

Visual and Auditory Signs

Non-objective art is often attacked, while non-objective music is the norm.

Verbal or auditory language is the only universal human system of communication.

Information value of natural noises is minimal — sea, wind, rain, trains, harbors — need to be supplemented. Cf. Richard Strauss's program music: we need to be told the plot, or the plot has to be supplemented by a text. Auditory icons are hard to distinguish.

Peircean semiotics. Symbols and indices depend on a relation of contiguity: artificial or conventional for symbols, and physical for indices. Icons depend on similarity. Index needs the presence of its referent. Difference is in the hierarchy, not the properties.

Supremacy of sight over hearing is valid for icons and indices, not for symbols. Cf. the universality of music and verbal speech.

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We reify visual signs. E.g. the approach to abstract art as if it were a puzzle picture.

A complex visual sign is simultaneous, while auditory signs usually go along the time line (but not distinctive features or, e.g., harmony in music). If we overstress the sequentiality we miss the hierarchical structure in syntax and in music.

The verbal or musical sequence: a consistently hierarchical structure and is resolvable into ultimate, discrete components designed ad hoc. Not in visual signs, or it is not so systematic. This disturbs us when viewing abstract films.

Luria on aphasia. Simultaneity disorder < dorsolateral lesions, successivity disorders < mediobasal. Verbal and visual.

Simultaneous synthesis is basic in sight. In speech it is the transposition of a sequential event into a synchronous structure.

representational signs: indices and icons. Mostly visual, mostly in space.

non-representational signs: auditory, in time. Implies compulsive structure and hierarchy, vs. the first.