup>8</sup> Worringer adopts a perspective on art's sublimation into thought that echoes Hegel's views on the art of the Romantic epoch. Romanticism brought along, Hegel explains, the perfecting of mind and emotion (or 'spirit'

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 285-286.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 286.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Worringer believes that artistic Expressionism needs time to reassess its possibilities – he intends to grant this time to art-making. Worringer thus leaves a door open for future artistic developments. (Ibid., 287.)

<sup>8</sup> Haxthausen also draws attention to the echoes from Hegel he discerns in Worringer's *Current Questions on Art*. Haxthausen, 'Modern Art After "The End of Expressionism": Worringer in the 1920s', 130. As Ritchie Robertson points out, the thought of Hegel – especially Hegel's interest in the relationship between reality and rationality – had marked the nineteenth century in Germany. Robertson explains that Hegel saw reality as a series of stages in the development of *Geist* [mind, or spirit], and that, according to Hegel, artistic practice would eventually be replaced by philosophical practice. See Ritchie Robertson, 'German Literature and Thought from 1810 to 1890' in Helmut Walser Smith, *The Oxford Handbook of Modern German History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 261. Also, Robert Anchor, *Germany Confronts Modernization: German Culture and Society, 1790-1890* (Lexington: Heath, 1972), 55-56.

and 'heart', in Hegel's terms); Romantic art thus came to focus less on external expression than on inner reality, according to him.<sup>9</sup> In *Current Questions on Art*, Worringer, like Hegel, is more interested in the intangible 'pictures of our minds' than in Expressionist art-making as practised around 1921;<sup>10</sup> his essay suggests that Worringer considers the Expressionist art of the 1920s as a page in history rather than as an active field of investigation.

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<sup>9</sup> In *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art* (1820-29), Hegel gives special attention to the key mode of art-making during his time: Romantic art. He argues that Romantic art emphasizes inwardness, and dissociates from elements that appeal to the senses. According to Hegel: 'This *inner* world constitutes the content of the romantic sphere and must therefore be represented as this inwardness and in the pure appearance of this depth of feeling. Inwardness celebrates its triumph over the external and manifests its victory in and on the external itself, whereby what is apparent to the senses alone sinks into worthlessness... Thereby the separation of Idea and shape, their indifference and inadequacy to each other, come to the fore again, as in symbolic art, but with this essential difference, that, in romantic art, the Idea, the deficiency of which in the symbol brought with it deficiency in shape, now has to appear *perfected* in itself as spirit and heart. Because of this higher perfection, it is not susceptible of an adequate union with the external, since its true reality and manifestation it can only seek and achieve only within itself.' Hegel and Knox, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, 80-81. Due to Worringer's silence with regard to Hegel's theories in *Abstraction and Empathy*, 'The Historical Development of Modern Art,' *Form in Gothic*, and *Current Questions on Art*, the connections between the thought of Hegel and Worringer are only briefly noted in this thesis.

<sup>10</sup> Worringer, 'From *Current Questions on Art*', 287. On Worringer's change of focus from art to art criticism, Haxthausen comments: 'If one strips away the refulgent cloak of Worringer's rhetoric, his position comes down to this: If art had not fulfilled its prophecies, if it had not conformed to his prognosis, then that proved only that painting and sculpture were finished, not that his historicist paradigm was flawed... He and the other apologists of Expressionism had been too modest: they had failed to see that their discourse was the true artistic expression of their time.' Haxthausen, 'Modern Art After "The End of Expressionism": Worringer in the 1920s', 121.

## **Questioning Worringer: critical discussions on the writings of Worringer and on his association with the Expressionist movement**

Writers such as Georg Lukács, Richard Sheppard, Joseph Frank, William V. Spanos, Ulrich Weisstein and Neil Donahue have highlighted Worringer's contribution to Expressionism from various viewpoints.<sup>1</sup> Lukács (1885-1971),<sup>2</sup> one of Worringer's most incisive critics, attends mainly to the literary dimension of Expressionism in 'Expressionism: Its Significance and Decline' (1934).<sup>3</sup> Although he refers to movements such as Naturalism, Impressionism

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<sup>1</sup> The pages that follow inquire into several instances of critical response to Worringer's writings in the English-speaking world. This study cannot commit to an in-depth examination of Expressionist literature and art, which would require much more space than the current thesis can offer. Instead, I focus on Worringer's relation to Expressionism as discussed in the literature on Worringer published in English, as well as on the interpretation of Worringer's views on representation and abstraction where mentioned in critical perspective. Expressionist art and writing have received ample coverage in recent publications. See, among many others, Christian Weikop, *New Perspectives on Brücke Expressionism: Bridging History* (Framham, Surrey and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2011). Also, Peter Lasko, *The Expressionist Roots of Modernism* (Manchester, England & New York, USA: Manchester University Press, 2003). Also, Donahue, *Invisible Cathedrals: The Expressionist Art History of Wilhelm Worringer*. Also, Stephanie Barron and Bruce Davis, eds., *German Expressionist Prints and Drawings* (Los Angeles, California: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1989). Also, Shulamith Behr, *Women Expressionists* (New York: Rizzoli, 1988). Also, Uhr, *Masterpieces of German Expressionism at the Detroit Institute of Arts*. Also, Vogt, *Expressionism: German Painting, 1905-1920*. Regarding the connection between Worringer's thought and the art of his time, further sections of this thesis address the works of Paul Cézanne, Claude Monet and Wassily Kandinsky – three artists whose works are considered to belong to different art movements (Post-Impressionism, Impressionism and Expressionism).

<sup>2</sup> A thinker associated with Central European philosophical traditions, Lukács held Marxist views. He was influenced by Hegel to a degree that made his writings difficult to accept unanimously for Leninists and Western Marxists. Lukács was awarded his doctorate in 1906 in Budapest, and attended Simmel's lectures in Berlin (1909-10). He published his book, *The Soul and the Forms*, in Germany in 1911. See George Lichtheim, *Lukács* ([London]: Fontana, 1970), 9-13. Mary Gluck points out that, at the beginning of his career as a literary critic, Lukács saw life and work as fused (a position not dissimilar to Worringer's, who underscores the link between art-making and feelings about the world in his books). See Mary Gluck, *Georg Lukács and His Generation, 1900-1918* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), 2-3. Gluck also notes that Simmel and Worringer wrote positive reviews for Lukács's *The Soul and the Forms*. (Ibid., 93.) She points to the actual parallelism between the works of Lukács and Worringer (ibid., 163), and notes that researchers tend to favour Lukács's early thought from and before the nineteen-twenties. (Ibid., 3.) In the nineteen-thirties and -forties, Lukács was employed at the Moscow Marx-Engels Institute (1930-31), was involved with the German Communist Party in Berlin (1931-33), and then worked at the Philosophical Institute of the Academy of Sciences in Moscow (1933-44). (Lichtheim, *Lukács*, 9-11.) He taught aesthetics and cultural philosophy in Budapest during the Mátyás Rákosi regime (1945-56), and retreated from activating in the Communist Party after being attacked by ultra-Stalinists (1948-49). Lukács served as Education Minister of the Imre Nagy (1953-1955) government; he became involved once more in the Communist Party, as a member of its Central Committee, between October-November 1956. When Nagy fell from power and was executed (1958), Lukács fled to Romania. Under János Kádár (1956-88), Lukács's writings could not be published in Hungary, but appeared in the West; nevertheless, Lukács could live in Budapest. He was readmitted to the Communist Party in 1967. In 1969, on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the short-lived Hungarian Soviet Republic, Lukács was awarded the Order of the Red Banner, and was permitted to speak in public once more. George Lichtheim notes that philosophy and politics are difficult to separate in the work of Lukács. See Lichtheim, *Lukács*, 9-12.

<sup>3</sup> Georg Lukács, 'Expressionism: Its Significance and Decline' in *Georg Lukács: Essays on Realism*, ed. Rodney Livingstone (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1934), 77, 103, 105-106, 113. Richard Sheppard highlights that

and Symbolism in his study, Lukács discusses these movements ideologically, criticizing their absence of political commitment as reflected in their creative approaches.<sup>4</sup> Like Worringer, he takes the perspective of generality with regard to art: the work of specific artists is not analysed in 'Expressionism: Its Significance and Decline.' Nevertheless, writing on art interests Lukács, and in his argument from 'Expressionism: its Significance and Decline', Worringer occupies a key place.<sup>5</sup>

### **Georg Lukács and the decline of Expressionism**

'Expressionism: Its Significance and Decline' opens with a citation from the *Philosophical Notebooks* (1913) of Vladimir Ilich Lenin (1870-1924), and continues with an account of *Current Questions on Art*, the printed version of Worringer's speech for the Goethe Society in Munich (1920). Emotionally connected to, yet also critical of recent Expressionist art,<sup>6</sup> Worringer's text meets with Lukács's criticism. For Lukács, Expressionism appears as a bourgeois movement disregarding the social and economical aspects of its ideology;<sup>7</sup> Worringer's very emphasis on emotion, vitality, and the effort to transcend relativity suggest to Lukács why Expressionism eventually reached its end.<sup>8</sup>

Although he mentions the pacifist ideology and left-wing leanings of German Expressionism,<sup>9</sup> Lukács does not approve of the non-specific, abstract opposition of

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Lukács actually referred to late Expressionism (1916-1920) in 'Expressionism: Its Significance and Decline.' (Lukács, 'Expressionism: Its Significance and Decline', 111.) Also see Richard Sheppard, 'Georg Lukács, Wilhelm Worringer and German Expressionism', *Journal of European Studies*, 25, No. 3, 1995, 263.

<sup>4</sup> For example, Lukács, 'Expressionism: Its Significance and Decline', 104-105.

<sup>5</sup> In his 'Critical Bibliography of Recent Methods in German Literary Research' (1930) Theodore Geissendoerfer mentions Worringer as one of the representatives of literary investigations based on the study of form and style. For Geissendoerfer, Worringer emphasizes style in art. See Theodore Geissendoerfer, 'A Critical Bibliography of Recent Methods in German Literary Research', *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 29, No. 3, 1930, 405-406. For Worringer's own distancing from art-making and expressed belief in intellectuality (1920), see Wolf Lepenies and Barbara Harshav, 'Between Social Science and Poetry in Germany', *Poetics Today*, 9, No. 1, 1988, 125-126.

<sup>6</sup> Lukács cites a passage from Worringer's speech where Worringer employs the first person plural in his evaluation of Expressionism. (Lukács, 'Expressionism: Its Significance and Decline', 77.)

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 77, 84-86.

<sup>8</sup> With regard to the decline of Expressionism, Behr, Fanning and Jarman believe in emphasizing the importance of the movement rather than its insufficiencies. (Behr, Fanning, and Jarman, *Expressionism Reassessed*, 2.)

<sup>9</sup> Lukács, 'Expressionism: Its Significance and Decline', 77.

Expressionism to ‘middle-classness’ [*Bürgerlichkeit*].<sup>10</sup> Yet Lukács employs a similarly general perspective when addressing Expressionism himself. Like Worringer, who did not distinguish between art viewing and art-making in *Abstraction and Empathy*, Lukács does not elicit the specific characteristic of literary Expressionism on the one hand, and artistic Expressionism on the other.

In its pointing out the failings of the Expressionist movement, Lukács’s criticism was actually preceded by Worringer’s 1920 speech. However, where Worringer displayed sympathy and understanding, Lukács is trenchant towards Expressionist artistic practice. For Lukács, Expressionism approached the world subjectively, idealistically, while claiming to be objective,<sup>11</sup> and did not criticize the middle class from an economical or political standpoint. Consequently, Lukács regards Expressionism as one of the tendencies that facilitated the rise of Fascism – a movement that added a reactionary edge to its borrowings from other sources, Expressionism included.<sup>12</sup>

Lukács considers Worringer’s connections with Expressionism and its perspective on the world to be profound.<sup>13</sup> A key feature of Worringer’s argument is the opposition between empathy and abstraction, according to Lukács. Unlike Perkins, Lukács remains insensitive to Worringer’s discussion of Gothic, a mode of art-making where Worringer recognizes the meeting between empathy and abstraction.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, Lukács signals ‘the striking effect’ of Worringer’s *Abstraction and Empathy*.

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 86-87.

<sup>11</sup> See Lukács, 'Expressionism: Its Significance and Decline', 102. Lukács also criticizes Expressionism for its ambition to grasp ‘essence’ without reflecting the world, for its missing content and emphatic form, for its abstraction and distortion. (———, 'Expressionism: Its Significance and Decline', 91, 109-110. )

<sup>12</sup> Lukács, 'Expressionism: Its Significance and Decline', 87. Also note Lukács’s later comment: ‘The very partial and problematic interest with which Expressionism is honoured by fascism can certainly not suffice to awaken Expressionism from its death.’ See ———, 'Expressionism: Its Significance and Decline', 110. Lukács signals the incorporation of Expressionist aspects in the National Socialist ideology at a time when Expressionism had lost its progressive impetus. Uhr agrees with Lukács in this respect. See Horst Uhr, *Masterpieces of German Expressionism at the Detroit Institute of Arts* (New York: Hudson Hills Press and The Detroit Institute of Arts, 1982), 25.

<sup>13</sup> Lukács, 'Expressionism: Its Significance and Decline', 89. For a discussion of Lukács’s response to Worringer’s writings, also see Geoffrey C. W. Waite, 'Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy*: Remarks on Its Reception and on the Rhetoric of Criticism' in *The Turn of the Century: German Literature and Art, 1890-1915*, eds. Gerald Chapple and Hans H. Schulte (Bonn: Bouvier, 1981 [1978]), 206-208.

<sup>14</sup> Perkins, *Contemporary Theory of Expressionism*, 54.

For Lukács, Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy* addresses early twentieth-century art more than with pre-modern modes of art-making. Lukács argues that the actual goal of *Abstraction and Empathy* is the defence of the art practices of Worringer's contemporaries.<sup>15</sup> In his forewords to *Abstraction and Empathy*, Worringer himself mentioned the positive reception his book had had on artists as well as writers.<sup>16</sup> Yet Lukács emphasizes the early twentieth-century relevance of *Abstraction and Empathy* in order to question the historical aspects of Worringer's inquiry.

Regarding Worringer's approach to representation and abstraction, Lukács remarks that Worringer considers the art of empathy (or representation) to be in decline.<sup>17</sup> This, Lukács claims, reveals the escapist tendency manifest in Worringer's thought, as much as in Expressionism.<sup>18</sup> He connects escapism with Worringer's discussion of agoraphobia, anxiety, and abstraction.<sup>19</sup> As seen by Lukács, abstraction is a process of distancing from social issues and from the struggle between classes –<sup>20</sup> it makes the target of one of the main objections Lukács brings to Expressionism, as well as to Worringer's writings.<sup>21</sup> According to Lukács, Expressionists left aside the distinctive features of their models in the world, and chose to employ a subjective method of rendering. In Lukács's words:

The expressionist precisely abstracted away from these typical characteristics, in as much as he proceeded, like the impressionists and symbolists, from the subjective reflex in experience, and emphasized precisely what in this appears – from the subject's standpoint – as essential, in as much as he ignored the 'little', 'petty',

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<sup>15</sup> Lukács, 'Expressionism: Its Significance and Decline', 89. Magdalena Bushart would agree in this respect. See Magdalena Bushart, 'Changing Times, Changing Styles: Wilhelm Worringer and the Art of His Epoch' in Neil H. Donahue, *Invisible Cathedrals: The Expressionist Art History of Wilhelm Worringer* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, c.1995), 72-74, 79.

<sup>16</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, vii-viii, xiii-xiv.

<sup>17</sup> Lukács, 'Expressionism: Its Significance and Decline', 89.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

<sup>21</sup> Lukács discusses abstraction in connection with Expressionism, but does not address Expressionism's representational aspects. An exception would be Lukács's mentioning of Expressionist emotionalism (a feature that, as we have seen, Worringer associates with empathy and representational art). For Lukács, emotion in Expressionism is exaggerated. However, the hybridity of Expressionism as a mode of making is nevertheless apparent to Ulrich Weisstein. See Ulrich Weisstein, 'German Literary Expressionism: An Anatomy', *The German Quarterly*, 54, No. 3, 1981, 272.

‘inessential’ aspects (i. e. precisely the concrete social determinations) and uprooted his ‘essence’ from its causal connection in time and space.<sup>22</sup>

Bypassing concreteness, connections and references to the world, Expressionists, according to Lukács, sacrifice the spatial, temporal and social components their work might have included. Lukács thinks that this process of abstraction causes Expressionist art to lose meaning. He decisively supports representational processes where empathy could operate unhindered. According to Lukács, abstraction leads to escapism; Expressionism was not able to stand for a socio-political cause due to its reliance on abstraction. Lukács clearly writes in favour of representation, or empathy. He does not merely defend the representational function; he seems to militate for the representational duties of literature and art.<sup>23</sup>

Worringer regards the world as unknowable, ungraspable chaos: ‘a ‘lawless tangle’, in the words of Lukács.<sup>24</sup> Isolation and passion, Lukács explains, are the methods proposed by Worringer to grasp ‘essence’ in the world.<sup>25</sup> Neither of these alternatives meets with Lukács’s approval, who also questions Worringer’s emphasis on the rhetoric of opposition. Worringer’s contrast between reasoned understanding and irrational passion seems exclusive and rigid to Lukács. However, twentieth-century writers on art tend to remember Worringer mostly for his oppositional approach to abstraction and representation, as well as for his engaged approach to the writing of art history.<sup>26</sup>

While Worringer tempers the antithesis between representation and abstraction by pointing to their common grounds in psychology, history and art-making, Lukács remains mostly critical towards abstraction. He emphasizes the opposition between abstraction and empathy, thus

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<sup>22</sup> Lukács, 'Expressionism: Its Significance and Decline', 105.

<sup>23</sup> Worringer, had he responded to the criticisms of Lukács, could have associated Lukács’s defence of representation with Classical-oriented approaches to art. In *Abstraction and Empathy*, Worringer offers the work of Kant as a point of reference for the end of Classicism; indeed, Lukács, as Richard Sheppard mentions, begins to admire Kant’s thought before the First World War. (See the paragraphs that follow, for Sheppard’s research of the relationship between the writings of Worringer and Lukács.) Embracing a Classical-oriented viewpoint, Lukács constructs his own argument on the basis of his rejection of Worringer’s perspective. He thus perpetuates the polar oppositions Worringer had cultivated in *Abstraction and Empathy*.

<sup>24</sup> Lukács, 'Expressionism: Its Significance and Decline', 102.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 102-103.

<sup>26</sup> See, for instance, Hulme and Read, eds., *Speculations: Essays on Humanism and the Philosophy of Art*, 75-91. Also, Read, *The Forms of Things Unknown: Essays towards an Aesthetic Philosophy*, 141-156. Selz, *German Expressionist Painting*, 8-10, 12-13. Also see Holdheim, 'Wilhelm Worringer and the Polarity of Understanding', 350, 355. Also, Rosenthal, *Abstraction in the Twentieth Century*, 8-9.

employing the very method he had criticized in Worringer's writings. Lukács discusses the connection between literature and art from a perspective also indebted to Worringer: he places the creative methods of Impressionism, Symbolism and Expressionism in social, historical, and ideological perspective, connecting literature and art with the worldviews that generate them. From his own psychologically oriented angle on the history and theory of art, Worringer had drawn attention to the connections between art-making and its contexts in *Abstraction and Empathy*. 'Expressionism: Its Significance and Decline' points critically towards the writings of Worringer, yet reveals significant similarities between the methodologies of Worringer and Lukács.

### **Richard Sheppard, and Lukács' debt to Worringer**

The respective approaches of Lukács and Worringer bear similarities because Lukács had a thorough interest in Worringer's work before the First World War. In 'Georg Lukács, Wilhelm Worringer and German Expressionism' (1995), Richard Sheppard inquires into the connections between the two writers. According to Worringer, Georg Simmel's presence in the Trocadéro Museum had inspired him to choose a topic of study that later became *Abstraction and Empathy*.<sup>27</sup> Lukács, like Worringer, had also studied with Simmel in Berlin.<sup>28</sup> An annotated copy of Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy* was found in Lukács' personal library, Sheppard remarks; these annotations, he comments, could have been made at different points in time.<sup>29</sup> Sheppard demonstrates that the work of Worringer was important for Lukács in the early decades of the twentieth century; Worringer and Lukács even corresponded in 1911, after Lukács had sent a free copy of his book, *Soul and Form* (1911), to Worringer.<sup>30</sup>

However, Sheppard observes that Lukács changed his perspective on Worringer's writings after reading Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (1790) at a point in time between

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<sup>27</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, ix.

<sup>28</sup> Sheppard, 'Georg Lukács, Wilhelm Worringer and German Expressionism', 242.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 244-245.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 247. Also, Joanna E. Ziegler, 'Worringer's Theory of Transcendental Space in Gothic Architecture: A Medievalist's Perspective' in Neil H. Donahue, *Invisible Cathedrals: The Expressionist Art History of Wilhelm Worringer* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, c.1995), 107.

1912 and 1914.<sup>31</sup> Sheppard finds that Lukács' own aesthetic came to revolve around concepts such as self-defining structure, objectivity, intentionality, the transcendental quality of experience in the world, and beauty as the meeting place of nature and art; such concepts, Sheppard explains, were at variance with the practices of pre-war Expressionists.<sup>32</sup> As to Lukács's interpretation of Worringer's writings, Sheppard finds in favour of Worringer;<sup>33</sup> he maintains that Lukács's criticism of Worringer and Expressionism allowed Lukács to articulate his own point of view.<sup>34</sup> Worringer appears as a constant point of reference for Lukács, as Sheppard points out, even when Lukács's references to Worringer take the form of negative commentary.

### **Joseph Frank's Worringer: expressiveness, emotion, and the passage of time**

For Joseph Frank in 'Spatial Form in Modern Literature' (1945), Worringer stands against the emphasis on Western aesthetics in art.<sup>35</sup> Worringer, according to Frank, figures among the most significant art historians of the modern age. Frank mentions that he finds Worringer's name to be highly visible in English criticism.<sup>36</sup> Tracing his own interest for the ideas of Worringer to T. E. Hulme's writings,<sup>37</sup> Frank also signals the enthusiasm of Herbert Read towards Worringer's accounts of abstract, geometric aspects of art-making.<sup>38</sup> Worringer's contribution to art, Frank highlights, consists in addressing emotions that reflect negative responses to a world of changes.<sup>39</sup> Writers such as Worringer regarded modes of art-making as reflective of the epoch during which they developed, Frank observes. According to him:

The great modern masters of art history – Alois Riegl, Max Dvořák, Wilhelm Worringer, Erwin Panofsky – tended to explain shifts in style by refined versions of

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 251.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 254-255.

<sup>33</sup> See, for instance, Sheppard's defence of Worringer with regard to Lukács's criticism of Worringer's writing in *Aesthetics*. Ibid., 268-272.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 272-273.

<sup>35</sup> Frank, *The Idea of Spatial Form*, 81.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 31-66.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., xiv.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 151, 171.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 58.

the Hegelian idea of *zeitgeist* [‘spirit of the times’]. All manifestations of a culture were somehow linked together; and art styles were seen as one part of a complex whose ultimate explanation was located in the evolution of racial, religious, or metaphysical categories (a Marxist would of course locate this explanation in socio-economic categories).<sup>40</sup>

Early twentieth-century German and Austrian art historians and scholars interested in form, its definition and its changes, belong to Hegel’s lineage, Frank explains. He mentions that Hulme examined the work of such writers in order to configure his own approach to the question of form.<sup>41</sup> Worringer’s ‘unusually expressive and incisive style’ gives *Abstraction and Empathy* its ‘noticeable quality of intellectual excitement and discovery’, according to Frank,<sup>42</sup> who favours Worringer’s view that the history of art should not account for artistic skill only. He notes:

After Worringer, it was no longer possible to look on the development of Western art since the Renaissance as the slow attainment of perfection and to regard any infraction of its canons either as sensationalism or incompetence. It was necessary to recognize that non-organic styles, tending toward abstraction, might have their own validity and their own *raison-d’être*.<sup>43</sup>

Although Frank – unlike Lukács before him – does not take a critical approach to Worringer’s writings, he offers a specific orientation to his reading of Worringer. Frank focuses on the temporal aspects of the abstract-representational relationship as described by Worringer. Examining Worringer’s thoughts on the passage of time, Frank notes that, in *Abstraction and Empathy*,<sup>44</sup> organic (naturalistic) and hieratic (non-naturalistic) styles succeed each other throughout history.<sup>45</sup> This approach to the passage of time is indeed visible in the final chapter of *Abstraction and Empathy*, where Worringer mourns the decline

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 182.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 54.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 171.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 53-55.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 171. Frank exemplifies by citing Worringer’s contrast between Greek and Renaissance art on the one hand, and Egyptian and Byzantine art-making on the other hand.

of Gothic and the beginnings of Renaissance;<sup>46</sup> however, in *Form in Gothic*, Worringer finds traces of Gothic in the art of Northern and Central Europe throughout history.<sup>47</sup> Worringer's writings offer to Frank the starting point for discussing literature, which Frank regards as an art of time, in contrast with abstraction, a creative approach eluding time's passage.<sup>48</sup>

### **William Spanos: empathy, abstraction, and the urge to engagement**

In 'Modern Literary Criticism and the Spatialization of Time: An Existential Critique' (1970), William V. Spanos points to the aspects he considers as downfalls in the writings of Frank and Worringer. Spanos underscores Worringer's debt to Lipps, also addressing the articulation of abstract-representational antithesis in Worringer's writings, and Worringer's exemplification of this antithesis in art-making. Spanos disapproves of the extensive reliance of British modernism (more specifically, of Vorticism) on Worringer's thought. In the inquiries of Worringer, Spanos finds room for alternative framings of the abstract-representational opposition.

Unlike Lukács, Spanos regards *Abstraction and Empathy* as Worringer's critique of Lipps' aesthetics rather than as a defence of early twentieth-century art-making.<sup>49</sup> Spanos considers that T. E. Hulme, Wyndham Lewis (1882-1957) and Ezra Pound (1885-1972) appropriated Worringer's angle on aesthetics and art historical periodization.<sup>50</sup> Referring to Frank's perspective, Spanos finds it uncritical, and maintains that Frank does not question

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<sup>46</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 120-121.

<sup>47</sup> Worringer and Read, *Form in Gothic*, 37-38.

<sup>48</sup> Frank, *The Idea of Spatial Form*, 60. Frank is interested in Worringer's treatment of the disappearance of depth. Depth and time are connected, Frank argues – and time gives rise to imbalance and troubling change, according to Worringer.

<sup>49</sup> Spanos, 'Modern Literary Criticism and the Spatialization of Time: An Existential Critique', 92-93. Spanos' point of view is correct up to a certain point, since Worringer departs from Lipps' aesthetics after having addressed its crucial impact on his own writings. (Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 4-7.) For Worringer's indebtedness to Lipps' aesthetics, more specifically with regard to Lipps' account of empathy as presented by Worringer, see Morgan, 'The Enchantment of Art: Abstraction and Empathy from German Romanticism to Expressionism', 321-322. (———, 'The Idea of Abstraction in German Theories of the Ornament from Kant to Kandinsky', 234-235, 238.)

<sup>50</sup> Spanos, 'Modern Literary Criticism and the Spatialization of Time: An Existential Critique', 92.

Worringer's distinction between Western humanism and the traditions of other religious cultures with regard to art-making.<sup>51</sup>

Worringer's contrast between naturalistic, vital art and geometric, dehumanized art interests Spanos. Discussing the psychological dimension of human response to environment as described by Worringer, Spanos differentiates between art that issues from harmony with the world, and art that stems from the fear of space, change, and instability.<sup>52</sup> Spanos pays attention to Worringer's angle on geometric art (which Worringer regards as a search for transcendence) and notes that Worringer's interpretation provided Hulme a starting point for his critique of Victorian positivism and Romanticism, as well as Western sentimentality.<sup>53</sup>

Addressing the psychological aspects of Worringer's approach to art, Spanos underscores the existence of a third urge that remains unrecognized in *Abstraction and Empathy*.<sup>54</sup> He criticises the arbitrariness of Worringer's associating, on the one hand, empathy with faith in humanism and an interest in material forms, and, on the other hand, abstraction with highest religious preoccupations and a disinterest in materiality.<sup>55</sup> Like Gombrich, Spanos finds Worringer's exemplifications of empathy-reliant and abstraction-oriented art to be imperfect.<sup>56</sup> For Spanos, a third psychological urge exists: the urge to engagement, or dialogic encounter with the world of flux.<sup>57</sup> The urge to engagement destabilizes the opposition between empathy and abstraction, Spanos argues. According to him, this urge is still naturalistic, yet communicates the disturbing impact of the world on artists, and reveals less explored depths of existence.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Spanos emphasizes the religious basis of Worringer's distinctions; he could have also addressed the geographical distance implicit in Worringer's oppositions – yet another modality employed by Worringer to reinforce differentiation. See, for instance, Worringer's placing alongside Greek and Oriental art, in Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 45-46. To assert differentiation even further, Worringer also discusses age groups and race groups in his book. See ———, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 54-55.

<sup>52</sup> Spanos, 'Modern Literary Criticism and the Spatialization of Time: An Existential Critique', 92.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 94-95.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.

<sup>56</sup> Gombrich, ' "They Were All Human Beings: So Much Is Plain": Reflections on Cultural Relativism in the Humanities', 692.

<sup>57</sup> Spanos, 'Modern Literary Criticism and the Spatialization of Time: An Existential Critique', 94-95.

<sup>58</sup> Spanos's account of this third psychological urge that reveals the dark side of naturalism brings to mind Expressionist practices as described by Guenther. See Peter W. Guenther, 'An Introduction to the Expressionist Movement' in *German Expressionist Prints and Drawings: The Robert Gore Rifkind Center for German*

Four years after Spanos, Perkins recognizes the urge to engagement in Worringer's approach to Gothic art.<sup>59</sup> Spanos, on the other hand, finds the manifestation of the third urge in the Laocoon group, as well as in Alberto Giacometti's *Head of a Man on a Rod*, and comments: 'This naturalism [...] does not, as Worringer's abstractionism does, reject or subdue the temporal, the existential world of nature. Indeed, the distortion is the distortion of impact: the projection of the natural movement of anguish or dread in an authentic encounter.'<sup>60</sup> For Spanos, naturalism can operate in such a way as to reflect emotion, communicate experience, and accept distortions in form, without severing its links to the world. In such an approach to representation, the abstraction-oriented transformation or elision of details, as well as the contribution of artistic media to articulating art remain invisible to Spanos.<sup>61</sup>

Spanos finds Worringer's approach to abstraction justified with reference to the plastic arts, which have a static quality.<sup>62</sup> However, he criticizes both Frank and Worringer for equating abstraction only with immobility and transcendence, and for discovering the optimistic acceptance of the world only in naturalism (or representation). The negative empathy Worringer had connected to abstraction is visible to Spanos within the field of naturalism as well; about the art that arises in response to the urge to engagement, Spanos remarks: 'It is a "naturalism" that derives no "delight" or "pleasure" in the reproduction of natural life. Yet it is faithful for all that to the image of man in his encounter with the alien temporal universe.'<sup>63</sup> He sees this naturalism of honest encounter manifest in Dürer's *Knight, Death and the Devil*, Van Gogh's *Potato Eaters*, or Giacometti's late bronzes.<sup>64</sup> Like Lukács, Spanos disagrees with Worringer's apparently non-negotiable equivalences; however, he ignores Worringer's approach to modes of art-making where the meeting ground of antithetical urges stands out.<sup>65</sup>

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*Expressionist Studies*, eds. Stephanie Barron and Bruce Davis (Los Angeles, California; Munich, Federal Republic of Germany; New York, New York: Los Angeles County Museum of Art and Prestel 1989), 35.

<sup>59</sup> Perkins, *Contemporary Theory of Expressionism*, 53-54.

<sup>60</sup> Spanos, 'Modern Literary Criticism and the Spatialization of Time: An Existential Critique', 95.

<sup>61</sup> After Spanos, Gilles Deleuze addresses the relationship between representation, abstraction and the Figure in Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, x-xv.

<sup>62</sup> Spanos, 'Modern Literary Criticism and the Spatialization of Time: An Existential Critique', 95.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Worringer's approach to Gothic art is addressed, in the current thesis, in 'Interplay in the Gothic art of Northern Europe: memory, assimilation, interpolation', and 'Interplay: a dual, hybrid state in Gothic art'.

## Ulrich Weisstein: Worringer, Expressionism, and abstract-representational middle grounds

In 'German Literary Expressionism: An Anatomy' (1981), Ulrich Weisstein regards the writings of Worringer and the growth of the Expressionist movement as implicitly connected.<sup>66</sup> For Weisstein, differentiating between Gothic art as presented by Worringer and early twentieth-century Expressionism seems superfluous. Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy* is an 'immensely influential' book for Weisstein; nevertheless, he does not agree with Worringer's perspective on the alternation of naturalistic and non-naturalistic modes of art-making.<sup>67</sup> According to Weisstein, Worringer's views on the historical succession of Classical (or realistic), and non-Classical (or non-realistic) styles has only historical interest. Weisstein also disagrees with Worringer's thoughts regarding trans-historical approaches to art as delineated in *Form in Gothic*;<sup>68</sup> for him, it is preferable to discuss Expressionism within the boundaries of the twentieth century.

Weisstein, like Lukács, considers that Worringer actually addresses early twentieth-century art-making in his books. *Abstraction and Empathy* propagates Expressionism, according to Weisstein, although the term 'Expressionism' does not feature in Worringer's text. Summarizing the Expressionist process of form-creation, Weisstein comments that Franz Marc's depiction of animals, and the paintings of the Eiffel Tower by Robert Delaunay (1885-1941) bring to light the dynamism of Expressionism.<sup>69</sup> In order to attain essence, Weisstein explains, Expressionists pierce the outer shell of appearances, reach the core (or the essence) of their subjects, and express with intensity the form of these subjects. Intensity causes distortion; according to Weisstein, the attention to inner necessity replaces the demand for beauty in Expressionist art.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Donahue criticizes Weisstein's approach to the writings of Worringer, especially with regard to Weisstein's discussion of Expressionism as a timeless, or perennial, approach to art-making. See Neil H. Donahue, *Forms of Disruption: Abstraction in Modern German Prose* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993), 30-31.

<sup>67</sup> Weisstein, 'German Literary Expressionism: An Anatomy', 265-266.

<sup>68</sup> Worringer and Read, *Form in Gothic*, 37.

<sup>69</sup> Weisstein, 'German Literary Expressionism: An Anatomy', 281.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 271.

Among Expressionist dichotomies, Weisstein mentions the relationship between representational (concrete) and non-representational (abstract) aspects in literature and art. Expressionism offers a middle ground between matter and idea, Weisstein argues. He explains that Expressionism is neither anti-mimetic nor fully abstract. In his words: 'Inevitably – or so it seems – the Expressionist work of art is suspended between two poles, the realistic and the idealistic. Thus while, on the one hand, it is rabidly anti-mimetic, on the other it shies away from pure abstraction. Depending on the talent or inclination of the individual writer, painter, composer, etc., it moves in one or the other direction, neither succumbing to the extremes nor reconciling the opposites.'<sup>71</sup> Weisstein thus emphasizes the capacity of Expressionism to articulate a dynamic balance between extremes in art-making. Worringer also pointed out that Gothic art does not cancel opposition, but incorporates it, maintaining the counterplay and interplay of representational and abstract aspects.<sup>72</sup> Like Worringer, Weisstein sees abstract-representational interplay as an aspect of opposition.<sup>73</sup>

### **Neil Donahue: 'world feeling' and the history of ideas in *Abstraction and Empathy***

Unlike Weisstein, Neil Donahue finds that *Abstraction and Empathy* holds more than historical interest for twenty-first century writers. He underscores the impact of Worringer's book on his contemporaries, as well as the capacity of the general (therefore comprehensive) terminology Worringer employs to bring together different strands of scholarship.<sup>74</sup> Worringer's approach is specific to early twentieth-century inquiries into the history of ideas, Donahue points out; such an approach has its benefits (for instance, inclusiveness) and limitations (for instance, the lack of attention to particular artists and works of art), Donahue explains.

Regarding Worringer's views on art, Donahue notes that Worringer draws attention to psychological grounds of art-making,<sup>75</sup> and to the limitations of the early twentieth-century

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 272.

<sup>72</sup> Worringer and Read, *Form in Gothic*, 63.

<sup>73</sup> Weisstein, 'German Literary Expressionism: An Anatomy', 271.

<sup>74</sup> Donahue, *Forms of Disruption: Abstraction in Modern German Prose*, 2.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 15-16.

aesthetics of empathy.<sup>76</sup> Worringer, Donahue explains, prefers the term ‘world feeling’ [*Weltgefühl*] to ‘rational worldview’ [*Weltanschauung*]:<sup>77</sup> empathy, emotion and instinct stand in the limelight of Worringer’s investigation.<sup>78</sup> According to Donahue, Worringer brings ‘primitive’ art to the attention of his own contemporaries by connecting it to abstraction,<sup>79</sup> and articulates an aesthetic for abstract art. Donahue writes:

We might in fact note yet further that Worringer’s thesis on primitive and modern abstraction, despite its limitations as anthropology, provided a unified aesthetics for abstract, or nonnaturalistic art, when no other existed; and by associating primitive art with the modern condition and to developments in modern art, Worringer’s book, in its enormous popularity, certainly awakened an interest in “primitive” art that led to further research.<sup>80</sup>

Worringer, according to Donahue, creates a theoretical platform for approaching abstraction as a mode of art-making in pre-historical as well as modern times. The urge to abstraction Worringer addresses is thus based, Donahue points out, on a shared will to art-making. Donahue lucidly summarizes Worringer’s views on abstraction:

Abstract art is elemental; abstraction reduces art to its fundamental elements of geometric construction. Instead of organic development, abstract art aggregates according to self-legitimizing principles of necessary addition and combination. Therefore, abstract art is accumulative and inorganic, life negating and non-mimetic in favour of the permanence of pure form... The “object” of art is the immediate presentation of forms, not the mediated re-presentation of the recognizable natural world. The forms of abstract art are connected by proximity and juxtaposition, that is, by their very appearance of disconnectedness, their shared evasion of natural mimesis, their logic of apparent disorder.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 22-26.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 22.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 28.

Like Perkins, Donahue regards the relationship between early twentieth-century art and literature on the one hand, and Expressionist theory on the other hand, as questionable.<sup>82</sup> Donahue points critically to the association of Worringer with the history of the Expressionist movement in contemporary scholarship.<sup>83</sup> The criticism Lukács directs towards Worringer's writings is insightfully approached by Donahue as Lukács's attempt to distance his own work from the influence of Worringer.<sup>84</sup> Unlike Spanos, Donahue mentions Frank's 'detailed summary and fair evaluation' of *Abstraction and Empathy*,<sup>85</sup> as well as Frank's extended application of Worringer's findings to the field of twentieth-century literary writing. Memorably framed in *Forms of Disruption*, the portrait of Worringer is, when addressed by Donahue, theoretically nuanced, historically relevant, and justly presented with regard to its limitations and successes.

To summarize, this section brings together a number of critical texts on Worringer's writings where Worringer, his thoughts and his connections to Expressionism are discussed. Lukács, for instance, finds that Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy* makes a key contribution to Expressionism, yet reveals the very reasons that caused the decline of the movement. Sheppard shows that Lukács had studied himself with Simmel, had been in contact with Worringer in the early years of the twentieth century, and had actually drawn inspiration from Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy*. Frank praises Worringer for his memorable writing, for his interest in non-Western aesthetics, for his tracing a connection between art-making and its epoch, as well as for addressing emotions reflective of negative responses to the world. According to Frank, Worringer's approach constitutes a significant point of reference in the writing of art history. Spanos casts a critical glance on Frank's reading of Worringer, which, according to Spanos, does not question Worringer's approach enough; Spanos also points to the undesirable strictness of Worringer's approach to opposition. Associating

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 13. Donahue criticizes Weisstein's perspective on Worringer's writings. On the other hand, Donahue mentions Adolf Klarmann's sympathetic reading of Worringer, and Klarmann's emphasis on empathy, subjectivity and intuition in the texts of Worringer. See ———, *Forms of Disruption: Abstraction in Modern German Prose*, 31.

<sup>84</sup> Donahue also points out that Mary Gluck (1985) notes the connections between Lukács and Worringer in her book, *Georg Lukács and His Generation, 1900-1918* (1985). Donahue, *Forms of Disruption: Abstraction in Modern German Prose*, 30. Sheppard (1995) looks further into Worringer's influence on Lukács, as the discussion above has highlighted.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 13-17.

Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy* with Expressionism, Weisstein disagrees with Worringer's discussion of Expressionism as a timeless approach to art-making. He signals the inherent oppositions in Expressionism, much like Worringer had noted the counterplay and interplay characteristic of Gothic art. Finally, Donahue writes in favour of Worringer, drawing attention to the limitations as well as to the advantages of Worringer's approach. For Donahue, Worringer paid much needed attention to 'primitive' art and abstraction at the beginning of the twentieth century.

## **Worringer and Expressionism: late twentieth-century perspectives**

As we have seen, twentieth-century writers have readdressed critically the connections between Worringer's writings and his epoch, especially with regard to Expressionism. Various aspects of the association of Worringer with the Expressionist movement have been explored in the second half of the twentieth century; contemporary researchers have asserted the commonalities between the writings of Worringer and artistic Expressionism, yet have also questioned the extent of Worringer's interest in the work of Expressionist artists.

For instance, Charles E. Haxthausen points to Worringer's direct assertion of a link between Gothic and Expressionist art in an article from 1925 entitled 'The Late Gothic and Expressionist System of Form' ['Spätgotisches und expressionistisches Formsyst $\ddot{u}$ m'] (*Wallraf-Richartz Almanac* [*Wallraf-Richartz Jahrbuch*]). Worringer's inquiring into Expressionist art-making in 1925, and his connecting Expressionism to Gothic art, may appear as a drastic change of perspective after Worringer's critique of artistic Expressionism in 1920-21. Nevertheless, Worringer did signal his intention of provoking debate and examining opposite viewpoints on given topics in both *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic*. His renewed attention to Expressionist art highlights the pervasiveness of the oppositional pattern in his approach to the writing of art theory and history. Yet, for Haxthausen, it is the limitations of Worringer's approach that stand out in 'The Late Gothic and Expressionist System of Form'. Haxthausen comments that the same characteristics of inquiry having generated dissatisfaction in *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic* inform Worringer's later discourse on Expressionism.

Discussing Worringer's essays in 'Modern Art After "The End of Expressionism": Worringer in the 1920s' (c. 1995), Haxthausen underscores that Worringer presents Expressionism as a systematic approach to art-making.<sup>1</sup> In *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic*, Worringer focused on addressing his topics from art historical and theoretical perspectives, including only a small number of references to the art of his time. He did not assert the existence of an Expressionist movement in his books, and did not relate Gothic directly to Expressionism in 1908 and 1910.

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<sup>1</sup> Haxthausen, 'Modern Art After "The End of Expressionism": Worringer in the 1920s', 125.

Worringer, according to Haxthausen, argues in 'The Late Gothic and Expressionist System of Form' that German artists import formal systems and subsequently stylise them strictly.<sup>2</sup> Yet, where Worringer underscores the systematic quality of Expressionism, Haxthausen notes that many of Worringer's contemporaries write about the diversity of the movement instead.<sup>3</sup> Adolf Behne (1885-1948), Haxthausen points out, regards Expressionism as a composite movement; Wilhelm Hausenstein (1882-1957) sees no common ground between the works of painters as diverse as Kandinsky and Rousseau, while Paul Westheim (1886-1963) applauds the individuality of the Expressionists and the resultant stylistic variety of the movement.<sup>4</sup> Worringer's approach to Expressionism, Haxthausen remarks, provides no supporting evidence in favour of its argument; it suffers from a lack of reference to specific artists and artworks. Worringer had assumed a position of similar generality in *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic*, where he had given priority to articulating and defending his interpretation of art, and had analysed stylistic trends throughout history. Haxthausen finds that the tendency towards generic arguments still characterizes Worringer's writings between 1911 and 1925.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, as Haxthausen makes visible, Worringer's writings assert their connections with artistic Expressionism after Worringer had completed *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic*.

According to Michael Jennings, Worringer provides a number of landmarks for the writing of a history of Expressionism,<sup>6</sup> such as an emphasis on emotion and inner experience, restlessness and fear of space.<sup>7</sup> Yet, in 'Against Expressionism: Materialism and Social Theory in Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy*' (c. 1995), Jennings finds that Worringer's inquiry cannot be regarded as strictly reflective of Expressionism (an approach to art-making Worringer would have had but little time to follow, since *Die Brücke* was only founded in 1905). In the words of Jennings: '... [T]he equation *Worringer equals Expressionism* rests on

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 125-126.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 126.

<sup>5</sup> Haxthausen, 'Modern Art After "The End of Expressionism": Worringer in the 1920s', 127.

<sup>6</sup> For the purposes of this section, Expressionism is regarded as emphasizing experimental, anti-naturalistic, anti-materialist, anti-industrialist, authority-questioning aspects in art-making. Rose-Carol Washton Long points to the complex, multilayered implications of a movement often associated with opposite characteristics such as nationalism and internationalism, utopianism and commercialism, inner aspects of art-making and public art practices. See Long, Barron, and Rigby, *German Expressionism: Documents from the End of the Wilhelmine Empire to the Rise of National Socialism*, xix-xxiv.

<sup>7</sup> Jennings, 'Against Expressionism: Materialism and Social Theory in Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy*', 88-89.

an assumption in the Worringer literature, now explicit, now implicit, that Worringer's major work represents a parallel exploitation of the same problems faced by the Expressionists, that it is Expressionism's cognate in the theory of art history.' <sup>8</sup> The commonalities Jennings notices between early twentieth-century Expressionist explorations and Worringer's direction of research suggest that Worringer was interested in the art of his time; however, such commonalities do not confirm a bond that, in fact, remains unacknowledged in *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic*.

Writers addressing Expressionism tend to highlight the influence of Worringer's thought at the beginning of the twentieth century, as well as key characteristics of his texts that resonate with Expressionist ideas and techniques. For instance, in *Expressionism: A Generation in Revolt* (1963), Bernard Myers draws attention to the connections between Worringer and Expressionism. Myers regards Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy* as a significant book for Expressionist artists; he underscores the role of subjectivity and intuition (two factors also valued by Expressionists) in Worringer's text.<sup>9</sup> *Abstraction and Empathy*, according to Myers, created an ideological basis for Expressionism; as Myers shows, Worringer employed the term 'Expressionist' in his much referenced article for *Der Sturm* [*The Storm*,] 'The Historical Development of Modern Art' (1911).<sup>10</sup>

For Frank Whitford in *Expressionism* (1970), Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic* signal a shift in aesthetic focus at the beginning of the twentieth century. Worringer, Whitford notes, defended the aesthetic value of art that did not follow Classical principles.<sup>11</sup> The temperament of artists and their inner responses to the world become apparent in Gothic art, according to Worringer as paraphrased by Whitford.<sup>12</sup> Underscoring the connections between personal experiences of the world and specific modes of art-making in *Form in Gothic*, Whitford mentions that Worringer considers Gothic art to be a specifically German phenomenon.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 88.

<sup>9</sup> Bernard S. Myers, *Expressionism: A Generation in Revolt* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1963), 12.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 40. Also see Long, Barron, and Rigby, *German Expressionism: Documents from the End of the Wilhelmine Empire to the Rise of National Socialism*, 9.

<sup>11</sup> Frank Whitford, *Expressionism* (London, New York: Hamlyn, 1970), 30.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>13</sup> Gordon also emphasizes the national aspects of Worringer's approach to Gothic. See Gordon, *Expressionism: Art and Idea*, 176.

Worringer pays special attention to the tendency towards abstraction in *Abstraction and Empathy*, as Paul Vogt remarks in *Expressionism: German Painting, 1905-1920* (1980). Vogt finds that Worringer asserts the independence of art from nature: art, according to Worringer, does not need to rely on its connections with the world.<sup>14</sup> Referring to Worringer's 1920 speech for the Munich Goethe Society, Vogt notes that the crisis of artistic Expressionism was visible for Worringer in the second decade of the twentieth century.<sup>15</sup>

Horst Uhr, highlighting one of the key arguments of Worringer's early writings, observes that Worringer's *Form in Gothic* articulated a contrast between Classical and Gothic art.<sup>16</sup> In *Masterpieces of German Expressionism at the Detroit Institute of Arts* (1982), Uhr explains that Expressionist artists such as Emil Nolde, Ernst Barlach, Max Beckmann (1884-1950), Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, Max Pechstein and Christian Rohlf were motivated in their choice of religious subjects by their dissatisfaction with their context before, during and after the First World War. The Expressionists' response to the world was, according to Uhr, inspired by Worringer's inquiry into the conditions that led to the emergence of Gothic art.<sup>17</sup>

Discussing the political response German Expressionism attracted from the National Socialist Party in the 1930s, Uhr mentions the repression of Expressionism orchestrated by means of exhibitions organized by the Nazis in 1933 – *Government Art from 1918 to 1933* (Karlsruhe), *Cultural Bolshevism* (Mannheim), and *Art in the Service of Demoralization* (Stuttgart) – and 1937 – *Degenerate "Art"* (Munich).<sup>18</sup> However, Uhr (in agreement with Worringer's 1921 opinion regarding the decline of Expressionism) also notes: 'Ironically, German Expressionism in its most authentic form was already a thing of the past when it was ruthlessly suppressed by the National Socialists.'<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Vogt, *Expressionism: German Painting, 1905-1920*, 24.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>16</sup> Uhr, *Masterpieces of German Expressionism at the Detroit Institute of Arts*, 23-24.

<sup>17</sup> ———, *Masterpieces of German Expressionism at the Detroit Institute of Arts*, 23-24.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 26-27. With regard to the *Degenerate 'Art'* exhibition from 1937, Christian Weikop examines the strong supportive response of British intellectuals for modern German art. Weikop shows that Lady Norton, Herbert Read, Irmgard Burchart, Herbert Einstein and Roland Penrose organized an exhibition entitled *Twentieth-Century German Art* at the New Burlington Art Galleries (London); the profits derived from this show were to be directed towards artists seeking refuge from National Socialist persecution. Read was an admirer of Worringer, whom Read had met after 1922, as Weikop explains. (Weikop, *New Perspectives on Brücke Expressionism: Bridging History*, 251-264.)

