# POINTED OR POINTLESS?
# Recalibrating the Index

## A conference and forum on the index in contemporary photography and image-based practice, theory and culture

**Day 1**
London: 10 June 2017

**Day 2**
Berlin: tbd November 2017

Organised by Coventry University,
Fachhochschule Potsdam and Middlesex University

**The Photographers Gallery, London**
**10 June 2017**

The symposium "Pointed or Pointless? Recalibrating the Index" aims to reconsider the notion of the index, its history and present-day applicability. Some recent debates – which abandon strict definitions of analogue/digital and scrutinize fixed notions of truth and medium – are taken as an opportunity to readdress the notion in the 21st century.

Deriving from the semiotic theory of American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce, the index has enjoyed a wide-reaching career. It has dominated photography's definition as a medium for decades, justifying its specific "truth-claim". With the rise of digital technologies the notion – in terms of a trace left behind by the photographed object on a material surface – has been challenged. Today, it serves as the distinguishing feature, which divides two states of the world (the real and the mediated) while at the same time connecting them. However this connection is not as linear as the media-ontological approach suggests, and has been recently discussed in terms of the "messy state of media", "post- digital", or "habitual media".

This complex situation asks for a re-evaluation of the notion of index – taking into account its complex historical existence; challenging it as an ontological tool by tackling the asserted gap between the "analogue" and the "digital"; and shifting the focus to an epistemological understanding.

The symposium is divided in two parts. The first event (taking place in London) is dedicated to the re-evaluation of the index, focussing on its historical re-assessment as well as on the steps of "stylization" of the term, following the trace from Peirce to visual theory. While the second (in Berlin) – subsequently – will deal with the updating of the index, by taking a closer look at the use of the notion in debates on the networked image, as well as discussing gestures of authentication, which emphasize concepts of authenticity and objectivity and can be registered as indexical.
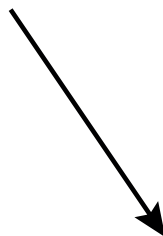
**We invite submissions that address:**

- Politics of indexicality (including institutionalization of the notion in visual studies and photography theory);

- Re-evaluations of the notion of index and photography in Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory;

- The deictic/performative qualities of the index, and challenges by artists/artworks to the theoretical tenets of indexicality;

- Reflections on the specificities of the entry of the index as a category into visual and art theory;

- Employments of the index in digital/networked image debates;

- Stylization and synonyms of the term;

- Metadata and indexicality (in social media, digital forensics, search engines, etc.);

- Indexical notions of real-time effects (as generated with apps like Snapchat, etc.).

500-word abstracts for 20-minute presentations
should be sent to andergassen@fh-potsdam.de

| **London** | **Berlin** |
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| **Extended Proposal Deadline:**<br>18th April 2017 | Proposal Deadline:<br>30th June 2017 |
| Notification of acceptance:<br>25th April 2017 | Notification of acceptance:<br>15th July 2017 |

The first event will be recorded and webcast. Priority for Berlin papers will be given to abstracts that build on or respond to papers from the London event as part of their research.

Organizing Committee:
Lisa Andergassen (Fachhochschule Postdam)
Paulius Petraitis (Middlesex University)
Damian Sutton (Coventry University)

This event is supported by