Notes from *Art As Experience* by John Dewey

“Art is “part of the significant life of an organized community.”

“compartamental conceptions of fine art” (Art as Experience, p. 6)

Theories, that isolate art and experiences of art, are not inherent in the subject matter.”

“…recovering the continuity of esthetic experience with normal processes of living.”

“It is one reason why the strictly intellectual art will never be popular as music is popular. Nevertheless, the experience itself has a satisfying emotional quality because it possesses internal integration and fulfillment reached through ordered and organized movement. This artistic structure may be immediately felt. In so far, it is aesthetic. What is even more important is that not only is this quality a significant motive in undertaking intellectual inquiry and in keeping it honest, but that no intellectual activity is an integral event (is an experience), unless it is rounded out with this quality. Without it, thinking is inconclusive. In short, aesthetic cannot be sharply marked off from intellectual experience since the latter must bear an aesthetic stamp to be itself complete.”

“The existence of this unity is constituted by a single quality that pervades the entire experience in spite of the variation of its constituent parts. This unity is neither emotional, practical, nor intellectual, for these terms name distinctions that reflection can make within it. “

“Because perception of relationship between what is done and what is undergone constitutes the work of intelligence, and because the artist is controlled in the process of his work by his grasp of the connection between what he has already done and what he is to do next, the idea that the artist does not think as intently and penetratingly as a scientific inquirer is absurd. A painter must consciously undergo the effect of his every brush stroke or he will not be aware of what he is doing and where his work is going. Moreover, he has to see each particular connection of doing and undergoing in relation to the whole that he desires to produce. To apprehend such relations is to think, and is one of the most exacting modes of thought.”

“Any idea that ignores the necessary role of intelligence in production of works of art is based upon identification of thinking with use of one special kind of material, verbal signs and words.”

“Craftsmanship to be artistic in the final sense must be “loving”; it must care deeply for the subject matter upon which skill is exercised.”

“Constant observation is, of course, necessary for the maker while he is producing. But if his perception is not also aesthetic in nature, it is a colorless and cold recognition of what has been done, used as a stimulus to the next step in a process that is essentially mechanical.”

In short, art, in its form, unites the very same relation of doing and undergoing, outgoing and incoming energy that makes an experience to be an experience.”

“The doing or making is artistic when the perceived result is of such a nature that its qualities as perceived have controlled the question of production.”

“The artist embodies in himself the attitude of the perceiver while he works.”
“The process of art in production is related to the aesthetic in perception organically.”

“In an emphatic artistic-aesthetic experience, the relation is so close that it controls simultaneously both the doing and the perception.”

“Hand and eye, when the experience is aesthetic, are but instruments through which the entire live creature, moved and active throughout, operates. Hence the expression is emotional and guided by purpose.”

“The real work of an artist is to build up an experience that is coherent in perception while moving with constant change in its development.

“For to perceive, a beholder must create his own experience. And his creation must include relations comparable to those which the original producer underwent.

“Because experience is the fulfillment of an organism in its struggles and achievements in a world of things, it is art in germ.”

“A conception of fine art that sets out from its connection with discovered qualities of ordinary experience will be able to indicate the factors and forces that favor the normal development of common human activities into matters of artistic value.”

“How is it that everyday making of things grows into that form of making which is genuinely artistic?”

The career and destiny of a living being are bound up with its interchanges with its environment, not externally but in the most intimate way.”

“Every living creature that attains sensibility welcomes order with a response of harmonious feeling whenever it finds a congruous order about it.”

“For only when an organism shares in the ordered relations of its environment does it secure the stability essential to living.”

“Recovery of union (of integration with environment); desire for restoration of the union converts mere emotion into interest in objects as conditions of realization of harmony.”

“With this realization, material of reflection is incorporated into objects as their meaning. Since the artist cares in a peculiar way for the phase of experience in which union is achieved, he does not shun moments of resistance and tension. He rather cultivates them, not for their own sake but because of their potentialities, bringing to living consciousness an experience that is unified and total.”

“The odd notion that an artist does not think and a scientific inquirer does nothing else is the result of converting a difference in tempo and emphasis into a difference in kind. The thinker has his aesthetic moment when his ideas cease to be mere ides and become the corporate meanings of objects The artist has his problems and thinks as he works. But his thought is more immediately embodied in the object. Because of the comparative remoteness of his end, the scientific worker operates with symbols, words and mathematical signs. The artist does his thinking in the very
qualitative media he works in, and the terms lie so close to the object that he is producing that they merge directly into it.”