<sup>19</sup> Uhr, *Masterpieces of German Expressionism at the Detroit Institute of Arts*, 25.

For James P. Bednarz in 'The Dual Vision of Paul Klee's Symbolic Language' (1983), German Expressionism relied on two key texts: Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy*, and Wassily Kandinsky's *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*.<sup>20</sup> The connections between Worringer's writings and Expressionism are also recognized by Stephen E. Bronner and D. Emily Hicks in 'Expressionist Painting and the Aesthetic Dimension' (1983). With regard to the aesthetic approach to painting as practiced in Expressionism, Bronner and Hicks point to Worringer's observations on the interaction between abstraction and empathy; they engage with a less highlighted strand of Worringer's inquiry (namely, the coexistence of abstract and representational aspects of art-making) and maintain that the distortion brought along by non-representational work requires empathic participation.<sup>21</sup>

Like Uhr, Donald E. Gordon underscores the relevance of Worringer's *Form in Gothic* for early twentieth-century German cultural contexts. Gordon also signals the spiritual preoccupations prevalent in the early years of the twentieth century.<sup>22</sup> In *Expressionism: Art and Idea* (1987), Gordon suggests that Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy* could have contributed to the emphasis painters such as Erich Heckel (1883-1970) placed on geometric aspects of nature.<sup>23</sup> Discussing Expressionist approaches to form, Gordon notes that eclecticism characterizes Expressionism;<sup>24</sup> he mentions Worringer's defence of French-German artistic exchanges, and cites from Worringer's article, 'The Historical Development of Modern Art'.<sup>25</sup> With regard to the Expressionist tendency of referring to other modes of art-making, Gordon agrees with Worringer's point of view from 'The Historical Development of Modern Art'.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> James P. Bednarz, 'The Dual Vision of Paul Klee's Symbolic Language' in *Passion and Rebellion: The Expressionist Heritage*, eds. Stephen Eric Bronner and Douglas Kellner (South Hadley, Massachusetts: J. F. Bergin, 1983), 280-281.

<sup>21</sup> Stephen Eric Bronner and D. Emily Hicks, 'Expressionist Painting and the Aesthetic Dimension' in *Passion and Rebellion: The Expressionist Heritage*, eds. Stephen Eric Bronner and Douglas Kellner (South Hadley, Massachusetts: J. F. Bergin, 1983), 243.

<sup>22</sup> Gordon, *Expressionism: Art and Idea*, 49.

<sup>23</sup> Gordon illustrates his point by drawing attention to Erich Heckel's work, *Glassy Day* (1913), as well as to the works of artists and architects like Lyonel Feininger (mentioned for his paintings that reminded of Cubism), Bruno Taut (the architect of the Glass Pavilion at the Werkbund Exhibition, Cologne, 1914), or Paul Scheerbart (for his 1914 *Glass Architecture*, a book dedicated to Taut). *Ibid.*, 50-53.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

<sup>25</sup> Worringer's 'The Historical Development of Modern Art' is discussed in 'The Historical Development of Modern Art (1911): Worringer's early response to Expressionism'.

<sup>26</sup> Gordon, *Expressionism: Art and Idea*, 70.

Gordon, like Worringer before him, points to the tendency of German Expressionist artists to seek pre-defined formal solutions. He writes: 'The Expressionist used existing forms rather than inventing new ones. He proceeded not by imitation of a source but by a transformation of it, in other words by a *reactive* process of *simultaneous* acceptance and partial modification or rejection.'<sup>27</sup> For Gordon, German Expressionism relied on the creative transformation of influences: he recognizes this process at work in the paintings of Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Oskar Kokoschka (1886-1980), Max Beckmann, and Lyonel Feininger (1871-1956). Worringer had signalled the tendency of contemporary German artists to respond to current or historical artworks; according to Gordon, Worringer '... actually elevated stylistic dependency to a central position in German art history from Dürer to the Expressionists.'<sup>28</sup>

Associating the writings of Worringer with the anti-Classical, renewal-oriented direction of early twentieth-century German art, Gordon observes that Worringer inspired further art historical research, from Paul Fechter's *Expressionism* (1914) and Heinrich Wölfflin's *Principles of Art History* (1915) to Karl Scheffler *The Gothic Spirit* (1917) and Eckart von Sydow's *German Expressionist Culture and Painting* (1920).<sup>29</sup>

Gordon emphasizes the distinctions drawn by Worringer, in *Form in Gothic*, between the sensuousness of Classical art and the spirituality of Gothic art,<sup>30</sup> he notes Worringer's views on Gothic as a specifically Northern artistic phenomenon.<sup>31</sup> In Gordon's account, German Expressionism cultivates art values he sees as particularly German, but also international connections with early twentieth-century French art-making, at least until the beginning of the First World War.<sup>32</sup> Where Worringer engaged with the various aspects of Gothic art, Gordon brings to light the multiple facets of Expressionism.

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 176-178.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 176.

<sup>31</sup> Also see Worringer and Read, *Form in Gothic*, 180. In the words of Worringer: 'For the Germans, as we have seen, are the *conditio sine qua non* of Gothic. They introduce among self-confident peoples that germ of sensuous uncertainty and spiritual distractedness from which the transcendental pathos of Gothic then surges so irrepressibly upwards.'

<sup>32</sup> Gordon, *Expressionism: Art and Idea*, 106.

In 'The Revival of Printmaking in Germany' (1989), Ida Katherine Rigby posits that Worringer's research inspired early twentieth-century German artists.<sup>33</sup> Rigby notes that Worringer's writings, including *Form in Gothic*, supported a growing interest in German printmaking after 1910. However, she also mentions Worringer's critical views regarding Expressionism, as formulated in his Munich lecture from 1920.<sup>34</sup>

Like Rigby, Rose-Carol Washton Long points to Worringer's initial support of Expressionism in 1911, and then to Worringer's 1920 dismissive comments regarding the movement.<sup>35</sup> In 'Scholarship: Past, Present and Future Directions' (1989), Long emphasizes the key qualities Worringer had attributed to Expressionism as well as to primitive art: purity, simplicity, mysticism.<sup>36</sup> Expressionism was seen as allied with Communism by conservatives such as Paul Schultze-Naumburg (1869-1949), and by the National Socialists, Long mentions. On the other hand, she also notes that a left-wing writer such as Alfred Kurella (1895-1975) considered Expressionism to have led to the acceptance of Fascism.<sup>37</sup> Long underscores the significance of Worringer's approach to Gothic art and to the metaphysical preoccupations of Northern artists; she also notes the interest of Expressionist artists in Gothic.<sup>38</sup>

Peter Guenther regards Worringer as a key theorist of Expressionism in 'An Introduction to the Expressionist Movement' (1989).<sup>39</sup> For Guenther, Expressionism is an art movement specific to Germany and its early twentieth-century historical context. The features that characterise German Expressionism could have developed only within Germany, Guenther argues. In his words:

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<sup>33</sup> Ida Katherine Rigby, 'The Revival of Printmaking in Germany' in *German Expressionist Prints and Drawings: The Robert Gore Rifkind Center for German Expressionist Studies*, eds. Stephanie Barron and Bruce Davis (Los Angeles, California; Munich, Federal Republic of Germany; New York, New York: Los Angeles County Museum of Art and Prestel 1989), 56, 58, 60.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 58-60.

<sup>35</sup> Rose-Carol Washton Long, 'Scholarship: Past, Present and Future Directions' in *German Expressionist Prints and Drawings: The Robert Gore Rifkind Center for German Expressionist Studies*, eds. Stephanie Barron and Bruce Davis (Los Angeles, California; Munich, Federal Republic of Germany; New York, New York: Los Angeles County Museum of Art and Prestel 1989), 185.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 185-186, 186-188.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 198.

<sup>39</sup> Peter W. Guenther, 'An Introduction to the Expressionist Movement' in *German Expressionist Prints and Drawings*, eds. Stephanie Barron and Bruce Davis (Los Angeles, California: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1989), 35.

The emotional intensity, the frequently too honest and depressing subject matter, the strong social undertones, the spiritual ties to a pantheistic world view, the inherent religious fervor, and the harsh condemnation of materialism were understandable only within the historical context of Germany. No other country experienced the violent generational conflict that Germany did; none so fervently embraced the belief that the arts could and should change man and society.<sup>40</sup>

Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy* drew attention to Northern European art-making, Norbert Lynton points out in 'Expressionism' (1994). For Lynton, a defining characteristic of Worringer's inquiry is the emphasis on the features of Northern art in contrast to the aesthetically dominant Southern art.<sup>41</sup> Lynton connects Worringer's explorations to the early twentieth-century work of Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944), and to Kandinsky's first abstractions.<sup>42</sup> According to Lynton, the common preoccupations of Worringer, Kandinsky and Franz Marc (1880-1916) are fostered by their shared environment, the city of Munich,<sup>43</sup> at point in time when Theodor Lipps, one of the authors most cited by Worringer in *Abstraction and Empathy*, was teaching at Munich University.<sup>44</sup>

The influence of Worringer's *Form in Gothic* on Paul Fechter's *Expressionism* (1914) is signalled by Shulamith Behr.<sup>45</sup> Worringer's book provided the foundations for connecting the key tendencies of German art-making to Gothic art, according to Behr in *Expressionism* (1999). Inspired by Worringer's association of Gothic and contemporary German art, Fechter connects Expressionism to a specifically German context, Behr observes.

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>41</sup> Lynton, 'Expressionism', 42.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> The connections between the art of Kandinsky, the writings of Worringer, and the city of Munich at the turn of the twentieth century need to make the topic of in-depth inquiry. Research could begin with Peg Weiss, *Kandinsky in Munich: The Formative Jugendstil Years* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979).

<sup>44</sup> Lynton, 'Expressionism', 42-43. Klaus Lankheit and Peter Vergo further bring to light the personal connections between Worringer, Marc and Kandinsky around the time of Worringer's publishing *Form in Gothic* (1912) with Reinhard Piper, and Kandinsky's issuing *On the Spiritual in Art* (1912) with the same printing house. See Wassily Kandinsky, Franz Marc, and Klaus Lankheit, eds., *The Blaue Reiter Almanac* (London: Tate, 2006), 17-18, 25-26, 30, 36. Also, Kandinsky, Lindsay, and Vergo, *Kandinsky. Complete Writings on Art*, 105, 117.

<sup>45</sup> Shulamith Behr, *Expressionism* (London: Tate Gallery, 1999), 8.

Like Behr, Shearer West highlights the contribution of Worringer to early twentieth-century artistic inquiries.<sup>46</sup> In *The Visual Arts in Germany, 1890-1937: Utopia and Despair* (2001) West draws attention to the historical aspects of Worringer's argument: Worringer, West notes, points out that early twentieth-century artistic tendencies were leading towards abstract practices, away from the empathic art of previous epochs. West is critical towards Worringer's approach views on aesthetic matters; nevertheless, he signals the connections between Worringer and the *Blaue Reiter* artists, showing that Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy* illuminated the relationship between inner experience and abstraction, and provided a ground for the appreciation of 'primitive' art.<sup>47</sup>

In contemporary writings on Expressionism such as the studies of Myers, Bednarz, Gordon and Guenther, Worringer thus emerges as a writer having provided theoretical grounds for the development of the movement. Uhr, Gordon, Guenther and Behr underscore the connection Worringer's writings enabled between early twentieth-century art-making and Gothic art. Worringer's support of the relationship between French and German artists is noted by Gordon and Long. The writings of Worringer inspired, or defended, artists associated with the Expressionist movement, as Whitford, Gordon, Long, Rigby and Lynton show; however, Vogt, Rigby and Long also draw attention to Worringer's 1920 growing disbelief in Expressionism.

Further complications in appraising the relationship between artistic Expressionism and Worringer's writings arise, as signalled by Haxthausen, with Worringer's 1925 approach to Expressionism as a systematic mode of art-making. We have seen that Worringer was critical towards artistic aspects of Expressionism in 1920-21. Yet, in 1925, Worringer showed his renewed interest in Expressionism, delineating a strong profile for the movement while many of his contemporaries, according to Haxthausen, highlighted the variety and composite quality of Expressionism in art.

In his turn, Michael Jennings observes that Worringer's writings contain landmarks for addressing Expressionism in art. Jennings nevertheless cautions against the tendency of

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<sup>46</sup> Shearer West, *The Visual Arts in Germany, 1890-1937: Utopia and Despair* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2001), 68.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*

researchers to regard Worringer's texts as direct reflections of the Expressionist movement. Indeed, Worringer does not address Expressionism in *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic*, and becomes critical of Expressionism in the second decade of the twentieth century. However, many contemporary writers continue to regard Worringer's texts as significantly connected to the Expressionist movement.

## Part 4: Redrawing antithesis

### Antithesis: Classical, modern and contemporary contexts

Aesthetic inquiries as practiced at the beginning of the twentieth century are bound to be incomplete, Worringer argues in the first pages of *Abstraction and Empathy*. Proposing to start his explorations by emphasizing the perspective of viewers – in other words, by accounting for human, emotional responses to art – Worringer notes that contemporary aesthetics should, and does not, address empathy alongside its opposite. The counter-pole of the urge to empathy is the urge to abstraction, Worringer explains; although he regards their relationship as antithetical, he perceives the opposition of empathy and abstraction as integral to aesthetic discourse. In his words: ‘It [i. e., modern aesthetics] will only assume the shape of a comprehensive aesthetic system when it has united with the lines that lead from the opposite pole.’<sup>1</sup>

Permeating Worringer’s opening argument, the vocabulary of opposition allows Worringer to contrast the urge to abstraction and the urge to empathy. Worringer thus establishes boundaries for his inquiry and at the same time defends the necessity of addressing the urge to abstraction. Empathy-reliant art and abstraction-oriented art, he writes, reflect two personal avenues of responding to the world. According to Worringer, both these avenues have their aesthetic significance, since they point to the changing perspectives of human beings on the contexts of their experience.

Worringer posits that the history of art presents the urge to empathy and the urge to abstraction in perpetual disputation, or debate.<sup>2</sup> For him, the tendencies towards abstraction and representation respectively do not manifest in isolation from each other, but are

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<sup>1</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 4. For the purposes of this thesis, a number of terms are employed to highlight Worringer’s approach to oppositional relationships and the processes that support their articulation. ‘Polarity,’ or ‘polar antithesis,’ or ‘polar opposition,’ signal the extreme contrast between juxtaposed terms. ‘Antithesis,’ or ‘opposition,’ are employed interchangeably to point to a situation of contrast – as in the case of the relationship between the urge to abstraction and the urge to empathy, or between abstraction and representation in art-making. ‘Distinction’ refers to a form of differentiation that could rely on opposition, but does not necessarily do so. ‘Separation’ is a process that leads to distinction, and that involves the eliciting of the specific features of contrasted terms.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 34, 35.

polemically interconnected. The interplay of psychological tendencies in art-making thus receives a negative, conflict-bent interpretation in *Abstraction and Empathy*.<sup>3</sup>

Although Worringer's remark re-establishes the opposition between abstraction and empathy, it nevertheless signals their fundamentally dialogic exchange. Opposition as employed by Worringer generates lifelikeness: empathy and abstraction feature as theoretical concepts but

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<sup>3</sup> Worringer's emphasis on antithesis as a method of inquiry relies on his readings of Schopenhauer. Another admirer of Schopenhauer's work is Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), whose resonance with the author of *The World as Will and Representation* was instantaneous. In the words of Nietzsche cited by Ritchie Robertson: 'I am among those readers of Schopenhauer who, after reading the first page, know for certain that they will read every page and attend to every word he ever uttered.' See Ritchie Robertson, 'German Literature and Thought from 1810 to 1890' in Helmut Walser Smith, *The Oxford Handbook of Modern German History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 265-266. Also, Shearer West, *The Visual Arts in Germany, 1890-1937: Utopia and Despair* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2001), 59-60. If, as Robertson points out, Schopenhauer was widely read during the late nineteenth century, Nietzsche is considered a key figure of modernism. See Stephen E. Dowden, Meike G. Werner, 'The Place of German Modernism' in Helmut Walser Smith, *The Oxford Handbook of Modern German History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 484. Also, Seth Taylor, *Left-Wing Nietzscheans: The Politics of German Expressionism, 1910-1920* (Berlin and New York: W. de Gruyter, 1990), 16-18. Worringer is likely to have been aware of Nietzsche's work, although he does not mention Nietzsche in *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic*. Nevertheless, Nietzsche's writings were widely known in Germany around the time of Worringer's researching for *Abstraction and Empathy*. Donald Gordon, for instance, explains that Nietzsche influenced *Die Brücke* Expressionists decisively; Nietzsche's texts inspired the naming of *Die Brücke*. Heckel even captured Nietzsche's likeness in a woodcut from 1905, Gordon notes. Gordon also addresses the impact of Nietzsche on Kandinsky and Marc, commenting that Nietzsche's influence was extensive, in Germany as well as France, around the turn of the twentieth century. See Gordon, *Expressionism: Art and Idea*, 11-18. Bronner and Kellner also note: 'Practically all expressionists followed Nietzsche in opposing the society of the "Bildungsphilister" ("complacent bourgeois") and, like Nietzsche, they perceived threats to individual subjectivity through new social forces and institutions. ... Almost all expressionist artists of the period absorbed Nietzschean ideas through osmosis, if not by direct study. Nietzsche's ideas were "in the air" and helped create the intellectual atmosphere in which Expressionism emerged.' See Stephen Eric Bronner, and Douglas Kellner, *Passion and Rebellion: The Expressionist Heritage* (South Hadley, Massachusetts: J. F. Bergin, 1983), 11. Nietzsche's books, Peter Russell explains, highlighted the gap between ideal and reality, and argued that the transvaluation of values (namely, the annihilation of the distinction between good and evil) was going to replace Christian ethic. See Peter Russell, *The Divided Mind: A Portrait of Modern German Culture* (Essen, Germany and Wellington, New Zealand: Verlag Die Blaue Eule and Victoria University Press, 1988), 78-82. However, in an early essay such as *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872), Nietzsche emphasises separation rather than bridging: he finds that the progress of the science of aesthetics relies on the acceptance of duality, which can take amiable forms, but is most often oppositional. In the words of Nietzsche: 'We will have achieved much for the scientific study of aesthetics when we come, not merely to a logical understanding, but also to the certain and immediate apprehension of the fact that the further development of art is bound up with the duality of the *Apollonian* [the domain of the visual arts and of the dream] and the *Dionysian* [the realm of non-visual arts and music], just as reproduction depends upon the duality of the sexes, their continuing strife and only periodically occurring reconciliation.' Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, Raymond Geuss, and Ronald Speirs, *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings*, Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy (Cambridge, U.K., and New York, U. S. A.: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 9-12. In the Dionysian, Nietzsche recognizes an abandonment of individuality that reminds him of experiences such as ecstasy and intoxication. From this point of view, Worringer could be said to highlight, in 'The Historical Development of Modern Art', how the Dionysian takes form in art: more precisely, how early twentieth-century artists articulate the experiencing of inner depth through immersing symbolic motifs within the core of artworks and allowing these 'hidden' motifs to vitalise form. Worringer may not mention the influence of Nietzsche on his own writings, but the texts of Worringer certainly resonate with Nietzsche's views on antithesis.

also as partners of discussion in *Abstraction and Empathy*. Worringer's approach to the polarity of empathy and abstraction allows for the personification and animated communication between opposites.

The debate between the urge to abstraction and the urge to empathy reflects, Worringer argued, the tension between human beings and the world. He writes: '... [A]ll artistic creation is nothing else than a continual registration of the great process of disputation, in which man and the outer world have been engaged, and will be engaged, from the dawn of creation till the end of time.'<sup>4</sup> Yet the historical process of disputation with the world is obliterated, Worringer notes, by an emphasis on aesthetic theories of imitation. While he regards tension as necessary in the development of art, Worringer disapproves of imitation. Previous sections have noted that Worringer considers imitation to be distinct from naturalism or representation;<sup>5</sup> for him, imitation cannot be considered to contribute to the development of art-making throughout the ages.<sup>6</sup> Yet, Worringer argues, imitation is highly regarded in contemporary aesthetics, a domain where the influence of Aristotle (384-22 B. C.), a key figure of Greek Classicism, is still felt.

### **Aristotle and antithesis**

In his *Poetics* (c. 335 B. C.), Aristotle examined the media, objects and modes of artistic imitation – in other words, its characteristics.<sup>7</sup> He pointed to the imitation and representation of human beings in action using colour and form,<sup>8</sup> and recommended that people be represented as better than in real life, worse than in real life, or simply as observed.<sup>9</sup> Imitation and representation were therefore distinct, sequential processes for Aristotle: while imitation referred to the psychological search for creating persuasive likenesses, representation (as an overall effect) connected to the mode of approaching a selected topic. As such, Aristotle

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 127.

<sup>5</sup> See 'Worringer's approach to the writing of art history and theory' from the current thesis.

<sup>6</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 28-32.

<sup>7</sup> Aristotle and S. H. Butcher, *The Poetics of Aristotle* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University, 2000 [c. 330 B. C.]), 4-6. The media of imitation were, for Aristotle, epic poetry, tragedy, comedy, dithyrambic verse, and music; he regarded drama and narrative as two modes of artistic imitation.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 5-6. The 'objects of imitation' are human beings, according to Aristotle.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 6.

accepted that representation could actually make visible different degrees of lifelikeness; he thus accounted for variations of personal expression in art-making. In his *Poetics*, Aristotle recognized the intrinsic diversity of representation as an artistic approach for which imitation provided the psychological ground.

Aristotle posited that human beings learned through imitation, and tended to imitate instinctively.<sup>10</sup> Imitation that informs representational art, Aristotle observed, provided the necessary amount of distance from painful situations. For instance, Aristotle noted that the opportunity to examine detailed renderings of disturbing motifs turned into an occasion of aesthetic enjoyment, especially for the general public.<sup>11</sup> Imitation and representation foster learning, according to Aristotle: ‘Thus the reason why men enjoy seeing a likeness is, that in contemplating it they find themselves learning or inferring, and saying perhaps, “Ah, that is he.” For if you happen not to have seen the original, the pleasure will be due not to the imitation as such, but to the execution, the colouring, or some such other cause.’<sup>12</sup>

Learning, deduction and recognition were, according to Aristotle, among the benefits of representation. Nevertheless, Aristotle also noted that the faithfulness of imitation did not provide the only reason for aesthetic pleasure. He signalled that specific qualities of rendering could also lead to enjoyment, even when comparison with the rendered motif is impossible. In Aristotle’s *Poetics*, imitation is a key process that leads to representation, but not the only quality of representation.

Worringer appreciative towards Aristotle and Greek Classicism in *Abstraction and Empathy*, yet underscores the excessive reliance of his contemporaries on Classicism. Explaining that Classical art makes visible a state of balance between human beings and the world,<sup>13</sup> Worringer nevertheless looks down upon the inspiration his own contemporaries derive, he claims, specifically from Aristotle’s theory of imitation.<sup>14</sup> Yet Worringer points out that scientific thinking and philosophy originated in Greek culture,<sup>15</sup> which became a point of reference for conceptual work during his time. Despite Worringer’s composite viewpoint

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 128.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 102, 127.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 102.

with regard to Classicism, *Abstraction and Empathy* finds inspiration in Classical rhetoric (the art of spoken and written persuasion), especially concerning the role of antithesis in the structuring of discourse. Powerfully drawn contrasts intensify Worringer's leading strands of thought throughout his book. Antithesis, hardly by coincidence, is singled out for its persuasive effect in Aristotle's *Rhetoric* (c. 350 B. C.).

Both persuasion and reasoning could be employed to explore opposite aspects of a topic, Aristotle explained in his text:<sup>16</sup> when placed in antithesis, facts gained clarity, and the arguments of opponents could be countered. Even when facts did not suit opposite viewpoints equally well, Aristotle remarked that rhetoric could articulate opposite conclusions and remain unbiased at the same time. In rhetoric as discussed by Aristotle, intellectual exercise mattered more than factual validity.

According to Aristotle, rhetorical success relied on prose that was either continuous (or free-running), or antithetical and condensed.<sup>17</sup> Aristotle regarded antithesis as both effective and enjoyable in rhetorical argument. He wrote: 'Such a form of speech is satisfying, because the significance of contrasted ideas is easily felt, especially when they are thus put side by side, and also because it has the effect of a logical argument; it is by putting two opposing conclusions side by side that you prove one of them false. Such, then, is the nature of antithesis.'<sup>18</sup> Simply organized and clearly stated, antithesis seems to rely on reason, Aristotle commented; however, he explained that antithesis actually appealed to feelings in its presentation of opposites. Simplicity and order appeared to serve logic in rhetorical discourse; yet Aristotle remarked that both these means of organization actually aimed to elicit emotional responses.

Aristotle's *Rhetoric* recommended the use of antithesis in sayings intended to be memorable and lively.<sup>19</sup> The decisiveness and alertness of discourse depended on antithesis, Aristotle remarked. At the beginning of the twentieth century, *Abstraction and Empathy* certainly reflects Aristotle's observations. Defining empathy and abstraction from an antithetic

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<sup>16</sup> Aristotle and W. Rhys Roberts, *Rhetoric* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University, 2010 [c. 350 B. C.]), 6.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 169.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 171.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 179-180.

perspective in the first pages of his text, Worringer establishes salient profiles for these psychological urges. His demonstration is engaging and memorable, even where art as made visible throughout its history may not support Worringer's argument.

### **Worringer's rhetoric: Neil Donahue, Geoffrey C. W. Waite, and Joshua Dittrich**

The rhetorical approach practiced by Worringer has been the topic of recent critical explorations. For instance, in *Invisible Cathedrals: The Expressionist Art History of Wilhelm Worringer* (1995), Neil Donahue remarks that the work of Worringer relies significantly on rhetoric.<sup>20</sup> In Donahue's words: 'He [i. e., Worringer] was never primarily a systematic, "scientific" scholar, but rather a rhetorician and cultural theorist of art and aesthetics. He wrote about general ideas in aesthetics in broadly historical terms, with a simple, powerful rhetoric that assured both an audience outside the academy and deep suspicion or even resentment within it.'<sup>21</sup>

Worringer's construction of discourse has, Donahue comments, an important ingredient to succeed in terms of persuasion: simplicity, which yields discursive power. The simplicity Donahue highlights is particularly visible in Worringer's antithetical framing of his argument. Pointing to the engagement of Worringer with the art of his time, Donahue mentions the speculative, engaged and creative aspects of Worringer's scholarly approach – in other words, the rhetorical element on which Worringer's writing relies.

In 'Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy*: Remarks on Its Reception and on the Rhetoric of Its Criticism' (1995 [1981]), Geoffrey C. W. Waite inquires into the rhetorical structure of Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy*.<sup>22</sup> He notices the discursive roles assumed by Worringer in his text; for instance, Waite observes that the history and psychology of style, the psychoanalysis of fear, the technique of the sacred, and cultural criticism, are all integral to Worringer's discourse from *Abstraction and Empathy*.<sup>23</sup> To articulate a personal direction

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<sup>20</sup> Donahue, 'Introduction: Art History or "Sublime Hysteria"?', 2.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Waite, 'Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy*: Remarks on Its Reception and on the Rhetoric of Its Criticism'.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 23.

of research, Worringer, according to Waite, establishes the defining traits of the urge to abstraction and reshapes reductively Lipps' interpretation of empathy. Worringer's approach to empathy silences the subtlety of Lipps' *Aesthetics*, Waite explains.<sup>24</sup> He remarks that *Abstraction and Empathy* includes value judgments supporting abstraction and irrationality rather than representation and reason –<sup>25</sup> judgments relying on rhetorical power rather than reflection in their defence of abstraction in art-making. For Waite, the articulation of Worringer's discourse in *Abstraction and Empathy* makes it difficult for this text to be considered a classic,<sup>26</sup> even in the context of modernity.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, as Waite points out, it is tenuous to associate Worringer's text with the idea of Classicism; yet, while Worringer himself stood against Classicism, he remains its student and employed its methods of organizing discourse.

A distinctive mechanism is at work in *Abstraction and Empathy* as read by Waite; this mechanism transforms Worringer's historical and philosophical signposts into rhetorical figures of reference. According to Waite, key characters of Worringer's text such as 'Theodor Lipps', 'the "pure" Greek', and 'Gothic style', become indicators of Worringer's intentions and wishes – in other words, they are load-bearing elements in Worringer's subjectivist argument rather than entities that assume self-standing historical, aesthetic, or artistic profiles.<sup>28</sup>

Signalling that Worringer does not separate between art-viewing and art-making in *Abstraction and Empathy*, Waite addresses the ambiguity of Worringer's antithesis between empathy (which is perception-based, according to him) and abstraction (which, Waite notes, rather refers to the activity of art-making).<sup>29</sup> Waite thus questions Worringer's key method of discourse, further arguing that Worringer writes empathically about abstraction, and

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 23-25.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>26</sup> Holdheim nevertheless opens his essay by pointing to the 'classic' status of *Abstraction and Empathy* in the second part of the twentieth century. Holdheim, 'Wilhelm Worringer and the Polarity of Understanding', 339.

<sup>27</sup> Waite, 'Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy*: Remarks on Its Reception and on the Rhetoric of Its Criticism', 16.

<sup>28</sup> 'Subjectivism' is the term Worringer employs to describe the aesthetic inquiries during modern times; he contrasts subjectivism with objectivism, and conducts a subjectivist inquiry in *Abstraction and Empathy*. (Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 4.) As previously defined for the purposes of this thesis, subjectivism refers to an emphasis on inner processes and responses to the world; objectivism, on the other hand, seeks to reflect the connections between the observing self and the outer world.

<sup>29</sup> Indeed, Worringer's antithesis is not polar because its terms are not direct opposites, as this thesis has shown.

approaches empathy in a distanced manner.<sup>30</sup> The memorability of Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy* relies on the persuasive power of the text; this power, Waite observes,<sup>31</sup> is often beyond Worringer's rational control.

The uncontrollable aspects of Worringer's discourse are also underscored by Joshua Dittrich, who analyses the rhetorical structure of Worringer's text, and Worringer's account of inorganic life, in 'A Life of Matter and Death: Inorganic Life in Worringer, Deleuze, and Guattari' (2011). Inorganic life is a key figure of thought in Worringer's work; according to Dittrich, the expressive heightening observed by Worringer in the Gothic line is also specific to Worringer's interpretation.<sup>32</sup> Dittrich recognizes the complexity and instability of Worringer's argument in *Abstraction and Empathy*,<sup>33</sup> analysing its conceptual oscillation between the urge to empathy and the urge to abstraction.<sup>34</sup>

*Abstraction and Empathy*, according to Dittrich, is a rhetorical performance,<sup>35</sup> where history itself becomes a figure of discourse.<sup>36</sup> However, Dittrich points out that rhetoric does not resolve the articulation of the relationship between the urge to empathy and the urge to abstraction. Thus Worringer's antithesis between urges remains undecided,<sup>37</sup> and the conceptual coexistence of urges in 'inorganic life' appears unstable, Dittrich argues.<sup>38</sup> While antithesis supports the rhetorical aspects of Worringer's argument, it does so, Dittrich claims, without providing Worringer with an alternative approach.<sup>39</sup> Dittrich implicitly points to the circularity of Worringer's demonstration from *Abstraction and Empathy* – a characteristic of discourse that had become evident to Waite as well.<sup>40</sup> The rhetoric of antithesis, for Dittrich, is without exit in Worringer's text. Nevertheless, in his own binary terms, Worringer suggested that the interplay of opposites was actually observable throughout the course of the

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<sup>30</sup> Waite, 'Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy*: Remarks on Its Reception and on the Rhetoric of Its Criticism', 29.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Dittrich, 'A Life of Matter and Death: Inorganic Life in Worringer, Deleuze and Guattari', 256.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 242-243.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 244, 252, 289.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 245.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 253.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 244, 252, 258.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 252.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 258.

<sup>40</sup> Waite, 'Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy*: Remarks on Its Reception and on the Rhetoric of Its Criticism', 30-31.

history of art. Worringer may not venture too far from the antithetical situations he defines and defends in *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic*; yet, by addressing abstract-representational interplay, he indicates where an exit from antithetical situations could be found.

Organizing Worringer's argument from *Abstraction and Empathy*, antithesis becomes a key methodological choice for Worringer. However, antithesis serves the purposes of persuasion rather than science in Worringer's handling – Donahue, Waite and Dittrich draw attention to the reliance of Worringer on rhetoric in this respect. Dissatisfied with the impact of Classicism on the art and scientific inquiries of his own time, Worringer nevertheless employs Classical rhetorical devices extensively in *Abstraction and Empathy*. Aristotle's writings prove to have influenced Worringer's articulation of argument and interpretive technique more than Worringer would have perhaps desired.

### **Kant, Schopenhauer, Riegl, Wölfflin, antithesis**

Before Worringer, antithesis was widely employed in philosophical and art historical research; for instance, antithesis, or binary opposition, features extensively in Kant's analytic discussions from *The Critique of the Power of Judgment*, and is considered by Schopenhauer a key relational aspect imposed by will onto the world. However, in the approaches of Kant and Schopenhauer, opposition is less emphasized than in the opening chapter of *Abstraction and Empathy*.

Contrast receives nuanced employment in Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. To articulate contrast, separations (or divisions) between terms of inquiry are necessary in philosophical practice, as *The Critique of the Power of Judgment* shows.<sup>41</sup> Kant posits that the absence of division brings along a lack of clarity – an undesirable feature for cognitive work employing concepts. Division, he explains, sets principles in contradiction; this is a dynamic specific to philosophical discourse. For Kant, divisions can be two-fold or three-fold; he

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<sup>41</sup> Kant explains: '... [A]ny division... always presupposes an opposition between the principles of the rational cognition belonging to the different parts of a science.' Kant and Guyer, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 59, 60. See Introduction (I).

defines two-fold divisions as oppositional and analytic (such a division is operated by Worringer in *Abstraction and Empathy*, for instance), and three-fold divisions as synthetic and concept-productive.<sup>42</sup> Kant notes his preference for three-fold divisions.<sup>43</sup> In his approach to the writing of philosophy, differentiation and synthesis are preferred to opposition alone.

The dynamic of differentiation can be observed at work in Kant's approach to the beautiful and the sublime.<sup>44</sup> According to Kant, beauty pleases freely, subjectively and universally, in the absence of concepts of reason.<sup>45</sup> Beauty, Kant explains, retains its free purposiveness even when it becomes partially intellectualized due to its association with an idea. For him, beauty is associated with the form of objects, with imagination at play, and with indeterminate concepts of understanding.<sup>46</sup>

As to the relationship between the beautiful and the sublime, Kant finds that they both arise from reflective judgment, and please without a purpose.<sup>47</sup> However, Kant points out that the sublime offers satisfaction through its very challenge to senses – a challenge due to the object-free magnitude or dynamism of its manifestations.<sup>48</sup> The feeling of the sublime, Kant explains, leads to negative pleasure because it emerges in response to formless phenomena, while beauty produces positive pleasure due to its association with form-bound objects. Kant argues that, in the case of the sublime, reflection itself is being contemplated. In other words,

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 82-83. See Introduction (IX).

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 82. See Introduction (IX).

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 31-50, 82-83, 95-134. In his *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Kant offers multiple definitions of beauty, or the beautiful, and the sublime. He explains, for instance, that beauty is '... the form of purposiveness of an object, insofar as it is perceived in it without representation of an end.' (———, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 120. See 'Definition of the beautiful inferred from this third moment'.) Further on, Kant defines the sublime as '...that which is absolutely great... That is sublime which even to be able to think demonstrates a faculty of the mind that surpasses every measure of the senses.' (———, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 131, 134. See § 25: 'Nominal definition of the sublime'.) However, these are only two of the definitions that Kant supplies for the beautiful and the sublime respectively. Kant's contrast between the beautiful and the sublime arises from an accumulation of differentiating observations on nature, art, and the responses of viewers with regard to them.

<sup>45</sup> For instance, Kant and Guyer, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 97-98, 107-120. See § 7: 'Comparison of the beautiful with the agreeable and the good through the above characteristic'; § 13-17.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 90-104. See § 2-9; for instance: 'Definition of the beautiful derived from the first moment. Taste is the faculty of judging an object or a kind of representation through a satisfaction or dissatisfaction without any interest. The object of such a satisfaction is called beautiful'; § 6: 'The beautiful is that which, without concepts, is represented as the object of a *universal* satisfaction'; 'The definition of the beautiful drawn from the second moment. That is beautiful which pleases universally without a concept'.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 128-131. See § 23: 'Transition from the faculty for judging the beautiful to that for judging the sublime'; § 24: 'On the division of an investigation of the feeling of the sublime'.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 128-142. See § 23-27.

according to Kant, the sublime surfaces not in objects or phenomena, but in the mind of the viewer.<sup>49</sup>

Kant employs opposition to differentiate between the beautiful and the sublime. However, he analyses the sublime and the beautiful from a variety of angles, so that their opposition is never singular or monolithic, but remains open to continued reflection. As Kant shows, the sublime and the beautiful do not compete for the same place in subjective attention: seeing objects as beautiful does not diminish, contradict, or cancel out the possibility to have sublime experiences. The opposition Kant articulates between the beautiful and the sublime remains inclusive of both terms, further illuminating them in the course of his analysis.<sup>50</sup>

For Worringer, the opposition between the urge to empathy and the urge to abstraction begins by being polar – in other words, extreme. However, in the course of his argument from *Abstraction and Empathy*, Worringer points to the coexistence of the two urges in art. He observes the common artistic grounds between representation and abstraction, yet continues to emphasize opposition as a key method of inquiry throughout his text. When Worringer addresses Gothic art, negative satisfaction comes to the fore, even though Gothic brings abstract and representational tendencies together. Kant draws attention to the analytic potential of two-fold divisions; for Worringer, the analysis of urges and modes of art-making mostly reinforces their opposition –<sup>51</sup> therefore, his personal point of view.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Kant focuses on discussing the beautiful and the sublime as experienced in the contemplation of nature, pointing out that the same principles can be applied to the discussion of art. (Ibid., 129-130, 179-183. See § 23; also, § 42: ‘On the intellectual interest in the beautiful’, and § 43: ‘On art in general’.) His discussion of the sublime in terms of negative satisfaction could be connected to Worringer’s approaching abstraction in terms of negative empathy; however, for Kant the sublime is not object-based. See ———, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 136. (See § 26: ‘On the estimation of magnitude of things of nature that is requisite for the idea of the sublime’.) Worringer, on the other hand, analyses the urge to abstraction as materialized in art-making throughout *Abstraction and Empathy*.

<sup>50</sup> Kant and Guyer, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 128-130. See § 23: ‘Transition from the faculty for judging the beautiful to that for judging the sublime’; § 24: ‘On the division of an investigation of the feeling of the sublime’.

<sup>51</sup> Worringer stated his interest in subjectivist approaches at the very beginning of *Abstraction and Empathy*; therefore, opposition could be regarded as his personal, ‘subjective’ preference in point of methodology.

<sup>52</sup> Waite signals the relevance of circularity with regard to Worringer’s discourse, both in the 1948 foreword to *Abstraction and Empathy*, and in *Abstraction and Empathy*. See Waite, ‘Worringer’s *Abstraction and Empathy*: Remarks on Its Reception and on the Rhetoric of Its Criticism’, 30-31.

Worringer's opposition to aesthetic viewpoints he regards as generally accepted is a distinctive feature of his strategy of research.<sup>53</sup> In *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic*, for instance, Classicism is associated with a balanced relationship between human beings and the world.<sup>54</sup> However, Worringer notes the cultural dominance – therefore, the negative aspect – of Classicism in his epoch.<sup>55</sup> The rhetorical strategy of opposition allows Worringer to build a strong profile for his discourse; his discussing the relationship between urges, as well as between modes of art-making, follows the same predominantly antithetic pathway.

The writer having inspired Worringer's articulation of polar antithesis between psychological urges is, according to Worringer, Schopenhauer.<sup>56</sup> '... [O]pposites throw light on each other', Schopenhauer remarked in *The World as Will and Representation*;<sup>57</sup> for him, the root of opposition in the world is will, the force that gives the world its existence. Schopenhauer argues that will, striving to find objectification (or materialization), assumes various forms that enter oppositional relationships. Phenomena of higher objectification subdue and incorporate phenomena of lower objectification, in search for the highest objectification attainable, Schopenhauer explains.<sup>58</sup> According to him, opposition characterizes the operation of natural forces.<sup>59</sup> For instance, Schopenhauer notices opposition, subordination and assimilation at work in the relation between gravitation and magnetism, or between plants and animals. Yet Schopenhauer also points out that, in art, knowledge can operate independently from the pressures of will.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 4-9.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 28-29, 32, 128.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 127.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 10, 137.

<sup>57</sup> Schopenhauer and Payne, *The World as Will and Representation*, 207.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 145-152. For instance, Ideas are objectifications of will for Schopenhauer; in this respect, he follows Plato rather than Kant. Kant regards ideas as concepts of reason, and aesthetic ideas as intuitions of the imagination. See Kant and Guyer, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 117-18. Also see Arthur Schopenhauer and E. F. J. Payne, *The World as Will and Representation*, vol. 1 (New York: Dover Publications, 1969 [1819]), xxii, 129-152, 202-209. Looking further into the relationship between the thought of Kant and Schopenhauer would very much exceed the scope of the current inquiry.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 146-147.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 152.

According to the absence or presence of opposition, Schopenhauer distinguishes between the beautiful and the sublime.<sup>61</sup> Will-less knowing, he explains, encounters no opposition when the viewer is engaged in contemplating the beautiful; in contrast, when experiencing the sublime, viewers must transcend the opposition arising between their will and the object of contemplation. Schopenhauer, like Kant, emphasizes the conflict that the experience of the sublime generates in the mind of the contemplating subject; yet, unlike Kant, Schopenhauer discusses the possibility of transitional steps between experiences of the beautiful and the sublime respectively.

Subtle transitions from the beautiful to the sublime can be experienced in wintry landscapes, boundless planes or rocky deserts, according to Schopenhauer.<sup>62</sup> In such places, he explains, human life is neither protected nor threatened; as a result, will-less contemplation comes to the fore. Schopenhauer thus draws attention to the fluidity of the boundaries between the sublime and the beautiful in contemplative experience. For him, observing and explaining the transitions between modes of aesthetic experience plays a part as important as highlighting distinctive features by means of opposition.

Worringer also relies on opposition to distinguish between representation and abstraction in art-making. However, abstract-representational opposition softens where Worringer addresses the coexistence of abstraction and representation in the same epoch,<sup>63</sup> as well as where Worringer explores the transition from one mode of art-making to another throughout history.<sup>64</sup> History offers Worringer a repository of figures of reference: Classicism, Romanesque and Gothic are examined by him in terms of representation, abstraction, but also in terms of the meeting between modes of art-making.<sup>65</sup> When articulating his theory, Worringer sets various approaches to art (and the urges that lead to them) in opposition;

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<sup>61</sup> Like Kant, Schopenhauer underscores the common ground between the beautiful and the sublime, namely their relationship to Ideas. He explains that, in the case of both the sublime and the beautiful, aesthetic contemplation has the Idea as its object. The sublime, Schopenhauer writes, finds its opposite in the charming, since the charming connects to appetites, stirs the will and interrupts contemplation. From this perspective, Schopenhauer disagrees with Kant's discussing the beautiful and the sublime in terms of opposition. (Ibid., 200-208.)

<sup>62</sup> Schopenhauer and Payne, *The World as Will and Representation*, 203-207.

<sup>63</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 12.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 79-80.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 70-121.

however, when addressing art as made visible in the course of history, Worringer highlights abstract-representational interplay.

Antithesis also supports the construction of argument in the writings of Worringer's contemporaries. For instance, in his *Late Roman Art Industry*,<sup>66</sup> Riegl contrasts between close viewing (or the tactile phase of art-making [*Nahsicht*]), and viewing from a distance (or the optical phase of art-making [*Fernsicht*]), in his discussion of the art of antiquity.<sup>67</sup> He remarks that close viewing invites an awareness of planes. According to Riegl, tactility, planarity and symmetry are preferred to optical recession in the art of ancient Egypt, since optical recession (as encountered in the art of the Late Roman Empire) suggests distance and deemphasizes materiality.

The antithesis between close viewing and viewing from a distance provides Riegl with the possibility to explain historical changes of style in psychological terms. However, Riegl also points to the middle ground between these viewing modes: he addresses tactile-optical viewing as associated with experiencing Classical Greek art. Following Riegl, Worringer also underscores the balance observable in the art of Classical Greece; however, Worringer refers to the relationship between human beings and their environment when addressing Greek equipoise.<sup>68</sup> For Riegl, antithesis supports critical, historical and psychological aspects of inquiry, yet does not become a key method of his investigations: it is a mode of drawing attention to differentiations between artistic approaches through time.

Placing pairs of terms in antithesis is a procedure employed by Worringer as well as Wölfflin in their organization of argument. Wölfflin, in *Principles of Art History* (1915),<sup>69</sup> illuminates the key concepts that inform art-viewing by means of binary opposition. He treats the alliance between form and personal expression with caution;<sup>70</sup> for him, processes such as the

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<sup>66</sup> Worringer comments on Riegl's *Late Roman Art Industry* in *Abstraction and Empathy*. (Ibid., 9, 93-94, 136.) Further explorations of the connection between the two books are necessary, yet require much more emphasis than the current thesis can provide.

<sup>67</sup> Previous sections have addressed this aspect of Riegl's argument; see 'Representation and abstraction in art-making: Worringer's perspective'.

<sup>68</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 45-46.

<sup>69</sup> At the time of writing *Abstraction and Empathy*, Worringer was an admirer of the work of Wölfflin. (Ibid., 137-138.)

<sup>70</sup> Heinrich Wölfflin, *Principles of Art History. The Problem of the Development of Style in Later Art* (New York: Dover Publications, 1950 [1915]), 226.

transition from linear to painterly seeing emerge from experiencing – a mode of engagement which is not necessarily emotional, since apprehension and representation appear to Wölfflin in their formal, rather than expressive, guise.<sup>71</sup>

Wölfflin considers that an exclusive focus on the history of expression entails significant risks, since expression reflects differently in artistic form through time.<sup>72</sup> He disagrees with approaching the history of art in terms of growth, apogee and decay.<sup>73</sup> Instead, Wölfflin proposes to focus on highlighting basic concepts that inform artistic development within given historical epochs. He organizes these concepts in five binary pairs: linear and painterly, plane and recession, closed and open form, multiplicity and unity, clearness and unclearness.

In *Abstraction and Empathy*, Worringer considers that writing about art must account for psychological as well as formal factors.<sup>74</sup> He notes that his inquiry focuses on general aesthetic categories; in other words, Worringer chooses to address forms of art that encourage the emergence of ‘elementary aesthetic feelings,’ and that facilitate theoretical discourse.<sup>75</sup> *Abstraction and Empathy* thus engages with the art of ancient Egypt and Greece, with Oriental and Byzantine art, with Gothic and Renaissance art. Addressing landmark styles from the history of art provides Worringer a ground of investigation that has already won the favour of his contemporaries. However, Worringer supports the writing of a ‘history of feeling about the world’ where the variations of personal responses to life contexts are discussed in connection to art.<sup>76</sup> The intuitive analysis of personal feeling takes place in reference to aesthetically accepted approaches to art-making in *Abstraction and Empathy*.

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 229. In the words of Wölfflin: ‘All five pairs of concepts [i. e., linear and painterly, plane and recession, closed and open form, multiplicity and unity, clearness and unclearness] can be interpreted both in the decorative and imitative sense. There is a beauty of the tectonic and a truth of the tectonic, a beauty of the painterly and a definite content of the world which is manifested in the painterly, and only in the painterly, style, and so on. But we will not forget that our categories are only forms – forms of apprehension and representation – and that they can therefore have no expressional content in themselves. Here it is only a question of the schema within which a definite beauty can manifest itself and only of the vessel in which impressions of nature can be caught and retained.’ Wölfflin, *Principles of Art History. The Problem of the Development of Style in Later Art*, 227.

<sup>72</sup> Wölfflin, *Principles of Art History. The Problem of the Development of Style in Later Art*, 226.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 12-17, 226-227.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 13, 30-31.

<sup>75</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 30-31. Also see, from the current thesis, ‘“Common to all”: form for Kant and Worringer’.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 13.

The approach Wölfflin employs in *Principles of Art History* favours the examination of experience rather than feeling. In *Prolegomena to a Psychology of Architecture*, Wölfflin had also addressed architectural form from the perspective of experience; yet, in this earlier study, the association of empathy and form surfaced more readily. Wölfflin had underscored that inanimate architecture could reveal its lifelikeness, its expressiveness, when compared with the human body. Attempting to understand built structures by means of imitation could reveal the organic qualities inherent in abstract form, Wölfflin explained.<sup>77</sup> The imitation of architecture's forms could lead to personal experiencing. Unlike Worringer, Wölfflin refers to imitation rather than feeling when approaching art that is difficult to understand; yet imitation appears to Wölfflin as a mode of embodied personal engagement, and supports a responsive – if unemotional – interpretation of inanimate form.<sup>78</sup>

In *Principles of Art History*, Wölfflin focuses on the concepts discernible in artistic expression. He prioritizes style and form in his search for key features of representation, and addresses various approaches to art-making during Renaissance and Baroque.<sup>79</sup> Selecting the main terms of investigation and distinguishing between them from changing perspectives, like Kant in his own approach to analysing the beautiful and the sublime,<sup>80</sup> Wölfflin organizes his findings by means of antithesis. In *Principles of Art History*, empirical concepts of increasing generality, as well as differentiation by means of contrast, play important parts.

The structural clarity of *Principles of Art History* relies on Wölfflin's employment of antithesis. One of his pairs of antithetic concepts brings together the linear (or limiting) and the painterly (or limitless) in art. Like Riegl in *Late Roman Art Industry*, Wölfflin explains linearity by association with the sense of touch and physical proximity, and painterliness by

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<sup>77</sup> For a discussion of empathy in Wölfflin's *Prolegomena to a Psychology of Architecture*, see previous subchapter on empathy. Also see Heinrich Wölfflin, 'Prolegomena to a Psychology of Architecture' in *Empathy, Form, and Space: Problems in German Aesthetics, 1873-1893*, ed. Harry Francis Malgrave and Eleftherios Ikononou (Santa Monica: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 152-161.

