

News item. Retrieved from
<http://www.commens.org/news/item/intuition-indexicality-new-perspectives-peirces-theory-index>, 21.01.2026.

Category: Academic Meeting

Title: From Intuition to Indexicality: New Perspectives on Peirce's Theory of the Index

Description: A two-day workshop organised by Chiara Ambrosio (UCL), Mats Bergman (University of Helsinki and UCL) and Gabriele Gava (Goethe-Universität, Frankfurt)

The workshop is free and open to all. For information and enquiries please contact Chiara Ambrosio (c.ambrosio [at] ucl.ac.uk)

The division of signs into icons, indices, and symbols is one of the bedrocks of C. S. Peirce's general theory of representation. While recent work on the topic has tended to focus on questions of iconic representation and its relation to symbolic or conventional modes of signification, indexicality has been relatively neglected. Yet, if Peirce is right, then indexicality is an essential ingredient of both pictorial and scientific representation; the index is indispensable in cognition as well as in communication.

This workshop will explore new approaches to Peirce's conception of indexicality and its contemporary relevance. The workshop will demonstrate that rather than being just one component in Peirce's complex theory of signs, the concept of index has significant bearings on the philosophical debate concerning intuitions as well as on present-day questions of context-dependence, graphical logic, and artistic representation. The contributions will address issues such as

- the development of Peirce's concept of index
- the historical and philosophical background of Peirce's conception of indexicality and its relation to his purported rejection of the doctrine of intuitions
- possible tensions in Peirce's varying characterisations of indexical reference in terms of the dynamical connection between sign and object and compelled attention
- the distinction between genuine and degenerate indices
- the connection between indexical reference and collateral observation
- indexicality in semantics and pragmatics
- the role of indexicality in logical and scientific representation
- the role of indexicality in pictorial and artistic representation
- the role of indexicality in communication
- photographs as icons and as indices

Workshop Programme:

Wednesday 21 January, 2 – 5.30

Venue: Torrington Place (1-19) 115 Galton LT, University College London

Map: <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/estates/roombooking/building-location/?id=086>

- 1.45-2.00pm Welcome (Chiara Ambrosio)
- 2.00-3.00pm Giovanni Maddalena, Università degli Studi del Molise: "Obelisks, existential graphs, selfies: toward a synthetic use of indices"
- 3.00-4.00pm Sharon Morris, The Slade School of Fine Arts, UCL: "The Index and the Contemporary Work of Art"
- 4.00-4.30pm Break
- 4.30-5.30pm Chiara Ambrosio, Department of Science and Technology Studies, UCL: "Peirce, Photography, and the Riddle of Indexicality"

Wednesday 22 January, 9.30 – 12.00

Venue TBC

- 9.30-10.30am Gabriele Gava, Goethe-Universität, Institut für Philosophie, Frankfurt: "Peirce's Engagement with Intuitions and its Consequences in his Metaphysics: A Comparison of his Views with those of Leibniz and Kant"
- 10.30-11.30am Cathy Legg, Department of Philosophy, University of Waikato: "Indexical Purpose: A new take on the distinction between semantics and pragmatics"
- 11.30-12.00 Break
- 12.00-1.00pm Mats Bergman, Department of Social Research, University of Helsinki and Department of Science and Technology Studies, UCL: "'The Plight of the Actor': Collateral Observation and the Indispensability of Communicative Indices"

Date: 21/01/2015 to 22/01/2015

Place: University College London

Link: Workshop page

Keywords: Index, Indexicality, Representation