**Art as a Life Form: Thinking with Susanne K. Langer**

Mag. art., Dr.in phil. Lona Gaikis

Vortrag in englischer Sprache.

Donnerstag, 11. April 2024, 18:00, Institut für Musikwissenschaft, Universität Wien.

**Abstract**

Logician and philosopher of art Susanne K. Langer (1895–1985) is a remarkable figure of twentieth-century thought. She devoted her philosophical engagement to mathematical and linguistic questions, and had a deeply ingrained curiosity for the meaning of the forms of art. In this, Langer continued Ernst Cassirer and Alfred North Whitehead’s analytical attempts to unveil the reach of symbolization processes that secure the mental substrata from which the matrices of meaning are woven. Langer regarded artistic expression as a symbolic form of its own (as presentational, non-discursive symbol), thereby “scouting the possibility that rationality arises as an *elaboration of feeling*” (Langer 1957). Intriguingly enough, her theory positioned the form of music at the very core of a comprehensive theory of the arts.

This presentation will illuminate the “new key” in Langer’s thought and extract core ideas that make her philosophy so applicable, and worthy of continuation in an age in which the boundaries of the artwork, concepts of authorship and aesthetic principles are challenged. I will look at the current example of Chinese artist Tianzhuo Chen’s 12-hour multidisciplinary sprawling of music(s) in *TRANCE*, shown 2024 at the Sonic Acts Biennial, Amsterdam, as an example of art performed as a life form. This event embedded various forms of artistic expression in matrix-like settings, involving the audience on various levels of engagement, and intensities. This session is, furthermore, curious to reach out to possible theoretical junctions between Langer’s philosophy and musicology.

**Lona Gaikis**

Lona Gaikis is a Lecturer in Philosophy, Arts and Cultural Studies (University of Art and Industrial Design, Linz; Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna), and affiliated with research at the University of Applied Arts in Vienna. She offers lectures and seminars on current debates in philosophy, society, and the arts, and contributes as an author to exhibition catalogues, journals, and anthologies. Lona obtained her doctoral degree in Philosophy, Art and Cultural Studies from the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna in 2017. Her research focused on the “new key” in Susanne K. Langer and the meaning of music(s) in artistic practice. She is editor of the recently published anthology *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Susanne K. Langer* (2024).

Lona’s commitment to research and academia is complemented by a curatorial engagement with media art and music sub-cultures. In 2009, she founded the platform czirp czirp – experimental and sonic arts. Oscillating between sound in experimental, synesthetic formats, and media art, this project has showcased various international artists.

Links: <https://lonagaikis.info/>

<https://www.czirpczirp.cc/>