<sup>78</sup> Wölfflin's approach to the experiencing of form emphasizes embodied aspects, but not emotion; his thought differs in this respect from Lipps' theory, where complete apperceptive understanding includes an emotional aspect. See Lipps, *Estetica. Psihologia Frumosului și a Artei*, 30-31.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 13-16.

<sup>80</sup> For the influence of Kant on Wölfflin's approach to the writing of art history, see Michael Hatt and Charlotte Klonk, *Art History: A Critical Introduction to Its Methods* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2006), 101.

association with sight and physical distance.<sup>81</sup> Wölfflin observes that the linear and the painterly characterize both vision and style, as when he writes:

We can thus further define the difference between the styles by saying that linear vision sharply distinguishes form from form, while the painterly eye on the other hand aims at that movement which passes over the sum of things... The great contrast between linear and painterly style corresponds to radically different interests in the world. In the former case, it is the solid figure, in the latter, the changing appearance; in the former, the enduring form, measurable, finite; in the latter, the movement, the form in function; in the former, the thing in itself; in the latter, the thing in its relations.<sup>82</sup>

Unlike Worringer in *Abstraction and Empathy*, Wölfflin analyses the art of representation in *Principles of Art History*. He discusses representational works in terms of outline, interior and exterior form, mass, patch, or movement, thus eliciting their abstract qualities. Although he often refers to visual schemas in his discussions, Wölfflin nevertheless addresses the dynamic of abstract characteristics as found within representational art.

Returning to Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy* after engaging with Wölfflin's *Principles of Art History* reveals a number of significant continuities and differences between these texts and the methodologies their writers employ. Both Worringer and Wölfflin discuss the relationship between psychological factors and artistic form; both employ antithesis to structure their respective discourses. The inquiries of Kant play a significant part for Worringer as for Wölfflin.<sup>83</sup> In *Abstraction and Empathy* and in *Principles of Art History*, Worringer and Wölfflin bring to light specific qualities of form.

On the other hand, Wölfflin's carefully structured approach could not be more different from Worringer's exploratory discourse. Wölfflin acknowledges the role of seeing and of embodiment at the same time, providing relevant points of reference for art historical analysis through his pairs of contrastive concepts. Instead, Worringer emphasizes the subjectivity of

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<sup>81</sup> Riegl and Winkes, *Late Roman Art Industry*, 24-27.

<sup>82</sup> Wölfflin, *Principles of Art History. The Problem of the Development of Style in Later Art*, 18-19, 27.

<sup>83</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 30, 130. Also, Wölfflin, *Principles of Art History. The Problem of the Development of Style in Later Art*, 227.

his inquiry and his interest in positive as well as negative feelings and emotions. Transcendence interests Worringer more than embodiment. For him, the urge to empathy and the urge to abstraction (which support the surfacing of representational and abstract modes of art-making) enter a relationship of disputation throughout history. This relationship is described by Worringer in the terms of argumentative discourse, and carries an implicit negative tinge.

Worringer, unlike Wölfflin, does not work towards constructing a systematic approach to the aesthetics of representation. Where Wölfflin employs focus, simplification and synthesis to arrive at principles of wide applicability,<sup>84</sup> Worringer persuasively asserts oppositional relations while proposing that antithetic terms can and should be regarded as equal. Worringer's antithesis between representation and abstraction did not aim to assert value differences in art – at least, this is Worringer's expressed intention.<sup>85</sup> According to him, urges towards art-making as well as modes of art-making coexist in Gothic.

Organizing Worringer's perspective on representation and abstraction in *Abstraction and Empathy*, antithesis also characterizes Worringer's thoughts on the relationship between human beings and their environments. He regards the connections between people and their contexts in terms of perpetual opposition.<sup>86</sup> This state of tension – which becomes visible in

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<sup>84</sup> Wölfflin, *Principles of Art History. The Problem of the Development of Style in Later Art*, vii-ix.

<sup>85</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 30-31.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 30-31, 127. Worringer does not mention Hegel in either *Abstraction and Empathy* or *Form in Gothic*; however, Hegel's nineteenth-century approach to antithesis as well as to the union of opposites is relevant to consider alongside Worringer's early twentieth-century views. Hegel's impact on German culture was pervasive at the time of Worringer's writing *Abstraction and Empathy*; see, among many others, Glenn Alexander Magee, *The Hegel Dictionary* (London and New York: Continuum, 2010), 5-8. Also, Robert Anchor, *Germany Confronts Modernization: German Culture and Society, 1790-1890* (Lexington: Heath, 1972), 55-56. It is likely that Worringer, who studied in Berlin before completing *Abstraction and Empathy* in Bern, would have had the opportunity to engage with the ideas of Hegel, who taught at the Berlin University between 1818 and 1831, and served as University Rector from 1830. In his *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art* (1820-29), Hegel explains the meeting of Idea and reality in Symbolic, Classical and Romantic art. For Hegel, Classical art provides a point of unification between mind and senses (Worringer follows Hegel in this respect, arguing that Classical art creates a bridge between instinct and understanding; see Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 123-132). On the other hand, in Symbolic and Romantic art, reality and Idea diverge, according to Hegel. Hegel finds that Romantic art offers ground for the Idea to reach its perfect shape not in the external world, but in the inner world of human beings. He explains: '[In romantic art,]... the separation of Idea and shape, their indifference and inadequacy to each other come to the fore again, as in symbolic art, but with the essential difference, that, in romantic art, the Idea, the deficiency of which in the symbol brought with it the deficiency of shape, now has to appear perfected in itself as spirit and heart. Because of this higher perfection, it is not susceptible of an adequate union with the external, since its true reality and manifestation it can seek and achieve only within itself.' See Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich, and T. M. Knox, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975 [1820-29]). Worringer, like Hegel, signals the antithesis between artists and

the urge to abstraction, according to Worringer – proves to reflect in Worringer’s opinions on life in the world. Antithesis informs Worringer’s views on art as well as existence.

Apart from antithesis, interplay is another methodological figure observable in *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic*. Abstract-representational interplay becomes particularly visible in Worringer’s discussions of art. Although he begins both *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic* by assigning a guiding methodological role to antithesis,<sup>87</sup> Worringer addresses the ‘amalgamation’ of representational and abstract elements in both books.<sup>88</sup>

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their world; abstract art makes this separation most visible for Worringer. However, where Hegel regarded negative relationships as dynamic, arguing that separation could be overcome and the unity of opposites could be achieved (Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, 21), Worringer emphasizes antithesis in *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic*. Regarding the interplay of abstraction and representation as another facet of antithesis, Worringer provides a key methodological role to antithesis in his writings. ‘Union’ between opposites is possible in Hegel’s aesthetics; instead, Worringer approaches relationships between art-making modes in terms of ‘counterplay and interplay’.

<sup>87</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 4, 26, 34. Also, Worringer and Read, *Form in Gothic*, 1-4.

<sup>88</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 43-44. Also, Worringer and Read, *Form in Gothic*, 63-64, 87.

**Gradation, displacement and transposition: alternatives to antithesis**  
**in Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy***

Worringer reserves a leading methodological role for antithesis in *Abstraction and Empathy*, yet also explores alternatives to abstract-representational opposition. For instance, Worringer discusses processes such as gradation, displacement, and transposition (or transfer), which he notices in the course of history.

In the concluding pages of his 'Theoretical Section' from *Abstraction and Empathy*, for instance, Worringer argues that representation and abstraction are manifestations of different degrees of distancing from organic existence.<sup>1</sup> Instead of contrasting abstraction and representation, Worringer presents them as modes of art-making that reflect lesser or greater proximities from the world. Such a statement draws attention to the gradual rather than polar relationship of abstraction and representation, as well as to the possibility of their interplay. Gradation thus comes forth as a relational modality where the contrast between representation and abstraction need not be absolute.

Displacement and transposition are gradual processes Worringer also addresses in *Abstraction and Empathy*. Displacement (or the substitution of one mode of art-making by another), can be observed during the transition from the Doric to the Ionic style of architecture;<sup>2</sup> Worringer explains that abstract features as observable in Doric style still feature in the representation-oriented Ionic style, which combines abstraction and representation, yet gives preference to the urge to empathy.<sup>3</sup> The displacement of Doric style by Ionic style is not radical, according to Worringer, but leads to the incorporation of features of the displaced style. Abstract-representational interplay thus becomes visible during times of transition between epochs and modes of art-making.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 13, 23.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 79-80.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 80.

<sup>4</sup> The transition from abstraction to representation is also addressed by Worringer, from the perspective of history, in *Form in Gothic*. Worringer explains that, in Classicism as observable in ancient Greek art, the features that characterized the world of 'primitive' people are no longer in sight: chaos turns into cosmos, fear and relativity are replaced by knowledge and objectivity, anthropocentrism becomes dominant, and the ground for opposition disappears. See Worringer and Read, *Form in Gothic*, 21.

If displacement operates in historical terms for Worringer, transposition takes place on spatial and formal grounds. Worringer observes transposition (or the embedding of one form of art into another) in the Classical art of ancient Greece, where architecture assimilates sculpture.<sup>5</sup> He explains that, despite of the dominance of abstract features brought along by architecture and the necessities of construction, Greek artists soften the impact of abstract elements through the highlighting of lifelike, organic values. According to Worringer, a generic tendency can be observed where architecture meets sculpture. In his words: ‘... [I]f this architectonic regularity is of an organic kind, as in Greek architecture, the constraint within which sculpture lives also has an organic effect, as for instance in the figures of a pediment; if, on the contrary, it is of an inorganic kind, as in Gothic, the figures are drawn into the same inorganic sphere.’<sup>6</sup> The sculptures that contribute to a building reflect, for Worringer, the predominant architectural aspects of that building. Underscoring the resonance between arts, Worringer signals that in architecture abstract and representational tendencies coexist and interact.

Transposition also leads to emphasis on inorganic, abstract aspects in ancient Egyptian art, according to Worringer. Egyptian art, Worringer notes, displays strong tendencies towards abstraction, yet that, despite the effort of artists to create in an abstract style, representational elements still inform their works.<sup>7</sup> For instance, Worringer argues that Egyptian artists endeavour to eliminate suggestions of three-dimensionality in sculpture, yet approach the heads of sculptures from the perspective of representation. The reverse process is also visible: Egyptian sculptures, according to Worringer, transform lifelike details into geometrical pattern, as can be seen in the rendition of fabric folds and hairstyles.<sup>8</sup> An emphasis on planes, geometry, decoration, and the transmission of information through writing predominate in Egyptian art, Worringer comments. For him, the coexistence of abstraction and representation

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<sup>5</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 88-89.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 91-93.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 70, 85-86, 88-89, 92, 108-109. Worringer’s discussion of secular style and court style in ancient Egyptian art draws attention to the historical coexistence of representation and abstraction. In Worringer’s words: ‘That the Egyptians had acquired an easy mastery over material is shown by the statues of the secular art of the Old Empire, which have been sufficiently admired for their realism – the village mayor, the brewer, etc. And at the same time the statues in the court style, that is the authentic monumental art, exhibit an unvividness of form and a severity of style as great as any archaic statue. Something else must, therefore, have contributed to this style than technical incompetence, as the artistic materialists would have us believe.’ ———, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 85-86.

in the art of Egypt makes room for representation in abstract contexts, yet cultivates abstraction.

The relationship between representation and abstraction thus receives a dynamic treatment in Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy*. Opposition remains Worringer's principal method of relating abstraction to representation in his book. Yet Worringer also discusses other modes of approaching the abstract-representational relationship, such as gradation (psychological, of emotions, of abstract and representational elements), displacement (historical, of one style by another) and transposition (spatial and formal, of representational elements into abstract contexts and vice-versa).

In contrast with opposition, gradation, displacement and transposition do not organize Worringer's discourse in *Abstraction and Empathy*. They do not become generic concepts that direct investigation, such as Wölfflin's 'linear' and 'painterly' from his *Principles of Art History*.<sup>9</sup> However, Worringer's discussion of gradation, displacement and transposition reveals his interest in various facets of the abstract-representational relationship in art.

Opposition simplifies and stabilizes Worringer's approach to the relationship between abstraction and representation in *Abstraction and Empathy*. Nevertheless, Worringer's attention to the unfolding of processes of gradation, displacement and transposition adds an exploratory edge to his inquiry. Abstraction and representation, two modes of art-making that might have been restricted to antithesis, actually receive a dynamic reading in *Abstraction and Empathy*. In his approach to psychological urges and to modes of art-making, Worringer is not content with the employment of opposition alone; he diverges from it to investigate its alternatives, and to reveal what opposition is bound to leave aside: the meeting ground of abstraction and representation.

Gradation, displacement and transposition make visible various forms of interplay between representation and abstraction in Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy*. Pointing to the interplay of abstraction and representation throughout *Abstraction and Empathy*, Worringer notes that the meeting of representation and abstraction informed art-making since ancient times. Psychological urges to empathy and abstraction could be noticed operating side by side

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<sup>9</sup> Wölfflin, *Principles of Art History. The Problem of the Development of Style in Later Art*, 14-15.

within the same epoch, Worringer argues. He implies that the historical coexistence of representational and abstract modes of art-making occasions various forms of interplay.

From a psychological viewpoint, Worringer considers that specific styles of art-making reflect the enjoyment that artists and viewers derive from art. 'Every style represented the maximum bestowal of happiness for the humanity that created it', Worringer notes.<sup>10</sup> He observes that styles – generally understood as specific creative approaches developed throughout history – give various forms of expression to happiness.<sup>11</sup> He thus connects art-making to emotion – personal, as well as shared – rather than to externally imposed requirements. From this perspective, art appears as an activity depending on the expressive will of its makers,<sup>12</sup> in all its forms. His comment is inclusive of representational expression, of abstract expression, and, last but not least, of the possibility of abstract-representational interplay [*Wechselspiel* in *Abstraction and Empathy*, *Ineinanderspiel* in *Form in Gothic*].<sup>13</sup>

Interplay (a multifaceted, inclusive process of relating between phenomena, thoughts, domains, or modes of art-making) becomes visible for Worringer in art, as well as in the natural world. In the opening pages of *Abstraction and Empathy*, Worringer asserts the independence of art from nature, and the equality of art to nature.<sup>14</sup> He readdresses the relationship between nature (or the world as observed by human beings)<sup>15</sup> and art from a psychological perspective at various points in his book, observing that the urge to empathy manifests in celebration of organic life, while the urge to abstraction signals a tendency to take distance from the world. For Worringer, the need of tranquillity he recognizes in Eastern art arises from seeing the world as flux, as an entanglement of interrelationships.<sup>16</sup> Imaginatively assuming the perspective of the Eastern artist or viewer, Worringer explains that the state of interplay characteristic of phenomena is arbitrary and tormenting.<sup>17</sup> Observed

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<sup>10</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 13.

<sup>11</sup> Worringer employs the term 'style' generically, as well as with reference to the urge to abstraction in *Abstraction and Empathy*. See, from the current thesis, 'Worringer's approach to the writing of art history and theory'.

<sup>12</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 9.

<sup>13</sup> See Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 30. Also, Worringer, *Form in Gothic*, 44.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 3-4.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 14-17.

<sup>17</sup> For Schopenhauer, the world is in constant fluctuation: 'Eternal becoming, endless flux, belongs to the revelation of the essential nature of the will.' Worringer sees the world as a place of struggle, like

in the word of appearances and changes, interplay gives rise to abstraction and assumes a negative psychological connotation for Worringer.

However, Worringer notes that the urge to abstraction does not lead to a complete exclusion of elements of environment. While the urge to abstraction can be considered antithetic to the urge to empathy, Worringer comments that to abstract could involve bringing representational elements and geometric elements together.<sup>18</sup> This approach to abstraction in art-making, Worringer argues, has as a purpose the exclusion of temporality and change, yet does not renounce the depiction of objects in the world altogether.

Worringer posits the coexistence of representational and abstract elements in cultural terms. Although he finds that the urge to abstraction receives its ultimate expression in Egyptian art,<sup>19</sup> he observes that artists from different places in the world preferred to amalgamate abstract and representational elements.<sup>20</sup> According to Worringer, Japanese art offers an opportunity to examine a mode of art-making that is fundamentally concerned with form, and at the same time organic.<sup>21</sup> Ionic architecture (5<sup>th</sup> century B. C.), in contrast with Doric architecture (6<sup>th</sup> -5<sup>th</sup> century B. C.), seems to bring inanimate stone to life, Worringer comments.<sup>22</sup> He also points to Byzantine style (c. 313-1453 A. D.) as inclusive of Hellenistic (c. 323-146 B. C.), Early Christian (c. 100-500 A. D.), and Oriental influences, therefore as a composite approach to art-making.<sup>23</sup> Saracenic (or Islamic) arabesque balances, for Worringer, naturalism (or representation) and abstraction.<sup>24</sup> In the interlaced ornament of

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Schopenhauer, yet associates the artistic manifestation of this struggle with abstraction-oriented art. Instead, Schopenhauer finds that art in all its forms is an opportunity of deliverance from the impositions of will, leading to pure contemplation and will-less knowing. (Ibid., 18.) Also, Schopenhauer and Payne, *The World as Will and Representation*, 149, 164, 184-267.

<sup>18</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 42.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 42-43.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 55. Worringer writes: 'The study of Japanese art in Europe must be accounted one of the most important stages in the history of the gradual rehabilitation of art as a purely formal organism, i. e. one that appeals to our elementary aesthetic feelings.'

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 80. In the words of Worringer: 'Whereas in the Doric temple the lofty, expressionless law of matter in its exclusivity frightens away all human empathy, in the Ionic temple all the sensations of life flow uninhibitedly in, and the joyfulness of these stones irradiated with life becomes our own joy.'

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 96, 99-101, 104.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 75. According to Worringer: 'We find by analysis that this Saracenic ornament also represents a balance between abstraction and naturalism, but with a predominance of abstraction as pronounced as the predominance of naturalism in Greek ornament.'

Northern Europe (c. 1000 A. D.), Worringer recognizes once more the interplay of representation and abstraction. He remarks:

In spite of the purely linear, inorganic basis of this ornamental style, we hesitate to term it abstract. Rather it is impossible to mistake the restless life contained in this tangle of lines. This unrest, this seeking, has no organic life that draws us gently into its movement; but there is life there, a vigorous, urgent life, that compels us joylessly to follow its movements. Thus, on an inorganic fundament, there is heightened movement, heightened expression. Here we have the decisive formula for the whole medieval North. Here are the elements which later on, as we shall show, culminate in Gothic.<sup>25</sup>

Representational and abstract elements may cohabit in art; the degree of their interaction, Worringer notes, varies according to time and place. Distinguishing sharply between abstract and representational styles becomes increasingly difficult as Worringer turns his gaze towards art styles throughout history. Although Worringer posits that the urge to abstraction informs the beginnings of art-making,<sup>26</sup> although he emphasizes the opposition of representation and abstraction in order to highlight their formal specificities and psychological points of emergence,<sup>27</sup> addressing art (even in its most generic instances) eventually leads his argument towards an acknowledgment of the interplay between representation and abstraction.

In the last chapter of *Abstraction and Empathy*, Worringer analyses Gothic art at length. He points out that Greek architecture primarily highlights organic values, while Egyptian architecture brings to the fore abstract values.<sup>28</sup> Gothic architecture presents a third avenue of artistic investigation; according to Worringer:

A third possibility now confronts us in the Gothic cathedral, which indeed operates with abstract values, but nonetheless directs an extremely strong and forcible appeal to our capacity for empathy. Here, however, constructional relations are not

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 76-77.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 4-23.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 112-114.

illuminated by a feeling for the organic, as is the process in Greek temple building, but purely mechanical relationships of forces are brought to view *per se*, and in addition these relationships of forces are intensified to the maximum in their tendency to movement and in their content by a power of empathy that extends to the abstract. It is not the life of an organism which we see before us, but that of a mechanism.<sup>29</sup>

Worringer observes that the Gothic cathedral combines representational and abstract elements. Abstraction is specific to the architectural context of Gothic for him; nevertheless, he also notes that a Gothic cathedral generates an empathic response similar to the one he had previously deemed specific for representational art. To differentiate between Greek and Gothic architecture, Worringer associates Greek temples with the concept of 'organism' (a living form where parts work to support the whole) and Gothic cathedrals with the concept of 'mechanism' (a constructed form capable of movement).

Animation is a characteristic of both 'organism' and 'mechanism,' Worringer notes, yet in a mechanism the abstract, structural, willed component comes to the fore. For Worringer, the Gothic cathedral infuses abstraction with lifelike qualities; he finds that the interplay of mechanical forces (in other words, of forces that modify or transmit movement) is intensified in Gothic architecture, providing the quality of life to an inorganic construction. In Gothic, abstract-representational interplay manifests as the coexistence of opposites, according to him; 'mechanism' is a term Worringer employs metaphorically to characterize the meeting of abstract structure and lifelike movement.

Worringer's analysis of Gothic architectural style casts a new light on the title of his book, *Abstraction and Empathy*. Empathy and abstraction, two psychological urges Worringer initially approaches as opposite, actually interweave in art-making. In his analyses of the common ground of representation and abstraction, Worringer responds empathically to Gothic while addressing its formal qualities. He thus demonstrates that abstract structure can encourage empathy, and articulates this demonstration in psychological and formal terms.

Worringer points to abstract-representational interplay at various stages of his argument, especially when addressing artistic styles throughout history. To begin, he notes that opposite

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 114-115.

forms of aesthetic experience can lead to the same effect: self-forgetting (or, in his terms, self-alienation). The urge to empathy and the urge to abstraction, according to Worringer, can be considered as gradations of a generic human need to leave the world behind in imagination, and concentrate on the contemplation of art instead.<sup>30</sup> Highlighting the psychological and aesthetic common ground of the urge to empathy and the urge to abstraction, Worringer prepares his examination of the meeting of these urges in art.

When addressing the urge to abstraction as the key impulse in art-making,<sup>31</sup> Worringer points to abstract form as made visible in the world of nature, namely in crystalline, inorganic entities. The separation between organic and inorganic aspects is thus not absolute, Worringer implies; an affinity exists between them.<sup>32</sup> Claiming he does not wish to insist on such matters, Worringer rhetorically summons the nameless, generic figure of ‘a convinced evolutionist’ to articulate his own speculations. Such an evolutionist, Worringer writes, could argue that human beings harbour memories of inorganic natural laws within their organism. Thus the urge to abstraction could be considered a longing for the inorganic, which Worringer’s ‘evolutionist’ regards as a primitive form of the organic.<sup>33</sup> In addition to the psychological and aesthetic commonalities of the urge to empathy and the urge to abstraction, Worringer also provides an ontological background to the possibility of abstract-representational interplay in art.

Positing that the urge to empathy connects to naturalism (or representation), Worringer also specifies that empathy may attach to abstract form. He personifies the need for empathy to intensify its claims, thus adding rhetorical edge to his discourse; in his words: ‘... the need for empathy abandons the sphere of the organic, that naturally falls to its lot, and takes possession of abstract forms, which are thereby, of course, robbed of their abstract value.’<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 23-25.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 34-35.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 35. From this point of view, Worringer’s argument echoes the thought of Schopenhauer, who writes: ‘Indeed, since all things in the world are the objectivity of one and the same will, and consequently identical according to their nature, there must be between them that unmistakable analogy, and in everything less perfect there must be seen the trace, outline, and plan of the next more perfect thing. Moreover, since all these forms belong only to the world as *representation*, it can even be assumed that, in the most universal forms of the representation, in this peculiar framework of the appearing phenomenal world, and thus in space and time, it is already possible to discover and establish the fundamental type, outline and plan of all that fills the forms.’ Schopenhauer and Payne, *The World as Will and Representation*, 144.

<sup>33</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 35-36.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 48.

As imagined by Worringer, the meeting between the urge to empathy and actual abstract art may acquire invasive nuances. Worringer associates the encounter between empathy and abstraction with Northern and Gothic art, but also with Greek art (for example, with the Vitruvian scroll).<sup>35</sup> From his perspective – which in this instance seeks to elicit emotional effect by favouring vivid yet aggressive figures of discourse – abstract-representational interplay may be approached in terms of imposition and inequality.<sup>36</sup>

However, Worringer also notes the harmonious coexistence of representational and abstract tendencies in art. He observes that in Classical art the synthesis of Mycenaean naturalism (or representation) and Dipylon abstraction becomes visible;<sup>37</sup> these two tendencies are balanced in ornamental forms such as the wavy line and the festoon, although the tendency towards naturalism and empathy predominates.<sup>38</sup> Saracenic arabesque also balances abstraction and naturalism, Worringer comments, although he thinks the urge to abstraction becomes more assertive in this case.<sup>39</sup> For him, Northern interlaced ornament is linear, inorganic, yet lifelike:<sup>40</sup> another instance of abstract-representational interplay.

Summarizing his previous findings, Worringer draws attention to the meeting of representation and abstraction in the art of early epochs. He regards this encounter as a compromise artists make when accounting for natural models.<sup>41</sup> Once more, interplay receives a negative interpretation, which Worringer counterbalances by examining the various forms abstract-representational interplay assumes throughout history. For instance, Worringer explains that architecture imposes either its representational or its abstract aspect on the sculpture it incorporates. Greek temple sculptures tend towards representation, while Gothic cathedral sculptures tend towards abstraction, Worringer remarks.<sup>42</sup> He notes that an overall inclination towards abstraction at work in Egyptian art, pyramids being foremost instances of abstract art for him. Nevertheless, he remarks that standing sculptures specific to the hieratic court style actually rely on the verisimilitude of representation in order to suggest

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 66.

<sup>36</sup> The implicit ethics and politics of Worringer's discourse, and the positioning of Worringer's ideas within early twentieth-century European contexts, need to make the topics of different inquiries.

<sup>37</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 71-73.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 75-76.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 76-77.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 86-87.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 88-89.

vitality.<sup>43</sup> Byzantine art also sets representation and abstraction in interplay;<sup>44</sup> Worringer considers it composite, although more pronounced tendencies towards abstraction inform its late stages. Abstract-representational interplay becomes highly visible in Worringer's analyses of art from *Abstraction and Empathy*.

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 91-93.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 93-101, 104.

## ***Form in Gothic: interplay readdressed***

Worringer continues his research of the meeting between representation and abstraction in *Form in Gothic*,<sup>1</sup> a text that expands on Worringer's early insights and provides further articulation to his theoretical standpoint. Where *Abstraction and Empathy* contrasts the urge to empathy and the urge to abstraction, and surveys their points of encounter in art-making, *Form in Gothic* offers a theoretical outline to Worringer's views on the role of antithesis in the writing of art history and theory.<sup>2</sup>

The last pages of *Abstraction and Empathy* contain an essay written by Worringer in 1910, the year when *Form in Gothic* is published. This essay, entitled 'Transcendence and Immanence in Art', contrasts Classical and non-Classical art, the urge to empathy and the urge to abstraction, immanence (or the tendency of seeking, in religion and art, reference points within the world, as in pantheism) and transcendence (the tendency to seek reference points beyond the world, as in Christianity).<sup>3</sup> In 'Transcendence and Immanence in Art', Worringer argues that seeing art from one perspective only is limiting. He claims that, during his epoch, art is addressed mostly in the terms of Classicism; he therefore approaches Classicism by reference to Greek culture in *Abstraction and Empathy*, and finds fault with the emphasis his contemporaries place on the heritage of Greek culture and Classical art.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Joanna E. Ziegler underscores the special place Gothic art holds in Worringer's inquiries. She writes: '... Gothic for Worringer was a metaphysical and phenomenological metaphor, one that contained and illuminated the intangible, expressive, and spiritual ideas of the Gothic. To frame this within the terms of recent discourse, Worringer saw Gothic architecture as *the* supreme cultural product of the Gothic past and mind.' Joanna E. Ziegler, 'Worringer's Theory of Transcendental Space in Gothic Architecture: A Medievalist's Perspective' in *Invisible Cathedrals: The Expressionist Art History of Wilhelm Worringer*, ed. Neil H. Donahue (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, c.1995), 109. Focusing on Gothic art and conducting a detailed investigation of its history and reflection in Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic* would much exceed the scope of the current inquiry.

<sup>2</sup> In *Abstraction and Empathy*, Worringer had followed, explained, and expanded upon Lipps's distinction between positive and negative empathy. See Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 4-7.

<sup>3</sup> Worringer explains: 'To the polar contrast between empathy and abstraction, which we found applicable to the consideration of art, correspond in the domain of the history of religion and of world views the two concepts of intra-mundaneity (immanence), which is characterised as polytheism or pantheism, and supra-mundaneity (transcendence), which leads over to monotheism.' (Ibid., 101.) Also, ———, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 131-135.

<sup>4</sup> Worringer connects Classicism with European art practices. He notes that the art of Classical epochs is an art of empathy, of adjustment to the world, of immanence, of balance between instinct and understanding. He regards Classicism as having completed its historical trajectory in the time of Kant. For Worringer, the polar opposite of Classical art is non-Classical, transcendental art, as practised in early cultures and in the Orient. Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 123-132. 'Transcendence and Immanence in Art' is included in the third edition of *Abstraction and Empathy* (published in 1910).

Classicism, for Worringer, is persuasively portrayed by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832). As Worringer observes in *Abstraction and Empathy*, Goethe drew attention to the resonance between human beings and the world during Classical times.<sup>5</sup>

Indeed, in 'Ancient and Modern' (1818), Goethe enthusiastically addressed the characteristics of ancient Greek art. He highlighted that art-making depended on its contexts,<sup>6</sup> as well as on the state of mind of the artist at the time of creation.<sup>7</sup> Positing that viewers found pleasure in works of art produced skilfully, without struggle,<sup>8</sup> Goethe held the astute observation of nature in high esteem.<sup>9</sup> Art-making needed to address worthy topics in a nimble yet faultless style, according to Goethe. In his words:

To see distinctly, to apprehend clearly, to impart with facility, — these are the qualities that enchant us; and when we maintain that all these are to be found in the genuine Greek works, united with the noblest subjects, the most unerring and perfect execution, it will be seen why it is we always begin and end with them. Let each one be a Greek in his own way, but let him be a Greek!<sup>10</sup>

For Goethe, ancient Greek art provided a point of reference that needed to be acknowledged for contemporary artistic excellence to be attained. Style (the complex yet personal accounting for the world by means of representation) nevertheless had humble origins according to Goethe:<sup>11</sup> it started from faithful imitation. Explaining the concept of imitation in 'Simple Imitation of Nature, Manner, Style' (1789), Goethe inquired into the positive aspects of the process of imitation. The practice of looking and rendering, as well as the attention dedicated to form and colour, led to accuracy, clarity, diversity and expressive power in art-making, according to Goethe.<sup>12</sup> By means of imitation, he commented, artists learnt to classify and connect forms, eliciting their distinctive particularities. Imitation

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 128.

<sup>6</sup> Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, 'Ancient and Modern' in *Goethe's Literary Essays*, ed. J. E. Spingarn (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1921 [1818]), 65.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 66.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 66-67.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> ———, 'Simple Imitation of Nature, Manner, Style' in *Goethe's Literary Essays*, ed. J. E. Spingarn (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1921 [1789]), 60-62.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 58-59.

supported the articulation of style,<sup>13</sup> which communicated empirical knowledge, denoted the achievement of representational excellence, and commanded admiration.<sup>14</sup> ‘Simple Imitation therefore labours in the ante-chamber that leads to Style’, Goethe remarked.<sup>15</sup> In *Abstraction and Empathy*, Worringer disagrees with the praise of imitation;<sup>16</sup> he regards it as characteristic for art practices of the past (such as the art of Antiquity or the art of Renaissance),<sup>17</sup> but detrimental if exclusively employed by contemporary artists. Arguing against the cultivation of one perspective on art-making only, Worringer writes:

As long as our historical endeavours continue to revolve around the one pole which we call art, but which is in fact only Classical art, our vision will remain restricted and conscious of only one goal. Only at the moment when we reach the pole itself do our eyes become opened, and we perceive the great beyond, that urges us toward the other pole. And the road that lies behind us seems suddenly small and insignificant in comparison with the infinitude that is now unfolded to our gaze.<sup>18</sup>

For Worringer, understanding a given form of art brings along an awareness of different art forms as well. Engaging with one pole of art-making is only a part of the journey involved in the writing of art history, according to Worringer. The picture Worringer draws still places representation and abstraction at opposite standpoints in the landscape of art; however, Worringer presents the unexplored pole as a territory awaiting discovery rather than as an undesirable alternative. Worringer’s readers are indirectly invited to share the writer’s sense of revelation when faced with a less familiar form of art. In ‘Transcendence and Immanence in Art’, the figure of polarity allows Worringer to point beyond polarity.

Worringer employs polar antithesis as well as a subjectivist perspective in the articulation of his argument from *Abstraction and Empathy*. For him (as previous sections have noted), the relationship between the urge to empathy and the urge to abstraction is introduced and described productively by means of antithesis. Subjectivism permits Worringer to combine aesthetic and psychological strands in his research, to adopt (by means of intuition and

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 59-60.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 61-62.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 62.

<sup>16</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 21, 26-29.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 32, 36-37.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 127.

imaginative reconstruction) the standpoint of viewers as well as artists in his writing, to speculate rather than demonstrate beyond doubt, and to favour persuasion. In *Form in Gothic*, Worringer's approach to the writing of art history and theory brings together antithesis and subjectivism once more, proposing an integrated view on their collaboration.

### History and Ego: Worringer's approach

'Historical Methods', the opening chapter of *Form in Gothic*, explains Worringer's theoretical model.<sup>19</sup> Since he considers knowledge to be filtered through Ego, Worringer posits that knowledge is indirect and subjective.<sup>20</sup> He aims to widen the span of knowledge yet maintain a subjectivist perspective; as such, he seeks to expand Ego through '... an ideal

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<sup>19</sup> Worringer, who focuses on generic aspects of art and human experience throughout the ages in *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic*, assumes the perspective of intellectual history, or *Geistesgeschichte*, in his writings. W. Eugene Kleinbauer explains that *Geistesgeschichte* (a division of the history of ideas having evolved from the works of Hegel and nineteenth-century Romantic theories) is an approach to the writing of art history practiced predominantly in Germany since the second half of the nineteenth century. Wilhelm Dilthey, Max Dvořák and Erwin Panofsky are key figures of *Geistesgeschichte*, according to Kleinbauer; Dilthey, for example, considers that knowledge arises when a human being develops generic views on the world, or *Weltanschauungen*. For Dilthey, knowledge is produced not through intellect, but through 'living experience'. Worringer, who writes after Dilthey, and who must have been familiar with Dilthey's work, aims to provide a 'living interpretation' to art in *Form in Gothic*, as this section further explains. Indeed, the works of Worringer exhibit the qualities as well as the shortcomings of *Geistesgeschichte*. Worringer approaches art in an intuitive and engaged manner, emphasizing the connections between objects, feelings and ideas, yet does not provide specific information on artists and their works. Kleinbauer describes *Geistesgeschichte* practices as follows: 'The history of ideas examines works of art as documents and illustrations of prevailing unit-ideas or idea complexes, for which reason the method possesses great value. At its best, the method reveals how ideas were understood systematically and clearly by artists and how they are embodied (or rejected) in their works. But the gain in our grasp of the intellectual attitudes of artists represents a loss in our grasp of the distinctive aesthetic qualities that characterise their individual works. The history of ideas treats the visual arts not as art but as intellectual phenomena. It clouds an understanding of the significance of art as art. At the same time, the method reminds us of the function of art history as a humanistic discipline: to try to understand, intellectually, the visual arts as products in time and space. To this end, the history of ideas can make, and indeed has made, a substantial contribution. See W. Eugène Kleinbauer, 'Geistesgeschichte and Art History', *Art Journal*, 30, No. 2, 1970-1971, 148-153. I wish to thank Neil Donahue for drawing my attention to Kleinbauer's article, as well as to its relevance with regard to Worringer's methods of inquiry. On the topic of *Geistesgeschichte*, also see August K. Wiedmann, *The German Quest for Primal Origins in Art, Culture and Politics 1900-1933* (Lewiston: E. Mellen Press, c. 1995), 3, 224-227, 230-231. (Wiedmann points to the empathetic, reader-oriented style of argument employed in early twentieth-century writings, which aimed to engage the emotions and imagination of the public. Wiedmann cites Dilthey with regard to the role of emotion in the writing of history. According to Wiedmann, Dilthey argues: 'We need a *felt* history as a foundation, for the mind on its own... knocks in vain at the doors of the past.')

<sup>20</sup> The capitalization of the word 'Ego' acquires theoretical resonance in Herbert Read's translation of Worringer's text. The term 'Ego' points to Worringer's intensified attention to the subjective aspects of his approach.

auxiliary construction of purely antithetical application'.<sup>21</sup> This construct emerges, Worringer explains, from a duplication of Ego. One part of the construct is a positive Ego (which offers a firm basis of inquiry); the second part of Worringer's construct is the ideal, theoretical, imaginary double of the Ego: its opposite pole, its direct antithesis.

Addressing the history of art from the perspectives of both these aspects of Ego, Worringer aims to incorporate opposite viewpoints in his writings, and to attain greater reliability than when examining externally provided data. Since it is bound to assume a positive as well as a negative shape in *Form in Gothic*, the concept of Ego as introduced by Worringer attempts to supersede subjective limitations, thus reaching towards objectivity and generality. The concept of Ego allows Worringer to assert the only inquiry standpoint that he considers both valid and immediately available to him as a historian and theoretician of art. His implicit pessimism with regard to human knowledge (which also surfaces in his interpretation of abstraction) echoes Schopenhauer's thoughts on will and its manifestations in the world.

For Schopenhauer, will – the force that gives the world its reality, and the only core of every phenomenon –<sup>22</sup> sets its own manifestations in opposition, creating situations of conflict, competition, and continuous change in the world. Schopenhauer recognizes the workings of will at all levels of existence. Life, according to Schopenhauer, is animated by relentless struggle aimed towards the self-assertion of opposing parties. In his words:

Every grade of the will's objectification fights for the matter, the space and the time of another. Persistent matter must constantly change the form, since, under the guidance of causality, mechanical, physical, chemical, and organic phenomena, eagerly striving to appear, snatch the matter from one another, for each wishes to reveal its own Idea... Yet this strife itself is only the revelation of that variance with itself that is essential to the will.<sup>23</sup>

When duplicating Ego and proposing to set its negative and positive aspects in dialogue, Worringer replicates the process of relating Schopenhauer observes in a world guided by will. Accepting implicitly Schopenhauer's assertion that struggle and opposition are characteristic

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<sup>21</sup> Worringer and Read, *Form in Gothic*, 2-3.

<sup>22</sup> Schopenhauer and Payne, *The World as Will and Representation*, 118.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 146-147.

for existence in the world, Worringer thus designs an inquiry where knowing emerges from the dialogue between protagonist and antagonist Ego facets. In his pursuit of a radical form of truth, Worringer confronts Ego with its imaginary opposite by highlighting a point of view and then accounting for its very antithesis. Paradoxically, in its own terms, Worringer's perspective thus becomes both self-reliant and inclusive.

The vital qualities of writing are important for Worringer. *Abstraction and Empathy* signals Worringer's preoccupation with accounting for aspects of a history of feeling about the world; following from it, *Form in Gothic* draws attention to Worringer's intention to provide a dynamic view on art. In *Form in Gothic*, the gaze of Worringer remains focused on emotion, not only as made visible in art, but also as re-presented through his writing. Duplicating Ego and placing its aspects in antithesis must lead to '... a living interpretation',<sup>24</sup> according to him. In other words, Worringer seeks to articulate an inquiry that brings actuality to his topics, that makes his subject-matter engaging. The role of Worringer as an interpreter of art thus comes to the fore, in accordance with his subjectivist intentions. To experience, imagine, and persuade become Worringer's primary self-assigned responsibilities in *Form in Gothic*.

Worringer's process of interpretation reveals its workings in his discussion of Northern ornament. For Worringer, Northern line is intensely vital – even more so when encountering obstacles.<sup>25</sup> After describing the moments of pause and acceleration of Northern line, Worringer explains that he approaches it as an expression of the process of art-making. In the words of Worringer: 'For here, too, we ascribe to the line as expression the sensation of the process of its execution felt afterwards at the moment of its apperception.'<sup>26</sup> Worringer observes and articulates his sensations in response to the rhythm of line. As in Lipps' *Aesthetics*, apperception involves sensations, feelings, inner reflection and understanding;<sup>27</sup> it is a process specific to the urge to empathy for Worringer as well as Lipps.<sup>28</sup> The interpretive approach practiced by Worringer thus reveals its consciously empathic component.

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<sup>24</sup> Worringer and Read, *Form in Gothic*, 4.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> Lipps, *Estetica. Psihologia Frumosului și a Artei*, 30.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 132-135. Also, Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 7.

In his writings, Worringer seeks to communicate the dynamism and urgency of his inner experiencing. He brings forward the processes he feels were at work at the time of art-making, drawing attention to form and its intuited engendering. His interpretations animate rather than monumentalize art; however, the benefits of this process reflect less onto the discussed artworks themselves than onto Worringer's own engaging style and argument. In *Form in Gothic* as in *Abstraction and Empathy*, Worringer's attention is primarily devoted to the defence of his point of view and its exemplification throughout history. A gap thus emerges between art and Worringer's approach to writing about it.<sup>29</sup> Emphasizing inner experience, Worringer's texts meet the conditions of creativity sooner than the requirements of scientific research.

### Interplay in naturalism

As we have seen, Worringer theorizes his approach to opposition in *Form in Gothic*, explicitly assigning to antithesis the role of method of inquiry. Nevertheless, Worringer continues to point to the interplay between elements that, according to his thought from *Abstraction and Empathy*, could be considered antithetic. He observes the opposition and interplay of imitative and creative impulses in naturalism, for instance,<sup>30</sup> distinguishing between the imitative impulse and the artistic, or creative, impulse. However, when naturalism approaches actuality, he points to the rapprochement of these opposites.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Dittrich also signals the difference between the actual history of art and Worringer's reading and writing of art history. See Dittrich, 'A Life of Matter and Death: Inorganic Life in Worringer, Deleuze and Guattari', 245.

<sup>30</sup> Worringer and Read, *Form in Gothic*, 19. As he had explained in *Abstraction and Empathy*, Worringer sees imitation to be distinct from naturalism. See Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 11-13, 21, 26-33.

<sup>31</sup> Worringer operates a distinction between naturalism and actuality in *Form in Gothic*. Read's translation of Worringer's words points to the possible – though unmentioned – influence of Hegel on Worringer's thought. In his *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807), Hegel explains that philosophy focuses on determining the actual. Hegel defines actuality as living self-statement and activity, not equivalent to nature and not necessarily bound to objects. In Hegel's words, the actual is '... that which posits itself and is alive within itself – existence within its own Notion. It is the process which begets and traverses its own moments, and this whole movement constitutes what is positive [in it] and its truth... Appearance is the arising and the passing away that does not itself arise and pass away, but is "in itself" [i. e., subsists intrinsically], and constitutes the actuality and the movement of the life of truth.' See Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Arnold V. Miller, and J. N. Findlay, *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977 [1807]), 7, 11, 13, 27. In *Form in Gothic*, Worringer's use of the term 'actuality' is similar to Hegel's; it is also anticipated by Worringer's earlier statement that the work of art stands

Although he notes that urges to imitation and urges to artistic creativity may come to coexist in naturalist art, Worringer regards their simultaneous manifestation with anxiety. In his words: ‘... [T]he closer naturalism comes to actuality – without being in any way identical with it – the nearer in that case also the imitative impulse and artistic impulse approach the one to the other, and the danger of confounding the two becomes almost unavoidable.’<sup>32</sup> Worringer’s comment reveals his unease regarding the manifestation of interplay in naturalist art. A state of interplay between opposites may bring along a loss of differentiation, he observes. Seen as threatening, the absence of differentiation could signal the absence, inapplicability, or obsolescence of boundaries, not to mention antithetic separations. And if the effectiveness of antithesis were to be questioned, a shadow of doubt would inevitably be cast upon Worringer’s own methodological choices.<sup>33</sup>

### **Interplay in the Gothic art of Northern Europe: memory, assimilation, interpolation**

Worringer expresses his reserve towards abstract-representational (creative-imitative) interplay in naturalist art; nevertheless, he continues to address interplay throughout *Form in Gothic*. For instance, he inquires into the meeting of abstraction and representation in the pre-Renaissance art of Northern Europe.

The Gothic art of Northern Europe appears as the main historical and geographical site of interplay in Worringer’s *Form in Gothic*. Memory-based linear representations of animals lead to abstract-representational interplay in Gothic art, according to him. While Gothic

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apart from nature and is unconnected to it (Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 3.). However, nature is not actuality for Worringer. In *Form in Gothic*, Worringer clarifies his understanding of the term ‘actuality’ while drawing an intuitive psychological profile for the medieval Northerner. Worringer writes: ‘The outer world offered him [i. e., Northern man,] only confused interpretations of actuality. He grasped these impressions with all their details quite accurately: but their mere material imitation had not, so far, had any artistic significance for him, for it had not freed any one single impression of actuality from the universal fluctuating sequence of appearances; objective imitation first became art when these impressions of actuality were combined with intensified intellectual complexes of expression.’ (Worringer and Read, *Form in Gothic*, 62.) According to Worringer, actuality can be extracted from appearance by means of intellectual and expressive input; only then can imitation become art.

<sup>32</sup> Worringer and Read, *Form in Gothic*, 19.

<sup>33</sup> Worringer’s discomfort with regard to the semantic coverage of the term ‘interplay’ also informs his comments on Northern ornament. He mentions that interplay in Gothic art should not be understood as associated with playfulness, but rather as connected with metaphysic content. (Ibid., 39.)

representations of animals retain a generic resemblance with animals as observed in the world, Worringer notes that the actual species having inspired Northern designs is problematic to identify.<sup>34</sup> In Gothic art, according to Worringer, animal figures seem to have made the subject of observation, yet are rendered as abstractions. Representation can thus become a process supportive of abstract-oriented art-making in Gothic, as Worringer underscores.

Gothic style provides historical and artistic support for many of Worringer's analyses of interplay. Like representation and abstraction, representational-abstract interplay emerges from specific forms of response to environment for Worringer. The psychological responses of Northern artists to their surroundings lead to the shaping of Gothic style; yet Worringer points to the distance Northern artists take from the rendition of environment. Pondering upon the liberating effect of art-making that develops independently from environment and senses in the Northern European context, Worringer writes:

... to Northern man, fettered as he was to a chaotic picture of actuality, the merging into such a world [i. e., a world of super-sensuous spiritual expression] must have been an ecstatic liberation. His artistic adjustment to the world could, therefore, only aim at assimilating the objects of the outer world to his specific language of line, that is to say, at interpolating them into this activity intensified and increased to its highest point of expression.<sup>35</sup>

Processes such as assimilation and interpolation embody the response of Northern artists to their contexts, Worringer notes. Since, according to him, artistic expression encapsulates the feelings of artists about the world,<sup>36</sup> a situation where representation-reliant and abstraction-oriented elements meet could perhaps appear as harmonious. However, Worringer points out that liberation from the struggles of life could only be attained through abstraction. Northern artists accept their surroundings, yet still seek to be free from their oppression; as such, they introduce representations of beings and objects in otherwise abstract, linear works of art.

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 59-60.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 62.

<sup>36</sup> The connection between art and the expression of feeling is one of the main points of continuity between *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic*. See Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 5-8.

Assimilation – a formal process – leads to the inclusion of representational elements in abstract contexts, Worringer explains, while interpolation – the visible result of assimilation – reveals the presence of observational elements in abstraction-oriented art.

Worringer also finds assimilation at work in ‘primitive’ (or prehistoric) times.<sup>37</sup> ‘Primitive’ creators begin by eliciting key characteristics of the world of appearances; Worringer explains that representational yet modified elements are then brought to contribute to a language of line free of reference to embodiment or expression. He also notices assimilation in Classical art, where it manifests as the communion between people and their world. In Classicism, Worringer muses, people and place are at one, assimilated to each other, and coexisting in harmony.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Worringer and Read, *Form in Gothic*, 18.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 22.

## Schiller, Worringer, interplay

*Form in Gothic* also explores the interplay of representational and abstract qualities as observed by Worringer in Greek art. In ‘The Principle of Classical Architecture’,<sup>1</sup> Worringer explains that the will to form specific to Greek architecture is the transformation of abstract, inorganic constructions into lifelike presences.<sup>2</sup> Keeping the temples of ancient Greece in mind, Worringer notes that their architecture seeks to reconcile opposite forces by reference to the organic world.<sup>3</sup> Ionic temples, for instance, make visible organic characteristics despite their tectonic, earth-bound, inorganic support. Contrasting Doric and Ionic temples, Worringer writes:

The structural limitations of the Doric temple and the consequent compression of its general proportions certainly make it ponderous, but they also give it its unequal solemnity and majestic aloofness. In the Ionic style everything is lighter, more flowing, more vital, more supple, more humanly approachable. What is lost in structural gravity is gained in expressive cheerfulness. All restraint due to the demands of the material itself, that is to say, due to structural laws, has vanished: the stone is made completely sensuous, is replete with organic life, and all restraints which constitute the power and grandeur of the Doric style are as it were playfully overridden. The Doric temple presents itself to us as a sublime drama, the Ionic as an exhilarating play of free energies.<sup>4</sup>

Associating Doric architecture with abstract qualities of form, Worringer sees the inclusion of and preference for organic characteristics come to the fore in Ionic style. A modulation of abstract features, and de-emphasis of structure as such, can be encountered in Ionic architecture, according to him. Signalling the element of play in Ionic architectural style, Worringer notes its organic aspect, nevertheless pointing to its abstract, tectonic fundament.

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., 88-103.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 92.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 94.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 103.

In *Form in Gothic* as in *Abstraction and Empathy*, Worringer resorts to the thought of Goethe in order to highlight the key characteristics of Greek antiquity and Classicism.<sup>5</sup> Worringer emphasizes the connection observed by Goethe between art and nature, between human beings and their environment in ancient Greece. Indeed, to Friedrich Schiller (1759-1805), one of Goethe's closest friends, Goethe appeared as significantly and beneficially influenced by Greek art and culture. Writing to Goethe in 1794 (the year when their correspondence began), Schiller admiringly points out to him:

Had you been born a Greek..., and had a choice Nature and an idealising Art surrounded you from your cradle, your path would have been infinitely shortened. Then would you, on the first contemplation of things, have seized the form of the Absolute, and with your first experience would the great art of representation have developed itself in you. But, being born a German, and your Grecian spirit having been cast in this northern creation, there was left to you no other choice, but either become a Northern Artist, or, by the help of the power of thought, to supply to your imagination that which reality withheld from it, and thus, from *within* outwardly and through a reasoning process, to create as a Greek.<sup>6</sup>

Schiller, focusing on Goethe's pathway in German culture, highlights the cultural leap Goethe took in his cultivation of a Greek model of thought. Around the turn of the nineteenth century, the culture of Greece appeared removed from the immediate interests of Schiller's contemporaries. Yet by the time of the publication of *Abstraction and Empathy*, Worringer was criticising a reversed situation: Greek influence had become predominant to the point of effacing modes of research and art-making that questioned its framework.

