



## Negro Sculpture

*Carl Einstein*

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“There is hardly any other art which Europeans approach with so much mistrust as African art. The first move is to even deny that there is such a thing as ‘art’, and then to emphasise the distance which separates such products from the creations of the Europeans, with a contempt that leads to demeaning terminology [...] In his judgements on the Negroes the European retains one major postulate: his invincible, however exaggerated, superiority. Such disrespect for the Negro is *de facto* born of our ignorance and the source of the unjust harm done to him.” Carl Einstein (1885-1940) was a pivotal figure in the development of European modernism that occurred during the years leading up to World War I. With the short, dense and revolutionary text of *Negerplastik*, Einstein undertook the first (European) critical response to African sculpture, challenging various prejudices and misconceptions around this subject. The work would quickly become a crucial text for the European avant-garde and today remains indispensable to understand the shift in discussion towards non-European art taking place at the time. The main aim in *Negerplastik* is to establish that African sculpture is art and that it cannot be understood by the system of sculptural production developed by Europeans who had constructed a master narrative of the development of art that was exclusionary of other cultures and productions. Originally published in 1915, the complete text of *Negerplastik* is presented here in a bilingual edition (English-German) for the first time, including all 108 original plates.

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