early seventeenth century, specifically, to Giulo Mancini, physician to Pope Urban VIII. Across numerous books and essays, many of which are organized diachronically, Ginzburg has always demonstrated a conspicuous concern with historical truth, as Barry Anderson writes in a review of Ginzburg’s book of essays, *Threads and Traces True False Fictive* (1992). Ginzburg has always approached the problem of establishing historical truth as a skeptic, but writes from a variety of angles, and what these wide-ranging and erudite interventions ultimately share is the role of clues in identifying anomalies, so important for historical inquiry. In cautious defense of positivism in his 1979 essay on the history of conversation, Ginzburg feels strongly on the importance of anomalies, arguing that the index, the “contextual paradigm of semiotics,” is well suited to disciplines concerned with indirect evidence, especially the human sciences like history because “[when] causes cannot be repeated, there is no alternative but to infer them from their effects.” Ginzburg stresses the conjunctural nature of indexical signs, hence of all historical inquiry, contrasting the element of chance involved in dealing with an individual case with the generalizability of experimental method in Galilean science. Recently, David Summers has defended the explanatory power of the index on somewhat different grounds although, like Ginzburg, he remains loyal to some of the empirical procedures that connoisseurs developed in the late nineteenth century. Summers, following Charles Sanders Peirce’s use of the term indexical sign (“a sign that is linked to its object by an actual connection”), is concerned not with interpretation but with “existential relations.” The “feature” of every artifact is an indexical record of its having been made. Asking how and why an artifact was made leads Summers to broader questions, still construed in terms of existential relations, such as the conditions that had to exist for an artifact’s having been made and used. The core of the transmedial phenomenon of attributing, understood in these broader terms, is the principle of substitution – that is, when something at hand is treated as if it were something else. Although this constitutes the fundamental definition of any sign, indexical and otherwise, Summers is interested in avoiding the language paradigm. He is concerned with semiotic issues related to the materiality of the artifact that are ignored when the paradigm is language (whether text as a “visual language” or art as composed of conventional signs).

Summers maintains that his model avoids the problem with linguistic accounts that are ethnocentrically beholden to the western tradition of representationism. That is, to the assumption that the mind represents the world to itself. The basic problem with demanding that all art be addressed and understood in the way European philosophy and criticism had come to think of art, is that what “we” see as formal characteristics cannot be presumed to have the same significance in their cultures of origin, even if all cultures are granted their own “aesthetics.” In other words, the way out of the methodological, epistemological, and ethical predicament of our nineteenth-century predecessors is to unthink the direct connection assumed to exist between the way works of art appear and the mentality of their makers this would be an untenable application of the principle of indexicality in favor of purely existential relationships. The indexical principle of inference is thus realized as an oblique way to approach historical truth through individual objects and case studies.

The second and by far the most influential channel through which the topic of indexicality entered contemporary considerations of art history is through scholarship on photography where traditional notions of “style” – focus clauses of art history’s model of indexicality were replaced in some quarters by discussion of the ontology of the work of art modeled on the photographic image as a physical imprint. The discussion again draws upon the the index, a type of sign which by itself asserts nothing because it is created simply by direct physical connection. As literary theorist Roland Barthes argues, the photograph imprints the order of the natural world onto the photographic emulsion, subsequently onto the photographic print, giving the photograph its documentary status and undeniable veracity. Yet at the same time, this direct transfer or trace, being a literal manifestation of the world itself (an index), is fundamentally a “message without a code.” In the 1970s and 80s, Rosalind Krauss argued in widely influential terms that the same logic of the index governs the contemporary production of much abstract and conceptual art. The point is not simply that the index establishes meaning mechanically – for in the final analysis all signs function conventionally – but that consoles in the relationship between the “machinery” and the image or artwork become the ground for establishing certain kinds of meaning.

The fundamental problem for interpretation is the opacity of the image in relationship to meaning understood as unified and stable. The primary aim of these critiques was to de-center formalist art histories in favor of establishing a socio-political framework for writing histories of art. By recuperating certain avant-garde tropes, critiques beginning with Krauss, Alan Sekula, Norman Bryson, Mike Bal, Donald Preziosi, and others targeted the apparently apolitical posture of formalist analysis conducted in purely perceptual terms as mere pretense because, by nature, all interpretation is strategic, invested, partial, and therefore ultimately political, even especially those that consider their political stance “indexical” thus became part of the project of accounting self-reflexively for ones subject position as interpreter – a different matter from employing the inferential analytic methods associated with indexical signs but nonetheless engaged with the nature of historical truth.