In 1797, three years after his early letter of praise to Goethe, Schiller underscored the effort of German writers to elicit the key features of Greek art; according to him, his peers intended to employ such features as a standard of beauty. Schiller was critical towards the excesses of this process, which he regarded as too reliant on reason.<sup>7</sup> He disapproved of the attention his

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<sup>5</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 115, 128, 138. Also, Worringer and Read, *Form in Gothic*, 21, 32.

<sup>6</sup> Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Friedrich Schiller, and George H. Calvert, *Correspondence between Schiller and Goethe from 1794 to 1805* (New York and London: Wiley and Putnam, 1845), 5.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 280.

contemporaries lent to subject-matter when articulating their judgments regarding beauty; according to him, beauty also had to be sought in artistic approaches as such.<sup>8</sup> Wishing that beauty had no longer been a term of reference, Schiller commented that truth, in the most generic sense of the term, should make the preferred topic of inquiry in aesthetics.

Schiller's comments followed his earlier explorations of aesthetics from *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* (1794), an inquiry that took the form of a series of letters. Slow in the making, as Schiller mentioned to Goethe,<sup>9</sup> *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* connects psychological and aesthetic preoccupations, and draws attention to the necessity of bridging the sensuous and formal drives by means of the play drive.

Like Schopenhauer and Riegl, Schiller inquires into the role played by aesthetics in human life in *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*. Schiller shares with Schopenhauer a declared interest in the philosophy of Kant.<sup>10</sup> Yet the cognitive and systematic components of Schiller's inquiry come to support his social and relational interests. Where Kant focuses on an ample, systematic investigation of mind and cognition in his *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (1790), Schiller's letters examine psychological and social dynamics with the intent of bringing clarity to self-understanding, as well as to the relations between human beings, their social contexts and the wider world.

Schiller and Worringer articulate decisive oppositions. For Schiller, human beings must bring into accord two opposite laws that stress absolute reality, and absolute formality respectively. Schiller explains in his 'Eleventh Letter' that the law of absolute reality requires human beings to manifest their potential and to provide materiality to form. On the other hand, he observes that the law of absolute formality demands that human beings transcend materiality and find harmony in a world of changes.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 281.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>10</sup> Friedrich Schiller, Elizabeth M. Wilkinson, and L. A. Willoughby, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man, in a Series of Letters* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1967 [1794]), 3. To Schiller's letter, Goethe replied on 27 August 1794 from Ettersburg: 'For my birth-day, which falls in this week, no more agreeable present could have come to me than your letter, in which, with a friendly hand, you give the sum of my existence, and through your sympathy, encourage me to a more assiduous and active use of my powers.' Goethe, Schiller, and Calvert, *Correspondence between Schiller and Goethe from 1794 to 1805*, 7.

<sup>11</sup> Schiller, Wilkinson, and Willoughby, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man, in a Series of Letters*, 77.

Reality and form also range among Worringer's main topics of inquiry in *Abstraction and Empathy*. For Worringer, the urge to empathy connects human beings to reality, while the urge to abstraction (which signals the search of human beings for the absolute) emphasizes a tendency towards transcending reality.<sup>12</sup> Yet, unlike Schiller, Worringer highlights the oppositional aspects of the relationship between human beings and their environment in the case of the urge to abstraction, while Schiller finds that harmony is the ultimate goal of the law of absolute formality.

However, the commonalities between the approaches of Schiller and Worringer become increasingly apparent as Schiller develops his argument in *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*. Placing the sensuous drive and the formal drive in antithesis in his 'Twelfth Letter', Schiller shows that the sensuous drive ties human beings to physical form, matter, time, changes and particularities. He continues by explaining that the formal drive can be considered as generative of laws and supportive of morality. Before him, Kant had also distinguished between the activity of senses (which he regarded to be influential in the empirical judgment of taste) and the interest in form (made visible, according to him, in the pure judgment of taste).<sup>13</sup> Both the beauty of purposeless forms and the sublime of formless natural manifestations could be associated with moral feeling for Kant.<sup>14</sup> Aesthetics could provide support in matters of ethics, according to Kant and Schiller.

During his examination of the forces that shape human behaviour, Schiller bestows the same degree of attention as Kant onto constructing theoretical demonstrations of general validity. Instead, Worringer's inquiry becomes increasingly specific and subjectivist as he develops his argument in *Abstraction and Empathy*.<sup>15</sup> His explorations, as previous sections have highlighted, rely on antithesis as an organizational method.

Antithesis plays an equally significant role in *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*. However, Schiller is more open to the interplay of opposites than Worringer in *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic*. For instance, in his 'Fourteenth Letter,' Schiller argues that the

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<sup>12</sup>Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 16-17.

<sup>13</sup>Kant and Guyer, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, 108. See § 14: 'Elucidation by means of examples'.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., 150-151. See 'General remark on the exposition of aesthetic reflective judgments'.

<sup>15</sup>Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 4. Worringer differentiates his inquiry from the objectively oriented writings of Kant, Hegel or Schopenhauer by establishing a subjective viewpoint of investigation.

sensuous drive and the formal drive require each other, and set boundaries to each other's activity. For Schiller, sensuous-formal antithesis ultimately place senses and form in interplay.<sup>16</sup> He considers the possibility of a simultaneous and conscious experiencing of the formal and sensuous drives. He ponders:

Should there, however, be cases in which he [i. e., the human being] were to have this twofold experience simultaneously, in which he were to be at once conscious of his freedom and sensible of his existence, were, at one and the same time, to feel himself matter and come to know himself as mind, then he would in such cases, and in such cases only, have a complete intuition of his human nature, and the object which afforded him this vision would become for him a symbol of his accomplished destiny and, in consequence (since that is only to be attained in the totality of time), serve him as a manifestation of the Infinite.<sup>17</sup>

According to Schiller, if the antithetic sensuous and formal drives were to be experienced simultaneously and consciously, they would connect feeling and knowing, matter and mind. Schiller accepts that the integration of opposites can take place in response to an object; he considers that such an object would then become a materialized reminder of an experience beyond time and human limitations. In his 'Fourteenth Letter,' Schiller thus provides a sketch for the psychological field of interplay between opposite drives.<sup>18</sup>

The integration of the sensuous and formal drives generates the play drive for Schiller. He regards the play drive as distinct from the sensuous and formal drives respectively, and as opposite to them. Schiller employs antithesis to define and ascribe a specific field to the play drive, much like he had done for the sensuous drive and the formal drive. (Worringer does not assign the same degree of theoretical attention to interplay in *Abstraction and Empathy*.) Schiller sees the play drive as a psychological tendency that brings harmony to the action of antithetic elements. In his words:

The play drive, in consequence, as the one in which both the others act in concert, will exert upon the psyche at once a moral and a physical constraint: it will, therefore,

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<sup>16</sup> Schiller, Wilkinson, and Willoughby, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man, in a Series of Letters*, 95.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 95-99.

since it annuls all contingency, annul all constraint too, and set man free both physically and morally... It will therefore, just because it makes both [i. e., both sense-drive and form-drive] contingent, and because with all constraint all contingency too disappears, abolish contingency in both, and, as a result, introduce form into matter and reality into form. To the extent that it deprives feelings and passions of their dynamic power, it will bring them into harmony with the ideas of reason; and to the extent that it deprives the laws of reason of their moral compulsion, it will reconcile them with the interests of the senses.<sup>19</sup>

The play drive, Schiller explains, sets human beings free by cancelling chance as well as restrictions, the extremes of emotional pressure as well as the obligations imposed by reason. According to him, the play drive balances opposites; it provides a middle ground for matter (or reality) and form, for feelings and reason, for senses and law; it excludes psychological extremes, and fosters harmony and the development of interconnections.

Demonstrating that the play drive balances embodied senses and abstract form, Schiller readdresses their opposition and provides a theoretical solution for the achievement of personal and social harmony. Worringer also keeps in mind the continuity between form and embodied experience in *Form in Gothic*, yet, given his subjectivist perspective, refers to inner value rather than to senses and embodiment. For instance, he points to the goal of research conducted from a psychological-formal perspective. In his words: ‘... [T]he true psychology of form begins when the formal value is shown to be the accurate expression of the inner value, in such a way that duality of form and content ceases to exist.’<sup>20</sup> Connecting personal experience with its formal rendering is an important aspect of the psychological interpretation of form for Worringer. However, Worringer focuses on the intuitive correctness of interpretation rather than on the articulation of generically valid principles in *Form in Gothic*. Worringer addresses interplay as actively as Schiller, yet does so by underscoring its problematic nature, and its inner differentiation.

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 97-99.

<sup>20</sup> Worringer and Read, *Form in Gothic*, 7.

### **Interplay: a dual, hybrid state in Gothic art**

For Worringer as for Schiller, interplay occurs where strongly articulated opposite tendencies find common ground. Schiller considers that aesthetics can reconcile feelings and reason, laws and senses in *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*. In his turn, Worringer observes the meeting of abstract and representational tendencies in Gothic art; he addresses representational-abstract interplay without sacrificing his methodological reliance on antithesis. Having explored the empathic aspects of the predominantly abstract Gothic style in *Abstraction and Empathy*,<sup>1</sup> Worringer continues his analysis of the vital, organic features of Gothic abstraction in *Form in Gothic*. For Schiller – an admirer of Goethe’s allegiances to Greek culture – the exuberance of Gothic style belonged to the past.<sup>2</sup> Worringer, unlike Schiller, defends Gothic art in his writings: he focuses on its distinctive characteristics, interprets them psychologically, and brings them to life for early twentieth-century readers.

Gothic art combines abstract linearity and organic vitality, pre-Renaissance and Classical ornamental styles, Worringer observes in *Form in Gothic*. He notes the interweaving of formal, psychological, and historical elements in Gothic. Northern Gothic provides a significant opportunity to observe the interplay of abstraction and representation, according to Worringer. In his words:

We see that, in spite of its abstract linear character, Northern ornament gives rise to the impression of vitality, which our own vital feeling, necessarily projecting itself into the object of perception, would *immediately* attribute solely to the organic world. This ornament seems therefore to unite the abstract character of primitive geometrical ornament with the vital character of Classical ornament, with its organic complexion. But this is not the case. It can in no way claim to represent a synthesis, a union of these elementary contrary principles; it would be more correct to describe it as a hybrid phenomenon. This is not a case of the harmonious interpenetration of two

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<sup>1</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 106-121.

<sup>2</sup> Schiller, Wilkinson, and Willoughby, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man, in a Series of Letters*, 201. Schiller’s comment on Gothic style is embedded into a pointed remark directed towards the art critics of his time. With regard to the nostalgic opinions expressed by some of these critics, Schiller writes: ‘They regret the sincerity, soundness, and solidity of former times; but they would like to see reintroduced with these the uncouthness and bluntness of primitive manners, the heavy awkwardness of ancient forms, and the lost exuberance of a Gothick Age.’ For Schiller, the vitality of Gothic does not seem to belong in the context and with the values of the late eighteenth century.

opposite tendencies, but of an impure, and to a certain extent uncanny, amalgamation of them, a requisition of our capacity for empathy (which is bound up with organic rhythm) for an abstract world which is alien to it.<sup>3</sup>

Worringer recognizes the vitality of Gothic style, an abstract-oriented mode of expression that can nevertheless generate empathic responses. Yet Worringer explains that vitality (a feature of representational art) and abstraction are not united, or synthesized, in Gothic art. His approach to the meeting of opposites differs from Schiller's ultimately harmonizing views. For Worringer, the opposite urges that animate Gothic style rather articulate a hybrid compound, where they remain simultaneously active. The 'amalgamation' Worringer had considered specific to the meeting of representation and abstraction in *Abstraction and Empathy* preserves its binary particularity in *Form in Gothic*.

Having anxiously noted the proximity of the imitation impulse and artistic impulse in naturalist art, Worringer remarks the Gothic style to be an aggregate of antithetic characteristics: organic vitality and abstract line, lifelike animation and geometry. Duality characterizes Gothic art for Worringer. He summarizes:

And thus we reach the specifically dual, or rather the hybrid, effect of the whole of Gothic art: on the one hand, the most acute direct comprehension of actuality, on the other hand, a super-actual, fantastic play of line, uncontrolled by any object, vitalized only by its own specific expression. The whole development of the Gothic art of representation is determined by this counterplay and interplay [*Gegen- und Ineinanderspiel*].<sup>4</sup>

Gothic art, according to Worringer, is a field of counterplay and interplay for opposite characteristics; counterplay (a form of antithesis) emphasizes the distinctive features of opposites, while interplay allows for their coexistence. Much like in *Abstraction and Empathy*, Worringer highlights the representational as well as abstract characteristics of Gothic art, repeatedly focusing on their dynamic interaction. The state of play between

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<sup>3</sup> Worringer and Read, *Form in Gothic*, 40-41.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

antithetic elements can lead to their union in Schiller's view.<sup>5</sup> Instead, Worringer prefers to acknowledge the differentiations as well as common ground of opposites, while placing oppositional differentiations in the limelight of his research.

The complexity of Worringer's approach is illuminated in 'Transcendence and Immanence in Art'. Added by Worringer to *Abstraction and Empathy* in 1910,<sup>6</sup> this article reflects on knowledge from a perspective that implicitly accounts for both antithesis and interplay. Worringer notes that, while the antithesis of objectivism and subjectivism cannot apply to Classical art, different epochs can operate only antithetically.<sup>7</sup> For Worringer, the writing of art history needs to involve intuition in the examination of will as made visible in artworks. Worringer rhetorically (if excessively) defends the role of intuition in art historical investigations, and explains that Classicism is only one landmark in writing the history and theory of art.<sup>8</sup>

With reference to art historical interpretation, Worringer explains that to know phenomena means to have become aware of the fluidity of limitations. According to him: 'Our knowledge of phenomena is complete only when it has reached that point at which everything which seemed to be a boundary becomes a transition, and we suddenly become aware of the relativity of the whole.'<sup>9</sup> In the context of *Abstraction and Empathy*, Worringer's observation is certainly unusual, since it promises to question the antithesis he articulated between the urge to empathy and the urge to abstraction, and between modes of art-making.

However, Worringer's analysis of art-making from ancient times to Renaissance, his discussion of processes such as gradation, displacement, transposition, assimilation, interpolation, and his approach to Gothic art in particular, had already drawn attention to a pervasive feature of his inquiry: namely, to Worringer's dynamic approach to his own key statements. In 'Transcendence and Immanence in Art', Worringer confirms he is not interested in positing an idea without testing its boundaries. He further explores this method of writing art history in *Form in Gothic*, where he affirms that opposites such as

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<sup>5</sup> Schiller, Wilkinson, and Willoughby, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man, in a Series of Letters*, 100-109.

<sup>6</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, xv.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 125-126.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 127.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 126.

representational and abstract elements coexist, without losing their respective identities, in Gothic art. The concept of hybridity allows Worringer to approach art from a perspective that accounts for the antithesis as well as for the interplay of its elements. Highlighting one side only of key issues is insufficient for Worringer; his subjectivist perspective often brings to the fore the attention he pays to his readership. With his readers in mind, Worringer may account for perspectives opposite to his own in *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic*.

## Part 5: Interplay in painting

### Worringer, his contemporaries, and early twentieth-century art-making

#### in *Abstraction and Empathy*

Worringer seeks to distinguish his argument from current art historical and theoretical practices, and does so by means of critical inquiry;<sup>1</sup> nevertheless, his writing reveals the attention Worringer bestows on his public. To diminish the distance between him and his readers, Worringer relies on rhetoric in ‘Transcendence and Immanence in Art’; he employs the first person plural when referring to contemporary aesthetic research, as well as to its difficult relationship with the writing of art history. According to him: ‘Any deeper inquiry into the nature of our scientific aesthetics must lead to the realisation that, measured against actual works of art, its applicability is extremely limited.’<sup>2</sup> ‘[O]ur scientific aesthetics’ thus becomes a phrase of considerable ambiguity,<sup>3</sup> since Worringer starts his demonstration from *Abstraction and Empathy* by pointing to the insufficiency of contemporary aesthetic methods, and by mentioning he intends to pursue an alternative line of research.<sup>4</sup> Yet the first person plural allows Worringer to create a sense of shared cultural context, where, by implication, his views and the perspectives of his opponents are equally welcome.<sup>5</sup> As a contributor to the cultural debates of his time, Worringer thus claims his place in a context where Classicism is still favoured. Hence his remark: ‘Our aesthetics is nothing more than a psychology of the Classical feeling for art.’<sup>6</sup>

Yet Worringer’s critical perspective regarding the contemporary approach to Classicism surfaces unambiguously when he addresses the widespread reliance of contemporary

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<sup>1</sup> For instance, Worringer stands against the materialist views of Gottfried Semper (1803-79), and takes distance from the perspective Lipps has on empathy. *Ibid.*, 4-9.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.

<sup>3</sup> Worringer also writes in unison with his contemporaries when addressing current opinion regarding stylistic distortion, the definition of art, or the capacity to empathise with abstract form. (*Ibid.*, 124, 132, 137.)

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>5</sup> Worringer addresses the thoughts of Carl Vinnen, an opponent of internationalism in art, in an integrative manner in ‘The Historical Development of Modern Art’. According to Worringer: ‘Vinnen’s brochure is entirely understandable to me, psychologically, and I don’t hesitate to regard it as a symptomatic phenomenon. I even welcome it as a timely call for an honest discussion of principles. The crisis in which we find our conceptions and our expectations of art cannot be kept quiet: it must lead to open and decisive discussion.’ ———, ‘The Historical Development of Modern Art’, 10.

<sup>6</sup> ———, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 123.

aesthetics and psychology on Classical values.<sup>7</sup> For him, his contemporaries demonstrate the psychological tendencies and aesthetic preferences that he associates with Classicism.<sup>8</sup> Aesthetics may incline towards Greek Classical art, Worringer comments in *Abstraction and Empathy*, but contemporary art gravitates towards different epochs. For instance, Worringer notes the preference of his generation for the Italian *Quattrocento* – a period he nevertheless describes in negative terms. This fifteenth-century approach to art-making appears to Worringer as inquisitive yet uncertain, emphatic in its realism, and prone to error.<sup>9</sup> Yet Worringer seems to favour the *Cinquecento* even less, due to its austerity.<sup>10</sup> His responses to the *Quattrocento* and *Cinquecento* indirectly remind his readers that abstraction and representation are also approached critically in *Abstraction and Empathy*.

When discussing the art of the *Quattrocento*, Worringer also casts a pessimistic glance towards the current state of humanity. His contemporaries appear to him to distrust the pursuit of knowledge, which, as previous sections have underscored, is associated by Worringer with the heritage of Classicism.<sup>11</sup> He observes: ‘Having slipped down from the pride of knowledge, man is now just as lost and helpless *vis-à-vis* the world-picture as primitive man’.<sup>12</sup> This state of mind reflects in art practices where Worringer notices the predominance of confusion, complication, heterogeneity and diversity. Such a panorama of artistic approaches is difficult to address, he comments – except through the differentiation of otherwise comparable tendencies.<sup>13</sup>

To distinguish between artistic tendencies plays a particularly important role for Worringer. According to him, similar approaches to art-making may have substantially different points of emergence;<sup>14</sup> Worringer examines the difference between naturalism (or representation) and imitation in this respect.<sup>15</sup> He mentions that he appreciates the capacity of contemporary artists to differentiate between comparable modes of making art.<sup>16</sup> Distinctions can be traced,

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 123-124.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 28-29.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 29. The *Cinquecento* is an Italian approach to art-making during the sixteenth century.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 102.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 26-27.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 27-33.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 26-27.

Worringer suggests, by inquiring whether art is the reflection of inner experience.<sup>17</sup> Artistic feelings and intuition play key roles in Worringer's views on art-making. If artists do not heed their inner voice, Worringer notes, art comes to rely on imitation. He criticizes post-Renaissance art precisely because he sees in it the predominance of imitation, and the suppression of personal perspective.<sup>18</sup> According to him, genuine creative drive is lost in his day as well –<sup>19</sup> namely, during a time when Classicism appears to provide art-making its norms.

However, the criticism Worringer directs towards contemporary art does not prevent him from inquiring into its methods. He observes that the process of amalgamating representational and crystalline (inorganic, geometric, abstract) elements is specific to the art-making of his time, as well as to the art of ancient Egypt.<sup>20</sup> At its core, early twentieth-century art brings together representation and abstraction, Worringer explains; it then makes the coexistence of representation and abstraction visible from within, and manifests it outwardly.<sup>21</sup> Formal regularity and the surfacing of empathic tendencies reveal abstract-representational interplay; Worringer considers the early twentieth-century abstract-representational amalgamation 'discreet and purified'.<sup>22</sup>

Although Worringer does not address early twentieth-century art-making extensively in either *Abstraction and Empathy* or *Form in Gothic*, he notes that the abstract-oriented works of a painter such as Ferdinand Hodler confuse the modern public. In his words from *Abstraction and Empathy*: 'One need only call to mind, for example, how bewildered even an artistically trained modern public is by such a phenomenon as Hodler, to name only one of a thousand instances. This bewilderment clearly reveals how very much we are accustomed to look upon beauty and truth to nature as a precondition of the artistically beautiful.'<sup>23</sup> Worringer also

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 74.

<sup>20</sup> Worringer looks at the meeting between abstraction and representation when addressing specific art periods and cultures, as this thesis has shown.

<sup>21</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 43.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. It is not clear what kind of art-making Worringer has in mind when commenting on contemporary abstract-representational interplay, yet the reader of *Abstraction and Empathy* may wish to refer to the early twentieth-century works of Ferdinand Hodler (an artist whose practice Worringer associates with recent tendencies towards abstraction). See, for instance, Hodler's *Thun, Stockhornkette* (1904), *Lake Geneva from Chexbres* (1904), or *Forest Brook at Leissingen* (1904).

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 137.

refers to the writings of Hildebrand in the first paragraphs of *Abstraction and Empathy*, where he draws attention to the emphasis Hildebrand places on actual processes of art-making.<sup>24</sup> Alongside Hildebrand, Worringer mentions Auguste Rodin (1840-1917) when signalling the interplay between three-dimensional representation and abstract tendencies in sculpture.<sup>25</sup> *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic* seem to focus exclusively on the art of the past; nevertheless, Worringer creates spaces within his argument where he acknowledges, albeit in passing, the art practices of his time.

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 4, 136.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 84. According to Worringer, abstract-representational interplay manifested in sculpture as an encounter between the compact qualities of matter and the pressures of form (invisible and cubic, according to Worringer) on matter. Worringer referred to the work of Michelangelo in particular when addressing interplay in sculpture.

## Pictorial contexts for abstract-representational interplay:<sup>1</sup>

### Cézanne's realized sensations<sup>2</sup>

When Worringer visited Paris in the early years of the twentieth century,<sup>3</sup> the work of Paul Cézanne (1839-1906) was beginning to receive national and international recognition.<sup>4</sup> After three decades of concentrated effort, the paintings and watercolours of Cézanne had finally started attracting the attention of gallery dealers and art collectors. Cézanne had a solo exhibition at the Rue Lafitte gallery of art dealer Ambroise Vollard in November 1895, two years after the gallery had opened;<sup>5</sup> one hundred and fifty of Cézanne's paintings and drawings were displayed for Paris viewers on this occasion (Vollard would also exhibit watercolours by Cézanne in 1905).<sup>6</sup> The Luxembourg Museum acquired two of Cézanne's works in 1895;<sup>7</sup> the paintings of the artist also appeared at the Salon of Independent Artists [*Salon des Indépendants*] (1899, 1901, 1902), at the Centennial Exhibition in Paris (1900), and at the innovative Parisian Autumn Salon [*Salon d'Automne*] exhibitions of 1905 and 1906.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of the following sections, representation and abstraction are defined, following Worringer, as experiential processes of rapprochement or distancing from chosen motifs. More specifically, 'representation' signals the attempt of artists to generate, in painting, a high degree of resemblance between an observed motif and the resulting work of art. 'Abstraction,' on the other hand, points to artists' emphasis on the employment of line, shape, value, form, colour in painting, especially when such elements of pictorial composition assert different degrees of freedom from the rendering of motifs.

<sup>2</sup> The phrase 'realized sensations' is inspired by Cézanne's comments on the realization of his sensations (or the pictorial aspect of his response to nature). See his letter to Paul, his son (Aix, 8 September 1906). Paul Cézanne and John Rewald, eds., *Paul Cézanne: Letters* (Oxford: B. Cassirer, 1976), 327.

<sup>3</sup> Mary Gluck places Worringer's visit to the Trocadéro Museum in Paris in 1906 approximately. See Gluck, 'Interpreting Primitivism, Mass Culture and Modernism: The Making of Wilhelm Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy*', 156. Sebastian Preuss writes that Worringer visited Paris in 1905, during Easter. Preuss, 'Spiritual Intoxication: Sebastian Preuss on Wilhelm Worringer and Modernism', 16.

<sup>4</sup> Jennings finds that Worringer's inquiry is related more to the work of Cézanne than to German Expressionism. For Jennings, Worringer's visit at the Trocadéro Museum actually places the writing of *Abstraction and Empathy* in a context where it becomes impossible to ignore Worringer's awareness of contemporary developments in French art. Jennings, 'Against Expressionism: Materialism and Social Theory in Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy*', 90-91.

<sup>5</sup> Richard Kendall, *Cézanne by Himself: Drawings, Paintings, Writings* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1988), 319.

<sup>6</sup> Marcel Brion, *Cézanne* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1974), 69. Also, Rewald, *Cézanne: A Biography*, 269. Also, Evmarie Schmitt, *Cézanne in Provence*, Pegasus Library (Munich: Prestel, 1995), 111.

<sup>7</sup> Rewald, *Cézanne: A Biography*, 269. Cachin mentions that the press counted around fifty paintings on display, while Vollard mentioned that one hundred fifty paintings were on show. Rewald, Cachin explains, noted that Vollard's gallery space could not accommodate all paintings simultaneously, so successive installations of Cézanne's work had to take place. Cachin et al., *Cézanne*, 552.

<sup>8</sup> Rewald, *Cézanne: A Biography*, 270.

Cézanne's works were also exhibited in Germany.<sup>9</sup> In 1897, for instance, the National Gallery in Berlin purchased a painting by Cézanne.<sup>10</sup> His works were on display at Paul Cassirer's gallery in Berlin (1900, 1904, 1906),<sup>11</sup> in the exhibitions of the Vienna Secession and Berlin Secession (1903). Emil Richter included artworks by Cézanne in an exhibition of Impressionist paintings at his gallery in Dresden.<sup>12</sup> After visiting Cézanne in 1906, collector Karl Ernst Osthaus went to Vollard and bought two of the artist's paintings for his own Folkwang Museum.<sup>13</sup> Cézanne's road to public acceptance had been long and difficult; however, his work was shown, collected, and widely discussed (if not admired) in the early years of the twentieth century.<sup>14</sup>

The place Cézanne occupied in the attention of the press of his time was controversial.<sup>15</sup> In 1888, for instance, Joris-Karl Huysmans (1848-1907) noted the chromatic abilities of Cézanne in the Parisian magazine *The Whip* [*La Cravache*], but associated Cézanne's art with the visual discomfort generated by the creative explorations of his epoch. Suggesting that the work of the painter was the outcome of a medical condition, Huysmans wrote:

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<sup>9</sup> Apart from Germany, the works of Cézanne were also exhibited in Brussels (with the group *Free Aesthetics* [*La Libre Esthétique*], in 1901 and 1904), and The Hague (on the occasion of an international exhibition, 1901). The Grafton Galleries (London) also displayed the work of Cézanne in a group show of Impressionist works organized by Durand-Ruel 1905. See John Rewald, *Paul Cézanne: A Biography* (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 269-270. Also, Cachin et al., *Cézanne*, 566.

<sup>10</sup> Also see Rewald, *Cézanne: A Biography*, 269. Cachin notes that, when the National Gallery received an imperial visit from Wilhelm II ('a fierce Francophobe', according to Laure-Caroline Semmer), director Hugo von Tschudi removed Cézanne's work (*Mill on the Coulevre at Pontoise*) from display. See Cachin et al., *Cézanne*, 555. Also see Laure-Caroline Semmer, 'Birth of the Figure of the Father of Modern Art: Cézanne in International Exhibitions 1910-1913', *Arts & Sociétés*, 2006.

<sup>11</sup> Uhr, *Lovis Corinth*, 130. Also, Rewald, *Cézanne: A Biography*, 270. Also, Cachin et al., *Cézanne*, 567.

<sup>12</sup> Rewald, *Cézanne: A Biography*, 270.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 222. Also, Cachin et al., *Cézanne*, 567.

<sup>14</sup> Brion, *Cézanne*, 69-70. Also, Rewald, *Cézanne: A Biography*, 215-222. Among the admirers of Cézanne, Rewald counts poets Joachim Gasquet (1873-1921) and Léo Larguier (1878-1950), painter Charles Camoin (1879-1865), painters and writers Émile Bernard (1868-1941) and Maurice Denis (1870-1943), as well as Claude Monet (1840-1926), who had already met with fame in the first decade of the twentieth century.

<sup>15</sup> Attending to the fascinating details of the reception of Cézanne's work in the press of his time would much exceed the scope of the current inquiry. For a survey of critical writings on Cézanne in the English language, see Cachin et al., *Cézanne*, 24-74. For instance, Cachin cites the opinions of artists on Cézanne in 1905 (around the time of Worringer's visit to Paris), as recorded by Charles Morice (1850-1932) in the *Mercury of France* [*Mercur de France*]. 'Cézanne has managed to strip pictorial art of all the mildew that it had accumulated over time', in the opinion of Paul Sérusier (1864-1927). For Paul Signac (1863-1935), '[a] still life by Cézanne, a cigarbox top by Seurat, these paintings are as beautiful as the *Mona Lisa* or the 200 square meters of Tintoretto's *Paradise*.' Kees van Dongen (1877-1968) remarks: 'Cézanne is the most beautiful painter of this period. But how many moths are consumed by this flame!' See ———, *Cézanne*, 42. In contrast, also see the predominantly negative opinions cited by Vollard in 1924. Ambroise Vollard and Harold Livingston Van Doren, *Paul Cézanne: His Life and Art* (London: Brentano's, 1924), 180-181.

In sum, [Cézanne is] a revelatory colorist who contributed more than the late Manet to the Impressionist movement, an artist with diseased retinas who, in his exasperated visual perceptions, discovered the premonitory symptoms of a new art – so might we sum up this too-neglected painter, Cézanne. He has not exhibited since the year 1877, when, in the rue Le Peletier, he showed sixteen canvases whose perfect artistic probity long kept the crowd amused.<sup>16</sup>

Despite the invisibility of the painter's work on the art scene of Paris, Huysmans remembered the paintings of Cézanne for their remarkable honesty. The public of 1877 nevertheless took this honesty lightly, Huysmans observed; the French press of the time responded to the work of Cézanne in similar terms, as Vollard shows in *Paul Cézanne: His Life and Art* (1924).<sup>17</sup> At the Autumn Salon of 1904,<sup>18</sup> the painter had a special room reserved for his paintings. Yet, regardless of this sign of appreciation for the practice of Cézanne, most of the critics cited by Vollard (with the exception of Alcanter de Brahm (1868-1942) from *Criticism [La Critique]* and Charles Ponsonailhe (1855-1915) from *The Illustrated Magazine [La Revue Illustrée]*) found Cézanne's work primitive, hesitant, awkward, and unknowledgeable. Ponsonailhe was among the few to recognize that an aesthetic platform for the interpretation of Cézanne's paintings was unavailable to contemporary art critics; he remarked: 'My spirit is willing enough, but my eyes haven't had the proper training.'<sup>19</sup> When departing from representational standards as established in academies of art, painting practices appeared problematic to early twentieth-century viewers as well as writers. Worringer addressed this situation in *Abstraction and Empathy*,<sup>20</sup> and revisited it in 'The Historical Development of Modern Art'.

'The Historical Development of Modern Art' (1911) draws attention to the influence of Paul Cézanne on early twentieth-century painters inquiring into new approaches to art-making.<sup>21</sup> In his essay, Worringer responds to Vinnen's opinion that Cézanne's practice was too

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<sup>16</sup> Cachin et al., *Cézanne*, 27. Also, Henri Dorra, ed. *Symbolist Art Theories: A Critical Anthology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 229. The excerpt above belongs in Joris-Karl Huysmans, 'Trois peintres – I Cézanne', *La Cravache*, 4 August 1888.

<sup>17</sup> Vollard and Van Doren, *Paul Cézanne: His Life and Art*, 186-205. Also see Vollard's selection of artist opinions on the practice of Cézanne, in ———, *Paul Cézanne: His Life and Art*, 180-181.

<sup>18</sup> Vollard and Van Doren, *Paul Cézanne: His Life and Art*, 187-193.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 189.

<sup>20</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 137.

<sup>21</sup> Worringer, 'The Historical Development of Modern Art', 10.

specific to the artist, and bound to have no followers.<sup>22</sup> For Worringer, the inspiration provided by the work of Cézanne is obvious: it leads to the surpassing of personal limitations, to impartiality, to formal simplification, and to open-minded views on representational practices.<sup>23</sup> Far from attracting no interest from younger artists,<sup>24</sup> Cézanne's approach to painting proves to be, according to Worringer, one of the sources of Synthetism and Expressionism.<sup>25</sup>

To Synthetist painter Paul Gauguin (1848-1903), for instance, Cézanne appears remarkable, although misunderstood. Gauguin was an early collector of Cézanne's paintings, and quoted Cézanne in his own work.<sup>26</sup> In a letter to Émile Schuffenecker (1885), Gauguin created an imaginary portrait of Cézanne, emphasizing the peacefulness of Cézanne's paintings. Gauguin wrote: 'He [i. e., Cézanne] is partial to forms that exude the mystery and the tranquillity of a man lying down in a dream. His sombre colours are in keeping with the oriental frame of mind. A man of the Midi, he spends entire days on mountaintops reading Virgil and gazing at the sky. Thus his horizons are very high, his blues very intense, his reds stunningly vibrant.'<sup>27</sup> Gauguin's Cézanne loves Classical authors as well as painting in the open air. Sensitive to Cézanne's approach to form and colour, Gauguin is curious about Cézanne's progress. 'Has Monsieur Cézanne found the exact *formula* for a work acceptable

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<sup>22</sup> In Vinnen's words: 'The art of a Cézanne, a van Gogh, was too characteristic of its creator, with too little attention to structure to found a school and to make way for successors.' Vinnen, 'Quousque Tandem', 7.

<sup>23</sup> Worringer, 'The Historical Development of Modern Art', 10-11.

<sup>24</sup> Evidence of Cézanne's impact on fellow artists and response to contemporary art is provided in his letters. For instance, Claude Monet, Émile Bernard, Maurice Denis and Charles Camoin are some of the painters with whom Cézanne was in contact. Cézanne and Rewald, eds., *Paul Cézanne: Letters*, 7-10. Also, Erle Loran, *Cézanne's Composition: Analysis of His Form with Diagrams and Photographs of His Motifs* (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1963), 7.

<sup>25</sup> Worringer's influence on Synthetist artists such as Paul Gauguin and Émile Bernard, as well as his conceptual impact on Expressionist painting, need to be explored in a self-standing inquiry. For the purposes of this thesis, Synthetism is defined as a post-Impressionist approach to art-making where the observation of motifs combines with attention to qualities of form, feeling, and inner vision. For the anti-realistic, visionary aspects of Gauguin's Synthetism, see Dario Gamboni, 'The Vision of a Vision: Perception, Hallucination, and Potential Images in Gauguin's *Vision of the Sermon*' in *Visions: Gauguin and His Time*, ed. Belinda Thomson (Zwolle and Amsterdam: Waanders Publishers and Van Gogh Museum, 2010), 12-13, 16.

<sup>26</sup> Joseph J. Rishel, *Gauguin, Cézanne, Matisse: Visions of Arcadia* (Philadelphia, PA: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 2012), 5-6. Rishel mentions that Gauguin bought six works by Cézanne; *Still Life with Fruit Dish* (1879-80) was among them. This painting was quoted by Gauguin in *Woman in Front of a Still Life by Cézanne* (1890), Rishel shows.

<sup>27</sup> Michel Hoog, *Cézanne: The First Modern Painter* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1994), 152. Gauguin's words are extracted from his letter to Schuffenecker from Copenhagen (14 January 1885).

to everyone?', Gauguin inquires in a letter to Pissarro in 1881.<sup>28</sup> Cézanne did not welcome the interest of his fellow painter in his practice, and Gauguin's admiration for his fellow artist remained unreturned.<sup>29</sup>

In his 'Letters from Munich' (*Apollon*, St. Petersburg, October-November 1910), Expressionist painter Wassily Kandinsky mentions Cézanne's 'outstanding talent'.<sup>30</sup> Cézanne, like Hodler, creates melodic compositions, Kandinsky explains in *On the Spiritual in Art* (1912). According to Kandinsky, one simple form organizes melodic compositions, which in turn emits one simple inner sound –<sup>31</sup> this is the key characteristic of the works of Hodler and Cézanne. Kandinsky notices not only the musicality of Cézanne's work, but also his particular ability to render inner life when focusing on inanimate objects. In the words of Kandinsky: 'He [i. e., Cézanne] can raise "still-life" to a level where externally "dead" objects come internally alive. He treats these objects just as he does people, for he had the gift of seeing inner life everywhere.'<sup>32</sup> For Kandinsky, Cézanne finds inspiration in objects, yet, starting from them, articulates self-standing pictorial entities, or pictures, where colour and form come to the fore.<sup>33</sup>

Like Worringer,<sup>34</sup> Cézanne believes that art develops alongside nature, yet is not subordinated to it. 'Art is a harmony which runs parallel with nature', according to Cézanne.<sup>35</sup> To arrive at such harmony, Cézanne observes his motifs and identifies the simplest geometrical forms

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<sup>28</sup> John Rewald, *The Ordeal of Paul Cézanne* (London: Phoenix House, 1950), 96. To Gauguin's question, Maurice Merleau-Ponty could possibly have answered that Cézanne did reach a form of pictorial practice that has generic validity. See Maurice Merleau-Ponty, 'Cézanne's Doubt' in *Sense and Non-Sense*, ed. Northwestern University Press (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1964 [1945]), 11. Merleau-Ponty observes: 'It is nonetheless possible that Cézanne conceived a form of art which, while occasioned by his nervous condition, is valid for everyone. Left to himself, he was able to look at nature as only a human being can. The meaning of this work cannot be determined from his life... It is thanks to the Impressionists, and particularly to Pissarro, that Cézanne later conceived painting not as the incarnation of imagined scenes, the projection of dreams outward, but as the exact study of appearances: less a work of the studio than a working from nature.'

<sup>29</sup> Rewald, *The Ordeal of Paul Cézanne*, 96.

<sup>30</sup> Kandinsky, Lindsay, and Vergo, *Kandinsky. Complete Writings on Art*, 79. Expressionism is defined, following Long, as an approach to art-making that questions authority and emphasizes experimental, anti-naturalistic, anti-materialist, and anti-industrialist aspects. See Long, Barron, and Rigby, *German Expressionism: Documents from the End of the Wilhelmine Empire to the Rise of National Socialism*, xix-xxiv. Also see 'Worringer and Expressionism: late twentieth-century perspectives'.

<sup>31</sup> Kandinsky, Lindsay, and Vergo, *Kandinsky. Complete Writings on Art*, 215-216.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 151.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 3.

<sup>35</sup> Cézanne and Rewald, eds., *Paul Cézanne: Letters*, 261. Letter to Joachim Gasquet, from Tholonet, 26 September 1897.

underlying them. He advises Synthetist painter Émile Bernard to compose his pictures by attending to the geometry of objects, as well as to geometrical aspects of composition. In the words of Cézanne: ‘... [T]reat nature by means of the cylinder, the sphere, the cone, everything brought into proper perspective so that each side of an object or a plane is directed towards a central point... [N]ature for us men is more depth than surface, whence the need to introduce into our light vibrations, represented by the reds and yellows, a sufficient amount of blueness to give the feel of air.’<sup>36</sup>

Painting means for Cézanne not only working in the open air and responding directly to chosen motifs, but also composing in awareness of the simplest, most generic form of objects. According to him, geometrical concerns need to be accompanied by attention to colour composition, especially in the rendering of depth and light. Understanding nature – a long, painful process – is an outcome of the art of painting for Cézanne.<sup>37</sup> He consciously brings together representational and abstract aspects in his practice, articulating pictorial equivalents of thoroughly observed motifs in the world.

Cézanne senses the endless possibilities of pictorial investigation; he accepts that the complexity of his response to the natural world slows down his process of inquiry.<sup>38</sup> He seeks to cultivate an accurate connection between seeing and feeling, between perception and emotion. The pictorial form taken by this connection must be expressed clearly and decisively, according to him. In other words, Cézanne considers that expression relies on seeing, feeling, and will. He mentions to Bernard that an awareness of the art of the past is helpful, yet that art practice is supported mainly by the study of nature. Relating to nature does not need extremes on the part of artists, Cézanne writes; however, artists must have their say with regard to their motifs – especially with regard to the expressive means employed in the rendering of these motifs.<sup>39</sup> Cézanne’s statement reveals the abstract potential of artistic expression; however, Cézanne continues by pointing out that representation needs to account logically for the innermost aspects of the world; Cézanne believes in giving clear, observation-based expression to the unknown. As seen by Cézanne, artistic practice brings

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 301. Letter to Émile Bernard, Aix-en-Provence, 15 April 1904.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 315. Letter to Bernard, Aix, 1905, Friday.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 302. Letter to Bernard, Aix, 12 May 1904.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 303. Letter to Bernard, Aix, 26 May 1904.

together perception and emotion, observation and will, logic and covertness. His understanding of painting makes the separation between representational and abstract strands of practice visible, yet difficult to operate.

Given his reticence towards questions of theory,<sup>40</sup> Cézanne does not distinguish between perception, sensation and feeling in his letters;<sup>41</sup> he therefore writes to Bernard about the transposition of optical sensations of light into colour sensations.<sup>42</sup> Nevertheless, Cézanne is clear on one point: sensations (or instincts,<sup>43</sup> as interpreted by him when discussing the advice of Thomas Couture to his students) need to acquire concrete form in art, much like perceptions do.<sup>44</sup> To articulate his sensations in painting, Cézanne often travels to places that are difficult to reach, allowing observation and the passage of time to inform each brushstroke he places on canvas.<sup>45</sup>

In a 1906 letter to his son, Cézanne, seventy at the time, reflects on his relationship with the natural model. Although he mentions that his understanding of nature has reached greater clarity, Cézanne still finds the making of a picture difficult. In his words: 'I must tell you that as a painter I am becoming more clear-sighted before nature, but that with me the realization of my sensations is always painful. I cannot attain the intensity that is unfolded before my senses. I have not the magnificent richness of colouring that animates nature.'<sup>46</sup> The process of communicating sensations pictorially remains challenging for Cézanne, even more so as his ability to see and understand the natural world enhances. For him, painting (or the realization of sensations) exposes its limitations when facing the world of nature. To

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 301-302.

<sup>41</sup> A conversation between Cézanne and Bernard, related by Bernard in 1921, clarifies Cézanne's perspective on sensation; however, the dialogue between painters is communicated from Bernard's perspective, and in Bernard's transcription of Cézanne's thought. Bernard: 'So you understand art to be a union of the world and the individual?' Cézanne: 'I understand it as personal apperception. This apperception I locate in sensation and require of the intellect that it should organize these sensations into a work of art.' Bernard: 'But what sensations are you referring to? Those of your feelings or of your retina?' Cézanne: 'I don't think you can distinguish between the two; however, as a painter, I believe in the visual sensation above all else.' See Émile Bernard, 'A Conversation with Cézanne' in *Cézanne by Himself: Drawings, Paintings, Writings*, ed. Richard Kendall (Boston, Toronto, New York: Little, Brown, 1988 [1921]), 289.

<sup>42</sup> Cézanne and Rewald, eds., *Paul Cézanne: Letters*, 310.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 297-298.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 303.

<sup>45</sup> Loran, *Cézanne's Composition: Analysis of His Form with Diagrams and Photographs of His Motifs*, 30. Rewald, *Paul Cézanne: A Biography*, 190-193, 239-249. Pavel Machotka, *Cézanne: Landscape into Art* (London, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 23-30.

<sup>46</sup> Cézanne and Rewald, eds., *Paul Cézanne: Letters*, 326. Letter to his son, Paul, Aix, 8 September 1906.

represent (even when not working with the exclusive goal of imitation in mind) obliges the painter to face the unavoidable gap between the world as observed and the world as depicted, Cézanne seems to imply. (Worringer explained this gap as generated by threatening conditions of life, and as primarily reflected in abstraction;<sup>47</sup> Deleuze calls it a chaos, an abyss, or a catastrophe.)<sup>48</sup> Yet, despite the pain it brings along, the process of rendering the world by means of paint retains an extraordinary fascination for Cézanne: he writes to his son he could focus on one location only and find a multitude of motifs at the slightest change of viewpoint.<sup>49</sup>

Addressing Cézanne's approach to painting in 'Cézanne's Doubt' (1945), Maurice Merleau-Ponty explains that Cézanne works with lived perspective. This type of perspective is neither geometric nor photographic,<sup>50</sup> Merleau-Ponty argues, but relies on the close observation of phenomena – an activity that preoccupied Cézanne throughout most of his life in art.<sup>51</sup> According to Merleau-Ponty, the distortion of perspective in Cézanne's compositions creates order, allowing objects to emerge and organize themselves for the gaze of the contemplating viewers.<sup>52</sup> Pictorial representation thus opens towards exposing abstract values. Cézanne, Merleau-Ponty points out, adds to nature instead of imitating it (an approach to painting Worringer could have seen as amalgamating abstraction and representation);<sup>53</sup> in this process, the painter witnesses, and allows the viewers to witness, existence perpetually coming into being. In the words of Merleau-Ponty: 'The painter recaptures and converts into visible objects what would, without him, remain walled up in the separate life of each

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<sup>47</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 16-17.

<sup>48</sup> Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, 102.

<sup>49</sup> Cézanne and Rewald, eds., *Paul Cézanne: Letters*, 326. Cachin shows that, at the time of writing his letter to his son, Cézanne was painting on the banks on the Arc (at the Trois Sautets bridge, and also at a place known as Gour de Martelly). See Cachin et al., *Cézanne*, 568.

<sup>50</sup> As previous paragraphs have shown, Cézanne recommends keeping geometry in mind when looking at the world. However, Cézanne does not consider geometric perspective to be the key element of his pictorial process. Geometry is important to Cézanne, but only in combination with sensation, feeling and will.

<sup>51</sup> Merleau-Ponty, 'Cézanne's Doubt', 14. In the first part of his artistic career, Cézanne drew and painted still lifes (*Sugar Bowl, Pears and Blue Cup*, 1866), portraits (*Young Man Leaning on his Elbow*, 1866), and the human body in action (*Woman Diving into the Water*, 1867-70). He rendered human passions and excesses (*The Abduction*, 1867; *The Feast*, c. 1867), as well as quiet interiors scenes (*Young Girl at the Piano – Overture to Tannhäuser*, c. 1869). However, after beginning to paint in the open air alongside Camille Pissarro (1830-1903) in 1873, Cézanne dedicated more of his attention to landscape and to the relationship between perception and painting. See Kendall, *Cézanne by Himself: Drawings, Paintings, Writings*, 16-17. Also, Cachin et al., *Cézanne*, 537-538.

<sup>52</sup> Merleau-Ponty, 'Cézanne's Doubt', 14-15.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 16-17.

consciousness: the vibration of appearances which is the cradle of things. Only one emotion is possible for this painter – the feeling of strangeness – and only one lyricism – that of the continual rebirth of existence.’<sup>54</sup> If Cézanne intends to represent the world, then his particular approach to representation invites the surfacing of vital, connective rhythms of being; appearances as recognizable in painting are a consequence of this process rather than its goal.<sup>55</sup>

Like Merleau-Ponty, who draws attention to the expressive rather than imitative qualities of Cézanne’s painting,<sup>56</sup> Gilles Deleuze signals Cézanne’s departure from representation understood strictly as illustration or figuration.<sup>57</sup> In *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation* (1984), Deleuze explains that Cézanne follows the way of the Figure;<sup>58</sup> this way, which for Deleuze is neither representational nor abstract,<sup>59</sup> and distinct from both,<sup>60</sup> relies on sensation.<sup>61</sup> Sensible form connecting to a sensation: this is Deleuze’s definition of the Figure.<sup>62</sup> Deleuze focuses on Cézanne’s emphasis on sensation (which is characteristic for subject and object simultaneously),<sup>63</sup> and the important role sensation plays in the articulation of Cézanne’s pictorial practice. ‘Sensation is what is painted’, Deleuze notes with regard to the work of Cézanne, underscoring the embodied quality of Cézanne’s approach in contrast

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 17-18.

<sup>55</sup> Merleau-Ponty also signals the perpetual instantaneity of Cézanne’s practice of representation in ‘Eye and Mind’ (1961), where he writes: ‘The “world’s instant” that Cézanne wanted to paint, an instant long since passed away, is still hurled towards us by his paintings.’ For Merleau-Ponty, Cézanne’s work unfolds in the present, continuously, for each viewer. See Maurice Merleau-Ponty, ‘Eye and Mind’ in *The Primacy of Perception: And Other Essays on Phenomenological Psychology, the Philosophy of Art, History and Politics*, ed. Northwestern University Press (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1964 [1961]), 7.

<sup>56</sup> Merleau-Ponty, ‘Cézanne’s Doubt’, 17-18. Merleau-Ponty points out that art does not rely on imitating, but on processes of expression.

<sup>57</sup> Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, 35.

<sup>58</sup> Deleuze defines the Figure as opposed to figuration. Ibid., 37.

