

## Tracing the Index in Art History and Media Theory (CAA 2012)

CAA, Los Angeles, Feb 22–25, 2012

Deadline: May 2, 2011

Jeanette Kohl, University of California Riverside

CAA Conference, February 22-25, 2012, Los Angeles

Panel:

Tracing the Index in Art History and Media Theory

Organizers:

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In recent debates on the 'crisis of representation', the concepts of 'index' and 'indexicality' have been much discussed. But: What do they mean? And how can the concept of the 'index' contribute to our understanding of cultural techniques of touch and reproduction, of trace, imprint, and cast? In many cases, indexical relations between objects (and subjects) seem to provide a counter-model to the brittle categories of likeness and figuration, invention and animation.

Historically, the index-concept harks back to the vanguard of pragma-semiotics Charles Sanders Peirce, yet it has remained a pivotal element in a variety of discourses. Peirce's sign-theory is based on the trichotomy of signs between likeness, indexicality, and symbolic meaning, which he defines as icon, index, and symbol. According to Peirce, an index is "a representation, which refers to its object not so much because of any similarity or analogy with it, (...) as because it is in dynamical connection both with the individual object, and with the senses or memory of the person for whom it serves as a sign".

Since Rosalind Krauss introduced the term to characterize appropriative rather than mimetic strategies in American art of the 1970's, the term has gained momentum especially in the theory of photography. As an epistemological category, the index makes an essential point of departure to investigate art historical and media theoretical issues of 'reproduction', copy, trace, and proximity in a triple way: as a theoretical and heuristic paradigm in image history, as a category of image production, and as a core phenomenon of material culture.

In "Tracing the Index", we invite papers that re-define and analyze 'indexicality' from a variety of angles. It is the aim of our panel to shed new light on the historical and contemporary concepts of 'indexicality': between text and image, theory and practice, performativity and preservation. Papers should touch upon questions of indexical materiality and/or strategies in the (visual, performing, language) arts, from the early modern period to contemporary art. Contributions based

on individual case studies and such dealing with theoretical framework are equally welcome.

Proposals for papers must be no longer than one double spaced, typed page and reflect the subject matter, the main line of argument, a brief characterization of your methodological approach, and a short conclusion or outlook.

Submission deadline for proposals is May 2, 2011.

For further submission requirements see:  
<http://www.collegeart.org/pdf/2012CallforParticipation.pdf>

Please send your proposal along with a title to:  
mirjam.wittmann@daad-alumni.de

Reference:

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(accessed May 8, 2026), <<https://arthist.net/archive/1120>>.