Indexicality entered the contemporary discourse on art and art history through a third channel, cultural anthropology, specifically Alfred Gell’s widely influential text Art and Agency, published posthumously in 1998, the overall argument of which hinges on his definition of indexicality. Gell’s important theoretical contribution was to avoid explaining agency from the rationalist perspective of western epistemology. Instead, like Summers a decade later, Gell asked how agency is implicated in artworks from within the belief system of their origin, for example, how do Hindu worshippers come to believe that a particular “idol” is alive? (fig. 1) The weakness of this argument is that it fixes on a single aspect of context – the exchange between the viewer and the gaze of the god – to the exclusion of other features such as the belief system of the viewer. Instead, indexicality is understood to be a consequence arising from the practice of art and its reception, leading to these viewing practices, and other conditions of production and use. Gell argues that indexes are the kinds of signs from which meaning is “abducted,” a term he idiosyncratically derived from Peirce. According to Peirce, “abduction” refers to a kind of inference that, in contrast to deduction (defined as a necessary inference) and induction (defined as a probable, non-necessary inference), is neither necessary nor logical, but contextual. To isolate a hypothetical explanation from an observed circumstance involves finding the most economical explanation. Gell adapts (or misinterprets?) Peirce’s semiotic theory to explain the paradox that material works of art are treated in some contexts as being alive, having agency. Anthropologist Howard Morphy objects to the way in which Gell confines different levels of artistry: artworks are thought to have the power to define group identity from within the belief system but is human agency that creates this potential. Morphy concludes that one of the main underlying problems with Gell’s analysis, and a key problem with social theory in general, is the difficulty of modeling the supra-individual prerogatives of action.
pleaded his synthetic vision of Metaphysics, of Order, and perhaps even of the Renaissance generally.

In 1990, Didi-Huberman's critique of secular interpretations of art produced in a Christian social context was predictive of what today marks a significant turn in Renaissance art. Historical studies to the ontological issues that underpin maternal images and objects. What course might Ginsburg's argument have taken if he had also considered the role of iconological signs in Christian images, beginning with the obvious clue that Giulio Mancini served as physician to Pope Urban VIII, who also happened to be a great patron of the arts? And what if Sumner's desire to disentangle the material work of art from linguistic theories of the visual had taken a more historical turn, engaging with the history that had entwined them in the first place, originating well before art history became professionalized and institutionalized as a humanistic discipline in the sixteenth century?

It would be of course entail full-length studies to pursue these connections adequately in the historical record. In the present context of discussion, it'd like to move on to ask about the unacknowledged history of the photographic index, and return to the question of "what if?" at the next stage of the argument. The direct consequence of the condition that photographs do not signify in and of themselves, despite their fidelity to an external reality, is that all meaning attached to the photograph - and by implication to all art - is arbitrary, in the sense that it is determined by time, place, circumstance, institutional authority, community consensus, and so on. To paint the prehistory of the styles of the photographic index with my broad brush, a significant precedent is offered by ecclesiastical accounts of Christian sacred images, especially in the form taken by reform-minded Catholic writers of the late sixteenth century to re-focus the worshipper's attention away from the artists' virtuosity and ingenuity and towards the scriptural narrative or religious icon.
The palpability of Divine presence is a demonstration of the basic Christian doctrine of salvation, just as it is in the case of the blessed Host. The efficacy of a particular relic might be contested or denied outright, and in actual practice different categories of relics were often conflated in a single object, but the logic of direct contact (constructed in a wide variety of ways) between the Divine and created matter remains the basis for claims about sacred objects. In the era before modern distinctions among art, science, and religion arose, demonstrations of sacred truths by scientific means was the unremarkable norm.1

Caroline Walker Bynum has written about the problems that escalated in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century theological writings regarding exactly how the Divine is manifested in material things.2 Claims made for the indexical nature of supernatural signs proliferated widely. Central to the debates about imputed contingency and the appearance of new types of sacred objects is the status of matter, necessarily linked ontologically to God. A related set of ontological problems, not the subject of Bynum's study, arose in the case of religious images made by human art: for what guarantee do the sacred truths or efficacy of such an "artificial" image, given human fallibility and the impermanence of creation?3