<sup>59</sup> Abstraction, for Deleuze, is associated with the physicality of the human head and bones; the brain (as in the case of representation) intermediates the impact of abstraction on viewers. On the other hand, sensation refers rather to the nervous system according to him. (Ibid., 34, 36.) Deleuze further defines abstraction as reductive, ascetic, optical, offering spiritual salvation and elaborating a symbolic (‘digital’) code starting from oppositions of form. See ———, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, 103-104.

<sup>60</sup> At a later point in his text, Deleuze explains that Cézanne did not actually follow a middle way between representation and abstraction, but invented his specific middle way. Deleuze remarks: ‘Few painters have produced the experience of chaos and catastrophe as intensely, while fighting to limit and control it at any price.’ Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, 111, 118.

<sup>61</sup> Deleuze mentions Merleau-Ponty’s approach to sensation in connection to Cézanne’s painting, explaining that, for Merleau-Ponty, each quality of sensation (or sense experience) opens a field connected to a multitude of other fields of sensation. Ibid., 178.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 34.

with the emphasis on light and colour as observed in Impressionist paintings.<sup>64</sup> Deleuze, like Merleau-Ponty, writes about the vitality of Cézanne's pictures, where sensation and rhythm are associated.<sup>65</sup> The work of Cézanne depicts the animating force of life for Deleuze. '... [W]as it not Cézanne's genius to have subordinated all the techniques of painting to this task: rendering visible the folding force of mountains, the germinative force of a seed, the thermic force of a landscape, and so on?','<sup>66</sup> Deleuze muses. Life force becomes significantly visible in Cézanne's pictorial response to the landscape of his birthplace, around the turn of the twentieth century.

Cézanne engaged with the depiction of places in Provence in the last decade of his life, when his approach to landscape reached a simplicity, poise and persuasiveness associated by Maurice Denis and Roger Fry with Classicism.<sup>67</sup> (Worringer would have disagreed with Denis and Fry, due to Cézanne's emphasis on re-creating rather than imitating his motif, as well as due to the painter's amalgamating space and geometrical considerations.) In 1897, after the death of Cézanne's mother and the sale of Jas de Bouffan (the Cézanne family home), the painter returned to the small cabin (*cabanon*) he had rented in the Bibémus quarry.<sup>68</sup> He painted at the quarry,<sup>69</sup> at Le Tholonet, and around Château Noir, from where Mont Sainte-Victoire could be seen.<sup>70</sup> Cézanne's engaging with motifs (his reasons to take action,<sup>71</sup> as Pavel Machotka points out) was fostered by the painter's familiarity with the area and by the opportunity for undisturbed work.<sup>72</sup> The quarry, with which Cézanne engaged in pictures such as *In the Bibémus Quarry* [*Dans la Carrière de Bibémus*] (c. 1895), *The*

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 42-43.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 57.

<sup>67</sup> Maurice Denis and Roger E. Fry, 'Cézanne-I', *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs*, 16, No. 82, 1910, 208, 213-214. Denis explains that, although it is difficult to define 'classicism,' he intends to point to style, order and synthetic qualities when employing this term. Objective and subjective qualities are balanced in a Classical picture, according to Denis. (Denis and Fry, 'Cézanne-I', 208, 213.) Also, Roger Eliot Fry, *Cézanne: A Study of His Development* (London: Hogarth Press, 1927), 87. Also, Meyer Schapiro, *Paul Cézanne* (London and New York: Thames and Hudson, and H.N. Abrahams, 1952), 4.

<sup>68</sup> Rewald, *The Ordeal of Paul Cézanne*, 137-138, 166.

<sup>69</sup> Rewald draws attention to the existence of many ancient quarries in Provence; he notes that the stones extracted from Bibémus have a distinctive soft ochre colour, often to be recognized in the facades of stately residencies of Aix-en-Provence, the town where Cézanne was born. The Bibémus quarry was active in the early decades of the nineteenth century, Athanassoglou-Kallmyer notes. See ———, *Paul Cézanne: A Biography*, 244-245. Also, Nina M. Athanassoglou-Kallmyer, *Cézanne and Provence: The Painter in His Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 244-245.

<sup>70</sup> Rewald, *Paul Cézanne: A Biography*, 240-249.

<sup>71</sup> Machotka, *Cézanne: Landscape into Art*, 1.

<sup>72</sup> Rewald, *The Ordeal of Paul Cézanne*, 166.

*Bibémus Quarry* [*La Carrière de Bibémus*] (c. 1895), or *The Red Rock* [*Le Rocher Rouge*] (c. 1895), provided much visual interest, as Rewald points out. According to Rewald:

The quarry had been abandoned for some time, and trees and bushes had taken root among the ochre rocks. In the distance, the ever-present Mont Sainte-Victoire rises into the sky... Yet it appears as though no plan presided over the exploitation of the quarry, where the stone has been extracted here and left untouched there. It is a vast field of seemingly accidental forms, as if some prehistoric giant, constructing a fantastic playground, had piled up cubes and dug holes and then abandoned them without leaving a hint of his intricate plan.<sup>73</sup>

*Mont Sainte-Victoire Seen from the Bibémus Quarry* [*La Montagne Sainte-Victoire vue de Bibémus*] (c. 1897) (Fig. 17) combines representational and abstract aspects of painting, offering an experiential and structural vision of the natural world. Cézanne addresses his motif in terms that emphasize physicality and structural rhythm, distancing his approach from the modes of art-making adopted by his predecessors.<sup>74</sup> He overlays brushstrokes, thus producing chromatic modulations that articulate mass, space and movement. However, this repetitive task, which could potentially lead to abstraction, allows Cézanne to explore geological, organic and atmospheric aspects of nature, and to communicate patiently observed outdoor rhythms. Cézanne does not cultivate imitative rendering, but engages in a personal, decisive reorganization of his motif on canvas.

Abstract processes support, yet are not subordinated to, representational purposes in Cézanne's *Mont Sainte-Victoire Seen from the Bibémus Quarry*. Articulating his picture by repeatedly adjusting and thus amplifying colour relationships, the painter highlights the abstract potential of his composition while representational elements remain recognizable ('...One must look at the model and feel very exactly',<sup>75</sup> according to Cézanne). Maintaining

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<sup>73</sup> ———, *Paul Cézanne: A Biography*, 245.

<sup>74</sup> In the words of Cézanne: 'The Louvre is the book in which we learn to read. We must not, however, be satisfied with retaining the beautiful formulas of our illustrious predecessors. Let us go forth and study beautiful nature, let us try to free our minds from them, let us strive to express ourselves according to our personal temperament. Time and reflection, moreover, modify little by little our vision, and at last comprehension comes to us.' Cézanne and Rewald, eds., *Paul Cézanne: Letters*, 315. To Bernard, Aix, 1905, Friday.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 302. (To Bernard, Aix, 12 May 1904.) The influence of Impressionism on Cézanne's approach to art-making – namely, the attentive yet subjective response to outdoors motifs – is revealed in the words of the painter. Regarding the connections between Cézanne and Impressionism, see Merleau-Ponty, 'Cézanne's

his observational commitments, the painter allows a recognizable image of mountain and quarry to emerge. Yet his picture reflects not only appearances, but processes in their temporal dynamism: the changing colours of weathering rocks and boulders, the play of light on uneven surfaces, the transit of air through foliage. Representation does not operate through imitation, but through chromatic approximations that often invite abstract aspects of picture-making to come to the fore.



Fig. 17. Paul Cézanne. *Mont Sainte-Victoire Seen from the Bibémus Quarry*. c. 1897. oil on canvas. 64.8 x 81.3 cm. Baltimore. The Baltimore Museum of Art.

Juxtaposed, overlaid, and rarely interrupted by the outlines of depicted objects, Cézanne's brushstrokes suggest mass and movement, engaging in a constant redefinition of form. They are compositional places of passage between abstraction and representation in Cézanne's work. When indicating main compositional elements such as quarry, mountain, or tree trunks, Cézanne still traces outlines; otherwise, his approach to paint application emphasizes the structural connectivity of natural elements. Between the few horizontal and vertical boundaries, however, order emerges from the play of colour planes (the embodiment of brushstrokes on canvas). Abstraction, in a painting such as *Mont Sainte-Victoire Seen from the Bibémus Quarry*, features not in its simplifying (geometric) function, but in its additive function (an employment that prioritizes the repetitiveness of paint application, chromatic

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Doubt', 11. Also, for Cézanne's subsequent impact on Symbolist painting, see Richard Shiff, *Cézanne and the End of Impressionism: A Study of the Theory, Technique, and Critical Evaluation of Modern Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 10.

variation, and the resulting effect of movement). Visible in Cézanne's approach to brushwork and colour handling, abstraction gives representational elements their distinctive vitality.

Contrasting between representational and abstract aspects of painting proves ineffective with regard to the work of Cézanne, as Merleau-Ponty and Deleuze remark. Earlier in the twentieth century, Roger Fry inquires into Cézanne's ability to bring together imagination and intellect, to create form and, at the same time, suggest colour, light and atmosphere. The seemingly casual aspect of Cézanne's compositions relies on an underlying plan that bears architectural associations for Fry. In his words: 'He [i. e., Cézanne] sees the face of Nature as though it were cut in some incredibly precious crystalline substance, each of its facets different, yet each dependent on the rest.'<sup>76</sup> Fry highlights the abstract aspect of Cézanne's approach to the natural world; Cézanne, according to Fry, addresses the materiality of objects, yet does so in a pictorial language of imagination rather than imitation. Representational and abstract tendencies interweave in Cézanne's approach to painting, which Fry regards as impressively subtle and complex.

In response to Fry's invitation, Maurice Denis publishes his thoughts on Cézanne in *The Burlington Magazine* (January 1910). Denis contrasts between illustrative paintings, where narrative interest predominate, and pictures where, like in the work of Cézanne, the love of painting is celebrated as such.<sup>77</sup> Reflecting on the interplay between representational and abstract aspects in Cézanne's pictures, Denis muses: 'Before the Cézanne we think only of the picture; neither the object represented nor the artist's personality holds our attention. We cannot decide so quickly whether it is an imitation or an interpretation of nature.'<sup>78</sup> The balance of objective and subjective aspects of painting, of style (or, in the words of Denis, 'synthetic order') and sensibility, characterizes the practice of Cézanne,<sup>79</sup> where sensations inspire a method of art-making.<sup>80</sup> For Denis, Cézanne may employ abstraction in his work,<sup>81</sup> but not at the cost of representation. According to Denis: '... [H]e [i. e., Cézanne] never

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<sup>76</sup> Roger Fry, 'From "The Post-Impressionists - 2" ' in *Cézanne: The First Modern Painter*, ed. Michel Hoog (London: Thames and Hudson [Nation], 1989 [3 December 1910]), 154-155.

<sup>77</sup> Denis and Fry, 'Cézanne-I', 208.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 213.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>80</sup> Maurice Denis, 'Cézanne-II', *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs*, 16, No. 83, 1910, 275.

<sup>81</sup> By abstraction, Denis, citing Sérusier, means reference to and visibility of geometrical elements in painting, such as straight lines, arcs of circles, ellipses. *Ibid.*, 279.

compromises by abstraction the just equilibrium between nature and style.’<sup>82</sup> Abstract-representational interplay, Denis comments, emerges in the work of Cézanne where the painter’s attention to his motifs and his effort towards pictorial articulation meet.

The interplay of representation and abstraction in Cézanne’s practice is also visible to James M. Carpenter. In ‘Cézanne and Tradition’ (1951), Carpenter notes that Cézanne depicts three-dimensionality by comparatively abstract means in his paintings. Carpenter writes: ‘Cézanne also attempted to create an illusion of three-dimensional form and space, not with means parallel to nature’s but within a more abstract language. Despite his greater abstraction he arrived at a kind of illusion in some ways more forceful than theirs [i. e., the Impressionists].’

<sup>83</sup> For Carpenter, two-dimensional and three-dimensional effects coexist in the work of Cézanne – hence the paradox of his approach to painting. A polar tension between flatness and illusion needs to be resolved by viewers when contemplating Cézanne’s paintings, Carpenter argues.

Clement Greenberg also underscores the coexistence of abstract and representational aspects in Cézanne’s pictures.<sup>84</sup> In ‘Cézanne’ (1952), Greenberg points to the visibility of the painter’s brushstrokes and to their bringing forward the canvas surface. However, Greenberg notes that Cézanne’s also attempts to suggest spatial recession in his paintings. Cézanne gives priority to abstraction in his work, according to Greenberg. He remarks: ‘... [W]hen Cézanne altered contours and proportions in an unrealistic manner, it was largely because he felt so strongly the need to enhance the unity and decorative force of the surface design that he let himself sacrifice the realism of the illusion to it.’<sup>85</sup> Underscoring the emphasis on surface and design he recognizes in the work of Cézanne, Greenberg nevertheless signals that representation (or illusion) and pattern (or design) are both active in Cézanne’s paintings.<sup>86</sup>

In *Cézanne and the End of Impressionism* (1984), Richard Shiff explains the interplay of abstract and representational aspects in the paintings of Cézanne from the perspective of

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> James M. Carpenter, ‘Cézanne and Tradition’, *The Art Bulletin*, 33, No. 3, 1951, 174.

<sup>84</sup> Clement Greenberg, ‘Cézanne’, *The American Mercury*, June, 1952, 72.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

Cézanne's debt to Impressionism.<sup>87</sup> He underscores the uniformity of Cézanne's paintings – a pictorial characteristic indicating Cézanne's connections with the thought of Impressionist painters.<sup>88</sup> Uniformity emerges from Cézanne's approach to pictorial depth, colour, and value (or variation on a scale from black to white), Shiff observes.<sup>89</sup> Cézanne, according to Shiff, does not create hierarchical compositions, but correspondences between flatness and depth (or surface and illusion) in order to enhance atmospheric effects. When noting the dialogue between two-dimensional and three-dimensional aspects of composition in Cézanne's work, Shiff indirectly points to the interplay of representational and abstract tendencies. The interaction of illusion and surface has a quality Shiff chooses to approach in terms of dynamism (or openness, or absence of hierarchy) rather than static integration.

Highly regarded in contemporary writings on art, the work of Cézanne was viewed with reticence by many turn-of-the-twentieth-century critics;<sup>90</sup> nevertheless, many notable artists of artists of Cézanne's time admired his work. Painters such as Camille Pissarro, Paul Gauguin, Claude Monet, Henri Matisse and Pablo Picasso collected the paintings of Cézanne.<sup>91</sup> 'Degas himself has fallen for the charm of this refined savage; Monet, everybody. Are we wrong? I don't think so', Pissarro commented.<sup>92</sup> Monet, for instance, proved not only an admirer of Cézanne's,<sup>93</sup> but also a friend: he provided support to the reclusive painter, (Cézanne was grateful for it),<sup>94</sup> he visited Cézanne at L'Estaque (1883),<sup>95</sup> and invited him at

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<sup>87</sup> Greenberg also notes the strong connection between Cézanne and the Impressionists. He writes: 'At bottom Cézanne was an Impressionist always, and he learned painting from the Impressionists, though he did not belong to their orthodoxy.' *Ibid.*, 71.

<sup>88</sup> In his book, Shiff shows that, while Cézanne relied on sensation in painting (an Impressionist approach), his practice was nevertheless regarded as exemplary by Symbolist painters. Richard Shiff, *Cézanne and the End of Impressionism: A Study of the Theory, Technique, and Critical Evaluation of Modern Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 10.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 215.

<sup>90</sup> Volland and Van Doren, *Paul Cézanne: His Life and Art*, 186-205.

<sup>91</sup> Denis Coutagne, *Cézanne et Paris* (Paris: Musée du Luxembourg, 2011), 164.

<sup>92</sup> Paul Cézanne et al., *Classic Cézanne* (Sydney: Art Gallery of New South Wales, 1998), 170. Pissarro's words are excerpted from a letter to Lucien Pissarro dated 21 November 1895.

<sup>93</sup> In the words of Gérôme Maësse: 'Claude Monet is perhaps the painter who understands and loves Cézanne most completely. To top that, his admiration reaches all the way to his wallet.' Gérôme Maësse, 'From "L'Opinion de Claude Monet" ' in *Classic Cézanne*, eds. Terence Maloon, Richard Shiff, and Angela Gundert (Sydney [Paris]: Art Gallery of New South Wales [Les Tendances Nouvelles], 1998 [December 1906]), 432.

<sup>94</sup> Cézanne and Rewald, eds., *Paul Cézanne: Letters*, 242. Letter to Monet, Aix, 6 July 1895. Rewald mentions that most of the correspondence between Monet and Cézanne is lost. ———, eds., *Paul Cézanne: Letters*, 7-8. Cézanne's well-known emotional outbursts led him to be ungenerous to even the closest of his friends, Monet included. John Rewald, 'Cézanne: A Biography' (doctoral, Sorbonne, 1990), 188-189. Also, Cachin et al., *Cézanne*, 553. However, despite his moments of inner turmoil, Cézanne genuinely admired Monet. Cézanne and Rewald, eds., *Paul Cézanne: Letters*, 291-297.

Argenteuil (1876) and Giverny (1894).<sup>96</sup> Visiting Monet at Giverny with Georges Clémenceau, journalist Michel Georges-Michel remembered the special place Cézanne's work occupied in Monet's home. In the words of Georges-Michel: 'I went into the adjoining room where there was only one unframed painting hanging on the wall: the *Garçon au gilet rouge* by Cézanne... Monet, ... after a long silence, said to us in his beautiful, deep voice: "Yes, Cézanne, he's the greatest of us all." ' <sup>97</sup>

### **Monet, Worringer's Impressionism, and abstract-representational interplay**

'I despise all living painters, except Monet and Renoir', Cézanne writes in 1902.<sup>98</sup> For Cézanne, Monet is a master of the art of painting;<sup>99</sup> his influence, Cézanne advises young artist Charles Camoin, must be balanced with the study of nature. Cézanne's awareness regarding the impact of Monet's art on younger generations, as well as his admiration for the work of Monet, emerge unambiguously from the words addressed to Camoin in a letter from 13 September 1903.

At the time of his letter to Camoin, Cézanne had known Monet for almost three decades. Monet was considered by Cézanne a key representative of Impressionism.<sup>100</sup> Cézanne kept informed regarding the purchases of Monet's work,<sup>101</sup> and attended, at times, Monet's exhibitions.<sup>102</sup> When two Impressionist societies (the *Anonymous Cooperative Society of Artists, Painters, Sculptors, Engravers* [*Société Anonyme Coopérative des Artistes, Peintres, Sculpteurs, Graveurs*] – liquidated in 1874 – and the *Union* [*L'Union*], founded in 1875) were competing for the attention of the public, Cézanne, who had joined the *Union*,

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<sup>95</sup> Cézanne and Rewald, eds., *Paul Cézanne: Letters*, 211-212. To Émile Zola, Aix, 23 February 1884.

<sup>96</sup> Cachin et al., *Cézanne*, 540-551.

<sup>97</sup> Michel Georges-Michel, 'From *Peintres et sculpteurs que j'ai connus, 1900-1942*' in *Classic Cézanne*, eds. Terence Maloon, Richard Shiff, and Angela Gundert (Sydney [New York]: Art Gallery of New South Wales [Brentano's], 1998 [1942]), 170.

<sup>98</sup> Cézanne and Rewald, eds., *Paul Cézanne: Letters*, 291. To Gasquet, Aix, 8 July 1902.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 297. To Charles Camoin, Aix, 13 September 1903. For the success of Monet's work in the early years of the twentieth century, see Virginia Spate, *Claude Monet: The Colour of Time* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2001), 201.

<sup>100</sup> Cézanne and Rewald, eds., *Paul Cézanne: Letters*, 147. To Camille Pissarro, L'Estaque, 2 July 1876.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 143, 190, 206. To Pissarro, Aix, April 1876; to Zola, Paris, 4 July 1880; to Zola, Aix, 10 March 1883.

<sup>102</sup> Cachin et al., *Cézanne*, 551.

supported Monet's initiative of re-establishing the *Anonymous Cooperative Society*.<sup>103</sup> Cézanne also asked Émile Zola, his friend, to write in favour of Monet and Renoir in 1880; at stake was the request of Renoir and Monet for a suitable exhibition space in the Palace of the Champs-Élysées, where their paintings could be displayed properly.<sup>104</sup> Zola obliged; Monet sold some of his works, while Renoir received portrait commissions.<sup>105</sup>

Cézanne and Monet exhibited together on a number of occasions – for instance, according to Isabelle Cahn, in the benefit show organized by Pissarro for Honoré Daumier (1808-79) in 1874,<sup>106</sup> as well as in the first and third Impressionist exhibitions (April 1874, and April 1877).<sup>107</sup> Cahn draws attention to the interest of Hugo von Tschudi (1851-1911), director of the Berlin National Gallery, in recent French painting – an interest resulting in the acquisition and display of works by Cézanne and Monet in the late years of the nineteenth century.<sup>108</sup> Tschudi's purchasing and exhibiting contemporary French art, Cahn remarks, provided recognition for the practices of artists such as Monet and Cézanne at a time when the works of these painters were regarded with greater caution by French museums.<sup>109</sup>

The enthusiasm of Tschudi for French art signalled a trend that appeared threatening towards contemporary German painting to Carl Vinnen. In 'Quousque Tandem?', his contribution to *The Protest of German Artists* (1911), Vinnen argued against the acquisition of recent French works in Germany – a movement he regarded as speculative.<sup>110</sup> His criticism, Vinnen commented, was not addressed to the work of Monet; Vinnen mentioned that he supported the purchase of Monet's *Lady in a Green-Black Dress* (1866) by the Bremen Museum. However, Vinnen did not miss the opportunity to point to the high cost of this work, as well as to the comparatively low sum received by the artist.

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<sup>103</sup> Cézanne and Rewald, eds., *Paul Cézanne: Letters*, 147-148. To Pissarro, Aix, April 1876.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 187-188. To Zola, Paris, 10 May 1880.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 190. To Zola, Paris, 4 July 1880.

<sup>106</sup> Cachin et al., *Cézanne*, 539.

<sup>107</sup> Rewald, *The Ordeal of Paul Cézanne*, 80-84.

<sup>108</sup> Cahn's list of artists whose works were acquired by Tschudi for the Berlin National Gallery includes Édouard Manet (1832-83), Edgar Degas (1834-1917), Camille Pissarro (1830-1903), Henri Fantin-Latour (1836-1904), and Auguste Rodin (1840-1917). Cachin et al., *Cézanne*, 555.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Vinnen, 'Quousque Tandem', 6-7.

Answering Vinnen in 'The Historical Development of Modern Art' (1911), Worringer defended the practices of artists such as Cézanne, Van Gogh and Matisse, and pointed to the recent departure from Impressionist influences in art-making.<sup>111</sup> For Worringer, Monet is one of 'the great classic Impressionists' in 1911;<sup>112</sup> yet Impressionism and the emphasis it places on sight, Worringer argues, are no longer the choice of a generation of creators who seek to focus on emotional life instead.<sup>113</sup>

Without providing references to specific artists, Worringer addresses the Impressionist approach to art-making in *Abstraction and Empathy*. The urge to abstraction, Worringer explains, required creators to emphasize the unchanging, absolute aspects of objects by not representing three-dimensional space, not introducing subjective nuances, and not depicting transitory aspects of the world.<sup>114</sup> Approximating objects to their fundamental, crystalline forms led to abstraction, Worringer notes. Impressionist representation, on the other hand, focused on appearances; it proposed a subjective approach to art-making, and emphasized opticality. Space, embodiment, three-dimensionality and illusion had to be avoided in abstract art. Worringer explains: 'It is precisely space which, filled with atmospheric air, linking things together and destroying their individual closedness, gives things their temporal value and draws them into the cosmic interplay of phenomena'.<sup>115</sup> For Worringer, the rendering of atmosphere asserted the passage of time, the connection and interplay of observed natural elements. Impressionist renderings captured the transformation of chosen motifs; as such, Impressionist art could not be associated with the urge to abstraction, according to Worringer.

The attempt of Worringer to associate Impressionism with representational practices, and to distance it from abstraction, succeeds when the urge to abstraction is seen in its extreme expressions – for instance, when connecting abstraction to geometric art as recognizable in Egyptian pyramids. Atmospheric and attached to the world, Worringer's Impressionism makes visible the interplay of phenomena; as such, it seems to offer ground to the very 'dread of space' Worringer associates with the emergence of abstract tendencies.<sup>116</sup> However, once Worringer has explained the key characteristics of the urge to abstraction and of the urge to

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<sup>111</sup> Worringer, 'The Historical Development of Modern Art', 10-11.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>114</sup> ———, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 37.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 15-16.

empathy, he is ready to admit to the existence of art-making that intermediates between abstraction and representation.<sup>117</sup> The rendering of appearances in abstract contexts is actually possible, Worringer explains, analysing the interplay of representation and abstraction at various points in the history of art.<sup>118</sup>

Worringer's words on Impressionism need to be addressed from a perspective that accounts for his inclination towards oppositional discourse. As Magdalena Bushart remarks in 'Changing Times, Changing Styles: Wilhelm Worringer and the Art of His Epoch' (c. 1995), Worringer does not renounce tradition, nor does he seek to interrupt its connections with present-day art. Worringer, Bushart explains, rather signals the 'epochal shift' taking place in the first decades of the twentieth century, and criticizes the society of his time, where Impressionism is a favoured mode of art-making.<sup>119</sup> In the words of Bushart: 'His [i. e., Worringer's] contemporaries were entirely correct when they read Worringer's works as comments on contemporary culture.'<sup>120</sup>

To be appreciated in its own right, the art of the first decades of the twentieth century had to enter a process of disputation (to employ Worringer's vocabulary) with its immediate antecedents – Worringer's oppositional understanding of art history relied on such a pattern.<sup>121</sup> The critique of current artistic practices (Impressionism,<sup>122</sup> for instance) intensifies Worringer's argument in support of 'modern primitiveness', which Worringer also regards as only a phase in the course of history.<sup>123</sup> Impressionism provides to Worringer a set of valuable characteristics in support of his antithetic definition of abstraction, and reveals Worringer's attention to current art-making. 'The Historical Development of Modern Art' re-entrenches Worringer's point of view from *Abstraction and Empathy*, adding temporal

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 42-43.

<sup>118</sup> For the instances of abstract-representational interplay as singled out by Worringer in *Abstraction and Empathy*, see, from the current thesis: 'Gradation, displacement and transposition: alternatives to antithesis in Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy*', '*Form in Gothic*: interplay readdressed', 'Interplay in naturalism', 'Interplay in the Gothic art of Northern Europe: memory, assimilation, interpolation', 'Interplay: a dual, hybrid state in Gothic art'.

<sup>119</sup> Bushart, 'Changing Times, Changing Styles: Wilhelm Worringer and the Art of His Epoch', 72.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> From this point of view, Worringer depends on the model of approaching the writing of art history provided by Hegel. See Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, and T. M. Knox, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975 [1820-29]), 614.

<sup>122</sup> For the critique of Impressionism during Worringer's time, when Impressionism was regarded as connected to Renaissance, and as symptomatic for the decline of culture, see Bushart, 'Changing Times, Changing Styles: Wilhelm Worringer and the Art of His Epoch', 73-74, 79.

<sup>123</sup> Worringer, 'The Historical Development of Modern Art', 12.

urgency to his previously articulated theories: Impressionism needs to be seen as exiting the contemporary stage for different approaches to art-making to be able to claim the limelight.

However, where Worringer considers Monet a ‘classic’ Impressionist, he indirectly draws attention to the coexistence of representational and abstract tendencies in Monet’s practice. In *Abstraction and Empathy*, Worringer had explained Classical art as a synthesis of representation (Mycenean style) and abstraction (Dipylon style), where the representational element was predominant.<sup>124</sup> Classicism thus provided ground for the meeting of abstraction and representation, according to Worringer. By extension, Worringer placed Monet’s Impressionist art within the same conceptual frame, namely ‘abstract-representational art-making’ emphasizing representation.<sup>125</sup> If Worringer considers Monet’s work of classical status, and associates it with Impressionism, then Worringer’s Impressionism is not exclusively representational, but predominantly representational.

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<sup>124</sup> ———, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 71.

<sup>125</sup> From the perspective of *Abstraction and Empathy*, Monet’s work, in its representational, motif-connected aspects, can be associated with Worringer’s description of the process of empathy – more specifically, with the appreciation of life and nature as apparent in art. Worringer, we have seen, considers Impressionism representational, and uses it as a term of contrast for abstraction-oriented practices. However, the readers of *Abstraction and Empathy* need to keep in mind that Worringer was addressing the audience of his time, who was familiar with Impressionism and, according to him, less appreciative of newer artistic developments. Impressionism, as an artistic approach emphasizing its connections to nature, is presented by Worringer as antithetic to modes of art-making favouring the expression of feelings through art and the exploration of inner worlds. Worringer thus signals the change in focus recognizable in recent art – namely, the transit from observation-oriented to expression-oriented art-making. Nevertheless, an Impressionist artist such as Monet makes visible abstract features of painting in his works. As following sections of this thesis show, Monet experienced anxiety when confronted with the changeability of natural motifs and with the difficulties of depiction. Anxiety inspired by the world was associated by Worringer with abstraction in *Abstraction and Empathy*; he also acknowledged that different degrees of abstracting could be observed in art, and that some art forms made visible both representational and abstract characteristics. (See Worringer and Kramer, *Abstraction and Empathy*, 14-15, 42-43.) A combination of abstract and representational features can indeed be noticed in Monet’s twentieth-century works. The representational mode and the connection between direct observation and art-making are central to Monet’s early paintings; however, his mature output allows abstract preoccupations and emphases to surface decisively. Monet never abandons painting from life, yet gives greater freedom to colour and to the rhythm of brushstrokes with the passage of time; he also completes canvases in the studio in his later years of practice, focusing more on his pictures rather than on the motifs that inspired them. Although his observation-oriented art differs in its generic impact and intention from the Expressionist works Worringer may have had in mind when writing *Abstraction and Empathy*, *Form in Gothic* and ‘The Historical Development of Modern Art’, Monet’s paintings nevertheless set abstraction and representation in interplay, as many contemporary researchers point out.

## Monet and his motifs: representational and abstract aspects

For an artist active around the turn of the twentieth century such as Claude Monet, to render a chosen motif involves a direct experiencing of the environment, as well as a reconfiguration, in pictorial terms, of the results of observation. Monet's response to subject-matter requires emotional self-activation as well as distancing. His letters offer a glimpse into his pictorial process. When in Rouen in the last years of the nineteenth century, for instance, Monet paints indoors, yet the changing weather has a powerful impact on his mood and art-making. The flow and tumult of phenomena underscored by Worringer in *Abstraction and Empathy* are an integral part of Monet's experience:<sup>1</sup> the painter renders his motifs at different times of the day, allowing changes of light and weather to influence his work. Struggling to adapt to external changes, especially when his paintings appear unsatisfactory, Monet complains to his wife, Alice, in the early days of March 1893:

I'm working away like a madman but, alas, all your words are in vain, and I feel empty and good for nothing. It all happens at once, the weather isn't very predictable: wonderful sunshine yesterday, fog this morning, sun this afternoon which disappeared just when I needed it; tomorrow it will be a dark grey day or rainy, and once again, I'm very much afraid I'll leave everything and come home on an impulse...

What's the good of working when I don't get to the end of anything? This evening I wanted to compare what I've done now with the old paintings, which I don't like looking at too much in case I fall into the same errors. Well, the result of that was that I was right to be unhappy last year; it's ghastly and what I'm doing now is quite as bad, bad in a different way, that's all. The essential thing is to avoid the urge of doing it too quickly, try, try again, and get it right once and for all...<sup>2</sup>

Externalizing Monet's internal dialogue, the letter brings to light a relevant aspect of his process: the painter abstains from looking at previously completed works in order to avoid making similar mistakes. Monet fears that abstract, predetermined formulae of composition could have a negative impact on his direct observation and experiencing. Monet wishes to

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid., 16-17.

<sup>2</sup> Claude Monet and Richard Kendall, *Monet by Himself: Paintings, Drawings, Pastels, Letters* (London: Macdonald Orbis, 1989), 178. Monet's letter is sent to Alice from Rouen, Thursday evening, on 9 March 1893.

generate fresh responses to his motifs, work slower, and finalize his pictures in terms he deems acceptable; his pictorial practice thus emerges as a tensioned re-negotiation of his double allegiance to direct observation and artistic effect.

‘I have always worked better alone and from my own impressions’,<sup>3</sup> Monet writes to art dealer Paul Durand-Ruel (1831-1922) in 1884.<sup>4</sup> For Monet, the activity of painting relies on his personal ability to engage with his motifs; he places considerable emphasis on his response to conditions of site, light and weather. Beginning from impressions, Monet’s work nevertheless takes shape through the orchestration of pictorial effects. His attempts to capture effects of light and atmosphere yield intense emotional responses in his letters, as do the changing weather patterns.<sup>5</sup>

However, Monet does not renounce engaging observationally with his motifs, and does not resort to geometrical renditions to simplify his relationship with the world. Where Worringer suggests that the distress of artists faced with a perpetually changeable world can be appeased by abstraction,<sup>6</sup> Monet, ever sensitive to the hardships imposed by nature, continues to work with representation. In his *History of Impressionist Painters* (1906), art critic Théodore Duret (1838-1927) notes that, although Monet paints from observed motifs, what he captures is their fleeting particularities. Monet’s work, according to Duret, renders atmosphere rather than permanence. Duret points out that the painter communicates the qualities of light, season, time of the day and temperature to his viewers, who thus come to experience the depicted atmospheric conditions themselves.<sup>7</sup> For Duret, Monet’s canvases have the remarkable power of sharing the direct experiences of the painter: when contemplating a

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 108. This citation is extracted from a letter Monet wrote in Giverny, on 12 January 1884.

<sup>4</sup> Art historian Moshe Barasch (1920-2004) explains that impression, or sensation, provides immediate access to the surrounding world. See Moshe Barasch, *Theories of Art: From Impressionism to Kandinsky* (Fredericksburg: New York University Press, 1998), 13-23. From my point of view, the term ‘impression’ emphasizes the process of reception and its result; it connects mostly to vision, hearing and distance. The term ‘sensation’ draws my attention to reception having already undergone processing by the mind as well as by the body; I regard ‘sensation’ as connected mostly to touch, taste, smell, temperature and proximity. Impression leaves lighter traces than sensation on viewers; sensation brings along an increased internalization of experience. However, Barasch observes that ‘impression’ and ‘sensation’ have come to be equated in nineteenth- and twentieth-century writings. For the purposes of this section, which explores the relationship between representation and abstraction, I am referring to ‘impression’ and ‘sensation’ as to forms of personal response to environment.

<sup>5</sup> Monet and Kendall, *Monet by Himself: Paintings, Drawings, Pastels, Letters*, 130-131.

<sup>6</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 20.

<sup>7</sup> Théodore Duret, *Histoire des Peintres Impressionistes* (Paris: H. Floury, 1919 [1906]), 51-53.

painting by Monet, it is as if viewers could experience nature itself. Duret argues that viewers can undergo thermal sensations on the basis of Monet's handling of colour.

To communicate impressions and sensations,<sup>8</sup> Monet relies on colour and paint. He records atmospheric effects, aiming to '... get a picture going for every kind of weather, every colour harmony'.<sup>9</sup> For him, rendering atmospheric changes is as important as reaching the pictorial solutions he deems appropriate; he ambitiously aims to translate the observation of weather patterns into complex chromatic compositions.

In Monet's works, chromatic variation springs from a limited palette. According to him: 'The point is to know how to use the colours, the choice of which is, when all's said and done, a matter of habit.'<sup>10</sup> A few well-chosen colours lead to rich chromatic orchestrations in the recording of site and weather, he notes; his observation of motifs in the open air relies on the same initial colour choices. Monet's approach to representation involves potentially abstract aspects – for instance, the assertion of personal preference in colour selection, and certain a degree of repetition in their employment – despite his focus on rendering the immediacy of experience.

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<sup>8</sup> For Duret, impressions are visual, and sensations arise in response to movement and light. Both impressions and sensations are connected to senses, but impressions connect more readily to visual effect, and sensations to embodied experience. *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>9</sup> Monet and Kendall, *Monet by Himself: Paintings, Drawings, Pastels, Letters*, 189-196. See Monet's letters to Alice Monet (London, 18 March 1900), respectively to Georges Durand-Ruel (Giverny, 3 July 1905). Writing to Georges Durand-Ruel about his colour palette, Monet notes: 'Anyway, I use flake white, cadmium yellow, vermillion, deep madder, cobalt blue, emerald green and that's all.'

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 196.

### ***The Doorway (Morning Effect) (1894): re-materializations***

In Monet's *Rouen Cathedral* series (1892-94), representational and abstract approaches to painting coexist. The *Doorway (Morning Effect)* (1894) (Fig. 18), a work Monet completed towards the end of the series, de-emphasizes architectural detail and depicts effects of light and shading on the Cathedral's facade. Pictorial form provides support to the rich overlays of colour tints and tones in Monet's painting. As the gaze ascends towards the upper half of the work, chromatic differentiations are less and less asserted in Monet's renditions of structure, mass and ornament.

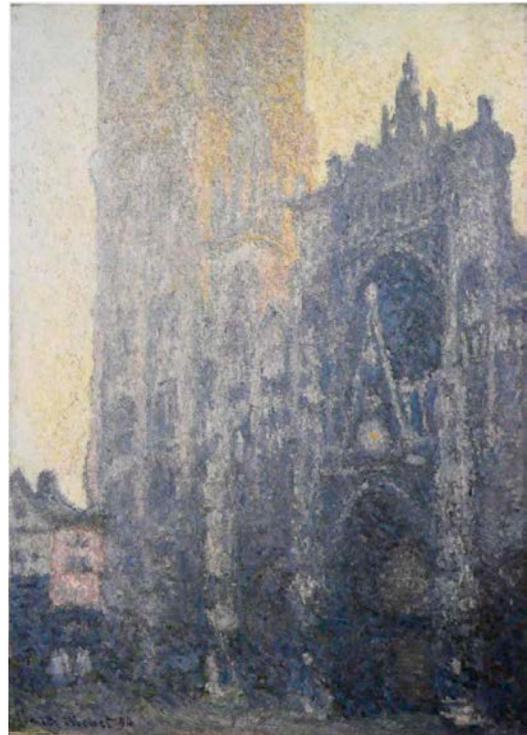


Fig. 18. Claude Monet. *The Doorway (Morning Effect)* [*Le Portail (Effet du Matin)*]. 1894. oil on canvas. 107 x 74 cm. Riehen/Basel. Fondation Beyeler.

An image of the Flamboyant Gothic facade of Rouen Cathedral features in *Form in Gothic* (Fig. 19),<sup>1</sup> where Worringer discusses the abstract yet vital characteristics of Gothic line.<sup>2</sup> For

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<sup>1</sup> The stages of construction of the Rouen Cathedral, as well as the various architectural styles the Cathedral incorporates, need to make the topic of a different inquiry. See, for further reference, Kevin D. Murphy, 'The Historic Building in the Modernized City: the Cathedrals of Paris and Rouen in the Nineteenth Century', *Journal of Urban History*, 37, No. 2, 2011, 281. Also, Michael T. Davis and Linda Elaine Neagley, 'Mechanics and Meaning: Plan Design at Saint-Urbain, Troyes and Saint-Ouen, Rouen', *Gesta*, 39, No. 2, 2000, 162-164, 165-167. Also, Linda Elaine Neagley, 'The Flamboyant Architecture of St.-Maclou, Rouen, and the Development of a Style', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 47, No. 4, 1988, 374.

<sup>2</sup> Worringer and Read, *Form in Gothic*, 68, illustration 22.

Worringer, Gothic architecture as made visible in the ruins of the Abbey of Jumièges (Normandy, France), in the Church of Saint Quirinus of Neuss (Germany), in the Cathedrals of Rheims (France), Ulm (Germany), Rouen (Normandy, France), and Cologne (Germany), is characterised by pathos and ecstasy.<sup>3</sup> Worringer's Gothic is super-sensuous and transcendental: it aspires to a world above the one presented by senses.<sup>4</sup> Repetitive, like the Northern ornament that announces it, and capable of developing motifs that appear never-ending, Gothic architecture allows the materiality of stone to be subdued by the will to form.<sup>5</sup> According to Worringer, Gothic buildings reflect no representational connection to objects in the world; their tremendous dynamism seems to reach beyond material expression. In his words: 'Common to all [i. e., to Northern ornament, Gothic architecture, as well as to the wild fantasies of immaturity] is an urge to activity, which, being bound to no one object, loses itself, as a result, in infinity.'<sup>6</sup> Monet's rendition of Rouen Cathedral does not underscore the dynamic pathos of Gothic, yet invokes, by means of paint, the fundamental similarities of stone and light.



Fig. 19. Rouen Cathedral. Facade. In Wilhelm Worringer, *Form in Gothic* [illustration 22, p. 72]. 1910 [edition of 1957]. Rouen. France.

Monet represents Rouen Cathedral on the basis of direct experience, combining observation with a personal approach to pictorial technique. For him, painting *The Doorway (Morning*

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 68-79. *Form in Gothic* presents illustrations of French and German churches and cathedrals side by side. The interweaving of images of German and French places of worship hints to Worringer's own artistic interests, as well as to the international aspect of Worringer's views on contemporary art-making.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 82.

*Effect*) begins with his response to a specific location; he establishes a vantage point that aligns his perspective with the perspective of a passer-by. Depicting Rouen Cathedral from the ground level looking up, Monet focuses less on offering a detailed representation of the majesty of the site than on addressing the meeting between light, structure and ornament in paint. His choice of place and perspective contribute to establishing the composition as well as the atmosphere of the picture.

Remembering her conversations with the painter, Lilla Cabot Perry mentions that Monet had started working on the Rouen Cathedral series in the window of a milliner's shop opposite the Cathedral. According to her, Monet built a little enclosure that isolated him from the shop, permitting him to stand back from the canvas for no more than a yard. '[H]e said he had never really seen these Rouen Cathedral pictures until he brought them back to his studio in Giverny',<sup>7</sup> Perry recalls. As her words suggest, Monet did not rely on creating an accurate connection between motifs as observed and motifs as depicted.<sup>8</sup> He rather focused on recording lived experience, even when the visual appraisal of pictorial results proved difficult.

Monet approaches painting from the perspective of representation: his works render people, places, natural elements; on the other hand, his technique creates distance from his motifs by veiling descriptive detail and emphasizing colour, light and paint effects.<sup>9</sup> According to John House in 'Time's Cycles' (1992), Monet intends to pursue the capturing of immaterial sensations rather than to achieve representational accuracy. Monet emphasizes the atmospheric rendition of pictorial motifs instead of depicting elements to which social, cultural or spiritual significance could be attached, House notes.<sup>10</sup> He observes that Monet's

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<sup>7</sup> Lilla Cabot Perry, 'Reminiscences of Claude Monet from 1889 to 1909' in *Monet and the Impressionists*, ed. George T. M. Shackelford (Sydney: Art Gallery of New South Wales, 2008), 206-207.

<sup>8</sup> Karin Sagner-Düchting, *Monet and Modernism* (Munich and London: Prestel, 2002), 34-71.

<sup>9</sup> For the tension between the perception-oriented and the process-oriented aspects of Monet's work, see ———, 'Monet's Late Work from the Vantage Point of Modernism' in *Monet and Modernism*, ed. Karin Sagner-Düchting (Munich and London: Prestel, 2002), 21-22.

<sup>10</sup> Also see Monet's words from a letter addressed to Gustave Geffroy on 7 October 1890: 'I'm hard at it, working stubbornly on a series of different effects (grain stacks), but at this time of the year the sun sets so fast that it's impossible to keep up with it... I'm getting so slow at my work and it makes me despair, but the further I get, the more I see that a lot of work has to be done in order to render what I'm looking for: "instantaneity", the "envelope" above all, the same light spread over everything, and more than ever I'm disgusted by easy things that come in one go. Anyway, I'm increasingly obsessed by the need to render what I experience, and I'm praying that I'll have a few more good years left to me because I think I may make some progress in that direction'. Monet and Kendall, *Monet by Himself: Paintings, Drawings, Pastels, Letters*, 172.

late nineteenth-century series bring attention to sequenced variation and aesthetic qualities – in other words, abstract aspects become visible in Monet’s mature practice.<sup>11</sup>

In *The Doorway (Morning Effect)*, Monet’s motif emerges from the overlay of brushstrokes rather than from directional lines and structuring planes. The painter renders the interaction of light with architectural form, and redefines form in this process. Composed by the repetitive touch of the brush rather than by unified planar treatment, colour varies within close ranges of tones and tints.<sup>12</sup> The dominant hues of this painting, blue and yellow, are modulated by Monet to depict both lit and shaded areas of the Cathedral facade.<sup>13</sup>

A certain degree of dematerialization characterises Monet’s approach to his motif in *The Doorway (Morning Effect)*; bathed in sunlight, the imposing figure of the Cathedral is depicted as an interweaving of blue, red, orange, green, yellow and purple tints. Architectural detail becomes chromatic harmony – the motif of the Cathedral stands as a landmark that makes visible the transformation of light and the passage of time. Monet’s approach to depicting Gothic architecture resonates with Worringer’s later findings; in *Form in Gothic*, Worringer writes: ‘... [A]ll expression to which Gothic architecture attained, was attained – and this is the full significance of the contrast – *in spite of the stone*’.<sup>14</sup>

In Monet’s *Doorway (Morning Effect)*, Rouen Cathedral, a building of historical, social, cultural and spiritual significance,<sup>15</sup> provides a starting point for Monet’s exploration of

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<sup>11</sup> John House, 'Time's Cycles', *Art in America*, 80, No. 10, 1992. Also, ———, 'Monet and the Genesis of His Series' in *Claude Monet Painter of Light*, eds. Dominik Rimbault, Philip Hurdwood, and Christopher Scoular (Avalon Beach, NSW: Maxwell's Collection Distributor, 2000), 12, 16, 23.

<sup>12</sup> In this subchapter, I use the term 'tint' to refer to a mixture of colour and white, and the term 'tone' to indicate that colour has been mixed with gray. 'Value contrast' refers to black and white contrast, and 'hue' points to colours specifically mentioned. 'Saturation' refers to the unmixed quality of a colour, while 'desaturation' implies that colour has been mixed with white (a desaturated colour is a tint).

<sup>13</sup> According to Christopher Lyon, in the case of Monet’s triptych, *Water Lilies* (c. 1920), the painter composed his colour harmonies by bringing together an unexpectedly small number of pigments. Lyon explains that Monet varied the range of green by mixing small amounts of other pigments with viridian and lead white. Lyon’s observation highlights a feature of Monet’s pictorial technique already apparent in *Doorway (Morning Effect)*, an earlier work of less chromatic diversity than the *Water Lilies* mentioned above. See Christopher Lyon, 'Unveiling Monet', *MoMA*, No. 7, 1991, 16.

<sup>14</sup> Worringer and Read, *Form in Gothic*, 106.

<sup>15</sup> Regarding Monet’s decision to paint the Rouen Cathedral, Robert Herbert notes: 'That Rouen Cathedral was a deliberate choice on Monet’s part is not to be doubted. He could have chosen to paint the Palais de Justice, or the Bourse, or another kind of governmental or financial institution. We know instinctively that this would be ludicrous for Monet, owing to the different associations with neo-classical architecture. Government buildings of classical style were associated with authority, that is, with government, with bureaucracy, rationality, rules and recipes. Gothic architecture was widely believed to be the result of the willing efforts of many artisans and

natural light and colour. The painter's composition relies on the diagonal ascension (and graduated softening) of value; in his handling, value contrast achieves a different effect than in the case of traditional *chiaroscuro* technique. *Chiaroscuro*, or the graduated articulation of light and dark contrast throughout a picture, emphasizes the three-dimensionality of figures, and suggests spatial depth. *Doorway (Morning Effect)* orchestrates contrast by means of similarity in tints and tones instead, and allows the transition from dark to light to take place in one principal plane: on the depicted facade of the cathedral.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, Monet continues to attend to representational aspects, establishing the composition of *Doorway (Morning Effect)* on the grounds of emplaced observation.

Resemblance with Rouen Cathedral is still sought by Monet; however, visual similarities become relative due to the prominence of brushwork. In this respect, Monet's pictorial technique appeals to the sense of touch as much as to the sense of sight. The brushstrokes of Monet dissolve detail and structure, and assert form, colour and texture in *Doorway (Morning Effect)*. Paint creates a bridge between light and matter; on Monet's canvas, stone becomes vibrantly present, while light finds embodiment. The overall, paradoxical effect of his picture is one of material weightlessness, articulated through visible, unblended, texturally particularizing brushstrokes.

Monet is not alone in highlighting the shimmering qualities of Gothic architecture. In *Principles of Art History* (1915), Wölfflin examines the formal aspects of late (or Flamboyant) Gothic, and observes that Gothic architecture communicates movement in painterly rather than linear terms. For Wölfflin, late Gothic makes visible not static plasticity, but dynamic appearances, and three-dimensional depth. He writes:

In contrast to [High Gothic], late Gothic seeks the painterly effect of vibrating forms. Not in the modern sense, but compared with the strict linearity of High Gothic, form has been divorced from the type of plastic rigidity and forced over towards the

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artists, who were given the freedom to choose their decorative motifs from nature.' Robert L. Herbert, 'The Decorative and the Natural in Monet's Cathedrals' in *Aspects of Monet: A Symposium on the Artist's Life and Times*, eds. John Rewald and Frances Weitzenhoffer (New York: Abrams, 1984), 171.

<sup>16</sup> Monet bridges value contrast and colour in *Doorway (Morning Effect)*. He thus responds, in late nineteenth-century terms, to the observation of John Shearman that colour cannot be separated from *chiaroscuro*, since light in painting is actually rendered by means of colour. See John Shearman, 'Leonardo's Colour and Chiaroscuro', *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*, 25, No. 1, 1962, 13.

appearance of movement. The style develops recessional motives, motives of overlapping in the ornament as in space. It plays with the apparently lawless and in places softens into flux. And as now calculations with mass effects come, where the single form no longer speaks with a quite independent voice, this art delights in the mysterious and unclucid, in other words, in a partial obscuring of reality.<sup>17</sup>

Familiar with the work of Wölfflin, Worringer mentions his opinion on Gothic in *Abstraction and Empathy*. ‘Here [i. e., in Gothic] something magnificent came into being’, Wölfflin, as cited by Worringer, points out. ‘But it is a magnificence that lies beyond life, not life itself magnificently experienced’.<sup>18</sup> Like Wölfflin, Worringer addresses the supra-sensuous characteristics of Gothic in *Abstraction and Empathy*. For Worringer, however, Gothic needs to be approached from a subjective, psychologically oriented viewpoint.<sup>19</sup> Writing about the exterior of Gothic cathedrals, Worringer expressively points to the dynamism he finds specific to Gothic architecture. He remarks: ‘The upward striving energies, which in the interior have not yet come to rest, seem to press outwards, in order to lose themselves, freed from all limitation and confinement’.<sup>20</sup> While Wölfflin signals the apparent absence of laws of Gothic form, Worringer explains Gothic architecture as reflective of a striving to reach beyond the very structure and material that give a building its substantiality.

