

Librería
Bonilla y Asociados
desde 1950



Título: Neuroarthistory

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Precio: Desconocido

Editorial:

Año: 2000

Tema:

Edición: 1^a

Sinopsis

ISBN: 9780300126778

This provocative book offers a fascinating account of neuroarthistory, one of the newest and most exciting fields in the human sciences. In recent decades there has been a dramatic increase in our knowledge of the visual brain. Knowledge of phenomena such as neural plasticity and neural mirroring is making it possible to answer with a new level of precision some of the most challenging questions about both the creative process and the response to art.

Exploring the writings of major thinkers (among them Montesquieu, Burke, Kant, Marx and Freud), and leading art historians (including Pliny, Winckelmann, Ruskin, Pater, Gombrich and Baxandall), as well as artists such as Alberti and Leonardo and scientists from Aristotle to Zeki, John Onians shows how an understanding of the neural basis of the mind contributes to an understanding of all human behaviors?including art.