Not surprisingly, bridging the gap between human and divine agency is the subject of extensive writings about art well before and during the Early Modern era when the status of the artist rose to new heights. My interest here is to explain how the logic of indexicality operates explicitly in the historical record. In its Scholastic theological formulation, the more closely an entity is in contact with God (the "first intelligible object"), the more divine and noble it is. Commenting on Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas defined an intelligible object as "receptacle of a perfection," so material substances received likenesses ("similitudes") of the intelligible by way of human sensory powers. Since God is eternal and unchanging, what is essential and permanent is more noble than what is apparent and variable. Material substances receive likeness of the intelligible ("intelligible forms") by way of the sensory powers. According to Aristotle, the intellect becomes intelligible by conceiving some intelligible object, and so it follows that the intellect and its intelligible object are the same. To use the vocabulary derived from the neo-Aristotelian literature on formal optics translated from Arabic into Latin and used by Thomas Aquinas, Bonaventure, Roger Bacon, and other Scholastic writers, similitudes are the "offspring" by which God communicates his likeness in "multiplication of itself."4 In the sixteenth-century literature on art, distinctions between "exemplary forms" (the "conco" or "idea" in the artist's mind) and actual painted or sculpted images are explained in ways that stress the artist's agency. One striking set of examples studied recently by Alexander Nagel sidesteps the problematic issue of the ontological status of a sacred image made by human art: alters dedicated to the Eucharist. It is in this context that an "artificial" work of art was discussed mostly in terms derived from literary theory. In the heterogenous literature on art, there is fundamental tension between a theological theory of images (the nature of sacred images and their proper use) and a rich tradition of describing art situated and grounded in literary theory transferred to the visual arts about how to make a work of art.

The casting of Michelangelo's conceptual powers as "divine" at the height of the Catho...
Reformation was related (more cautiously than Leonardo da Vinci’s bold claims for painting made fifty years earlier) to the same long-standing conception of the artist’s agency subordinate to God: by calling Michelange- llo’s conceptual powers “divine” contemporary writers like Pietro Aretino and Vasari asserted the independent role of the artist, while simultaneously emphasizing his dependence on a higher source of inspiration. Ostensibly the understanding of the artist’s power as emanating from the Divine would ensure the truth of an artistic representation in line with the Church’s ontological point of view. And yet the same underlying structure of beliefs still enabled Aretino and Vasari to disagree vehemently on a central issue: the appropriateness of Michelangelo’s judgement in interpreting the sacred themes of the Last Judgment. The basis of contention was his use of artifice to embellish the Scriptural message.

The important point in the present context is that ontological issues were often discussed in rhetorical terms. As new concerns entered the literature, a confusing range of new possibilities emerged in order to override the topological field or matrix consisting of the work itself, the artist(s) or force(s) held responsible for its material mode or appearance, and the proper field of art that a work may be put in. In his 1882 treatise On Sacred and Profane Images, Archbishop Gabriele Paleotti (1522–1597) understood images as indexical signs arranged in a hierarchy in just the terms I have been discussing when he connected but also distinguished sharply between “vestiges” which are “irrational and imperfect” traces like a footprint, and images produced by the art of “disegno.” He defined the latter as “taken from another form for the purpose of being like it.” Paleotti distinguished between such loathsome figures from which “copies (imitazioni) can be made” and the “irrational” footprint, on the basis of St. Augustine, who likewise conceived of a continuum of images produced by art and nature (like reflections in mirrors or clear wa-

This appears to be almost human in origin (in other words, not quite): knowledge of this movement (written) as a resuscitation of the most difficult and most necessary divine gift, which the ancient called the “gift of Apollo and the Muse.” It is also necessary for the painter, together with the other things required of him, to have knowledge and force and to express the principal movements almost as if it were generated out of his soul and raised by him from a habit.” (emphasis added)

Lomazzo was not the only artist caught between allegiances to his artistic fictions and the truth of sacred representations when the Church of Rome redirected artistic license away from fantastic forms emblematic of the artist’s powers of invention. Fantastico, grotesco, capriccio, and similar artistic inventions should be understood. On the one hand, they stood for the artist’s freedom and capacity to invent images out of his imagination that nature alone could not create. On the other hand, and for the same reasons, they could be and often were associated with irrational mental activity, the active imagination unstrained by human reason or by nature. The central point in these discussions was in fact precisely the old neo-Platonic Scholastic distinction between the “delusions” of a disolute person and the “true visions” of a prophet. In the thirteenth century, Thomas Aquinas articulated the range of logical possibilities in his distinction between the “improper substance” of an object and its accidental, external appearance. Mutations in appearance were external to the visionary’s eyes, but the imagination of the “disolute person” caused him to mistake the image for the thing itself, and he was thereby captivated by demonic illusions (Summa Theologiae 3.76.8).

