

THE VIRTUES IN THE VIRTUAL: SUSANNE LANGER'S PROJECTIONS AND THE DIGITAL WORLD

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Susanne Langer developed a sophisticated theory regarding the human power to create, transport, and project symbols, using bodily feeling as the medium. This activity can be guided and formed into art, such that our way of feeling the world, which virtualizes it, is done in a way that facilitates later projections. We can call it “artistic synthesis.” In a way, the computer has become a medium that mirrors and facilitates the externalization of such processes, with such innovations as Augmented Reality (AR). With the virtual world of computers we have a “canvas” that will receive the semblance of artistic synthesis. In this paper I will adapt Langer’s theory of semblance/primary illusion to the medium of computer art, explaining some criteria for what would make for excellence in the creation of it. In particular I will examine video games, computer generated movie images, animation, AR, virtual robotics, and how the poetic arts are changed by writing on a computer. Arguably, humans have existed in an AR environment of a sort since we learned to substitute symbols for the things they present to us, but our power to make this substitution has grown beyond our imagining.