Robert L. Herbert observes that, for Impressionist artists such as Monet, Renoir, and Pissarro, Gothic architecture proved appealing on social, political and cultural grounds.<sup>21</sup> According to

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<sup>17</sup> Wölfflin, *Principles of Art History. The Problem of the Development of Style in Later Art*, 231.

<sup>18</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 138.

<sup>19</sup> In the conclusion of *Principles of Art History*, Wölfflin, writing in 1915, cautions against the exclusive focus on the history of expression in art, which he finds one-sided, and signals his interest in form (or schema, to employ his terminology) instead. In *Abstraction and Empathy* Worringer noted he intended to cultivate a subjective approach to the ‘history of the feeling about the world’; he made vast employment of the term ‘expression’ in his discussions of art. The term ‘expression’ seems a synonym of ‘art-making’ in *Abstraction and Empathy*; Worringer focuses on ‘forms of artistic expression’ throughout his text. (Ibid., 30.) While Worringer was interested in charting emotional variations on the basis of their manifestation in artistic style, Wölfflin prefers to focus on defining and analysing concepts of general applicability in *Principles of Art History*. Nevertheless, in *Prolegomena to a Psychology of Architecture* (1886), Wölfflin had approached architectural form from a perspective that responded to expressive and psychological concerns. Wölfflin, *Principles of Art History. The Problem of the Development of Style in Later Art*, 226-227.

<sup>20</sup> Worringer and Read, *Form in Gothic*, 164-165.

<sup>21</sup> Herbert, ‘The Decorative and the Natural in Monet’s Cathedrals’, 171. However, the dematerialization mentioned by Herbert characterizes mainly the visual effect of Monet’s approach. From being the subject of the painter’s observation, the Rouen Cathedral actually transits to becoming a painted motif in Monet’s *Doorway (Morning Effect)*. During this transition from observation to picture-making, Monet allows abstract aspects to

him, Impressionist artists appreciated that Gothic architecture had emerged as a community effort, where creative contributions permitted personal freedom in the interpretation of natural motifs.<sup>22</sup> From the perspective of Herbert's argument, Rouen Cathedral can be considered as an architectural extension of the natural world, brought into being through artistic collaboration.

Herbert explains that Monet's decision to paint the Rouen Cathedral was supported by the late nineteenth-century connection drawn between Gothic art and naturalism. He mentions that admirers of Monet's work such as statesman Georges Clemenceau (1841-1929) and writer Léon Bazalgette (1873-1928) regarded nature, medieval art, craft and decoration as associated.<sup>23</sup> For Monet to focus on painting the Rouen Cathedral was contextually justified, Herbert maintains; he notes Monet's attachment to naturalist values, but also highlights the decorative aspects of Monet's practice. The decorative, according to Herbert, takes shape through Monet's cultivation of surface effects, through his emphasis on colour, and through his selection of an architectural motif as a starting point for pictorial exploration.

Twentieth-century writers have underscored the subtle interweaving of representational and abstract aspects in Monet's work. Monet's pursuit of abstraction is predominantly visible for Kazimir Malevich (1879-1935), who emphasizes the key role of painting as such (rather than of painting as representation) in the Rouen Cathedral series.<sup>24</sup> Roger Fry draws attention to Monet's deliberate simplifications and instinctive design while signalling Monet's capacity to render appearances.<sup>25</sup> For André Masson (1896-1987), Monet has the representational ability to record sensations, but also the abstraction-oriented capacity to select and organize sensations.<sup>26</sup> In her turn, Karen Sagner-Düchting notes that critical approaches to Monet's work tend to range from interpreting Monet's paintings as precise records of perception to

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build into his process of representation: he depicts the Rouen Cathedral in the colours of light (thus suggesting its dematerialization), yet unforgettably re-materializes the Cathedral by means of paint.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 171-173.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 168-171.

<sup>24</sup> Kazimir Malevich cited in Sagner-Düchting, *Monet and Modernism*, 35.

<sup>25</sup> Roger Fry, 'Modern French Art at the Lefevre Gallery', *The Burlington Magazine for Connoisseurs*, 63, No. 364, 1933, 24.

<sup>26</sup> André Masson, 'Monet the Founder' in *Monet and the Impressionists*, ed. George T. M. Shackelford (Sydney: Art Gallery of New South Wales, 2008 [1952]), 90-91.

seeing Monet's efforts – especially in his late works – as sensation-oriented, subjective explorations of colour.<sup>27</sup>

### **Representation and abstraction in Monet's *Water Lilies* (1907)**

The abstract aspect animating Monet's pictorial effects comes increasingly to the fore in his early twentieth-century series, for instance in *Water Lilies* (1903-09).<sup>28</sup> His tendency towards abstraction develops gradually, in connection to his process of painting from chosen motifs.<sup>29</sup> As early as 1893, Monet was predicating the success of his work on slowing down, on avoiding rapid completion; he often communicated instantaneity through '... a stubborn incrustation of colours', a textural accumulation of paint which required repetitive overlaying.<sup>30</sup>

With the passage of time, Monet's commitment to instantaneity becomes a matter of pictorial effect rather than a strategy of immediate response to his motifs; he continues to paint in response to environment, yet, as his early twentieth-century correspondence reveals, also re-addresses his works in the studio.<sup>31</sup> In fact, the painter agonizes over finalizing his works, making numerous alterations before managing to articulate fleeting atmospheric impressions

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<sup>27</sup> Sagner-Düchting, 'Monet's Late Work from the Vantage Point of Modernism', 20-21. Kandinsky, in his *Reminiscences* (1913), notes he was particularly impressed with one of Monet's *Haystacks*.

<sup>28</sup> Apart from his *Rouen Cathedral* series (1892-94), Monet also worked on a series of *Haystacks* (1890-91), on a series of *Poplars on the Banks of the Epte* (1891), and on a series of London paintings (1900-04). See Virginia Spate and Claude Monet, *The Colour of Time: Claude Monet* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1992), 201-252.

<sup>29</sup> Hajo Düchting observes that, although colour modelling and brushwork go beyond the purposes of representation in Monet's *Water Lilies*, a hint to 'nature's intrinsic elemental character' is still present in these paintings. See Hajo Düchting, 'Colour and Technique: Monet and His Influence on Abstract Painting' in *Monet and Modernism*, ed. Karin Sagner-Düchting (Munich and London: Prestel, 2002), 144-145. Regarding the diversity of painting techniques employed by Monet in the *Water Lilies* project, see Lyon, 'Unveiling Monet', 16-17.

<sup>30</sup> Monet and Kendall, *Monet by Himself: Paintings, Drawings, Pastels, Letters*, 179. Regarding Monet's constantly reworking and altering his paintings, see his letters to Alice (London, 28 March 1900, and London again, 2 March 1901). On Monet's views regarding the exhibition of *Water Lilies* (which could only be shown together, according to the painter), see his letter to Paul Durand-Ruel (Giverny, 27 April 1907). ———, *Monet by Himself: Paintings, Drawings, Pastels, Letters*, 190-198.

<sup>31</sup> Monet and Kendall, *Monet by Himself: Paintings, Drawings, Pastels, Letters*, 192-198. See Monet's letters to his wife Alice (London, 2 March 1901), his letters to Paul Durand-Ruel (Giverny, 10 May 1903 and 12 February 1905), and his letter to Gustave Geffroy (Giverny, 11 August 1908).

and sensations to his relative satisfaction.<sup>32</sup> Representational features remain discernible in his mature output, yet the painter's preoccupations with colour, brushwork, form, space and composition also gain visibility.

Monet, in his *Water Lilies*, does not strive to articulate pictures that render motifs accurately, in all their detail. To depict the world does not rely on imitation, but on communicating personal, embodied experience. In the words of Monet: 'I only know that I do what I can to convey what I experience before nature and that most often, in order to succeed in conveying what I feel, I totally forget the most elementary rules of painting, if they exist that is. In short, I let a good many mistakes show through when fixing my sensations.'<sup>33</sup>

In *Abstraction and Empathy*, Worringer associates sensation with vitality and organic life – in other words, with representational art (or naturalism).<sup>34</sup> He draws attention to Goethe's remark that, for Classically oriented artists (or, according to Worringer's main line of argument, representational artists), the sensations they experience are inner reflections of the natural world. Following Goethe, Worringer explains that nature appeared as the outer manifestation of inner feeling in representational art.<sup>35</sup> He maintains that contemporary artists need to distinguish between naturalism and imitation, and signalled the role of artistic will in naturalism. According to Worringer:

... [W]hat is naturalism? The answer is: approximation to the organic and the true to life, but not because the artist desired to depict a natural object true to life in its corporeality, not because he desired to give the illusion of a living object, but because the feeling for the organic form that is true to life had been aroused and because the artist desired to give satisfaction to this feeling, which dominated the absolute artistic

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<sup>32</sup> See previously cited excerpt from Monet's letter to Alice, written from Rouen, Thursday evening, on 9 March 1893.

<sup>33</sup> Monet and Kendall, *Monet by Himself: Paintings, Drawings, Pastels, Letters*, 245. Letter to Gustave Geffroy, written from Giverny on 7 June 1912.

<sup>34</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 61, 72, 128.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 128. For Worringer's association of representation (or naturalism) with Classicism, see, from the current thesis, 'Wilhelm Worringer: sketch for a portrait', 'Gazing in the mirror of history: Worringer's forewords to *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic*', 'Empathy, abstraction and representation in Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy*', 'Representation and abstraction in art-making: Worringer's perspective', "'Common to all': form for Kant and Worringer', 'Riegl and artistic will'.

volition. It was the happiness of the organically alive, not that of truth to life, which was striven after.<sup>36</sup>

For Worringer, naturalist art communicates the personal responses of artists to the world: more precisely, their enjoyment of organic form and intention of engaging with it. The boundaries of naturalist art as described by Worringer thus extend to include works that do not offer strict imitations of natural motifs. In his later works, Monet approaches painting from a perspective similar to Worringer's point of view on naturalism. Balancing his interest in nature and direct observation with his attention to pictorial effects, Monet depicts his motifs while expressing his sensations; his process thus comes to interweave representational and abstract approaches to painting.

Virginia Spate points to the complex connections developed by Monet between abstraction and representation in his early twentieth-century works. In *Transcending the Moment – Monet's Water Lilies 1899 –1926* (2000), Spate writes: 'The central paradox of Monet's painting is nowhere more clearly exemplified than in the *Water Lilies*, which are both "abstract" and accurate, dream-like and intensely familiar.'<sup>37</sup>

Two pictorial elements that facilitate Monet's interweaving of abstraction and representation are colour and form. In a canvas from the *Water Lilies* series, *Water Lilies* (1907) (Fig. 20),<sup>38</sup> the larger violet and green areas of the canvas reveal the presence of ochre, yellow, pink, blue, indigo veils at close range. Due to their dissolved boundaries and textural variations, these veils of colour reflect the physical attributes of movement and fluidity.

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 27-28.

<sup>37</sup> Virginia Spate, 'Transcending the Moment - Monet's Water Lilies 1899-1926' in *Claude Monet Painter of Light*, eds. Dominik Rimbault, Philip Hurdwood, and Christopher Scoular (Avalon Beach, NSW: Maxwell's Collection Distributor, 2000), 32-33.

<sup>38</sup> In the discussion that follows, the term '*Water Lilies*' refers specifically to Monet's painting from 1907, unless otherwise indicated (e. g., Monet's *Water Lilies* series).



Fig. 20. Claude Monet. *Water Lilies*. 1907. oil on canvas. 96.8 x 93.4 cm. Boston, Museum of Fine Arts.

Monet communicates effects of clustering, undulation, dissolution, enfolding, intermittence, refraction and reflection by building up subtle differences in brushwork, tint and tone in *Water Lilies*. Red, white and purple punctuate his composition, emphasizing the play of light on leaves and water. Nevertheless, the painter organizes his composition around protagonist colours: he establishes green and violet as key chromatic notes of *Water Lilies*.

In Monet's handling, paint reconfigures the physical specificities of his motif. His brushstrokes model pictorial planes by accumulation in *Water Lilies*. Blended when employed by Monet to depict water and reflections, brushstrokes become shorter and disclose their uneven edges as the painter renders leaves and petals. His application of paint alternates between smooth and textured passages. Much like colour and form, brushwork plays a key role in the articulation of Monet's composition.

Form surfaces from the meeting of colour and brushwork in Monet's *Water Lilies*. His choice of motif emphasizes physical processes and levels of coexistence rather than the solid aspects of natural forms.<sup>39</sup> The stability of built environment the Cathedral motif had suggested in the

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<sup>39</sup> Muriel Ciolkowska shows that Monet's approach to form is characterized by melody and vibration rather than by structural aspects, as in the case of Cézanne's work. Ciolkowska notes: 'If Cézanne aimed at harmony through form, Monet aimed at melody through tone, and so from stage to stage, as his style acquired perfection and his eyes subtlety, it became more and more intangible, evading increasingly the matter-of-factness of definition through outline, and by means, I repeat, analogous to the Chinese artist's method of translating the form of a bird by painting its feathers, or of a sea wave by numerous strokes building up a form within a form. In other words Monet's preoccupation was not with co-related form, as Cézanne's, but with vibrations within

early eighteen-nineties disappears a decade later in the *Water Lilies* series. As Virginia Spate and William Seitz remark, Monet gradually comes to exclude the bank of the Giverny pond from his paintings;<sup>40</sup> his decision to focus on the rendering of water, plants and light thus influences the abstract-representational dynamics of his works. *Water Lilies* (1907), for instance, narrows the gap between depiction and pictorial effect.<sup>41</sup> When Monet traces boundaries for representational elements, he emphasizes the sketch-like quality of contour, allowing it to dissolve into colour. His approach to form communicates the qualities of mobility inherent in his motif.

In his *Theory of Colours* (1810), Goethe noted that colour had a distinctive capacity for transformation which made it a visual indicator of subtle natural processes.<sup>42</sup> His remark is validated in a work such as *Water Lilies*, due to Monet's approach to observation as well as pictorial rendition. For Monet, the motif of water lilies requires a sustained examination of physical qualities and processes. He begins by observing and recording colour change in front of his motif – a habit he had developed throughout his practice, as his works and letters show.

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one form.' See Muriel Ciolkowska, 'Memories of Monet' in *Monet and the Impressionists*, ed. George T. M. Shackelford (Sydney: Art Gallery of New South Wales, 2008 [March 1927]), 202.

<sup>40</sup> Spate, *Claude Monet: The Colour of Time*, 258-263. Also, early twentieth-century writer Henri Ghéon describes Monet's decision to focus on water surfaces in terms suggestive of increasing abstraction. Ghéon writes in 1909: 'Remark how over the course of five years of studies by the shore of the same flowering pond, Claude Monet restricts the field of his vision in a progressive fashion. First he paints the pond ringed in by banks, then the banks give way, leaving their reflection; the next year, no more than the reflection of the trees, then nothing but the sky in the water. And thus, from the flower bed of water lilies scarcely a single flower remains at the end.' See Steven Z. Levine and Claude Monet, *Monet, Narcissus, and Self-Reflection: The Modernist Myth of the Self* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 240, 319. Also see William Seitz, 'Monet and Abstract Painting', *College Art Journal*, Vol. 16, No. 1, 1956, 45.

<sup>41</sup> Spate highlights the relationship between abstract and representational modes with regard to Monet's *Water Lilies* works from 1907. She writes: 'These abstract colour harmonies embody intensely observed effects: slight inflections of violet around the lowest island of the leaves – which seem to be coming to form in the thinning mist – suggest the translucent depths of the water, while the different intensities of colour are evocative of the different densities of mist in shadow, in the golden reflections or under the open sky.' See Spate, *Claude Monet: The Colour of Time*, 263.

<sup>42</sup> Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Theory of Colours* (London: John Murray, Albemarle Street, 1840 [1810]), xlvii.



Fig. 21. Claude Monet. *Port Donnant, Belle-Île*. 1886. oil on canvas. 65.6 x 81.3 cm. New Haven, Art Institute of Chicago.

In the 1880s, for instance, Monet focuses on depicting the interaction of water, rocks and light from Belle-Île (Fig. 21). According to him: ‘... I do know that to paint the sea really well, you need to look at it every hour of every day in the same place so that you can understand its ways in that particular spot; and this is why I am working on the same motifs over and over again, four or six times even’.<sup>43</sup> Through concentrated, emplaced looking and successive renditions, Monet charts the variations of a dynamic vista. He develops a pictorial approach that combines static and dynamic elements in order to render his chosen motif.

A similar interweaving of repeated observation and pictorial rendition informs the *Water Lilies* series. However, rocks, clouds, the horizon, and the occasional spell of rain feature in Monet’s paintings from Belle-Île, where the artist engages in three-dimensional modelling and communicates atmospheric depth of field, as well as a sense of location. Two decades later, Monet’s *Water Lilies* series focuses on vegetation, water surfaces, and the effects of physical processes made visible by his chosen motif. The painter replaces the experience of seeing in the distance with close-range observation. By removing spatial signposts and boundaries, he can explore the interchanges between form and colour, and can bring the abstract potential of colour and brushwork to the surface. Gradual chromatic steps lead viewing from the definition to the dissolution of form in *Water Lilies*.

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<sup>43</sup> Monet and Kendall, *Monet by Himself: Paintings, Drawings, Pastels, Letters*, 122. This letter is sent by Monet to Alice from Kervilahouen, on 30 October 1886.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Monet's painting articulates a multifaceted dialogue between representation and abstraction, two modes of art-making Worringer frames by means of antithesis in the opening pages of *Abstraction and Empathy*. This characteristic of Monet's practice is signalled by Duret, for whom Monet's *Water Lilies* appear to be '... decorative work, but a kind of decoration that relies on reality and is grounded in a long-standing practice of observing nature.'<sup>44</sup> Duret draws attention to the relationship between abstraction and representation in Monet's art as early as 1906. The abstraction-oriented *Water Lilies* series emerges after decades of sustained representational inquiry – a mode of art-making that continues to reverberate in Monet's mature output, according to Duret.

The interweaving of abstraction and representation in Monet's painting, *Water Lilies* (1907), takes a different shape than the abstract-representational interplay in *The Doorway (Morning Effect)*. For *The Doorway (Morning Effect)*, Monet employed colour to re-materialize architectural structure and detail in pictorial terms. Instead, the motif of *Water Lilies* presupposes a distancing from physical values such as solidity, form and boundaries; consequently, Monet directs his use of colour less towards structuring and light-dark contrasts than towards blending and chromatic modulations. The painter employs primary hues only to create dynamic accents; he emphasizes tints, tones and secondary hues, more readily suggestive of harmony and of a fluid relationship between form and colour.

*Water Lilies* records subtle shifts in Monet's angle of vision. These changes in viewpoint further enhance the interweaving of abstract and representational values. In the lower left corner of the canvas, for instance, the water lilies seem rendered almost from above; the surface plane thus appears to curve towards the viewer, alluding to the roundness of three-dimensional space. The placement of lily clusters on the right of Monet's composition suggests the possibility of diagonal movement for this visual group. Towards the top of the canvas, vegetation seems to glide away from the viewer, indicating spatial recession. Monet

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<sup>44</sup> Duret, *Histoire des Peintres Impressionistes*, 68. In the revised and translated edition of this book, Duret writes about Monet's paintings of the pond at Giverny: 'Monet thus reached that last degree of abstraction and imagination allied with reality, of which the art of landscape is capable.' See Théodore Duret, *Manet and the French Impressionists* (London: Grant Richards, 1910), 146. However, as Steven Z. Levine shows, Monet's pictorial approach provokes a variety of responses from his contemporaries. For example, Roger Marx regards Monet's *Water Lilies* series as a token of egoism and self-absorption, while Charles Morice considers Monet's work to place exclusive emphasis on physicality. See Levine and Monet, *Monet, Narcissus, and Self-Reflection: The Modernist Myth of the Self*, 231, 239.

may have constructed pictorial space from an emplaced vantage point, yet included more than one angle of vision in his picture. His painting configures a composite space where the positioning and representation of elements allude to natural changes, as well as to the passage of time.<sup>45</sup>

For Monet, direct experience and formal considerations intermix in his approach to environment, work display and art-making. Refusing to show a selection of canvases from his *Water Lilies* series in 1907, Monet explains to Paul Durand-Ruel: ‘... [T]he whole effect can only be achieved from an exhibition of the entire group.’<sup>46</sup> His attention to compositional aspects of painting comes to reflect in his views on exhibition strategy. In a letter from 1921 addressed to Georges Clemenceau, Monet requires that the *Large Decorations* he intends to donate to the State be exhibited in accordance with his views, in the space at the Orangerie Museum.<sup>47</sup> The immersive atmosphere Monet wishes to rearticulate by means of display is rooted in his engagement with his garden, pond, and studio at Giverny. Bringing together direct experience and attention to effects of painting, light and space, Monet creates complex, lived connections between representational and abstract aspects of painting at the beginning of the twentieth century.

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<sup>45</sup> Roger Marx approaches Monet’s bridging of abstraction and representation in terms of change, movement and attentiveness to the brisk pace of modern life. With regard to early twentieth-century painting, Marx writes: ‘It is no longer a question of fixing the things that abide, but of seizing what is passing. The concrete reality of things is not so interesting as the temporary links between things, the interdependent rapports. Until recently artists prided themselves on representing a palpable reality, yet there is a delicate interrelatedness that comprises and surrounds reality and seems to elude any kind of detailed transcription – however, this is just what Monsieur Claude Monet aspires to do, and where he excels.’ See Roger Marx, ‘The Waterlilies by Monsieur Claude Monet’ in *Monet and the Impressionists*, ed. George T. M. Shackelford (Sydney: Art Gallery of New South Wales, 2008 [June 1909]), 202.

<sup>46</sup> Monet and Kendall, *Monet by Himself: Paintings, Drawings, Pastels, Letters*, 198.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 258. Regarding Monet’s negotiation of the visual relationship between his series of *Large Decorations* [*Grandes Décorations*] and their exhibition space, The Orangerie in the Tuileries Gardens, Paris, also see Spate, *Claude Monet: The Colour of Time*, 269-302.

## **Towards the expression of inner worlds: Kandinsky, Worringer, and turn-of-the-twentieth century artist writings**

The transition between rendering outer aspects of the world to expressing inner life takes place gradually in the works of artists during the first years of the twentieth century.<sup>1</sup> In the practices of painters such as Hodler, Cézanne, Monet, and Kandinsky, responding to aspects of personal experience brings increased visibility to abstract-representational interplay.

For Kandinsky, the development of his art relies on artistic experimentation as well as written reflection. Kandinsky employs the medium of writing throughout his life, as Kenneth C. Lindsay and Peter Vergo remark.<sup>2</sup> The articles of the painter reveal his engagement with early twentieth-century art and criticism,<sup>3</sup> and bring to light his awareness of and direct involvement with international artistic developments.<sup>4</sup>

Kandinsky participates actively to the cultural and artistic scene of Munich, a city where, like Worringer, he resides in the early years of the twentieth century.<sup>5</sup> In Munich, Kandinsky's

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<sup>1</sup> See Kandinsky, Lindsay, and Vergo, *Kandinsky. Complete Writings on Art*, 153. Also, Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 11, 26-29, 33.

<sup>2</sup> Kandinsky, Lindsay, and Vergo, *Kandinsky. Complete Writings on Art*, 11-13.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 33-51. See Kandinsky's 'Critique of Critics' (1901), an article where he requires art critics to combine sensitivity, consciousness, comprehension and knowledge in their judgments. Also see Kandinsky's correspondence from Munich (1902), where he comments admiringly on the works of contemporary French and British artists in the International Exhibition of the Secession.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 17, 45-46.

<sup>5</sup> In English-language sources, the relationship between Kandinsky and Worringer tends to be mentioned without extensive detailing. Kandinsky, as Vivian Endicott Barnett, Helmut Friedel and Rudolf H. Wackernagel show, lived in Munich between 1896 and 1914. See Vivian Endicott Barnett, Helmut Friedel, and Rudolf H. Wackernagel, eds., *Vasily Kandinsky: A Colorful Life: The Collection of the Lenbachhaus, Munich* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1996), 32. Worringer was also located in Munich between 1902 and 1909, according to Sebastian Preuss, so (at the very least) Kandinsky and Worringer would have had the chance to hear each other's names in art-connected circles. See Preuss, 'Spiritual Intoxication: Sebastian Preuss on Wilhelm Worringer and Modernism', 16. Kenneth C. Lindsay and Peter Vergo, Klaus Lankheit, Peter Selz, and Juliet Koss note that Kandinsky knew Worringer and was familiar with his writings; however, these authors do not comment further on the connections between the two. See Kandinsky, Lindsay, and Vergo, *Kandinsky. Complete Writings on Art*, 117. Also, Kandinsky, Marc, and Lankheit, *The Blaue Reiter Almanac*, 25-26, 30, 36. Also, Peter Selz, 'The Aesthetic Theories of Wassily Kandinsky and Their Relationship to the Origin of Non-Objective Painting', *The Art Bulletin*, 39, No. 2, 1957, 129. Carmen Giménez sketches a background for the links between Kandinsky and Worringer; she underscores that Piper published the works of both Worringer and Kandinsky, and that Marc – Kandinsky's friend – read *Abstraction and Empathy* before the publication of *The Blue Rider Almanac*. According to Giménez: 'Between 1908 and 1910 – the same years that Worringer's book was beginning to circulate – he [i. e., Kandinsky] began to consciously develop an art that was purely abstract, working not from Cubism or any kind of representational style but from pure colour. Just a few years later he wrote *On the Spiritual in Art* (1912) and edited, with Franz Marc, *The Blaue Reiter Almanac* (1912). We know that Kandinsky was familiar with Worringer's work – their books were put out by the same publisher, Reinhard Piper, and in December 1911 Marc wrote to Kandinsky that he was reading *Abstraction and Empathy*.

art-making incorporates a variety of influences that shape his writings as well. Sixten Ringbom, for instance, draws attention to the impact of the writings of philosopher Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925) and writer J. W. Goethe (1749-1832) on Kandinsky's thought.<sup>6</sup> According to Peg Weiss, Kandinsky was familiar with the key figures of the Munich *Jugendstil* [Youth Style] movement, such as architect and designer Peter Behrens (1868-1940), or sculptor Hermann Obrist (1862-1927).<sup>7</sup> In her turn, Vivian Endicott Barnett discusses the contexts and conditions that fuelled Kandinsky's early twentieth-century relationships with artists like Gabriele Münter (1877-1962), Alexei Jawlensky (1864-1941), and Marianne von Werefkin (1860-1938).<sup>8</sup> According to Shulamith Behr, Kandinsky resonated with the utopian worldview of writer and activist Dimitrije Mitrinovich (1887-1953), and welcomed Mitrinovich's contribution to the *Blue Rider Almanac* (1912).<sup>9</sup> These authors do not draw attention to the relationship between Kandinsky and Worringer, to Kandinsky's having read Worringer's books, or to the significance of Worringer's ideas for

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Worringer was a kindred spirit and had a very disciplined, concise, and extremely strong way of thinking. But Kandinsky wrote his own book as an artist, not a historian, so he never referred to him. And I think he had a strong personality, so perhaps he didn't want to owe anything to Worringer, you know?' See Carmen Giménez, and Nat Trotman, 'Lasting Impact: Carmen Giménez on Abstraction and Empathy.' *Deutsche Guggenheim Magazine*, 2009, 4-17. With regard to Worringer's views on Kandinsky's *On the Spiritual in Art*, Juliet Koss mentions only one letter sent by Worringer to Kandinsky. She observes: 'For his part, Worringer's response to Kandinsky's book was polite, but distant. With reference to the artist's famous description of art as a large, upwardly moving triangle, he wrote: "Briefly formulated, this is my position with regard to your book: I am not standing at the same point, but I find myself in the same triangle."' (Worringer to Kandinsky, January 7, 1912.) See Koss, 'On the Limits of Empathy', 150, 157. Kandinsky saw the triangle of spiritual life as fear-laden and materialist in its lower sections, and increasingly fearless, yet still a prey to confusion, in its higher compartments; artists could be found in every division of the triangle. Art historians belonged in a higher division of the triangle, yet, according to him, focused too much on the past. (Kandinsky cautioned: '...the external principles of art can only be valid for the past and not for the future.' See Kandinsky, Lindsay, and Vergo, *Kandinsky. Complete Writings on Art*, 141.) It is unclear whether Kandinsky had Worringer's work in mind when writing about contemporary art historical practices; he certainly did not point to Worringer in *On the Spiritual in Art*. On the other hand, Worringer tactfully claimed no specific standpoint in Kandinsky's spiritual triangle, although he saw himself as included in the triangle itself. (See ———, *Kandinsky. Complete Writings on Art*, 133-142.) Further explorations of the connection between Worringer and Kandinsky, as well as of the influence of Worringer on Kandinsky, need to make the topic of self-standing inquiries.

<sup>6</sup> Sixten Ringbom, 'Art in "The Epoch of the Great Spiritual": Occult Elements in the Early Theory of Abstract Painting', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 29, 1966, 386-389.

<sup>7</sup> As Weiss explains, Behrens had offered Kandinsky a teaching position with the Düsseldorf Arts and Crafts School, while Obrist, who in time became Kandinsky's friend, held a teaching studio across Kandinsky's own Phalanx School. See Peg Weiss, 'Kandinsky and the "Jugendstil" Arts and Crafts Movement', *The Burlington Magazine*, 117, No. 866, 1975, 270-279.

<sup>8</sup> Barnett shows that Münter was Kandinsky's student at the Phalanx School in Munich, and later became his companion. Together with Jawlensky and Werefkin, Barnett explains, Kandinsky founded the New Artists' Association of Munich [*Neue Künstlervereinigung München*]. See Wassily Kandinsky et al., eds., *Vasily Kandinsky: A Colorful Life: The Collection of the Lenbachhaus, Munich* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1996), 45, 191-192.

<sup>9</sup> Shulamith Behr, 'Wassily Kandinsky and Dimitrije Mitrinovic; Pan-Christian Universalism and the Yearbook Towards the Mankind of the Future through Aryan Europe', *Oxford Art Journal*, 15, No. 1, 1992, 81-82.

Kandinsky. As made evident in English-language sources, the influence of Worringer on Kandinsky can be considered generic rather than specific; Kandinsky would have resonated with Worringer's ideas, yet, unlike in the case of Nietzsche,<sup>10</sup> did not mention Worringer in *On the Spiritual in Art*.

Kandinsky's early twentieth-century paintings take shape in conditions that encourage the rise of independent artistic associations, the emphasis on spiritual, intellectual, and interdisciplinary aspects of art-making,<sup>11</sup> and the exploration but also the questioning of decorative art. The early years of the twentieth century find Kandinsky experimenting with designs for ceramics, outfits and handbags;<sup>12</sup> in 1904, he writes to Münter with regard to his involvement in printmaking: 'It's not playing, my love, I am learning a lot from these things and making headway.'<sup>13</sup> As Weiss and Barnett show, Kandinsky brings together elements of fine art as well as craft in his practice;<sup>14</sup> however, he is critical towards geometrical

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<sup>10</sup> Kandinsky pays tribute to Nietzsche rather than to Worringer in his own writings. For instance, in 'Whither the New Art?' (1911), an article published in *Odesskie novosti*, Odessa, Kandinsky refers to the impact of Nietzsche in his epoch. For Kandinsky, Nietzsche's books provide ground for a focus on the inner world; the signs of this shift of attention from external to internal values manifest as disturbing outer changes. Kandinsky writes: 'Consciously or unconsciously, the genius of Nietzsche began the "transvaluation of values." What had stood firm was displaced – as if a great earthquake had erupted in the soul. And it is this tragedy of displacement, instability, and weakness of the material world that is reflected in art by imprecision and by dissonance. When we look at paintings from this point of view, we should not, I repeat, understand and not know, but simply feel, baring our soul completely.' See Wassily Kandinsky, Kenneth C. Lindsay, and Peter Vergo, *Kandinsky. Complete Writings on Art* (Boston, Massachusetts: G.K. Hall, 1982), I, 103. In *On the Spiritual in Art* (1912), Kandinsky mentions once more Nietzsche's contribution to the increased emphasis on inner preoccupations at the beginning of the twentieth century. In the words of Kandinsky: 'When religion, science, and morality are shaken (the last by the mighty hand of Nietzsche), when the external supports threaten to collapse, then man's gaze turns away from the external towards himself. Literature, music and art are the first and most sensitive realms where this spiritual change becomes noticeable in real form.' See Wassily Kandinsky, Kenneth C. Lindsay, and Peter Vergo, *Kandinsky. Complete Writings on Art* (Boston, Massachusetts: G.K. Hall, 1982), I, 145.

<sup>11</sup> In connection with an article published in *Dekorative Kunst* (March 1904) about the school Obrist and Wilhelm von Debschitz (1871-1948) had opened in 1902-03, Weiss underscores that instruction at the Obrist-Debschitz school was regarded as 'geistige.' *Geistige* is 'spiritual-intellectual,' in Weiss' translation. Thus Weiss casts an indirect light on two key aspects that inform Kandinsky's own text, *On the Spiritual in Art* [*Über das Geistige in der Kunst*], namely the preoccupation with spiritual pursuits as well as with intellectual expression. See Weiss, 'Kandinsky and the "Jugendstil" Arts and Crafts Movement', 272.

<sup>12</sup> Kandinsky et al., eds., *Vasily Kandinsky: A Colorful Life: The Collection of the Lenbachhaus, Munich*, 96.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 126. Also, ———, eds., *Vasily Kandinsky: A Colorful Life: The Collection of the Lenbachhaus, Munich*, 192.

<sup>14</sup> Peg Weiss, 'Kandinsky and the 'Jugendstil' Arts and Crafts Movement', *The Burlington Magazine*, 117, No. 866, 1975, 275-279. Also, Kandinsky et al., eds., *Vasily Kandinsky: A Colorful Life: The Collection of the Lenbachhaus, Munich*, 79-81.

ornamentation in *On the Spiritual in Art*,<sup>15</sup> highlighting instead the relevance of inner necessity in artistic practice.

In his writings, Kandinsky proves familiar with contemporary French art.<sup>16</sup> He notes the inner qualities of Cézanne's paintings in 'Letters from Munich' (1909-10) and in *On the Spiritual in Art*,<sup>17</sup> commenting on Cézanne's ability to animate still life renditions by rendering form through colour, and thus creating harmony with mathematical and abstract inflections. Cézanne's approach to representation leads, Kandinsky observes, to the creation of pictures rather than to the depiction of motifs.

Monet's work has a similarly intense effect on Kandinsky. In his 'Reminiscences' (1913), Kandinsky mentions the impression a *Haystack* painting by Monet had made on him at an earlier date.<sup>18</sup> Seeing Monet's work brings along a significant realization for Kandinsky: memory does not need to rely on recognizable motifs. Kandinsky recalls:

And suddenly, for the first time, I saw a picture. That it was a haystack, the catalogue informed me. I didn't recognize it. I found this nonrecognition painful, and thought that the painter had no right to paint so indistinctly. I had a dull feeling that the object was lacking in this picture. And I noticed with surprise and confusion that the picture not only gripped me, but impressed itself ineradicably upon my memory, always hovering quite unexpectedly before my eyes, down to the last detail.<sup>19</sup>

In his response to Monet's rendition of a *Haystack*, Kandinsky highlights his own preference for paintings that offer ground for empathic responses. Such paintings may postpone the recognition of motifs, or dissolve motifs altogether. Kandinsky does not empathise exclusively with representational aspects of painting: he records his vivid emotions upon

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<sup>15</sup> Kandinsky, Lindsay, and Vergo, *Kandinsky. Complete Writings on Art*, 197-199.

<sup>16</sup> As Barnett mentions, Kandinsky had exhibited in Paris since 1904 and had lived in Paris between 1906 and 1907. See Kandinsky et al., eds., *Vasily Kandinsky: A Colorful Life: The Collection of the Lenbachhaus, Munich*, 32, 159.

<sup>17</sup> Kandinsky, Lindsay, and Vergo, *Kandinsky. Complete Writings on Art*, 57. Also, ———, *Kandinsky. Complete Writings on Art*, 79, 98, 151.

<sup>18</sup> Lindsay and Vergo point to the possibility of Kandinsky's having seen the painting of Monet in 1896, on the occasion of a touring exhibition of French art in Russia (St. Petersburg was one of the cities where Monet's work was shown). However, according to Lindsay and Vergo, the precise identity of Monet's work (cited in the exhibition catalogue as *Haystack in Sunlight*) is difficult to ascertain. Kandinsky, Lindsay, and Vergo, *Kandinsky. Complete Writings on Art*, 363, 888-889.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 363.

seeing Monet's *Haystack*, a painting he experiences as disturbingly vague, yet memorable. From this perspective, Kandinsky's approach to empathy and abstraction differs from Worringer's views as expressed in *Abstraction and Empathy*. For Worringer, Impressionism is mainly representational, and exemplifies an empathic approach to the world;<sup>20</sup> for Kandinsky, Monet's Impressionist paintings expose their abstract qualities.

Pictorial emphasis on abstract elements does not need to exclude representational aspects, according to Kandinsky. He believes that representational motifs can be approached in the terms of abstraction. For instance, in 'On the Question of Form' (1912) – an essay he contributes to the *Blue Rider Almanac* – Kandinsky explains that the work of Franz Marc offers an abstraction-oriented rendition to a representational motif. Kandinsky writes:

The strong abstract sound of corporeal form does not necessarily demand the destruction of the representational element. We see in the picture by Marc (*The Bull*) that here, too, there can be no general rules. The object can retain completely its own internal and external sound, and yet its individual parts can be transformed into independently sounding, abstract forms, which thus occasion an overall, abstract sound.<sup>21</sup>

Inner life (or the dynamic of personal, emotional experiencing) plays a key role in the writings and works of Kandinsky.<sup>22</sup> Abstraction was associated by Kandinsky with the manifestation of inner life through art-making. The journey from naturalism to abstraction (or style) is also discussed by Worringer in *Abstraction and Empathy*, where Worringer distinguishes between naturalism, imitation and style. For Worringer, naturalism means '... the happiness of the organically alive, not that of truth to life';<sup>23</sup> he thus introduces a subtle distinction between types of representational approaches to natural models.

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<sup>20</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy*, 38.

<sup>21</sup> Kandinsky, Lindsay, and Vergo, *Kandinsky. Complete Writings on Art*, 255.

<sup>22</sup> Regarding the role of interiority in Kandinsky's thought, see Will Grohmann, *Wassily Kandinsky: Life and Work* (New York: H. N. Abrams, 1958), 90-91. Also see Jeremy Elie Caslin, 'Kandinsky's Theory of Art: Hegel, the Beginnings of Abstraction, and Art History' (Doctoral Dissertation, University of Virginia, 1998), 5. Also, Christopher Short, *The Art Theory of Wassily Kandinsky, 1909-1928. The Quest for Synthesis* (Oxford, Bern, Berlin, Bruxelles, Frankfurt am Main, New York, Wien: Peter Lang, 2010), 60-74.

<sup>23</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 28.

Worringer associates style with abstraction. He defines style as ‘... that which lifts the rendering of the natural model into a higher sphere’.<sup>24</sup> For him as for Kandinsky, abstraction presupposes a sublimation of natural models through art. In the writings of both Worringer and Kandinsky, the dynamic relationship between representation and abstraction unfolds throughout history and permeates cultural environments, as well as the inner realm of viewers and artists.

Cézanne also points to the increasing presence of abstract features in his work from the early years of the twentieth century. He associates abstraction with sense-based responses to colours in the world. According to Cézanne, the representation of sensations actually requires of objects not to be enclosed within definite contours. His later canvases, that paint covers only partially, reveal his emphasis on sensations. In his words to Émile Bernard (1905): ‘Now, being old, nearly 70 years, the sensations of colour, which give the light, are for me the reason for the abstractions which do not allow me to cover my canvas entirely nor to pursue the delimitation of the objects where their points of contact are fine and delicate; from which it results that my image or picture is incomplete.’<sup>25</sup>

In June 1912, Monet, like Cézanne, notes the importance of emphasizing sensations in painting. Monet writes to Gustave Geffroy that he prioritizes sensations, attempting to render them even at the cost of representational accuracy.<sup>26</sup> For him, his work focuses on attentively responding to the world, as well as on the communication of personal experience.

Paul Ferdinand Schmidt (1878-1955) comments in similar terms on Expressionist practices in January 1912, when he explains that Expressionism develops in opposition to Impressionism.<sup>27</sup> A student of medieval art, like Worringer, and a defender of early Expressionism, Schmidt published in *Der Sturm* [*The Storm*], a magazine cultivating an international outlook.<sup>28</sup> The gallery associated with *The Storm* exhibited the works of artists

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 33.

<sup>25</sup> This excerpt is taken from Cézanne’s letter to Bernard, Aix-en-Provence, 23 October 1905. See Paul Cézanne and John Rewald, eds., *Paul Cézanne: Letters* (Oxford: B. Cassirer, 1976), 316.

<sup>26</sup> See the letter of Monet to Gustave Geffroy, Giverny, 7 June 1912, regarding the achievement of pictorial effects, in Monet and Kendall, *Monet by Himself: Paintings, Drawings, Pastels, Letters*, 245.

<sup>27</sup> Long, Barron, and Rigby, *German Expressionism: Documents from the End of the Wilhelmine Empire to the Rise of National Socialism*, 14.

<sup>28</sup> The founder of *The Storm* magazine and gallery was Herwarth Walden, a defender of Expressionism. Ibid., 56-57.

such as Kandinsky and Marc. Schmidt's 1912 article, 'The Expressionists,' inquired into the processes of contemporary artists and into their departure from Classical practices of representation.

Writing about Expressionist artists in *The Storm*, Schmidt notes their commitment to personal aspects of art-making, and their working in the absence of a system. Nevertheless, he finds that Expressionists (among whom he counts Munch, Hodler, Pechstein, and Nolde) have in common their readdressing the rules of representation.<sup>29</sup> Schmidt writes: 'They [i. e., the Expressionists] are united in having pushed aside any obligation to be "correct"; but while one paints in sharply defined planes, another sets down a riot of color, and a third floods one color over into another, or contrasts bright with muted color... Instead of an external plausibility, these works possess the powerful configuration of inner truth.'<sup>30</sup> Schmidt thus underscores the cultivation of personal approaches to art-making in his time. However, he emphasizes not sensations (which, as we have seen, were considered by artists to emerge in response to motifs in the world), but to the inner life of artists. 'Inner truth' is an important aspect of painting for Schmidt, as for Kandinsky in *On the Spiritual in Art* (1912).

Expressionist artists, Schmidt remarks, communicate in terms of artistic will rather than in terms of observation. He considers attention to the natural world to be distracting, and points out that Expressionist art-making increases the focus of artists on the act of painting and underscores pictorial means. According to Schmidt:

A real painterly fervor can now replace the simple slice of nature, whose presence terrorized painter and viewer alike. It often required attention to peripheral matters and so distracted rather than focused one's attention. Now the crucial thing is to be able to "see correctly" in another way: not to insist on a comparison with reality, but to convey the perception of reality in such purity and intensity that the means become persuasive. Art is again exercising its ancient rights to extract its works from nature according to higher laws.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 14-15.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 15.

Echoes of Worringer's views on abstraction inform the comments of Schmidt on Expressionist art-making. In *Abstraction and Empathy*, Worringer observed the distressing impact of the world's multifarious, interwoven phenomena on artists whose work favoured abstraction.<sup>32</sup> Schmidt, in his turn, maintains that nature has come to place viewers and artists in a state of terror during the early years of the twentieth century, and argues that correct seeing can occur in art-making without requiring the representation of the world. Rendering the world can rely instead on the commitment, directness and persuasiveness with which reality is approached, according to him. Like Worringer, Schmidt regards art-making in more than representational terms.

Worringer's *Form in Gothic* includes, for instance, an account of the transition from abstraction to representation in history. Late Gothic (or advanced Gothic, to employ his terminology) appears to Worringer as a field of art-making where abstract and representational features meet. Throughout history, the passage from abstraction to representation occurs when 'a change of temperature'<sup>33</sup> informs the relationship between people and their environments, Worringer notes; late Gothic reflects such a transition, bringing together sensuousness (an attribute of representation) and super-sensuousness (a characteristic of abstraction). According to Worringer:

This sensuous super-sensuousness of advanced Gothic is best described as the lyrical element of Gothic. The springtime of the soul becomes the springtime of the senses, the delight in the ego, a delight in nature, and a world of lyric exuberance is awakened. It is the most intimate, most delicate drama which the evolution of Gothic offers to our observation, to watch how this new lyric element in Gothic makes a compromise with the old, rigid, non-naturalistic will to form proper to its constitution, gradually clothing with bud and blossom the rigid world of abstract forms... The capitals become flowery wonders, there is no end to the luxuriance of creeping tendrils, and the tracery, once so formally and geometrically planned, develops into a

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<sup>32</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 16.

<sup>33</sup> Worringer and Read, *Form in Gothic*, 174.

marvellous world of bud and blossom. Within the chaos of stiff lines there now develops a chaos of bloom.<sup>34</sup>

For Worringer, late Gothic art reveals contrasting elements without cancelling their differences. Late Gothic, an approach to art-making where dramatic aspects of form acquire delicacy and intimacy, addresses soul and senses at the same time, according to him. Artistic will as well as attention to nature, emphasis on abstract structure as well as on naturalistic representation, are acknowledged in late Gothic. From this perspective, Worringer signals the lyricism of late Gothic,<sup>35</sup> while revealing his own interest in responding to art where representation and abstraction meet.

Ernest K. Mundt draws attention to the impact and relevance of senses in Worringer's writings. In 'Three Aspects of German Aesthetic Theory' (1959), Mundt emphasizes the Baroque, Romantic, and Dionysian features of Worringer's perspective,<sup>36</sup> introducing Worringer neither as an idealist (such as Erwin Panofsky), nor as a formalist (such as Hildebrand or Wölfflin), but as a sensualist, in the lineage of R. Vischer and Lipps.<sup>37</sup> For Mundt, Worringer's defence of abstraction is less visible than Worringer's empathic approach to apparently contrasting modes of art-making.

Like Worringer, Kandinsky looks into the dynamic of abstract-representational exchanges in art. *On the Spiritual in Art* (a book published by Reinhart Piper in December 1911 with the date 1912),<sup>38</sup> articulates Kandinsky's views on contemporary social, economical, political and artistic contexts. In his book, Kandinsky discusses modes of art-making as visible at the beginning of the twentieth century, highlights the interplay between the arts, and approaches abstract-representational interplay from the perspective of art-making. Worringer emphasizes abstract-representational antithesis and points to abstract-representational interplay in his writings; instead, Kandinsky recognizes the conflicts and tumult of the early twentieth-

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 175-176.

<sup>35</sup> Worringer also traces an alliance between art and religion throughout *Form in Gothic*. This aspect of Worringer's views of art is another point of similarity with the perspective of Hegel on art-making.

<sup>36</sup> Ernest K. Mundt, 'Three Aspects of German Aesthetic Theory', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 17, No. 3, 1959, 307.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 310.

<sup>38</sup> Kandinsky, Lindsay, and Vergo, *Kandinsky. Complete Writings on Art*, I, 114.

century, yet demonstrates his attention to contemporary artists, artistic practices and forms of abstract-representational interplay.

### **Interplay in Kandinsky's *On the Spiritual in Art* (1912) and 'On the Question of Form' (1912)**

'Clashing discords, loss of equilibrium, "principles" overthrown, unexpected drumbeats, great questionings, apparently purposeless strivings, stress and longing (apparently torn apart), chains and fetters broken (which had united many), opposites and contradictions –, this is our harmony',<sup>39</sup> Kandinsky writes in *On the Spiritual in Art*. For him, outer instability characterizes the beginning of the twentieth century; he emphasizes the tumult of his time from a point of view Worringer had also adopted with regard to the rise of abstraction. Observing the apparent longing for serenity of Eastern cultures, Worringer argues that Oriental artists are '[t]ormented by the entangled inter-relationship and flux of phenomena of the outer world'.<sup>40</sup> Where Kandinsky approaches his topics in the terms of contrast, his debt to Worringer becomes most visible.

#### ***On the Spiritual in Art: oppositions and interplay***

A contrast that resonates strongly throughout Kandinsky's text can be traced, for instance, between inner (internal) and outer (external) realms. External and internal features of art and life are key points of differentiation for Kandinsky: they inform his analysis of social, personal as well as artistic environments. Kandinsky discerns the interest of contemporary artists towards the realm of inner nature, more specifically towards the expression of inner worlds.<sup>41</sup> He discusses two groups of painters: on the one hand, painters who seek to render inner aspects by reference to the outer world; on the other hand, painters who work more closely with characteristics of art-making that Kandinsky associates with abstraction (namely

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 193.

<sup>40</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 16.

<sup>41</sup> Kandinsky, Lindsay, and Vergo, *Kandinsky. Complete Writings on Art*, 153-155.

form, colour, harmony, and self-expression). In the first group, Kandinsky places Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828-82), Edward Burne-Jones (1833-98), Arnold Böcklin (1827-1901), Franz von Stuck (1863-1928), Giovanni Segantini (1858-99) and their followers; the second group comprises Paul Cézanne, Henri Matisse and Pablo Picasso. Despite differences in expression, Kandinsky recognises the presence of an inner perspective in the work of all these artists.