Two texts written by artists in the post-Tridentine period suggest how the logic of indexicality continued to operate around the time that Gisburg identified the earliest accounts of medical symptomology. At the height of Tridentine reforms instituted in Milan by Archbishop Carlo Borromeo (in office 1564–1584), the Milanese painter-theorist Giuseppe Lomazzo described how the artist’s greatest challenge is to impart graceful life and movement to his figures. This depends on being personally endowed with furor, the quality that artists shared with poets, a divine gift that

Pope Pius IV, under whose papacy the Tridentine Decree on Images was conceived and ratified in 1564 (with considerable help from the Pope’s nephew Carlo Borromeo), was assistant and first founder of the Roman Academy of San Luca established by artists in 1577 and authorized by Pope Sixtus V in 1588. Zuccaro wrote about human disegno as the "internal" mirror of divine creativity that ordained the world and continually brings it into existence, while "external disegno" is made up of the visible world, which is "the painting of God" together with all abstract things. Citing Thomas Aquinas’s Summa Theologiae and St. Augustine, Zuccaro wrote that about the existence of "ideas" as forms separable from mind in the matter of the artist, we apprehend these forms in the way that is appropriate to humans, through the senses. Following Aquinas, in line with the justification of images that resolved the Byzantine iconoclastic controversy in the ninth century, Zuccaro called the mental image that precedes its material fabrication a "quasi-idea" that is analogous to ideas in the mind of God but received through the senses by the intellect, which is a tabula rasa like a "spacious, smooth canvas prepared by us painters." Navigating judiciously through ontologically dangerous territory, Zuccaro argued that the artist’s function is to "compose an intellect" that "makes all things," and is found in the human soul which derives its intellectual light from God himself, the separate intellect and the soul’s creator. In this way the fallible, particular intellect of the human individual is enlightened and sustained by the mind of God. Although we are only a "small copy of the excellence of divine art," the human intellect belong to its nature (that is, through sense experience) can know "spiritual forms representing all things of this world" that come from God by virtue of this ability, man may be "almost a second God." Following Aristotle through Aquinas, Zuccaro writes about the divine image ''impressed on us'' as the idea of all the arts, the form of all the arts, Painting.
distinguished by coloring, shading, lighting, and so on give figures such spirit and vividity that they seem “living and true,” appealing intuitively and universally to all beholders: thus a well-painted image “increases devotion greatly.” Modern scholars who refer Zuccaro’s argument only to his classical sources miss the point of his attempt to justify both the veracity of the sacred representation and the artist’s agency in fabricating it.

EX VOTOS AS THE CONVERSE OF ACHIOPOFETES

The same Christian ontology operating through the logic of indexicality so clearly articulated by Paleotti and Zuccaro also governs many other kinds of Christian religious objects, such as ex-votos, most frequently made of silver or wax, offered to the divine as a request for aid or as thanks for divine help received (fig. 6). The preferred medium itself (wax or metal) carried powerful associations of identity due not to an artist’s workshop but to the trace of physical contact directly embedded in it—just as a footprint is an index of the person who made it, so the ex-voto was considered an index of the individual who offers it in the hope of receiving divine assistance. Wax and silver are ideally suited to serve as offerings because they can be impressed with the votary’s individual identity, however that is defined, or melted down and re-enshroned after the votive gift is accepted.

The ex-voto is an offering from an individual to the Church, often through an intercessory saint or another holy figure, such as the Virgin figured in a miraculous image.21 Wax and silver can bear the traces of physical contact in the same way that a stamp imprints its likeness or simulea on a wax tablet, to use the Aristotelian analogy that explains sense perception as the impression of an image on the material mind. The life cast and the death mask functions according to the same logic. They are also sort of ineradicable impressed with human rather than sacred identity. Offered as material substitutes for the person making the vow, ex-votus sometimes refer to the donor by being the same height or of equal weight, but however the relationship between votary and votive is established, the ex-voto’s indexical properties make the link between the human and the divine realms. Such ephiphanies were fabricated quickly and usually cheaply, produced within a matter of days by specialized wax workers, although their increasing similarity to other kinds of commemorative art is indicated in Vasari’s (inaccurately) ascribing their invention to Leonardo’s teacher Verrocchio. The slippage is remarkable for it emphasizes the instability of the category “life-like” which increasingly referred to the artist’s miraculous abilities while still maintaining the indexical significance of votary and votive.

