



Artistry of the Mentally Ill: A Contribution to the Psychology and Psychopathology of Configuration

Hans Prinzhorn

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More than 70 years after its first publication in German, *Artistry of the Mentally Ill* by Hans Prinzhorn remains a classic concerning the borderland between psychiatry and art, illness and self-expression. The drawings, paintings and sculptures collected and analyzed by Prinzhorn are the products of artistically untrained and unpracticed persons – inmates of asylums. This book represents one of the first attempts to analyze the artistic work of the mentally ill. Completely spontaneous they are in sharp contrast to more recent collections which are the products of occupational therapy or psychotherapy. Before Prinzhorn, works by the mentally ill were considered curiosities, never the subject of scientific or artistic analysis. However, to Prinzhorn they were "the eruptions of an universal human creative urge" counteracting the autistic tendencies toward isolation. Prinzhorn demonstrates surprising parallels between his collection and those by children, and between ancient Greek cultures and primitive ones.

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