The contrast between internal and external tendencies in art had been equally emphasized by Worringer in *Abstraction and Empathy*. For Worringer, external strivings (or the urge to empathy) surfaced when the relationship between artists and their environment was harmonious; such a context was associated by Worringer with the art of representation and the culture of ancient Greece.<sup>42</sup> Internal strivings (or the urge to abstraction), Worringer explained, became visible in art forms with abstract, geometrical, inorganic tendencies, and in traditional Eastern cultures.<sup>43</sup> Worringer acknowledged the cohabitation of abstract and representational, inner and outer tendencies, in Gothic art.<sup>44</sup>

While Worringer directed his attention mainly towards the past in *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic*, Kandinsky addressed his own times and looked into the processes of art-making visible around the turn of the twentieth century.<sup>45</sup> Less assertive contrasts were employed by Kandinsky, who presented the varied facets of apparently opposite artistic elements, and ultimately their constant interaction in painting. For Kandinsky, the representational work of Segantini had strong abstract undertones, while the work of Matisse oscillated between representation and abstraction, between the painter's attention to the outer world and the cultivation of inner expression.

As a practising artist, Kandinsky highlights the interplay between inner and outer artistic tendencies, between abstract and representational expression, more than Worringer does in *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic*. However, both Kandinsky and Worringer

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<sup>42</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 45-46.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 46-48.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 76-77.

<sup>45</sup> David Morgan notes the differences between the views of Worringer and Kandinsky on topics regarding abstraction and representation. According to Morgan, Kandinsky chose to delimit representation and abstraction less strictly than Worringer in *Abstraction and Empathy*. See Morgan, 'The Idea of Abstraction in German Theories of the Ornament from Kant to Kandinsky', 238-239.

place particular emphasis on the role of emotion and inner life in their writings, thus making visible their affinities with Expressionism. *Abstraction and Empathy* and *On the Spiritual in Art* draw attention to the psychological factors that bring art into being; in Kandinsky's book, inner changes are the cause of the dramatic reshaping of historical and social contexts at the beginning of the twentieth century. Contemporary artists, whose works reflect inner values, can lead the world towards a better future, in Kandinsky's visionary interpretation.

Kandinsky paints a multifaceted panorama of his epoch in *On the Spiritual in Art*.<sup>46</sup> He reflects on the pressing problems of his context, noting that progress is ensured by artists who follow the call of spirit.<sup>47</sup> The arts, according to Kandinsky, have opened towards interdisciplinary dialogue in the early twentieth century;<sup>48</sup> among them, painting moves away from realism towards Impressionism, then Neo-Impressionism, then abstraction.<sup>49</sup> Inspired by music, early twentieth-century painting attends to questions of rhythm, Kandinsky observes.<sup>50</sup> For Kandinsky as for Worringer, art can no longer rely exclusively on representational processes.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> With regard to Kandinsky's book and its reception, Rose-Carol Washton Long notes: 'By the spring of 1912, Wassily Kandinsky (1866-1944) was in the limelight in Germany. His manifesto on painting, *On the Spiritual in Art* (*Über das Geistige in der Kunst*), which went into three editions by the middle of 1912, his co-editorship of the *Blaue Reiter* almanac, and his paintings were attracting much attention.' Long, Barron, and Rigby, *German Expressionism: Documents from the End of the Wilhelmine Empire to the Rise of National Socialism*, 38.

<sup>47</sup> Kandinsky, Lindsay, and Vergo, *Kandinsky. Complete Writings on Art*, 133-143. 'Spirit' is an internal force for Kandinsky, according to his explanations from *The Struggle for Art*; it characterises the internal life of human beings. Art, for Kandinsky, is itself an internal, spiritual force; its internal element is content, and its external element is form. Spirit, therefore, manifests in the content of art; the forms taken by art change to accommodate content. ———, *Kandinsky. Complete Writings on Art*, 106-107.

<sup>48</sup> Kandinsky, Lindsay, and Vergo, *Kandinsky. Complete Writings on Art*, 153-154.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 149-152.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 154-155.

<sup>51</sup> The current section of the thesis focuses on instances where interplay, especially abstract-representational interplay, is visible in Kandinsky's *On the Spiritual in Art* and 'On the Question of Form.' For an extensive inquiry into Kandinsky's views on art and art-making, see, for instance, Grohmann, *Wassily Kandinsky: Life and Work*. Also see Kandinsky, Lindsay, and Vergo, *Kandinsky. Complete Writings on Art*. Also, Short, *The Art Theory of Wassily Kandinsky, 1909-1928. The Quest for Synthesis*.

## **Kandinsky's approach to form and content: *The Struggle for Art* (1911), and the First Exhibition of the Editors of the *Blaue Reiter* (1911)**

Prior to the publication of *On the Spiritual in Art*, Kandinsky had contributed alongside Worringer to *The Struggle for Art: The Answer to the Protest of German Artists* (1911).<sup>52</sup> Kandinsky focused on artistic form in his untitled essay.<sup>53</sup> Relying on the rhetoric of opposition, like Worringer in *Abstraction and Empathy*, Kandinsky contrasted external and internal elements of art, namely elements of form and content.<sup>54</sup> He argued that harmony could be attained between content and form, between the internal and external elements of art. However, such harmony was based on subordination, according to him: the element of content was to influence external form, in order to reflect the inner life of the artist. For Kandinsky as for Schmidt in 'The Expressionists', the representation of the world, and the attention of artists to external factors such as nature, were no longer necessary.<sup>55</sup>

In the catalogue of the First Exhibition of the Editors of the *Blaue Reiter* (1911), Kandinsky underscored the formal, external elements that he considered as signals of an emphasis on inner experience. Form was not to be imitative of nature, but planned and purposeful, Kandinsky posited. He drew attention to the necessity of the process of construction in the art of his time, and noted: 'The variety of forms: the constructive, compositional [aspect] of these forms; [t]he intensive turning toward the inner [aspect] of nature and, bound up with it, the rejection of any prettifying of the external aspect – THESE ARE IN GENERAL THE SIGNS OF THE NEW INNER RENAISSANCE.'<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Worringer's contribution to *The Struggle for Art* is addressed in 'The Historical Development of Modern Art (1911): Worringer's early response to Expressionism'.

<sup>53</sup> Kandinsky, Lindsay, and Vergo, *Kandinsky. Complete Writings on Art*, 107.

<sup>54</sup> Kandinsky resumes the discussion of form and content in *On the Spiritual in Art*; in his terminology, form is associated with the question, 'How?', and content with 'What?'. He emphasizes the significance of content in art. In his words: 'This "What?" will no longer be the material, objective "What?" of the period left behind, but rather an artistic content, the soul of art, without which its body (the "How?") can never lead a full healthy life, just like an individual or a whole people. This "What?" is that content which only art can contain, and to which only art can give clear expression through the means available to it.' (Ibid., 137-138.)

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 106-107.

<sup>56</sup> The employment of uppercase for the last sentence of the citation is Kandinsky's choice, as reflected in Lindsay and Vergo's edition. (Ibid., 113.)

## Inner life, painting, and its relationship with the world in *On the Spiritual in Art*

Kandinsky links spirit and emotional life in *On the Spiritual in Art*. He suggests that feeling can support artists in their discovering, through talent, the way to connect to spirit. According to Kandinsky, '[t]he spirit that will lead us into the realms of tomorrow can only be recognized through feeling (to which the talent of the artist is the path).' <sup>57</sup> For artists as well as for viewers, according to Kandinsky, art operates on the basis of emotion. <sup>58</sup> He contrasts emotional and logic-driven approaches to art-making, explaining that measuring, calculating, reasoning, are processes that may inform art, yet that the best artistic results are reached by starting from feeling and letting it guide art-making. Kandinsky regards emotions as '... material states of the soul'; <sup>59</sup> in other words, as visible manifestations of inner life. Inner life, feeling and emotion assume decisive roles in *On the Spiritual in Art*; they articulate internal necessity, which influences artistic decisions. For Kandinsky, internal necessity and its laws must be followed at all times; he sees the laws of internal necessity as spiritual. <sup>60</sup>

Kandinsky addresses the distancing of painting from the rendition of nature in *On the Spiritual in Art* as well. <sup>61</sup> He connects this phenomenon to the relationship between painting and music. For him, painting does not operate in terms of duration, like music, but of instantaneous presentation; yet music, unlike painting, is free from referring to external elements of nature. Kandinsky writes:

Music, which externally is completely emancipated from nature, does not need to borrow external forms from anywhere to create its own language. Painting today is still almost entirely dependent upon natural forms, upon forms borrowed from nature. And its task today is to examine its forces and its materials, to become acquainted

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 141. 'Talent,' like 'spirit,' is a term Kandinsky does not define as such; in the citation above, Kandinsky explains that the talent of artists provides viewers access to their feelings; emotional life, in its turn, can reveal the spirit-driven way to the future.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 176-177.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 189. In this instance, Kandinsky uses the term 'material' to point to the increased degree of concreteness of human emotions (the soul, for instance, is less 'material' than human emotions). Materiality is connected by Kandinsky as a negative aspect of life when human beings focus more on immediate success, gains and technical developments, to the detriment of spiritual values. (———, *Kandinsky. Complete Writings on Art*, 135.) Yet negative nuances are lacking when Kandinsky associates materiality and human emotions.

<sup>60</sup> Kandinsky, Lindsay, and Vergo, *Kandinsky. Complete Writings on Art*.

<sup>61</sup> See, for instance, Kandinsky's references to Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Oscar Wilde (1854-1900) and Eugène Delacroix (1798-1863) with regard to the optional reliance of artists on the study of nature, on processes of imitation or on realism. Ibid., 208.

with them, as music has long since done, and to attempt to use these materials and forces in a purely painterly way for the purpose of creation.<sup>62</sup>

Early twentieth-century painting needs to employ media and focus on processes in order to emphasize painterly rather than external features, Kandinsky argues. In his view, the distancing from the rendering of external elements is to support increased artistic attention to inner aspects of experience and pictorial process.<sup>63</sup> In *Abstraction and Empathy*, Worringer, following Lipps and Schopenhauer, argued that objects in the world existed only as long as they were vessels of the inner life of viewers;<sup>64</sup> he considered that the attention and emotional interest of viewers actually brought objects into being. Four years later, Kandinsky requires artists to create precisely from the perspective of inner life:<sup>65</sup> like Worringer, he emphasizes the role of internally felt artistic decision in art-making. In the words of Kandinsky: ‘The artist should be blind to “accepted” or unaccepted” form, deaf to the precepts and demands of his time. His eyes should be always directed towards his own inner life, and his ears turned to the voice of internal necessity.’<sup>66</sup>

Nevertheless, Kandinsky also addresses the role of external, organic elements in art-making. He senses the presence of organic components in abstract forms; for him, ‘... the sound of the organic element, even when pushed right into the background, is able to make itself heard within the chosen form.’<sup>67</sup> Kandinsky wishes to extend painting in the direction of music; however, his preoccupation with organic aspects of the world usually recorded through representational processes still informs his thought in *On the Spiritual in Art*. Worringer associated the interest in organic, external aspects with the art of representation and with the

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<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 154.

<sup>63</sup> However, distancing from the representation of the external world does not limit the importance Kandinsky attributes to senses. Kandinsky remains receptive to colours, sounds and scents in *On the Spiritual in Art*. Ibid., 158-159, 162-163.

<sup>64</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 6-7. Also, see, from the current thesis, ‘Empathy, abstraction and representation in Worringer’s *Abstraction and Empathy*’.

<sup>65</sup> Regarding inner life as expressed in form, Kandinsky approves of construction, yet has his reserves regarding ornament. Worringer saw in ornament a key expression of artistic will. Kandinsky, less convinced, finds ornament ‘... not, admittedly, an entirely lifeless being.’ (Ibid., 28, 51-52. Also, Kandinsky, Lindsay, and Vergo, *Kandinsky. Complete Writings on Art*, 197.)

<sup>66</sup> Wassily Kandinsky, ‘On the Spiritual in Art’ in *Kandinsky: Complete Writings on Art*, eds. Kenneth C. Lindsay and Peter Vergo (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1982 [1911-1912]), 175.

<sup>67</sup> Kandinsky, Lindsay, and Vergo, *Kandinsky. Complete Writings on Art*, 168.

psychological process of empathy;<sup>68</sup> nevertheless, he recognized that empathy could be experienced in response to art he considered predominantly abstract, such as Gothic art.<sup>69</sup> Like Worringer, Kandinsky draws attention to the interplay of organic and abstract components in art; according to Kandinsky, the organic component preserves its sound within abstract form.

Objects in the world – found in nature, or in art – are animated beings for Kandinsky. Where Worringer, following Lipps, considers that the attention and vitality of the viewer lend their animation to objects,<sup>70</sup> Kandinsky believes that objects have their own life, communicate their own effects, and exert their influence on human beings.<sup>71</sup> This influence, Kandinsky explains, may be processed consciously or unconsciously; it may also be cancelled through the redirecting of attention.<sup>72</sup> Associating nature and music,<sup>73</sup> Kandinsky argues that the soul is a piano played by nature, while the objects in the world are much like the keys of the piano. Kandinsky points to the colour and form of objects, in order to suggest directions of inquiry that could organize the information derived from nature. However, he does not miss to note the effect of objects themselves on viewers and artists. For Kandinsky, nature and objects may be less visible in art; however, their impact is still felt in art-making.

Kandinsky mentions that renouncing the connections between art and nature would be difficult at the time of his writing.<sup>74</sup> Nevertheless, despite his reserves regarding current explorations of form in the art of ornament, Kandinsky believes that an art of ‘pure composition’ will become possible in the future.<sup>75</sup> He proposes that, in order to reach

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<sup>68</sup> See, for instance, Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 14, 17, 27-28.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 48, 112-113.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 6-7.

<sup>71</sup> Kandinsky, Lindsay, and Vergo, *Kandinsky. Complete Writings on Art*, 168-169.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> Kandinsky defines nature as ‘...the ever-changing external environment of man’. (*Ibid.*) In *Abstraction and Empathy*, Worringer had also highlighted the state of perpetual motion characteristic to the natural world, yet regarded this aspect of nature as negative. See Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 16-17. Kandinsky approaches nature with less apprehension in *On the Spiritual in Art*, although he favours the association of painting and music more than the association of painting with the natural world. For instance, Kandinsky considers artists must fight against the influence of nature, as well as against the influence of fairy-tale effects in painting. See Kandinsky, Lindsay, and Vergo, *Kandinsky. Complete Writings on Art*, 204.

<sup>74</sup> Kandinsky, Lindsay, and Vergo, *Kandinsky. Complete Writings on Art*, 197.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

abstraction, artists could omit representational (or, in his terminology, corporeal) elements; alternatively, artists could employ forms abstracted from corporeal elements.<sup>76</sup>

Worringer maintained that abstract art emphasized the articulation of planes rather than the rendition of three-dimensional space.<sup>77</sup> According to Kandinsky, abstraction, although turning away from representing the third dimension, can nevertheless allude to three-dimensional space through the quality of line, through the placement of forms on surfaces, through the placement of forms in relation to each other, and through the employment of colours that seem to recede or advance.<sup>78</sup> The painting of space – a key characteristic of representation, according to Worringer – is possible in representational as well as abstract art, from Kandinsky's perspective.<sup>79</sup>

Kandinsky considers that his own works belong in three categories: impressions (inspired by external nature), improvisations (fostered by inner nature) and compositions (characterized by reasoning, purposefulness, deliberation, and conscious compositional effort).<sup>80</sup> Revealing that external elements influence his process, Kandinsky creates a bridge between observational interests (usually associated with representation) and abstract outcomes. In *On the Spiritual in Art*, Kandinsky brings to light the tensions inherent in early twentieth-century approaches to art-making.<sup>81</sup> However, he also points to various instances of interplay, where contrasting elements engage in interdisciplinary as well as intra-disciplinary dialogue.

For instance, Kandinsky finds that the interplay between arts is favoured in the early years of the twentieth century.<sup>82</sup> He observes that the distances between arts diminish due to the very differentiations that separate one form of art from another. Artists turn gradually towards an examination of specific materials and elements in order to find their inner value, Kandinsky notes. The interplay between arts thus emerges from the acceptance of dialogue between disciplines, while the interplay between modes of art-making occurs due to the gradual transition from externally reflective art-making to internally reflective art-making.

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 169.

<sup>77</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 21-22, 38-42.

<sup>78</sup> Kandinsky, Lindsay, and Vergo, *Kandinsky. Complete Writings on Art*, 193-195.

<sup>79</sup> Kandinsky makes space seen in his 'abstract' paintings, as following sections of this thesis show.

<sup>80</sup> Kandinsky, Lindsay, and Vergo, *Kandinsky. Complete Writings on Art*, 218.

<sup>81</sup> For instance. Kandinsky is critical towards art that emphasizes skill, and responds to social and commercial pressures. (Ibid., 127-132.)

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 153.

Interdisciplinary and intra-disciplinary emphases characterize early twentieth-century painting, Kandinsky notes. Responding to music, painting addresses issues of rhythm, construction, repetition, and motion;<sup>83</sup> thus art-making comes to involve both hearing and seeing, connecting senses in the process of its becoming. Synaesthesia, an instance of interplay between senses, is characteristic of Kandinsky's work.<sup>84</sup> Yet Kandinsky addresses compositional aspects of art-making as well. For instance, he explains that unexpected combinations and effects can be achieved when addressing the interplay between colour and form. In his words: 'Since the number of forms and colors is infinite, the number of possible combinations is likewise infinite as well as their effects. This material is inexhaustible.'<sup>85</sup> Kandinsky does not associate colour and form with representation; instead, he notes the possibilities opened by their interplay.

Highlighting that external elements of form conceal internal elements of content, Kandinsky asserts that internal elements surface in various degrees.<sup>86</sup> For him, the contrast between external and internal elements leads to their differentiation, yet not to their mutual exclusion; the internal element is purposeful, and aims to move the viewer. Kandinsky writes: '... [T]he artist is the hand that purposefully sets the human soul vibrating by pressing this or that key (= form). Thus it is clear that the harmony of forms can only be based upon the purposeful touching of the human soul. This is the principle we have called the principle of internal necessity.'<sup>87</sup>

According to Kandinsky, inner content manifests through form in abstraction-oriented art-making. The interplay between form and content sometimes acquires symbolic overtones in his work;<sup>88</sup> elements of powerful emotional value for Kandinsky (troika, horse and rider,<sup>89</sup> for

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 154.

<sup>84</sup> See, in this respect, Rose-Carol Washton Long, *Kandinsky, the Development of an Abstract Style* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980). Also, Judith Zilczer, "'Color Music': Synaesthesia and Nineteenth-Century Sources for Abstract Art', *Artibus et Historiae*, 8, No. 16, 1987. Also, Short, *The Art Theory of Wassily Kandinsky, 1909-1928. The Quest for Synthesis*.

<sup>85</sup> Kandinsky, Lindsay, and Vergo, *Kandinsky. Complete Writings on Art*, 163.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 165.

<sup>87</sup> Kandinsky, 'On the Spiritual in Art', 165.

<sup>88</sup> Regarding symbolism in Kandinsky's paintings, see Peg Weiss, 'Kandinsky and the Symbolist Heritage', *Art Journal*, 45, No. 2, 1985. Also, Peg Weiss and Wassily Kandinsky, *Kandinsky and Old Russia: The Artist as Ethnographer and Shaman* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995). Also, Rose-Carol Washton Long, 'Kandinsky's Abstract Style: The Veiling of Apocalyptic Folk Imagery', *Art Journal*, 34, 1975, ———, 'Kandinsky's Vision of Utopia as a Garden of Love', *Art Journal*, 43, 1983.

instance) still participate to Kandinsky's pictures by assuming less recognizable aspects. Like Worringer before him, Kandinsky asserts oppositional relationships, yet remains sensitive to the interplay of antithetic elements such as inner and outer aspects of art-making.

### **Representation and abstraction in interplay**

Representation and abstraction find common ground in *On the Spiritual in Art*. Kandinsky connects abstraction and representation to form ('the expression of inner content',<sup>90</sup> according to him), and to its capacity for description.<sup>91</sup> Representation, Kandinsky explains, brings forms into being by means of contour, while abstraction is free from the need to describe altogether. He notes that abstract-representational interplay can occur between the respective territories of representational and abstract forms. According to Kandinsky:

Between these two boundaries [i. e., of representation, which describes by means of contour, and abstraction, or pure form, which does not describe] lie the infinite number of forms in which both elements are present, and where either the material or the abstract [element] predominates. These forms are at present that store from which the artist borrows all the individual elements of his creations.<sup>92</sup>

Kandinsky notices that contemporary artists work with forms where representational and abstract tendencies meet. These hybrid forms (to employ Worringer's terminology)<sup>93</sup> include both abstract and representational elements, yet one aspect of the two predominates. An infinite amount of abstract-representational, hybrid forms exist, Kandinsky writes, signalling their role as artistic resources for early twentieth-century artists. He also draws attention to the dialogue between self-sufficient forms, which are independent yet woven together by

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<sup>89</sup> Smithgall, *Kandinsky and the Harmony of Silence: Painting with White Border*, 21-30. Also, from the current thesis, see 'Worringer's impact: *Expressionism* (1914) by Paul Fechter, and *Expressionism* (1916) by Hermann Bahr'.

<sup>90</sup> Kandinsky, Lindsay, and Vergo, *Kandinsky. Complete Writings on Art*, 165.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 166.

<sup>93</sup> Worringer referred to Gothic art as hybrid, explaining that empathy and abstraction coexist within its boundaries. See Worringer and Read, *Form in Gothic*, 63.

pictorial composition.<sup>94</sup> However, he finds there is a limit to interplay: for instance, a red horse would be an unnatural presence in a naturalistically rendered landscape.<sup>95</sup> He explains:

A normal, naturalistically painted landscape with modelled, anatomically precise figures would produce such a discord when placed together with this [red] horse that no feeling would follow from it, and it would prove impossible to fuse these elements into a single unity. What is to be understood by this “unity,” and what it might be, is shown by the definition of our modern-day harmony. From which we may conclude that it is possible to split up the entire picture, to indulge in contradictions, to lead [the spectator] through and to build upon any and every sort of external plane, while the inner plane remains the same. The elements of construction of the picture are no longer to be sought in terms of external, but rather of internal necessity.<sup>96</sup>

Artists must listen to the call of inner necessity, according to Kandinsky; therefore, constructing a picture informed by contradictions and limitless diversity proves acceptable to him, despite its different approach to articulating compositional relationships. Such a picture is characterised by inner coherence as long as it is the materialization of personal experience; its formal variety does not affect its content, Kandinsky argues. *On the Spiritual in Art* thus traces a boundary of acceptability to the bringing together of contrasting elements; however, Kandinsky also points to the contemporary artistic tendencies of readdressing compositional expectations.

Examining the processes that configure abstract-representational forms, Kandinsky notes that such processes can be understood, measured, and limitlessly employed in art-making. Worringer had emphasized the instinctual and wilful aspects of making art, detailing intuitively their psychological origin;<sup>97</sup> for Kandinsky, art-making may appear will-driven, yet is in fact a materialization of definable processes.

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<sup>94</sup> Kandinsky, Lindsay, and Vergo, *Kandinsky. Complete Writings on Art*, 167.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 201. This limitation is specific to the time of Kandinsky’s writing *On the Spiritual in Art* and ‘On the Question of Form.’ The emergence of the art of collage readdressed this possibility later in the twentieth century. See, among many others, Brandon Taylor, *Collage: The Making of Modern Art* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2004).

<sup>96</sup> Kandinsky, ‘On the Spiritual in Art’, 201-202.

<sup>97</sup> Kandinsky, Lindsay, and Vergo, *Kandinsky. Complete Writings on Art*, 171.

Kandinsky, explaining the interplay of forms within black and white compositions, notes the flexibility of forms, as well as their relationships when juxtaposed. Among inter-form relationships, he counts meeting, limitation, jostling, confluence and dismemberment; he mentions the similar approach to different groups of forms, the various degrees of delimitation between forms, the combination of hidden and revealed, rhythmic and arrhythmic elements, of describable and difficult to describe abstract forms. For Kandinsky, black and white compositions place the forms they include in complex yet comprehensible interplay.

Colours influence each other specifically, Kandinsky observes.<sup>98</sup> He groups colours into opposing pairs such as yellow and blue, red and green, orange and violet,<sup>99</sup> looked into their gradations,<sup>100</sup> analyzes their temperature and movement,<sup>101</sup> and addresses them individually in order to single out the emotions they arise in viewers.<sup>102</sup> Kandinsky underscores that the art of painting of his time employs colour combinations previously considered to lack harmony.<sup>103</sup> Like for forms, Kandinsky looks into the processes that colours undergo in painting. Approved and unapproved colour combinations may lead, according to Kandinsky, to clashes, to the dominance of a colour over another colour, or to the dominance of a colour over a group of colours.<sup>104</sup> He notes that colours may be contained between lines, and given precise boundaries, also mentioning that one colour may grow to reveal another, and that

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<sup>98</sup> See, for instance, the influence of yellow and blue on each other as explained by Kandinsky. According to Kandinsky, the advancing, boundlessly energetic, strident and earthly yellow is tempered by the centripetal, remote, impersonal, deep blue. The combination of these two colours yields peaceful, static green. *Ibid.*, 180.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 178, 184, 190.

<sup>100</sup> For instance, Kandinsky explained that the colour red had no particular cold or warm tendencies, and consisted of actual gradations of red. Colours could not expand boundlessly for him, except in the eyes of the mind. (*Ibid.*, 162.)

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 177-180. 177-180. For the indebtedness of Kandinsky to Goethe's colour theory, see Grohmann, *Wassily Kandinsky: Life and Work*, 90-91. Also, Short, *The Art Theory of Wassily Kandinsky, 1909-1928. The Quest for Synthesis*, 29-40.

<sup>102</sup> For instance, see Kandinsky's thoughts on the colour blue, in Kandinsky, Lindsay, and Vergo, *Kandinsky. Complete Writings on Art*, 181-182. Kandinsky considers blue a heavenly colour that suggests sorrow but also encouraged spiritual tendencies. The 'sound' of blue varies from flute (for its lightest tones) to cello to double bass to organ (for its darkest tones). Concerning the emotions engendered by colours, Kandinsky notes that he regards his analysis as incomplete. ———, *Kandinsky. Complete Writings on Art*, 189.

<sup>103</sup> Kandinsky, Lindsay, and Vergo, *Kandinsky. Complete Writings on Art*, 193.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 194.

colours may flow over each other's boundaries, intermingle, or dissolve.<sup>105</sup> The interplay of colours, like the interplay of forms, holds endless possibilities for Kandinsky.

Kandinsky has his reservations regarding the pictures where the employment of colour favours associations with ornament and fantasy.<sup>106</sup> The path that leads to painting, Kandinsky finds, runs between two stations to be avoided: fantasy (a realist approach too connected to external elements), and ornament (a geometrical approach to abstraction).<sup>107</sup> Beyond ornament lies pure abstraction, and beyond fantasy – realism, Kandinsky explains. Yet the middle ground between ornament and fantasy is a territory of interplay, of unbounded creativity. In Kandinsky's words:

Beyond these limits [i. e., imposed by abstraction and realism] (here I abandon my schematic path) lie, on the right, pure abstraction [i. e., greater abstraction than that of geometrical form] and, on the left, pure realism [i. e., a higher form of fantasy - fantasy in the hardest material]. And between the two – unlimited freedom, depth, breadth, a wealth of possibilities, and beyond them the realms of pure abstraction and realism – e v e r y t h i n g today is, thanks to the moment at which we find ourselves, placed at the service of the artist. Today is a day of freedom only conceivable when a great epoch is in the making.<sup>108</sup>

Having brought to light some of the manifestations of interplay in *On the Spiritual in Art*, Kandinsky casts a confident glance towards the art of his time. He reinforces his views on the relationship between representation (or realism, in his terms) and abstraction in an article entitled 'On the Question of Form,' announced in *On the Spiritual in Art*,<sup>109</sup> and published in the *Blue Rider Almanac* in 1912.

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Kandinsky is critical of 'the fairy-tale effect,' which he connects with the nature effect – both are to be renounced or cancelled in painting, due to their narrative and descriptive associations. For Kandinsky, the cultivation of the spiritual requires this sacrifice. (Ibid., 204.)

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 207.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

### **‘On the Question of Form’: the inner similarity of representation and abstraction**

In ‘On the Question of Form’ as in *On the Spiritual in Art*, Kandinsky underscores that form must be a means to express content, or the inner life of the soul.<sup>110</sup> He recognizes the temporality of form,<sup>111</sup> and mentions that form needs to reveal necessity. Worringer emphasized the psychological aspects of form in his discussion of the connections between artists and their environments.<sup>112</sup> Kandinsky also points to the relevance of expressing inner necessity in art-making.<sup>113</sup> However, unlike Worringer, Kandinsky places greater emphasis on the interplay between abstract and representational (or, in Kandinsky’s terminology, realist) aspects of art-making.

Kandinsky regards abstraction and representation (or realism) as opposed. Nevertheless, he notes that their two distinct paths have one single purpose. Abstract-representational interplay manifests in forms that stand between the two poles Kandinsky identifies as Great Realism and Great Abstraction.<sup>114</sup> The juxtaposition and combination of representation (or realism) and abstraction leads to an emphasis of balance, where one mode of art-making features within the other, or supports the other. The balance of abstraction and representation (or realism) is important for Kandinsky; in its absence, art, Kandinsky observes, seems to lose either its connection to the world of matter, or its capacity to embody an ideal.<sup>115</sup>

‘[T]he most powerfully affective element’ can balance the polar relationship of representation and abstraction, according to Kandinsky. For Kandinsky as for Worringer, emotion provides a major impetus to the making of art.<sup>116</sup> Yet Worringer looks primarily towards historical modes of art-making in *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic*, and defends contemporary art from a historical viewpoint in ‘The Historical Development of Modern Art.’ On the other hand, Kandinsky prefers to focus on the key processes of art-making in ‘On the Question of Form’.

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 237.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 32, 34-35, 45-47.

<sup>113</sup> Kandinsky, Lindsay, and Vergo, *Kandinsky. Complete Writings on Art*, 239.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid., 242.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Worringer considers that the emotional responses of artists to their environments exert a decisive influence on art-making. See, for instance, Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 4-8.

‘On the Question of Form’ underscores that the most powerfully affective element in a work of art is a subordinate component that nevertheless informs decisively the predominant mode of artworks.<sup>117</sup> Abstraction – which assumes a subordinate role in representational, or realist, art – is the most powerfully affective element in a representational, or realist, picture, Kandinsky posits. Likewise, according to him, representation (or realism) contributes the most powerfully affective element to an abstract work.<sup>118</sup> In the words of Kandinsky:

Thus, finally, we see that if in the case of great realism the real element appears noticeably large and the abstract noticeably small, and if in the case of great abstraction this relationship appears to be reversed, then in their ultimate basis (= goal) these two poles equal one another. Between these two antipodes can be put an = sign:

Realism = Abstraction

Abstraction = Realism

The greatest external dissimilarity becomes the greatest internal similarity.<sup>119</sup>

Kandinsky sees representation and abstraction as inseparable in art. He finds that, both fundamentally and in purpose-oriented terms, abstraction and representation can be regarded as equivalent art-making modes. Like Worringer, Kandinsky employs logical reasoning to prove his point, examining relationships in terms of their most elemental demonstrable dynamics.<sup>120</sup> Worringer underscored the polarity between representation (or naturalism, or realism) and abstraction (for instance, he associated abstraction with geometrical forms and

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<sup>117</sup> Kandinsky explains that an externally emphasized approach to art-making can result in the lessening of its inner strength. See Kandinsky, Lindsay, and Vergo, *Kandinsky. Complete Writings on Art*, 244.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 243-245. Much like Worringer before him, Kandinsky associates abstraction with ‘artistic’ elements, and representation, or realism, with objective elements. Throughout *Abstraction and Empathy*, Worringer employs the term ‘artistic’ in a generic sense. See Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 22-23. However, Worringer underscores that artistic impulse has its origin in abstraction. See ———, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 44. 44. For Worringer’s employment of the term ‘objective,’ or ‘objectivity,’ see ———, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 39, 58, 67.

<sup>119</sup> Kandinsky, Lindsay, and Vergo, *Kandinsky. Complete Writings on Art*, 245.

<sup>120</sup> In *Abstraction and Empathy*, Worringer begins by asserting the polar opposition between representation and abstraction. See Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 4.

the fear of space, and representation with organic forms and the cultivation of three-dimensional spatial relationships); nevertheless, he accepted the possibility of abstract-representational interplay in Gothic art. Kandinsky, like Worringer, proposes a memorable formula for the relationship of abstraction and representation, equating them on the basis of their apparent, external opposition.

The schematic approach of Kandinsky to demonstrating the relationship between representation and abstraction could reflect his belief in the role a scientific outlook could play in the articulation of form.<sup>121</sup> ‘True form arises out of the combination of emotion and science’, he writes.<sup>122</sup> Perhaps the interplay of abstraction and representation needed, after all, the validation of reason in the early years of the twentieth century. Kandinsky’s inquiry bears similarities to Worringer’s argument from *Abstraction and Empathy* in this respect; like Worringer, Kandinsky calls upon strategies of reasoning to buttress his point of view.

For Worringer, the interplay of abstraction and representation as made visible in Gothic art is hybrid: in other words, it does not assert a reconciliation of opposites, but permits their coexistence while maintaining their differences.<sup>123</sup> Yet Kandinsky goes further than Worringer with regard to interplay: for him, the key feature of abstraction and realism is their internal similarity. (Worringer could have disagreed, since he regarded the urge to abstraction and the urge to empathy as emergent from opposite tendencies: distancing and rapprochement.) As modes of art-making, realism and abstraction have similar inner constitutions, Kandinsky asserts: both contain a small proportion but significant proportion of their opposite. When placing the sign of equality between representation (or realism) and abstraction, Kandinsky aims to reveal their inner similarity; however, his formula requires his readers to leap intuitively towards fundamental truths rather than to engage with irrefutable systematic explanations. Although Kandinsky’s approach reaches towards the clarity of

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<sup>121</sup> Kandinsky regarded politics, economics, law and ethnography as sciences that facilitated the development of his abstract thinking. ‘I loved all these sciences,’ Kandinsky wrote, ‘... and today I still think with gratitude of the enthusiasm and perhaps inspiration they gave me.’ (Ibid., 362-3.)

<sup>122</sup> Kandinsky, Lindsay, and Vergo, *Kandinsky. Complete Writings on Art*, 244.

<sup>123</sup> Worringer found common ground between artistic urges in contemplation, or the tendency towards taking distance from the world. See Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 24-25. Yet Worringer adopted the perspective of aesthetics rather than art-making when drawing attention to distancing as a shared experience, regardless of the contemplated art form. Kandinsky points to modes of art-making instead; his assertion of abstract-realist equality is more paradoxical than Worringer’s claims for Gothic abstract-representational hybridity, and the generic loss of self entailed by contemplation.

science, it asserts an abstract-realist relationship that is difficult to demonstrate, but observable in art throughout its history.

Worringer had written memorable pages on abstract-representational interplay in Gothic art, yet had approached interplay with caution in both *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic*. Where Worringer finds abstract-representational interplay manifested within historical contexts, Kandinsky recognizes abstract-representational interplay as a key component of art-making, and as a source of inspiration for contemporary artists. For Worringer, interplay is a process recognizable in the art of the past as well as the creative practices of his time: he discusses processes of gradation, displacement, transposition, remembering, assimilation and interpolation in *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic*.<sup>124</sup> For Kandinsky, interplay is generic aspect of relating that assumes a crucial role within his epoch.

In ‘On the Question of Form’, Kandinsky maintains that, due to the inner similarity of representation (or realism) and abstraction, artists can choose freely between these modes of art-making. He writes: ‘The combination of the abstract with the representational, the choice between the infinite number of abstract forms and those forms built out of representational material – i. e., the choice between the individual means within each sphere – is and remains entirely according to the inner wishes of the artist.’<sup>125</sup> Kandinsky encourages contemporary artists to follow their intentions when selecting and combining abstract and representational forms. According to him, artists can guide their choices by appraising the inner effects of art-making components, and the combination of such components.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Worringer recognizes the trans-historical aspects of Gothic art (a key site of interplay in both *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic*), yet addresses mainly the historical aspects of abstract-representational interplay in his books. In other words, Gothic art (rather than abstract-representational interplay) is for Worringer a phenomenon that transcends the limits of given epochs, and is recognizable throughout history. See Worringer and Read, *Form in Gothic*, 37-38. Worringer focuses on psychological aspects of Gothic art, and on ideal types of Gothic art only; his purpose is to delineate ‘... the idea of Gothic’, and the Gothic will to form. See ———, *Form in Gothic*, 167. By underscoring the perennial aspects of the Gothic approach to form, Worringer transits towards approaching Gothic art from the perspective of the history of ideas. Donahue defends Worringer’s perspective from this point of view. See Donahue, *Forms of Disruption: Abstraction in Modern German Prose*, 2.

<sup>125</sup> Kandinsky, Lindsay, and Vergo, *Kandinsky. Complete Writings on Art*, 254.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 248.

Antithesis as well as interplay can inform interdisciplinary dialogues, Kandinsky notes. He pays attention to both these aspects of relational exchanges. The dialogue between arts can be fostered, he argues, by reflecting and thus strengthening the ‘sound’ of one art through a similar ‘sound’ from another art. According to him, antithesis can first characterize the meeting of arts; yet, with the passage of time, this meeting can be negotiated in any terms emergent between the extremes of opposition and collaboration.<sup>127</sup>

Interplay thus appears as a key relational modality in Kandinsky’s early writings. Within the art of painting, Kandinsky discusses the interplay of potential opposites, such as external and internal elements, or representational and abstract modes of art-making. He also draws attention to the possibilities of interplay between various arts.<sup>128</sup> Interplay informs Kandinsky’s own artistic practice as well: while his improvisations reflect inner life, his compositions rely on the complex organization of material from various sources, and his impressions respond to external natural elements.

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 258-259.

<sup>128</sup> Kandinsky’s involvement in the cultivation of interdisciplinary relationships within his epoch have been briefly noted in this section. Further instances of interdisciplinary exchanges – generated by Kandinsky or to which Kandinsky participated – have been addressed, for instance, in Wassily Kandinsky et al., *Kandinsky in Munich, 1896-1914* (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, 1982). Also, Kandinsky et al., eds., *Vasily Kandinsky: A Colorful Life: The Collection of the Lenbachhaus, Munich*. Also, Kandinsky, Lindsay, and Vergo, *Kandinsky. Complete Writings on Art*. Also, Kandinsky, Marc, and Lankheit, *The Blaue Reiter Almanac*.

**Painting interplay: Kandinsky's *Impression V (Park)* (1911),  
*Picture with a Black Arch* (1912), and *Picture with Red Spot* (1914)**

In *Impression V (Park)* (1911), *Picture with a Black Arch* (1912), and *Picture with Red Spot* (1914), Kandinsky's increasing commitment to the exploration of abstraction becomes visible.<sup>1</sup> The titles of his three works suggest that Kandinsky now connects the activity of painting with the registering of personal impressions, as well as with the exploration of specific features of picture-making such as line, colour and construction. *Impression V (Park)*, for instance, still suggests an active attempt of the painter to observe and relate to a place in the world. In *Picture with Black Arch*, the arch mentioned by Kandinsky could be interpreted as an architectural or imagined, representational or abstract element at the same time. Similarly, the title of Kandinsky's 1914 painting may be referring to an observational or remembered red detail that assumes particular significance for the painter; however, *Picture with Red Spot* remains the least specific, most abstract of Kandinsky's three titles.

Kandinsky continues to allude to representational elements in *Impression V (Park)* (Fig. 22). Communicating a sense of location has now become a secondary preoccupation for him, as the title of his work suggests; triangular shapes may hint to mountains, indistinct presences, or even directional motion in his painting. The rendering of impressions leads him, on the one hand, and an artist such as Monet, on the other hand, to different results. Monet prefers to work by himself, from his impressions, rather than in the company of other artists;<sup>2</sup> as his letters show, he directs great efforts towards sourcing the right motif and depicting it in a way he finds satisfactory.<sup>3</sup> For Kandinsky, an impression offers only a point of departure to his explorations.<sup>4</sup> Kandinsky does not require impressions to generate representational

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<sup>1</sup> While referring to Kandinsky's thoughts on the elements of composition, this analysis will not focus on examining the reflection of Kandinsky's theory of line, form and colour into his own works, or the hidden symbolism of Kandinsky's paintings. These topics have been investigated in Ringbom, 'Art in "The Epoch of the Great Spiritual": Occult Elements in the Early Theory of Abstract Painting'. Also, Maurice Tuchman, Judi Freeman, and Carel Blotkamp, *The Spiritual in Art: Abstract Painting 1890-1985* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1986). This section explores the meeting points between abstract and representational aspects of art-making, in order to highlight features of interplay in Kandinsky's paintings produced around the time of his writing *On the Spiritual in Art* and 'On the Question of Form'.

<sup>2</sup> See Monet's letter to Paul Durand-Ruel from Giverny, 12 January 1884, in Monet and Kendall, *Monet by Himself: Paintings, Drawings, Pastels, Letters*, 108.

<sup>3</sup> See, for instance, Monet's letters to Alice Hoschedé from Bordighera, 24 January 1884, and 29 January 1884. *Ibid.*, 108, 109.

<sup>4</sup> In *On the Spiritual in Art*, Kandinsky regards Impressionism as an art movement that had already made its key contribution to the history of art. See Kandinsky, Lindsay, and Vergo, *Kandinsky. Complete Writings on Art*,

renderings. He prefers to employ his observations to articulate pictures where space, presence and movement are approached in abstract terms.<sup>5</sup>



Fig. 22. Wassily Kandinsky. *Impression V (Park)*. 1911. oil on canvas. 106 x 157.5 cm. Paris. Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou.

In *Impression V (Park)*, Kandinsky allows the elongation of his brushstrokes almost to dissolve the materiality of paint; he sets to work ‘... a delicate process of dematerialization’, to employ Worringer’s terminology.<sup>6</sup> Assertive of its embodiment to a minimum, paint appears as colour more than as pictorial medium.<sup>7</sup> Chromatic variation leads to the definition of form; Kandinsky’s brushwork suggests texture, weight, three-dimensionality, advancement and recession. The edges that could have separated colours, and indicated forms, melt into dry brushwork or tints; in Kandinsky’s handling, both form and colour thus appear to cancel out their zones of beginning and end. Kandinsky models pictorial bodies that exhibit fluid and solid qualities at the same time, and that assume presence on canvas while making only distant reference to objects in the world. Monet used a similar technique in his series of

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149. Worringer approached Impressionism critically in *Abstraction and Empathy*, due to the emphasis Impressionism placed on its connections with the world. See Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 38.

<sup>5</sup> Grohmann writes about Kandinsky’s extraordinary visual memory in Grohmann, *Wassily Kandinsky: Life and Work*, 46-51. Also see Kandinsky’s ‘Reminiscences’ (1913), in Kandinsky, Lindsay, and Vergo, *Kandinsky. Complete Writings on Art*, 357-382.

<sup>6</sup> Worringer and Read, *Form in Gothic*, 161.

<sup>7</sup> This observation is the result of my examining Kandinsky’s paintings on display at Centre Georges Pompidou in 2012.

works on the *Rouen Cathedral*, yet his canvases paid homage to the passage of hours, and to the effect of time on his motif.<sup>8</sup> In *Impression V (Park)*, Kandinsky suggests space, atmosphere, and animation without referring to a specific time and place, but relying on the interplay of colour and form instead.

Kandinsky's approach to line also combines representational and abstract aspects. He sets line free from the obligation of circumscribing and defining form in *Impression V (Park)*. Line as employed by Kandinsky does not impose onto colour; Kandinsky assigns equally assertive roles to colour and line when he suggests natural forms, human-made structures, or details of gesture and presence. Worringer underscored the capacity of line to summarize expressive value, regardless of its connection to representational forms.<sup>9</sup> For Kandinsky, interplay is revealed in his approach to line, which hints to the outer world, structures pictorial space, and expresses inner life. Black may stand for motionlessness and extinction in *On the Spiritual in Art*,<sup>10</sup> yet the black lines in Kandinsky's paintings are animated and potentially narrative, even when they do not need to make representational motifs visible.

*Picture with a Black Arch* (1912) (Fig. 23) proposes a different approach to the interplay of colour and form. The territories of form and colour overlap more in *Picture with a Black Arch* than in *Impression V (Park)*. An increased emphasis on separation yields greater clarity: Kandinsky employs one main colour – blue, red, or purple – to establish the boundaries of the three dominant forms. He anchors the soaring purple form to its blue and red counterparts by means of a black arch.

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<sup>8</sup> Robert Herbert inquires into Monet's approach to colour-form. See Herbert, 'The Decorative and the Natural in Monet's Cathedrals'.

<sup>9</sup> Worringer addresses this aspect of line in his discussion of Northern animal ornament in Worringer and Read, *Form in Gothic*, 61.

<sup>10</sup> Kandinsky, Lindsay, and Vergo, *Kandinsky. Complete Writings on Art*, 185. Also see Kandinsky's memories of a black coach and a gondola boarded at night, and the emotions he associated with these objects, in his *Reminiscences/Three Pictures* (1913), in ———, *Kandinsky. Complete Writings on Art*, 358.



Fig. 23. Wassily Kandinsky. *Picture with a Black Arch*. 1912. oil on canvas. 188 x 196 cm. Paris. Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou.

An assertive element in Kandinsky's picture, the black arch suggests the possibility of relating the purple form and the blue form, yet, due to its own lack of anchoring, preserves its independence and dynamism in the picture. Its positioning brings to mind Worringer's discussion of the role of pointed arches in Gothic architecture. Worringer finds that the arch is an architectural expression of human consciousness. In *Form in Gothic*, he writes:

It is as if, with the introduction of the pointed arch, the building were permeated by a great wave of self-awareness. The redeeming word seems to have been spoken which allowed its restrained craving for activity and its pathetic yearning for expression to find utterance. The whole building stretches itself upward in the glad consciousness of being freed from all weight of material, from all earthly confinement... The movement of thrust from both sides is gathered into unity by a keystone at the crown of the vault, which, in spite of its actual weight conformable with its structural function as

abutment, fails entirely to produce any aesthetic impression of weight, appearing rather as a natural termination light as a flower.<sup>11</sup>

For Worringer, the arch suggests liberation from material constraints and weightlessness, despite its material manifestation. He analyzes an architectural element of abstract expression; however, he empathically compares the arch with an element of nature. In this light, Kandinsky's painted arch draws further attention to the dynamism of an abstract element, to its expressive potential, and to its possible association with structures built by human beings in response to their world.

Kandinsky creates colour-line interplay through the placement of the black arch, as well as through the placement of the smaller black linear elements within his composition. His approach to colour mixing also suggests interplay: for instance, mixing blue and red (the colours of the largest forms in *Picture with a Black Arch*) results in purple (the colour of the form above the larger red and blue elements). Distinct from the blue and red forms, the purple form assumes a connective role in Kandinsky's composition, much like the black arch that overlaps it. As a relational modality, interplay appears emphasized in Kandinsky's *Picture with a Black Arch* by means of line, colour and form.

The interplay of form and content can also be observed in *Picture with a Black Arch*. Kandinsky links content to inner life, while form is for him the outer reflection of content, and can change in response to content. In *Picture with a Black Arch*, Kandinsky uses predominantly abstract pictorial elements – elements that suggest various interpretations. For instance, the pointed arch motif could be regarded as suggestive of a house roof or a boomerang; the grid motif could appear to allude to ribs, or to a bird in flight; the rounded arch motif could suggest the presence of a portal, or the act of jumping. Allowing the equivalences between content and form to remain open, Kandinsky sets possible contents in interplay with their abstract formal expression. Although it takes distance from the direct depiction of the world, Kandinsky's *Picture with a Black Arch* articulates an additive, inclusive, and relational aspect of abstraction.

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<sup>11</sup> Worringer and Read, *Form in Gothic*, 156-157.

In Kandinsky's *Picture with Red Spot* (1914) (Fig. 24), abstracted yet partially recognizable human figures occupy the four corners of the work.<sup>12</sup> A floating presence in the top right corner seems to gaze towards the rest of the composition; in the top left corner, a group of figures in a marine-like setting appears also to examine the scene below. Kandinsky makes animated presences easily discernible in the rest of his painting. He reinforces suggestions of vitality by means of directional and radiating patterns of paint application. The distance between the representational and abstract impulses diminishes in Kandinsky's *Picture with Red Spot*, although the bridging of imitation and creativity occurs in different terms than the ones discussed by Worringer.<sup>13</sup>



Fig. 24. Wassily Kandinsky. *Picture with Red Spot*. 1914. oil on canvas. 130 x 130 cm. Paris. Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou.

<sup>12</sup> Kandinsky vividly describes his emotional connections to the colour red in his *Reminiscences/Three Pictures* (1913), where he records his impressions on his travels in the Vologda province, and his experiencing the interiors of old Russian wooden houses. In the words of Kandinsky: 'Folk pictures on the walls: a symbolic representation of a hero, a battle, a painted folk song. The "red" corner (red is the same as beautiful in old Russian) thickly, completely covered with painted and printed pictures of the saints, burning in front of it the red flame of a small pendant lamp, glowing and blowing like a knowing, discreetly murmuring, modest, and triumphant star, existing in and for itself.' See Kandinsky, Lindsay, and Vergo, *Kandinsky. Complete Writings on Art*, 368-369. Regarding Kandinsky's views on the energy and intensity of the colour red, which Kandinsky also associates with masculinity, also see his reflections from *On the Spiritual in Art*, in ———, *Kandinsky. Complete Writings on Art*, 186-187. The inner and outer aspects of colours as seen by Kandinsky could make the topic of further investigation, yet require self-standing essay space.

<sup>13</sup> Worringer notes that imitation and creativity unite in naturalism, in the absence of transcendentalism, when human beings and their environment are in harmony. In these conditions, Worringer finds the rapprochement of imitation and creativity dangerous. See Worringer and Read, *Form in Gothic*, 19.

Abstract-representational interplay is balanced in favour of abstraction in *Picture with Red Spot*; however, some passages retain representational connections with spaces, presences and happenings in the world. Kandinsky emphasizes the clustering of detail – a compositional characteristic associated predominantly with the art of representation; in his work, dots, lines, forms and colours articulate a mostly abstract composition, yet their accumulation, inflection, dissolution, gradation, overlapping, occasional flatness, and overall animation provide as much visual information as can be found in a representational painting. Abstract elements of composition become Kandinsky's characters in *Picture with Red Spot*.