Negating all marks of human craftsmanship heightens these associations of images made by human art with miraculously conceived images that result from direct contact with the divine. The fusion of image and its prototype is both a new interpretation and consistent with the Christian theory of images in the case of a self-portrait (fig. 7).22 Diogenes described in the Christian terms that both Vasari and Zuccaro (and Centini) for that matter) used to discuss the artist’s acquired mental and physical labor, can be understood as formulations describing the artist’s indexical act that mediates between the divine and earthly realms, between eternal substance and created matter. St. Augustine describes prayer as an internal vision in terms very similar to Leonardo da Vinci’s description of how the painter transmutes his mind into the mind of nature.23

The same slippages between artifice and religious understanding of the world articulate the problem that all Christian works of art had to negotiate: is a religious painting simply a votive made by human hands and offered to the divine for aid or thanks for aid received? Or is the image sacred due to its conformity with the divine according to the same logic imputed to govern a miraculous image made without human intervention? In this short study, I can only suggest the rich associations and the far-reaching reverberations of those associations that thinking about images as indexical signals elicits for the modern understanding of art.

WHY AN ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE INDEX?

In Constructing Images Didi-Huberman stresses the importance of considering the materiality of the artwork, irrefutably to words, rooted in the Christian theology of images which he recognizes as concerned with the indexicality of signs.24 In another important theoretically-motivated study recently published, Christopher Wood argues that the modern categories of the religious art of Christianity were formed, and he deals with similar concerns, though they argue the opposite, hypothesizing that the indexical model of referentiality was created intuitively in response to “theological doubts about the image.” Intuition and doubt are indeed directly involved in the referential claims that sacred Christian images elicit, whether they are vested in orthodox ways or not. Rather than advocating a new ontological view of art based directly on Christian concerns with the materiality of the image, or taking sides in an historical debate about the veracity of images, however, my strategy here is that what the modern art of ideography construes inhered from a Christian metaphysics.

This has led me to question the grounds on which modern distinctions between the religious and the secular spheres has been posited. Modern scholarship has focused on the increasingly independent agency granted to the artist and, by implication, to viewers. The new discourse on art that developed in the fourteenth century and later in Italy and elsewhere in Europe, claimed an increasingly independent role for both artist and viewer. Yet the Christian context in which all religious images functioned continued to infiltrate these discussions in specific ways. The perennial challenge was to establish the ontological status of material things as signs of the Divine. I have suggested that a lingering, unrecognized Christian ontology still haunts our understanding of how material things can be studied as historical objects.

In this connection, I argue that the status of referential methods depends on an unrecognized Christian mythology of tactility that imagines causality reductively as contingency, whether actual or just imputed, which is somehow supposed to guarantee the truth of our historical accounts. I have argued this by showing how discussions of indexicality entered disciplinary discussions of art historical methodology and its attendant truth claims along three separate trajectories. These trajectories intermingle, and, at various times and places, in and out of modernist and postmodernist accounts, modernist and postmodernist accounts, these pockets of art history deserve to be connected and considered critically. They share an unacknowledged concern with causality as well as historical origins of great antiquity in Christian accounts of images, particularly doctrinal claims about veracity that were renewed during the long era of Church reform in the late fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries. Excavating these ‘deep’ connections demands an archaeological approach to the topic of indexicality in the specific sense established by Michel Foucault: to expose the network of rules which establish what is meaningful—rules that are the preconditions for the elements of the discursive formation in which they operate to have meaning and value.
MUOTOKOKEMUSTEN SISÄLTÖJEN KOGNITIOTIETEELLISTÄ ANALYYSISTÄ
PERTTI SAARIJÖRVI


Esitetyn kysyn avulla uskomuksenmuodoja ja on keskeinen osa muotoilua. Esittelijä Kari Frank pyysi käytännöllisyyden odelua laajasta utta kauneutta kohteineen. Hän pyysi siis "ravintotäällä" vanhan muotoilukokemusmaailman ja laajaa siten tilalle avoimen uudelleen esineistön ja siihen liittyvän arjen kokemistavan."