



Feeling and Form

Susanne K. Langer

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In *Philosophy in a New Key*, Susanne Langer developed a theory of symbolism, there applied to music, which she felt could be developed to embrace all the arts. In *Feeling and Form* she did just that. It offers the reader nothing less than a systematic, comprehensive theory of art, applied in turn to painting, sculpture, architecture, literature, music, the dance, drama and film. --- from book's back cover

Feeling and Form Details

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From Reader Review Feeling and Form for online ebook

Markie says

"Herein lies the 'strangeness' or 'otherness' that characterizes an artistic object. The form is immediately given to perception, and yet it reaches beyond itself; it is semblance, but seems to be charged with reality. Like speech, that is physically nothing but little buzzing sounds, it is filled with its meaning, and its meaning is a reality." - p 52

"People who are so concerned for their children's scientific enlightenment that they keep Grimm out of the library and Santa Claus out of the chimney, allow the cheapest art, the worst of bad singing, the most revolting of sentimental fiction to impinge on the children's minds all day and every day, from infancy." - p 401

Mina says

"The function of artistic illusion is not 'make-believe', as many philosophers and psychologists assume, but the very opposite, disengagement from belief - the contemplation of sensory qualities without their usual meanings..." A dense read, but an important discourse on aesthetic philosophy and ideas of art and symbolism. Will be reading the more popular 'Philosophy in a New Key' to follow.

Jon Frankel says

This isn't only the best philosophical writing about art that I have ever read, it is the only philosophical investigation of the arts that I have found at all interesting. Langer, building on her earlier work, *Philosophy in a New Key*, analyzes all of the arts, saying on the one hand that each is distinct, but that all share some basic attributes, and that these are universal across culture and time. Each art is a virtual reality, and each art is based non-discursive symbolism, which is in turn a basic human cognitive process. She refuses to see sculpture as 3 dimensional painting for instance. She differentiates film narrative from theatre. The novel is a virtual history, where as dramatic art is virtual fate, or about the future. Music is virtual time and painting virtual space. The ideas are so crisply and beautiful presented it was possible to forget momentarily that I was reading philosophy. So much aesthetic writing gets bogged down in jargon, abstraction, weird values, agendas foreign to the arts. Few writers take the actual experience of artists into account. It is only at the end for instance that she discusses at all how to evaluate what is good or bad art. I marked so many pages of this book it would be absurd to quote. I want to reiterate here: this book is profound, takes into account the complexities of evolution, cognition, reception, sign vs. symbol, communication, form, structure, and history without ever once devolving into the nightmarish gobbledeegook of contemporary academic theory.

Greg Talbot says

"Envisagement" surfaces often in this book; "envisionment" rarely so. Here in lies the problem with so

brilliant a mind as philosopher Susanne Langer. Langer has complex strings of adjectives, ideas and theory. But the format and writing style turned me off as a reader. If the writing were wound up in a concise, orderly matter, or even a brilliant illuminating artistic manner, this book would really be something. But Langer is joyful in her own musings. Any welcoming or contextualizing to readers sails away quite quickly.

At times I did find myself particularly drawn in. Particularly the areas of poetry and literature, and how we evaluate them. Although, like a paper plane she slides across topics quickly, and uses abstract terms to define abstract terms.

Unfortunately, my own form and feelings from this book are disappointed. Where there should be inspiration, there is pedantic swagger. Where there should be joy, there is unyielding judgement about art. Like a particularly heady lecture, paying attention to the small bits is rewarding. But even the best students can muster so much attention to so much dryness.

Thom Dunn says

Chapter 13, "Poesis" offers up a neo-Aristotelian view of literature as art form.

Tim says

I read this in graduate school, and more than anything else that I have read, it helped me to understand what art is and how it works. I don't just mean visual art either - all the arts. This really should be required reading for any educated reader with the passion for the arts. I would gladly buy it again if someone offers it at a reasonable price.

Rebecca says

Susanne Langer, now on the "A-list."

Nancy Honore says

Definitely one of the most challenging things I've read, but it also led to some of the best discussions about the nature of art and the aesthetic emotion that I've ever had.