Kandinsky, in *Picture with Red Spot*, creates textural variety by means of brushwork. He reveals material aspects of paint in some passages; in other passages, he highlights the dynamics of paint application and the weightlessness of paint. Full brushstrokes anchor Kandinsky's abstract motifs, asserting their mass by means of paint; emptying brushstrokes dissolve the materiality of paint into colour, and melt single colours into interwoven and graduated hues. When articulating the abstract and representational aspects of his work, Kandinsky activates both the sense of touch and the sense of sight. He evokes the interplay of senses in *Picture with Red Spot*.

Abstract-representational interplay models the relationship between colours, between forms, between colour and form, between form and content in Kandinsky's early twentieth-century works. His paintings include representational features such as the registering of impressions and presences, attention to details and to lifelike animation. At the same time, Kandinsky underscores the inflection, dissolution, gradation, overlapping of dots, lines, forms and colours; in his handling, abstraction is a process that fosters not the isolation, but the connection between compositional elements. Even though he creates boundaries and works with separations in *Impression V (Park)*, *Picture with a Black Arch*, and *Picture with Red Spot*, he generates contexts for interplay within and between compositional groups of elements, focusing on the shared grounds that painting can bring to light.

## **Rethinking abstract-representational interplay: Worringer, Arnheim, Deleuze and Guattari**

In the paintings of Wassily Kandinsky, Rudolf Arnheim recognizes an interest in the uncharted grounds between representation and abstraction. Arnheim, writing about the non-representational art of the early twentieth century, observes in *Visual Thinking* (1970): ‘... [A]rtists such as Wassily Kandinsky were exploring the mysterious zone between the representational and the abstract.’<sup>1</sup> For Arnheim, the territories where abstraction and representation overlap may appear mysterious, but their actual manifestation in the paintings of Kandinsky leaves no room for doubt.

Arnheim mentions Kandinsky’s paintings in his discussion of non-mimetic images.<sup>2</sup> He explains that non-mimetic images do not cultivate resemblances as recorded by senses: instead, non-mimetic images have ‘non-sensuous content’ and exhibit ‘non-sensorial feelings of relations’.<sup>3</sup> In other words, Arnheim considers that images need not display imitative representational content, and need not rely on the depiction of height, width and depth relations in order to be regarded as images. According to him, non-mimetic images support the exploration and solving of theoretical problems, and play a decisive role in the activities of the mind. Arnheim, like Worringer, finds that responses to the world do not manifest exclusively in terms of representation. However, Arnheim insists that abstraction reveals not the stirrings of instinct – as Worringer argues in *Abstraction and Empathy* –<sup>4</sup> but the expression of thought.

Worringer explains that abstraction is the manifestation of instinct;<sup>5</sup> instead, Arnheim considers the capacity of human beings to abstract as a fundamental component of perceiving, thinking and picture-making. ‘Abstractness,’ to employ Arnheim’s terminology, thus contributes to the activities of the mind, senses, as well as to art; it does not aim to offer a route of escape from threatening surroundings. The attention Arnheim bestows on the negotiable boundaries between representation and abstraction becomes obvious in his

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<sup>1</sup> Arnheim, *Visual Thinking*, 114.

<sup>2</sup> The term ‘image’ is defined in this thesis as the visual likeness that informs the relationship between beings, objects, events or phenomena, and their representation.

<sup>3</sup> Arnheim, *Visual Thinking*, 115.

<sup>4</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 18-19.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 40-41. Also, Worringer and Read, *Form in Gothic*, 32.

approach to ‘pictures.’ For him, a picture embodies a specific function of an image.<sup>6</sup> Arnheim notes that pictures are not copies, or imitations, and that they can abstract in different degrees. He explains:

A picture can dwell at the most varied levels of abstractness. A photograph or a Dutch landscape of the seventeenth century may be quite lifelike and yet select, arrange, and almost unnoticeably stylize its subject in such a way that it focuses on some of the subject’s essence. On the other hand, a totally non-mimetic geometrical pattern by Mondrian may be intended as a picture of the turmoil of New York’s Broadway. A child may capture the character of a human figure or a tree by a few highly abstract circles, ovals, or straight lines. Abstractness is a means by which the picture interprets what it portrays.<sup>7</sup>

For Arnheim, pictures that engage with representing the world also employ processes specific to abstraction, such as selection, arrangement and stylization. Abstractness is therefore indispensable to the making of art: as Arnheim underscores, it provides a passageway from observed motifs to their interpretation through picture-making, be this picture-making abstract or representational.

Worringer’s abstraction and Arnheim’s abstractness cannot be considered as strictly equivalent. For Worringer, abstraction is a psychological urge, and a mode of art-making connected with style, that may include references to the world.<sup>8</sup> Instead, Arnheim points towards a zone of perception, thinking and art-making where abstractness is specific to both abstraction and representation. Abstractness functions as an instrument of art-making, according to Arnheim; as such, it is not employed to articulate an antithesis with representation, but exposes abstract-representational common ground, overriding their differentiation.

Worringer, as we have seen, asserted the polar opposition of representation and abstraction at the beginning of *Abstraction and Empathy*; he continued by apparently turning against his earlier statements when highlighting that art he regarded as abstract could comprise

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<sup>6</sup> Arnheim, *Visual Thinking*, 136.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 137.

<sup>8</sup> Worringer and Read, *Form in Gothic*, 34.

representational characteristics. In the demonstration conducted by Worringer, abstract-representational opposition facilitated theoretical understanding, yet was difficult to connect to art historical evidence. Gothic art offered Worringer a prime example of coexistence between abstract and representational aspects.

In contrast with Worringer's standpoint from *Abstraction and Empathy*, Arnheim considers that abstract works of art do not invoke a wish of separation from the world, even though they may not include representational elements. In the words of Arnheim: 'Since it [i. e., an "abstract," non-mimetic work of art] does not portray the external shape of physical objects, it is closer to the pure forces it presents symbolically; but it portrays at the same time the inherent nature of the things and events of the world and thereby maintains its relevance to human life on earth.'<sup>9</sup> The deep-rooted aspects of forces, things, and events in the world come forth for Arnheim in his consideration of abstraction. For him, abstraction is not an attempt to transcend the vicissitudes of unwelcoming surroundings, as Worringer had claimed, but a relevant approach to life as experienced by human beings.

Art benefits from the coexistence of abstract and representational features, Arnheim explains – in fact, it improves when abstract work accounts for representational aspects, and when representational art attends to form. According to him: '... although a painting may be entirely "abstract" (non-mimetic), it needs to reflect some of the complexity of form by which realistic works depict the wealth of human experience. Inversely, a realistic portrayal, in order to be readable, generic, and expressive, must fit its presentation of objects to the pure forms, more directly embodied in non-mimetic art.'<sup>10</sup> A beneficial overlap of abstraction and representation thus occurs, according to Arnheim, in compositions where formal complexity characterizes abstraction, and where representation has formal purity (or simplicity of form). Worringer insisted, in *Abstraction and Empathy*, that abstraction provides the basis of all art-

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<sup>9</sup> Arnheim, *Visual Thinking*, 148.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 150-151. Arnheim points to no artworks in support of his ideas from the cited passage, yet mentions the varied levels of abstractness of photographs, Dutch landscapes, or paintings by Piet Mondrian (which Arnheim considers as geometrical patterns). ———, *Visual Thinking*, 137. He discusses the symbolic potential of representational images such as *The Workshop [L'Atelier]* (1855) by Gustave Courbet; he also mentions the picture quality (therefore particularity, and specific cognitive quality) of, for instance, a portrait by Rembrandt, or of a non-mimetic work of art. ———, *Visual Thinking*, 141, 148. Arnheim also nods towards approaches to art-making where the decision of abstracting elements from their initial context leads to a novel approach to representation: for instance, Arnheim notes that Picasso invokes the image of a bull's head by re-assembling the components of an old bicycle. ———, *Visual Thinking*, 141.

making.<sup>11</sup> In *Visual Thinking*, Arnheim takes Worringer's viewpoint further, exploring its psychological grounds, yet also underscoring the shortcomings of Worringer's emphasis on the opposition between empathy and abstraction.

Although critical towards Worringer's methodological approach, Arnheim acknowledges the lack of dogmatism of Worringer's perspective in 'Wilhelm Worringer on Abstraction and Empathy' (1984). For instance, Arnheim notes Worringer's observation that representation and abstraction can be regarded, theoretically, as opposites, while the history of art shows them engaging in dialogue.<sup>12</sup> Worringer's antithesis between representation and abstraction, and his connecting abstraction to a psychological response of withdrawal, may be questioned, Arnheim comments. However, Arnheim also mentions that *Abstraction and Empathy* points to the interplay of representation and abstraction – an alternative to opposition indeed highlighted by Worringer in his discussions of historical transitions between epochs, and in his interpretation of Gothic art.

Gothic art, especially Gothic line and its lifelikeness, also fascinate Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. In *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1987), Deleuze and Guattari turn to Worringer's views on Gothic when inquiring into the transformational aspects of metallurgy.<sup>13</sup> They underscore the contrast traced by Worringer between organic, Classical art and barbarian, Gothic art.<sup>14</sup> Unlike Arnheim, they accept the oppositional strategy adopted by Worringer in his debut book. Pointing to the Gothic line as seen by Worringer,<sup>15</sup> Deleuze and Guattari examine the 'Nonorganic Life' of metal – a material they regard as having a body without organs (namely, an active life that is not located within given organisms, but that travels between organisms).<sup>16</sup> For Deleuze and Guattari, 'Nonorganic Life' is the key aspect of Worringer's interpretation of Gothic art. Worringer's paradoxical phrase, which brings together opposite terms, is employed in *A Thousand Plateaus* to draw attention to the lifelike qualities of inanimate materials.

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<sup>11</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 41-45.

<sup>12</sup> Arnheim, *New Essays on the Psychology of Art*, 61.

<sup>13</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 410-411.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 415.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 411.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 499.

Highlighting the continuity between the inquiries of Riegl and Worringer with regard to sight and touch, Deleuze and Guattari argue that ‘close vision’ and ‘haptic space’ form an aesthetic couple.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, Worringer had drawn attention to the tactile qualities of abstract art (especially with regard to sculpture), as well as to the optical features of representation in *Abstraction and Empathy*.<sup>18</sup> Yet Worringer discusses tactility much less than Riegl in *Late Roman Art Industry*. Representation relies on the sense of sight, and on optical characteristics, for Worringer, whereas abstraction emphasizes planes and (to employ his phrase) the ‘closed material individuality’ of objects.<sup>19</sup> Worringer, unlike Riegl, connects abstraction with the flatness of planes rather than with experiential proximity. Although manifesting visually in art, abstraction comes to challenge senses, including the sense of sight, in *Abstraction and Empathy*.

Deleuze and Guattari focus on human senses more than Worringer, who faced the difficult task of steering clear of Riegl’s influence. Underscoring the aesthetic relevance of distant and close viewing, as well as their possible coexistence with the sense of touch, Deleuze and Guattari nevertheless depart from the thought of Riegl and Worringer. For instance, ‘haptic’ is a term Deleuze and Guattari prefer to Riegl and Worringer’s ‘tactile,’ since ‘haptic’ allows for possible touch-sight interconnections.<sup>20</sup> Deleuze and Guattari thus open their investigation to the overlapping and co-operation of senses: they link sight with physical distance, and the possibility of touch with proximity, recognizing the haptic function the eye can perform. For Worringer, the sense of sight supports the articulation of representational art; abstraction, on the other hand, is planar, and embodies the wish of viewers and artists to be released from the pressures of the world. Worringer’s abstraction comes to develop supra-sensuous, spiritual aspects in the process of attempting to leave the world behind.<sup>21</sup>

Worringer observes significant abstract aspects in Gothic art. For instance, in *Form in Gothic*, he explores the expressive qualities of Gothic line. To illuminate the contrast between line in Greek ornament and Gothic ornament respectively, Worringer refers to the activity of

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 492-493.

<sup>18</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 40-41, 84, 86.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 34-48.

<sup>20</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, 492.

<sup>21</sup> Worringer and Read, *Form in Gothic*, 42-44.

drawing in conditions of mental stress;<sup>22</sup> in such instances, he explains, human will does not drive expression, and satisfaction does not follow the completion of work. Instead, Worringer argues that this type of stress-laden line appears to obey a will of its own, twisting, turning, and gaining momentum from the negotiation of obstacles. Worringer comments: ‘The essence of this specific expression of the line is, that it does not represent sensuous, organic values, but values of a non-sensuous, that is to say, a spiritual kind. It does not express organic activity of will, but a psychical, spiritual activity of will, far removed from any connection or conformity with the complexes of organic sensation.’<sup>23</sup> Lines drawn under stress; such lines – the expressiveness of which Worringer likens to Gothic ornament –<sup>24</sup> have non-sensuous, spiritual qualities, and power rather than beauty of expression. Egyptian art appeared predominantly abstract to Worringer;<sup>25</sup> Gothic art, he argued, was abstract with a difference: it cultivated lifelike movement as well as a preoccupation with structure.

Worringer argues that all art begins with abstraction, Deleuze and Guattari observe.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, Worringer gave priority to the urge to abstraction; he explained in *Form in Gothic*: ‘... [A] vital impulse for empathy developed from a powerful impulse for abstraction.’<sup>27</sup> As Deleuze and Guattari point out, Worringer associated the emergence of abstraction with crystalline, geometric qualities of form, made visible in the art of ancient Egypt; then Gothic art had driven geometry towards expressiveness. The ‘de-geometrization of line’ at work in Northern

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 43.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>25</sup> Worringer reformulates his position on abstraction and its association with the culture of ancient Egypt in *Egyptian Art* (1927), Donahue points out. Comparing Egyptian and early twentieth-century American culture, Worringer, Donahue highlights, criticises their shared superficiality, emptiness and uniformity. Donahue points out that *Egyptian Art* proposes a reading that negates the appreciation Worringer had shown for the abstractness of ancient Egyptian art in *Abstraction and Empathy*. Worringer, as cited by Donahue, maintains: ‘It would be untrue to claim for the Egyptian, as the author himself has done on a former occasion, a feeling for the “awe-inspiring nature of the cubic,” and to assume that he overcame it by giving a geometrical form to his planes. This would be to introduce into the Egyptian’s feeling for life a dramatic element utterly at variance with our present sober conception.’ Donahue signals that intellectual history, or *Geistesgeschichte*, as practiced by Worringer in *Abstraction and Empathy*, now expresses the nationalist tendencies of late Weimar culture (1918-1933). Worringer’s argument from *Egyptian Art* is tendentious, but also frank; Donahue explains that Worringer is baffled by modern cities, which he does not approach in 1927 as in the past, namely from the perspective of ‘... the logic of artistic sensibility’. Donahue’s essay points to the limitations and dangers of ‘ecstatic *Geistesgeschichte*’ as approached by Worringer, who subjects art to his powerfully personal views. See Neil H. Donahue, ‘From Worringer to Baudrillard and Back: Ancient Americans and (Post)Modern Culture in Weimar Germany’ in Neil H. Donahue, *Invisible Cathedrals: The Expressionist Art History of Wilhelm Worringer* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), 134-135, 137, 140, 145-150, 151, 150-155.

<sup>26</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, 496.

<sup>27</sup> Worringer and Read, *Form in Gothic*, 32.

(or Gothic) ornament interested Worringer.<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, Deleuze and Guattari disagree with his exemplifications. Abstraction – more specifically, abstract line – has mainly Gothic (or nomadic) characteristics for Deleuze and Guattari. They do not consider abstraction is observable most notably in Egyptian art, as Worringer did, nor do they accept that abstraction could be an expression of fear. According to Deleuze and Guattari:

Whereas the rectilinear (or “regularly” rounded) Egyptian line is negatively motivated by anxiety in the face of all that passes, flows or varies, and erects the constancy and eternity of an In-Itself, the nomad line is abstract in an entirely different sense, precisely because it has a multiple orientations and passes *between* points, figures, and contours: it is positively motivated by the smooth space it draws, not by any striation it might perform to ward off anxiety and subordinate the smooth. The abstract line is the affect of smooth spaces, not a feeling of anxiety that calls forth striation.<sup>29</sup>

Deleuze and Guattari link abstraction with ‘close vision’ and smooth space. Bringing forth both touch and sight as functions of the human eye, smooth space has haptic characteristics according to Deleuze and Guattari.<sup>30</sup> To smooth space they oppose striated space,<sup>31</sup> a predominantly optical type of space that involves distant viewing. Worringer associated distant viewing with three-dimensionality and representation; for him, the distant viewing presupposed by representation could be contrasted with the non-sensuous tendencies of abstraction.<sup>32</sup> The sense of sight had as an opposite the non-sensuous, or spiritual, in *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic*. Instead, Deleuze and Guattari refer both the smoothness and the striation of space to the activity of senses.

Having posited the antithesis of smoothness and striation, Deleuze and Guattari follow by noting their possible connections. According to them: ‘Once again, as always, this analysis must be corrected by a coefficient of transformation according to which passages between the striated and the smooth are at once necessary and uncertain, and all the more disruptive.’<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>29</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, 496-497.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 493.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 37-41. Also, Worringer and Read, *Form in Gothic*, 31-33.

<sup>33</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, 493.

Deleuze and Guattari, like Worringer, remain sensitive to the interplay of terms they introduce as opposites. For them, to oppose smoothness and striation brings along complications, and underscores the intermittence and overlays of the two characteristics of space. Yet, according to Deleuze and Guattari, the lack of symmetry between imperfect opposites confirms the very distinction between them.<sup>34</sup> Smoothness and striation can be defined less through opposition than through distinction, according to Deleuze and Guattari – in other words, not as much through polar antithesis (a strategy preferred by Worringer in *Abstraction and Empathy*) as through an affirmative assertion of differences.

Abstraction – a mode of art-making Worringer regards as an expression of negative emotions towards the world – appears in a positive light to Deleuze and Guattari. Unlike Worringer, they affirm the capacity of abstract (or nomad) line to travel in different directions between various standpoints. Deleuze and Guattari recognize the connections between abstraction and affect (or emotional expression) yet do not see abstraction as an anxiety-laden response to the world. Abstraction is not an aspect of viewers' negative response to their surroundings, according to Deleuze and Guattari, but a mode of expression the characteristics of which can receive positive definition. The viewpoints articulated in *Abstraction and Empathy* and *A Thousand Plateaus* differ significantly with regard to abstract art and its alleged negativity. Representation and abstraction should not be contrasted, according to Deleuze and Guattari, as expressions of antithetic emotions experienced in response to the world.

The approach of Deleuze and Guattari to the strategy of opposition reveals once more its subtlety towards the end of *A Thousand Plateaus*, especially with regard to the differentiation between the figurative and the abstract.<sup>35</sup> For Deleuze and Guattari, the figurative is equivalent to representation or imitation. (Worringer, who considered that aesthetics should not be concerned with imitation, would have strongly disagreed with their viewpoint.)<sup>36</sup> They assert that a figurative line cannot be contrasted with an abstract line, but only with a line that is not figurative.<sup>37</sup> In other words, they draw renewed attention to the limits of the strategy of opposition, which may succeed in differentiating between artistic territories, but cannot

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 481-482.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 497.

<sup>36</sup> Worringer and Kramer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 27-29, 32-33.

<sup>37</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, 497.

support their polar contrast. Deleuze and Guattari do not define the domain of non-figurative art, which they offer as a theoretical counterpart of the figurative;<sup>38</sup> however, their observations expose the insufficiency of approaching the abstract and the figurative (or, in their terms, the representational, the imitative) from the point of view of polar antithesis.

Despite their implicit criticism towards Worringer's reading of abstraction in negative terms, Deleuze and Guattari praise Worringer's approach to the contrast between the organic and the abstract.<sup>39</sup> For them, Worringer excels in his articulation of the abstract-organic antithesis. However, Deleuze and Guattari find that Worringer's opposition between the abstract and the organic cannot be sustained. Defining 'the organic' as the very form taken by representation,<sup>40</sup> Deleuze and Guattari explain that 'the organic' connects the act of representation to represented motifs. 'The organic' is also associated with feeling, with empathy, according to Deleuze and Guattari – it is a key characteristic of life. They argue that 'the organic' cannot stand against 'the abstract' as discussed by Worringer in Greek and Egyptian art, since Greek art is actually inspired by Egyptian art, and continues to display geometric, rectilinear qualities of form.<sup>41</sup> For Deleuze and Guattari, 'the abstract' rather finds its beginning in Gothic art.

The perspective Deleuze and Guattari take on 'the abstract' observed in Gothic line powerfully brings to light abstract-representational interplay. Mechanical and dynamic, Gothic line appears to Deleuze and Guattari as lifelike, despite being inorganic. Worringer approached the 'abstraction' of Gothic art from a similar perspective in *Abstraction and Empathy*,<sup>42</sup> as well as *Form in Gothic*:<sup>43</sup> he noted Gothic's inorganic vitality. However, Deleuze and Guattari expand on Worringer's inquiries, distinguishing Gothic line from both 'the geometrical' and 'the organic.' In their words:

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<sup>38</sup> In *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, Deleuze approaches non-figuration when addressing resemblance in Bacon's paintings. Deleuze remarks that Bacon creates nonfigurative resemblances. To articulate this type of resemblance, Deleuze explains, Bacon employs procedures such as scrambling, rubbing or hatching, and produces figural Images. Non-figuration is thus discussed by Deleuze in association with resemblance (a pictorial characteristic that could be considered its opposite). See Deleuze, *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*, 158-159.

<sup>39</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, 498.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 48, 112-113. Also, Worringer and Read, *Form in Gothic*.

<sup>43</sup> Worringer and Read, *Form in Gothic*, 55-57, 106-107.

It is this nomadic line that he [i. e. Worringer] says is mechanical, but in free action and swirling; it is inorganic, yet alive, and all the more alive for being inorganic. It is distinguished both from the geometrical and the organic. It raises “mechanical” relations to the level of *intuition*. Heads (even a human being’s when it is not a face) unravel and coil into ribbons in a continuous process; mouths curl in spirals. Hair, clothes... This streaming, spiralling, zigzagging, snaking, feverish line of variation liberates a power of life that human beings had rectified and organisms had confined, and which matter now expresses as the trait, flow, or impulse traversing it. If everything is alive, it is not because everything is organic or organized but, on the contrary, because the organism is a diversion of life. In short, the life in question is inorganic, germinal, and intensive, a powerful life without organs, a Body that is all the more alive for having no organs, everything that passes *between* organisms...<sup>44</sup>

To Deleuze and Guattari, Gothic (or nomadic line) seems to follow an intuitive path of expression; it exceeds the depiction of embodied form. Bodies are not recognizably rendered according to the principles of representation, but dynamically transformed by Gothic line, Deleuze and Guattari remark. Worringer’s *Form in Gothic* signalled the possible association of Gothic line and power. According to Worringer: ‘... [I]t is evident that the organically determined line contains beauty of expression, while power of expression is reserved for the Gothic line.’<sup>45</sup> For Deleuze and Guattari as well, Gothic line shows the power of life liberated from the restrictions of organization.

Gothic line is abstract, according to Deleuze and Guattari, but displays lifelike energy and movement nevertheless. ‘The abstract’ as observed by Deleuze and Guattari in the Gothic line actually presupposes the interplay of abstract and representational characteristics. Worringer also noted the predominantly abstract character of Gothic line, yet claimed Gothic line reflects neither the urge to abstraction, nor the urge to empathy. In the words of Worringer: ‘Gothic line being essentially abstract, and yet at the same time strongly vital, shows us that a differentiated intermediate state exists, in which the dualism is no longer sufficiently strong to seek artistic freedom in the absolute negation of life, but is on the other hand not yet so weakened as to derive the meaning of art from the organic orderliness of life

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<sup>44</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, 498-499.

<sup>45</sup> Worringer and Read, *Form in Gothic*, 44.

itself.’<sup>46</sup> While underscoring the predominantly abstract character of Gothic line, Worringer finds it informed by representational characteristics. Gothic art, he argues, is neither abstract nor representational, but hybrid.<sup>47</sup>

*Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic* place abstraction in a positive context when discussing its capacity of transcendence and openness towards spirituality.<sup>48</sup> Yet the transcendent, spiritual tendencies of abstraction as seen by Worringer are still the outcomes of taking distance from the world – a response Worringer frames in negative terms. As long as Worringer considers abstraction a psychological urge opposed to empathy, he associates abstraction with negative emotional connections between artists or viewers and the world.

Gothic, on the other hand, is a mode of art-making Worringer addresses in terms of form. His Gothic offers a particular avenue towards expression, where lifelike dynamism as well as the urge towards distancing from the world can be recognized. The opposition of abstract and representational characteristics becomes inactive in Worringer’s interpretation of Gothic art; abstract-representational interplay replaces it. Worringer may highlight the interplay of abstraction and representation in negative terms,<sup>49</sup> yet asserts its visibility in Gothic art nevertheless; for him, as previous sections have noted, Gothic appears as a hybrid approach to art, a territory where the ‘counterplay and interplay’ urges considered opposite may be observed.<sup>50</sup>

In the later years of the twentieth century, Deleuze and Guattari argue that abstraction can be defined in association with smooth, haptic space, and close viewing; they do not need a negative framing for abstraction in order to better establish its aesthetic territory. Moreover, for Deleuze and Guattari, Gothic art is abstract rather than hybrid. Although abstraction offers an alternative to representation and striated space, it cannot open a door to salvation, according to Deleuze and Guattari. ‘Never believe that a smooth space will suffice to save us’, Deleuze and Guattari warn their readers.<sup>51</sup> They explain that smooth spaces do not

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 68.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 63-64, 85, 87.

<sup>48</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 18-19, 34-36, 46, 76, 102-103, 129-131, 134. Worringer and Read, *Form in Gothic*, 38-39, 43-44, 63-66.

<sup>49</sup> Worringer and Read, *Form in Gothic*, 39.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 63.

<sup>51</sup> Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, 500.

liberate viewers from the restrictions of striation, but provide life an opportunity to re-articulate its challenges.

Abstraction, as Deleuze and Guattari observe it in Gothic art, does not reach for the absolute, but is intensely active in the field between organisms. Combining inorganic and organic qualities, abstract linearity and lifelike movement, it makes available a pathway towards the interplay of opposites. Where Worringer emphasized the spiritual and transcendent aspects of abstraction, Deleuze and Guattari reinforce the connections of abstraction with the world. Although their respective methodologies highlight abstract-representational opposition, the three writers walk on common ground when inquiring into the particularities of abstract-representational interplay as observable in art. Towards the end of the twentieth century, Worringer's most significant legacy proves to be his decisive articulation of oppositions that actually open to the interplay of their terms.

## Conclusion

According to many modern and contemporary researchers, the key feature of *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic*, and their most memorable aspect, is the antithesis Worringer draws between the urge to empathy and the urge to abstraction.<sup>1</sup> Having incorporated and re-addressed the ideas of Theodor Lipps and Alois Riegl, Worringer influenced the articulation of an antithetic approach to modern art in the writings of Paul Fechter, Hermann Bahr, T. E. Hulme and Herbert Read. Worringer's ideas had a direct impact on the rise of German Expressionism, a mediated influence on the development of English Vorticism, and contributed to the validation of abstraction as an approach to fine art practice at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Later twentieth-century explorations underscore the key role of Worringer's ideas in his time, and the distinctive qualities of his writing.<sup>2</sup> For T. E. Hulme, Herbert Read, W. Eugène Kleinbauer, Hilton Kramer, Michael W. Jennings, Mary Gluck, W. Wolfgang Holdheim, Joseph Masheck, Neil Donahue, David Morgan, Madgalena Bushart, Mark Rosenthal, Mark Jarzombek, Hal Foster, Rosalind Krauss, Yve-Alain Bois, and Benjamin Buchloh, *Abstraction and Empathy* draws decisive contrasts between epochs, locations and psychological tendencies, as observed in art throughout its history. Worringer's polemical inclinations and his imaginative approach to the art of distant epochs are matched, as his supporters tend to observe, by his innovative approach to the writing of art history and theory. Yet the researchers of Worringer's work also signal the lack of alignment between Worringer's theory and the history of art,<sup>3</sup> his narrowly defined antitheses,<sup>4</sup> questionable generalizations,<sup>5</sup> preference for debate rather than documentation,<sup>6</sup> and focus on art historical interpretation more than on actual artistic motivation.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Worringer's employment of antithesis is highlighted, for instance, in the research of W. Eugène Kleinbauer, Hilton Kramer, W. Wolfgang Holdheim, Neil Donahue, Joseph Masheck, David Morgan, Geoffrey C. W. Waite, Mark Rosenthal, Allan Antliff, as well as Hal Foster, Rosalind Krauss, Yve-Alain Bois and Benjamin Buchloh. See, from the current thesis, 'Wilhelm Worringer: sketch for a portrait,' 10-36.

<sup>2</sup> See, from the current thesis, 'Wilhelm Worringer: sketch for a portrait,' 10-36, a section that briefly highlights the opinions on Worringer of twentieth-century writers.

<sup>3</sup> W. Wolfgang Holdheim in 'Wilhelm Worringer: sketch for a portrait,' 10-36.

<sup>4</sup> E. H. Gombrich in 'Wilhelm Worringer: sketch for a portrait,' 10-36.

<sup>5</sup> Dennis Duerden in 'Wilhelm Worringer: sketch for a portrait,' 10-36.

<sup>6</sup> Madgalena Bushart in 'Wilhelm Worringer: sketch for a portrait,' 10-36.

<sup>7</sup> Mark Jarzombek in 'Wilhelm Worringer: sketch for a portrait,' 10-36.

The forewords Worringer wrote to *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic* reveal key aspects of his discourse that also reflect into his books.<sup>8</sup> Interweaving tendencies towards distancing and connectivity, the forewords emphasize Worringer's interest in generating debate, his views on the limitations of the Classical framework in early twentieth-century approaches to art, and his attention to inner aspects of art-making. Worringer takes the opportunity of pointing to the experimental aspects of his research, strengthening and animating his statements by placing them within an oppositional framework. The vitality of his writing, his reliance on instinct, his attention to his readership, and his intention to provide a voice to the pressing artistic matters of his epoch, emerge with clarity in the forewords to *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic*.

Relying on antithesis, Worringer's writing of art history and theory also makes visible situations of significant coexistence between opposites.<sup>9</sup> For instance, in *Abstraction and Empathy*, Worringer separates between nature and art, and sets urge to empathy and the urge to abstraction in opposition. However, he does not disconnect viewing from feeling and from art-making, thus bringing together art and aesthetics. Employing a subjectivist framework, Worringer underscores the diversity of the art-viewing experience. He argues that aesthetics cannot account only for instances where the urge to empathy is invited.

Although the thought of Lipps influences Worringer's initial perspective on empathy in its positive and negative aspects, Worringer implicitly equates empathy and positive empathy. Transferring the negative aspect of empathy onto abstraction, he discusses abstraction rather than negative empathy in *Abstraction and Empathy*. He thus articulates a narrower line of research than Lipps, accounting emphatically for the opposition of urges and modes of art-making in the early stages of his argument. Aiming to provide a critical re-reading of Lipps' *Aesthetics*, *Abstraction and Empathy* succeeds in offering an incisive, selective reinterpretation of Lipps' system.

Worringer associates the urge to empathy with artistic naturalism, and the urge to abstraction with artistic style. He provides to the aesthetic and psychological terms of his inquiry a

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<sup>8</sup> See 'Gazing in the mirror of history: Worringer's forewords to *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic*,' 37-48, from the current thesis.

<sup>9</sup> From the current thesis, 'Worringer's approach to the writing of art history and theory,' 49-64.

reflection in art-making.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, as W. J. T. Mitchell, Juliet Koss and Andreas Michel show, twentieth-century researchers encounter difficulties in assessing and employing Worringer's terminology. Empathy, Mitchell and Koss comment, is regarded from the perspective of its limitations in art historical discussions nowadays.

In their turn, Clement Greenberg and Frances Colpitt contrast representation (or figuration) and abstraction in art-making instead of employing the naturalism-style pairing proposed by Worringer, and question the effectiveness of the abstract-representational polarity. Worringer's opposition of the urge to empathy (and naturalism) and the urge to abstraction (and style) is partial rather than polar in *Abstraction and Empathy*. To emphasize the relevance of Worringer's discussion of art-making, as well as late twentieth-century terminological preferences, 'representation' and 'abstraction' are contrasted in the current thesis with Worringer's emphasis on differentiation in mind.

Different urges lead to different artistic results, Worringer argues in *Abstraction and Empathy*.<sup>11</sup> He notes that style, generically understood, provides occasions for enjoyment and satisfaction; however, he disputes the aesthetic supremacy of naturalism in his epoch, pointing to the words and works of Adolf Hildebrand and Ferdinand Hodler in support of his argument. Naturalism (or representation), a mode of art-making emphasizing the enthusiasm of artists and viewers towards the world, is not to be mistaken for imitation, Worringer notes; abstraction, according to him, can be effectively contrasted only with naturalism.

Observing the tendencies towards abstraction of Oriental art, Worringer explains that the urge to abstraction sets single forms free from three-dimensional, spatial relations. Instead, the urge to empathy supports the rendition of space and three-dimensionality. Having asserted the opposition between urges and modes of art-making, Worringer nevertheless recognizes their similarities, especially at points of transition between epochs. As his argument advances, Worringer notes that representation occasions, much like abstraction, the contemplative distancing of viewers from the world, while abstract art does not require the

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<sup>10</sup> This topic is approached in 'Empathy, abstract and representation in Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic*,' 65-85, from the current thesis.

<sup>11</sup> See, from the current thesis, 'Representation and abstraction in art-making: Worringer's perspective,' 86-110.

exclusion of representational elements. The meeting of representational and abstract tendencies is recognisable, according to him, in Gothic as well as Classical art.

The completion of Classicism is marked by the thought of Kant, Worringer specifies in *Abstraction and Empathy*.<sup>12</sup> Although critical towards the impact of Classicism on his epoch, Worringer relies on Kant's research when addressing the question of form in art. Separating between narrative and formal approaches to art-making, Worringer considers form a key component in aesthetics. Like Kant, Worringer recognizes the simplicity and generality of form; however, for Worringer form is associated mainly with regularity as emergent from instinct rather than intellect.

Wölfflin, who also follows Kant's direction of research, offers Worringer the opportunity to draw attention to the contrast between representation-inclined uniformity and abstraction-oriented regularity in art. The dynamism Wölfflin recognizes and criticises in the art of the late nineteenth century is specific to Gothic as approvingly described by Worringer. Gothic, Worringer mentions, departs from Classical balance as observable in Greek ornament, for instance. Even where such balance is missing, artists seek opportunities for peaceful contemplation in an unpredictable world often animated by conflict. Worringer's views regarding the limits of representation are influenced by the thought of Schopenhauer on will and life in the world.

The silencing of will opens room for aesthetic contemplation, Worringer remarks, following Schopenhauer.<sup>13</sup> In *Abstraction and Empathy*, Worringer differentiates between two types of experience: the distancing from the world (which he associates with abstraction) and the distancing from the self (which occurs in conditions of empathy). Thus distancing emerges as a common psychological ground between modes of art-making for him, much like for Schopenhauer, who underscores the experiential loss of self that accompanies aesthetic pleasure. Art, according to Schopenhauer and Worringer, is a materialization of will, rooted in the emotional responses of artists to the world.

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<sup>12</sup> The influence of Kant on Worringer is addressed in '“Common to all”: form for Kant and Worringer,' 111-121, from the current thesis.

<sup>13</sup> 'A matter of will: Schopenhauer and Worringer on life and art,' 122-126, is a section that briefly discusses the influence of Schopenhauer on Worringer.

Worringer emphasizes the role of will rather than the importance of skill in art-making.<sup>14</sup> He extends the research of Riegl in this respect. Riegl finds that artistic will becomes most visible in architecture or crafts, where representational elements are eluded. Artistic will, according to him depends on time and place, models technique and meaning, and makes progress visible. For Worringer, artistic will generates tendencies towards representation or abstraction, giving rise to divergent aspects of art-making; instead, Riegl sees will as a force determined by the views of the world at a given time, and recognizes it as a common ground in the interpretation of art.

In late twentieth-century research, Worringer's early twentieth-century writings are often discussed in connection to the growth of Expressionism in German art.<sup>15</sup> Expressionism is a term featuring in a variety of sources around the turn of the twentieth century, and suggests the incorporation of various artistic influences.<sup>16</sup> Signalling an interest in responding to the world intensely, from a subjective perspective, Expressionism reveals its discursive and emotional similarities with Worringer's approach from *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic*. A significant contributor to the articulation of Expressionism in Germany is Gothic; this approach to art-making, as described by Worringer, extends beyond historical and national boundaries, yet assumes distinctive form in Germany.

Asserting the ties between Gothic and German art, Worringer provides a historical foundation to the artistic explorations of his time, distancing them (as well as his inquiry) from the dominant approach inspired by Renaissance and Impressionist art-making.<sup>17</sup> Worringer explains that, in early twentieth-century German art practices, external symbolism is immersed into the core of abstraction-oriented artworks and then brought to surface; the resulting works of art stand free from the dualism of form and content, according to him. Representational and abstract modes of art-making thus come to relate on new, inclusive grounds.

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<sup>14</sup> The question of artistic will is approached in 'Riegl and artistic will,' 127-131, in this thesis.

<sup>15</sup> See 'Worringer and Expressionism: late twentieth-century perspectives,' 215-224.

<sup>16</sup> 'The words of Worringer: 'Expressionism' at the beginning of the twentieth century,' 149-157, from the current thesis.

<sup>17</sup> See ' "The Historical Development of Modern Art" (1911): Worringer's early response to Expressionism,' 158-184.

Worringer's influence becomes visible in the writings of Paul Fechter and Hermann Bahr on Expressionism.<sup>18</sup> Mentioning that the books of Worringer support viewers' access to modern art, Fechter emphasizes the attention contemporary art-making places on expressing emotion. For Fechter as for Worringer, antithesis provides an effective pathway to explaining artistic processes: intensive and extensive Expressionism are for Fechter key elements of inquiry.

In his turn, Bahr contrasts 'the eye of the body' and 'the eye of the spirit', claiming that the two need to find balance in art-making. Bahr, who is also inspired by Worringer's writings, notes that the acceptance of art relies on the alignment of viewers' and artists' modes of seeing. Expressionism offers more than an artistic exploration specific to current times for Bahr: it is the mark of enduring spiritual powers available to humanity under the extreme duress of war.

Worringer proves a supporter of the experimental aspects of Expressionism, whether these manifest in art or in different forms of research.<sup>19</sup> Later artistic Expressionism meets with his empathically articulated criticism; nevertheless, for Georg Lukács, Worringer remains a representative of Expressionism and of its ideology.<sup>20</sup> Harshly critical towards Expressionism as well as towards Worringer for their reliance on abstract aspects of art-making, Lukács is nevertheless inspired by Worringer's writings, as Richard Sheppard points out. For Joseph Frank, Worringer's lively, exciting prose has the merit of addressing emotions that reflect negative responses to a world of changes, and underscores the merits of abstraction as a creative approach eluding time's passage.

William Spanos, criticising Frank's response to Worringer's writings, underscores that a third urge can be discerned in art-making: the urge to engagement with the world, where representational and abstract aspects meet. Regarding Expressionism and the writings of Worringer as implicitly connected, Ulrich Weisstein disagrees with Worringer's trans-historical views on Gothic, recommending instead that Expressionism be discussed within its

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<sup>18</sup> This topic is briefly discussed in 'Worringer's impact: *Expressionism* (1914) by Paul Fechter, and *Expressionism* (1916) by Hermann Bahr,' 185-195, from the current thesis.

<sup>19</sup> 'Current Questions on Art (1921): Worringer revisits Expressionism,' 196-198, looks further into Worringer's approach to Expressionism in the early nineteen-twenties.

<sup>20</sup> Lukács' viewpoint is addressed in 'Questioning Worringer: critical discussions on the writings of Worringer and on Worringer's association with the Expressionist movement,' 199-214.

own epoch. Worringer emphasizes feeling rather than reason in his writings; according to Neil Donahue, Worringer addresses his topics from the perspective of the history of ideas. Donahue draws attention to the impact of Worringer's writing at the beginning of the twentieth century, as well as to his generic terminology that brings together different strands of scholarship.

Relying on the vocabulary of opposition, Worringer contrasts the urge to empathy and the urge to abstraction.<sup>21</sup> He thus establishes the domains of abstraction and representation in art-making, and underscores their characteristics. Approached by Neil Donahue, Geoffrey C. W. Waite, and Joshua Dittrich from the perspective of its rhetorical aspects, Worringer's oppositional line of argument finds an antecedent in the thought of Aristotle, a writer Worringer mentions when criticising the dependence of contemporary art and thinking on Classical models.

For Aristotle, antithesis is a key aspect of rhetorical discourse, employed for the specific purpose of persuasion. Worringer's argument and interpretation, antithetically articulated, indirectly show his reliance on Classical rhetoric. Antithesis features in the writings of Kant, Schopenhauer, Riegl, and Wölfflin, yet is distinctively associated with subjectivism, emotion, and the defence of abstract art in Worringer's texts. A key strategy in Worringer's discourse, antithesis also characterises the views of Worringer on lived experience: he finds that human beings are engaged in a perpetually oppositional relationship with their environments.

However, alternatives to opposition also feature in *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic*. Addressing instances of abstract-representational interplay, Worringer points to gradation, displacement and transposition in psychological, historical and formal contexts.<sup>22</sup> For him, interplay is visible in Japanese art, Ionic architecture or Byzantine style, but most of all in Gothic art.<sup>23</sup> Worringer contrasts representation and abstraction; nevertheless, he also notes that, once one pole of the antithetical relationship is reached, its opposite reveals its appeal. In *Form in Gothic*, Worringer explains that historical objectivity can only be attained

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<sup>21</sup> For a discussion of the role of the rhetorical strategy of opposition in Worringer's approach to the writing of art history and theory, see 'Antithesis: Classical, modern and contemporary contexts,' 225-243.

<sup>22</sup> See 'Gradation, displacement and transposition: alternatives to antithesis in Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy*,' 244-253, in this thesis.

<sup>23</sup> This thesis inquires into Worringer's views on abstract-representational interplay in '*Form in Gothic*: interplay readdressed,' 254-256.

through a duplication of Ego and through attending to the antithetic opinions of its parts.<sup>24</sup> The interplay of opposites is thus revisited by Worringer from a new angle.

Visible in naturalist (or representational) art, which actually draws together the imitative and creative impulses, interplay appears threatening to Worringer, since it promises to destabilize the antithesis of representation and abstraction.<sup>25</sup> However, in Gothic art, Worringer recognizes abstract-representational interplay at work. Processes of remembering, assimilation and interpolation feature in the Gothic approach to rendering animal figures, according to him;<sup>26</sup> he detects a connection with the world in such representations, but finds it difficult to establish specific sources for Gothic motifs. Gothic interplay is different from Classical interplay as observed in Ionic architecture, for instance; it also differs from the play drive as previously described by Friedrich Schiller.<sup>27</sup>

Schiller, like Worringer, employs strong contrasts when defining the key terms of his inquiry: he writes about the antithetic laws of absolute reality and absolute formality, and the sensuous and formal drives specific to them. Yet Schiller argues that the play drive mediates between these opposites, balancing matter and form, feelings and reason, senses and law, and fostering harmonious interconnections. Gothic art does not attract Schiller's interest, yet becomes the main site of abstract-representational interplay for Worringer. Underscoring the duality and hybridity of Gothic, Worringer finds that opposite elements coexist without estranging their defining characteristics in Gothic art.<sup>28</sup>

Worringer approaches the relationship between representation and abstraction with his contemporaries in mind.<sup>29</sup> Arguing in favour of abstraction, he seeks the attention and understanding of a public he regards as critical towards current abstract tendencies in art-

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<sup>24</sup> 'History and Ego: Worringer's approach,' 257-259, casts a closer glance towards Worringer's historical methods as explained in *Form in Gothic*.

<sup>25</sup> Worringer's hesitation regarding interplay as made visible in naturalism is approached in 'Interplay in naturalism,' 260, from the current thesis.

<sup>26</sup> See 'Interplay in the Gothic art of Northern Europe: memory, assimilation, interpolation,' 261-263.

<sup>27</sup> From the current thesis, see 'Schiller, Worringer, interplay,' 264-269.

<sup>28</sup> Gothic hybridity is underscored in 'Interplay: a dual, hybrid state in Gothic art,' 270-273, from this thesis.

<sup>29</sup> The attention Worringer directs towards his contemporaries is discussed in 'Worringer: his contemporaries, and early twentieth-century art-making in Abstraction and Empathy,' 274-277, from this thesis.

making. As his forewords point out, his strategy meets with success during his time.<sup>30</sup> Relying on the opposition of abstraction and representation, *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic* benefit from the advantages Worringer's methodological preference brings along: clarity, persuasive power, memorability. These qualities explain the wide appeal of Worringer's books in the early years of the twentieth century.

Nevertheless, the disadvantages of polar opposition are highlighted by Arnheim;<sup>31</sup> for him, abstract-representational antithesis fails to acknowledge the merits of abstraction as a fundamental activity of thinking, perception, and art-making. Deleuze and Guattari,<sup>32</sup> who articulate memorable oppositions themselves, also inquire into the interaction between antithetic terms such as organic and inorganic, representational (or figurative) and abstract. Arnheim, Deleuze and Guattari – three writers who discuss Worringer's approach at length – address abstract-representational opposition as well as interplay in their writings. They signal their disagreements with Worringer's views, yet remain open to the complexities of his argument. For them as for Worringer, one perspective on the abstract-representational relationship does not suffice.

When theorizing opposition in his books, Worringer proves more confident than when he discusses interplay. Denying the 'play' element in order to emphasize the seriousness of artistic pursuits, Worringer sees in abstract-representational interplay the threat of a loss of identity for abstract, respectively imitative impulses.<sup>33</sup> However, he employs the term 'interplay' with assurance where 'interplay' is paired up with its opposite: 'counterplay.'<sup>34</sup> Interplay acquires predominantly negative associations in Worringer's texts,<sup>35</sup> yet this does not prevent Worringer from dedicating a significant number of pages to the analysis of the

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<sup>30</sup> This thesis has pointed to the reservations of early twentieth-century art historians such as Richard Hamann to Worringer's approach. See 'Gazing in the mirror of history: Worringer's forewords to *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic*,' 37-48.

<sup>31</sup> See, from the current thesis, 'Abstraction, representation, opposition: Worringer and Rudolf Arnheim,' 132-139; also, 'Rethinking abstract-representational interplay: Worringer, Arnheim, Deleuze,' 350-361.

<sup>32</sup> The approach of Deleuze, and Deleuze and Guattari, to Worringer's writings is explored in 'The relationship between abstraction and representation: highlights from Worringer's *Abstraction and Empathy*, and Gilles Deleuze's *Francis Bacon: The Logic of Sensation*,' 140-148, and 'Rethinking abstract-representational interplay: Worringer, Arnheim, Deleuze,' 350-362, two sections from this thesis.

<sup>33</sup> Worringer and Read, *Form in Gothic*, 19, 39.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>35</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 23, 38. Also, Worringer and Read, *Form in Gothic*, 39, 63, 177.

interplay of representation and abstraction as observed in Gothic art.<sup>36</sup> He also highlights instances of abstract-representational interplay at points of transition between epochs and modes of art-making, for instance in connection to the passage between Romanesque and Gothic art,<sup>37</sup> or between Gothic and Renaissance.<sup>38</sup> Abstract-representational interplay develops artistic and historical nuances in *Abstraction and Empathy* and *Form in Gothic*, where Worringer discusses it alongside the opposition of representation and abstraction.

The title of Worringer's debut book, *Abstraction and Empathy*, reveals the peculiar dynamic of opposition and interplay in Worringer's writing. If interpreted according to the first chapters of *Abstraction and Empathy*, its title could appear oppositional. Nevertheless, when Worringer juxtaposes terms he regards as opposites, he creates common ground at the same time as differentiation. He gives no indication that the urge to abstraction has to be read as strictly opposite to the urge to empathy, but allows a fruitful ambiguity to connect the two terms instead.

*Abstraction and Empathy* shows Worringer attending to both abstract-representational opposition and interplay. This dual focus is a key characteristic of his discourse. Associated with 'disputation' rather than dialogue in *Abstraction and Empathy*,<sup>39</sup> and paired with 'counterplay' in *Form in Gothic*,<sup>40</sup> interplay features in Worringer's texts as an indispensable facet of artistic practice. The writings and works of painters active around the turn of the twentieth century indeed reveal various approaches to abstract-representational interplay.<sup>41</sup>

For instance, Hildebrand brings together an interest in the study of nature and a structural approach to the unity of form and composition. Hodler welcomes personal emotion as well as formal parallelism in his work. Painting, according to Cézanne, needs to emerge from a

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<sup>36</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 112-121. Also, Worringer and Read, *Form in Gothic*, 55-58, 111-126, 141-151.

<sup>37</sup> Worringer and Read, *Form in Gothic*, 111, 116-117.

<sup>38</sup> Worringer, *Abstraction and Empathy: A Contribution to the Psychology of Style*, 119-121.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 34, 45.

<sup>40</sup> Worringer and Read, *Form in Gothic*, 63, 177.

<sup>41</sup> See, for instance, 'Pictorial contexts for abstract-representational interplay: Cézanne's realized sensations,' 278-292, 'Monet, Worringer's Impressionism, and abstract-representational interplay,' 293-297, 'Monet and his motifs: representational and abstract aspects,' 298-300, 'Representation and abstraction in Monet's *Water Lilies* (1907),' 308-315, 'Towards the expression of inner worlds: Kandinsky, Worringer, and turn-of-the-twentieth-century artist writings,' 316-324, 'Painting interplay: Kandinsky's *Impression V (Park)* (1911), *Picture with a Black Arch* (1912), and *Picture with Red Spot* (1914),' 343-349.

complex combination of attentive observation, direct rendering, studying the Old Masters at the Louvre, finding the geometry of motifs, and bringing sensations to realisation. Working in the open air, Monet completes his paintings in the studio, where he readdresses the relationship between direct observation and pictorial engagement with the world. Kandinsky's impressions rely on observed motifs, while his improvisations capture the sudden surfacing of inner life; both his impressions and improvisations echo his attention to the world, transfiguring direct observation and allowing it to inform increasingly abstract compositions. A characteristic of art-making particularly visible in the early 1900s, abstract-representational interplay draws together apparently opposite approaches whose actual exchanges highlight the formal, emotional and contextual processes that bring art into being.

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