Suzanne Langer selection from her *Feeling and Form* 1953 222-231 Ross.

The Symbol of Feeling

1. Tonal structures of music bear a close logical similarity to the forms of human feeling.
   1. Forms of growth and of attenuation, flowing and slowing, conflict and resolution….
   2. “Music is a tonal analogue of emotive life.”
2. The symbol and what it symbolizes must have some common logical form.
3. Formal analogy however is not enough, since the relation is symmetrical.
   1. The decisive reason to choose one of these as the symbol is that it is easier to handle.
   2. Sounds are easier to handle than feelings.
4. A symbol is used to articulate ideas of something we wish to think about.
5. Sound as a sheer sensory factor may be soothing or exciting etc., but so are taste, smell, touch.
   1. Selecting and exploiting these is self-indulgence, not art.
   2. A society supports art as spiritual triumph for the tribe.
   3. Chefs etc. are not torchbearers of the culture.
   4. If music just stimulates and soothes it might be popular but not culturally important, its schools no more important than cooking schools.
6. “Our interest in music arises from its intimate relation to the all-important life of feeling.”
   1. The function of music is not stimulation of feeling but expression of it, i.e. symbolic expression of the forms of sentience.
   2. Music expresses the musician’s imagination of feelings, not his own emotional state [vs. Tolstoy and Collingwood]
   3. Through music the artist may learn and utter ideas of human sensibility.
7. We are naturally impressed by language as symbolic form, yet music is not language.
   1. Its significance is not “meaning” since, as logicians hold, meaning is explicable, and so my term “implicit meaning” may not be right.
8. The prime purpose of language is discourse and it gives us “discursive reason.”
   1. Yet any appreciation of form is “reason,” and discourse (as in math) is only one of its patterns.
   2. There are whole domains of experience that are “ineffable.”
   3. I am not saying there is a better path to philosophical truth through intuition, since I hold that intuition is basic to all understanding including discursive thought. There is no substitute for logic in the making of theory.
9. There are both discursive and non-discursive logical forms.
   1. Music as symbolic form is our starting point here for a philosophy of art.
10. Language is the most amazing symbolic system humanity has invented.
    1. There, separate words are assigned to separate items.
11. A complex of words, as in a sentence, is a symbol analogous to a complex of ideas.
12. It is an articulate form whose symbolic function is logical expression.
13. Music, like language, is an articulate form, its parts fusing together to form a greater entity, but still maintaining separate existence. [This is very like Dewey]
    1. The greater entity [the musical work] is articulated: it has internal structure.
14. But music is not a language of feeling because its elements are not words, not independent associative symbols with reference fixed by convention.
    1. We are free to fill its subtle articulate forms with any meaning that fits them.
    2. It is not a language as it has no vocabulary.
15. So perhaps it does not have “meaning”: rather, it has import, i.e. the pattern of sentience, of life itself.
16. The significance of music is its “vital import” i.e. it features the dynamism of subjective experience.
17. Music is “significant form”: its significance is “that of a symbol, a highly articulated sensuous object, which by virtue of its dynamic structure can express the forms of vital experience which language is peculiarly unfit to convey. Feeling, life, motion and emotion constitute its import.”
18. This special theory of music may be generalized to a theory of art as such.
    1. The factor of significance is felt as a quality rather than recognized as a function.
    2. All the arts are significant forms in this sense.

Semblance

1. What is created in a work of art? More than what is novel or even a delightful combination of sensory elements.
   1. A vase of flowers cannot be re-created.
   2. A picture is an image created out of things that are not images, e.g. canvas, paint.
2. It is natural, but naïve, to think of the relationship of image to its object as imitation of reality.
   1. But imitation is neither the aim nor the measure of artistic creation.
   2. Yet the idea of copying nature is not applicable to all the arts.
3. How are images different from actualities? The difference is functional. Real objects may function as images.
   1. So works of art that represent nothing can still be illusions: “Imitation of other things is not the essential power of images”
   2. “The true power of the image lies in the fact that it is an abstraction, a symbol, a bearer of an idea.”
4. How can a building be an image?
   1. “It becomes an image when it presents itself purely to our vision, i.e. as sheer visual form instead of a locally and practically related object.”
   2. We then abstract is appearance from its material existence.
   3. We see then a thing of vision, detached from its actual setting, in a different context.
5. The image in this sense is the artist’s creation.
   1. The canvas and paints were already there and the painter arranges them, although forms do have a life, something arising from the process of arranging colors on a surface, something created not just gathered, i.e. the image.
   2. The image emerges from the disposition of the pigments, and the existence of the canvas and pain seems abrogated, the new appearance supersedes them.
6. An image is a virtual object: it does not guide us but is a complete entity with only visual attributes.

Virtual Space

1. How can space be organized or articulated?
2. “the space in which we live and act is not what is treated in art at all.”
   1. “The harmoniously organized space in a picture is not experiential space” known by all the senses: it is entirely visual.
   2. For the other senses there is a flat canvas, but for the eye there is a deep space full of shapes.
   3. This purely visual space is an illusion since the other senses do not agree.
   4. Pictorial space is not only organized, it is created: like the space behind a mirror it is virtual space, an intangible image.
3. “This virtual space is the primary illusion of all plastic art.”
   1. All elements of design serve to produce it.
   2. Thus it has no continuity or connection with the space in which we live: limited by the frame, but self-contained.
4. Everything relevant in a picture must be visual, which serve “architectonic purposes.”
   1. There is no supporting date from the other senses.
   2. We must then have visual substitutes for things normally known by other means.
   3. That is why direct copying is not enough.
   4. The substitutes explain the difference from photography.
   5. Creative painting constructs spatial entities out of color alone to present the primary illusion.

The Modes of Virtual Space

1. The modes of virtual space.
   1. Sculpture
      1. In painting the three-d space is obviously virtual.
      2. In what sense does sculpture “create” space?
      3. Hildebrand: present a three-d space in two-d picture plane
      4. But sculptors seldom think this way: sculpture is essentially volume, not scene.
   2. The volume is more than the bulk: it is the space made visible.
      1. It is more than the area which the figure actually occupies.
      2. The tangle form absolutely commands the empty space.
      3. This empty space is part of the sculptural volume
      4. The figure seems to have continuity with the emptiness around it.
   3. The source of illusion here is that it seems like an organism.
      1. There are references for example to inevitable form.
      2. In nature vital function makes form inevitable.
      3. Organisms, performing characteristic functions must have certain general forms, or perish.
   4. Nothing but life exhibits any telos [purpose]
      1. The acorn strives to become an oak.
   5. There is nothing actually organic about a work of sculpture.
      1. Only its form is the form of life.
      2. It is virtual kinetic volume.
2. Architecture
   1. Architecture creates the semblance of that World which is the counterpart of a Self.
   2. Error of functionalism.
   3. Symbolic expression vs. provident planning
   4. Image of life created in buildings is the visible semblance of an ethnic domain: the symbol of humanity to be found in the strength and interplay of forms
   5. Human environment holds the imprint of functional pattern
   6. Any building that can create the illusion of an ethnic world must seem organic.
   7. “organization” is the watchword of architecture
   8. Great architect/philosophers: Sullivan, Wright, Le Corbusier: organic growth,