

HANS HAACHE

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By ROMAN HALPIN

HANS HAACKE

INTRODUCTION:

In freely hanging plexiglass tubes up to one metre long, trapped air bubbles are set in motion, and prowl up and down like caged animals; or else red and blue liquids of different densities interpenetrate. Drops fall slowly through, one perforated disc onto another which has a different arrangement of holes. Beads of condensation run down the sides of a glass box. Ice on a steel pillar melts onto a copper heating element beneath. Obstacles are articulated as sources of form; the slowness of motion calls for a corresponding intensity of concentration.

'To create something that lives in time, that makes the spectator experience time ..... to articulate something natural'

Above the stream of air from a ventilator goose feathers fly, balloons bob, rage twist and turn in the air, pieces of blue sail cloth flap in waves weighted with small lumps of lead. "My materials are air and a flexible substance, my tools are the laws of nature".

To make something that is indeterminate, something whose shape cannot be accurately predicted; this is how Haacke formulated his aim.

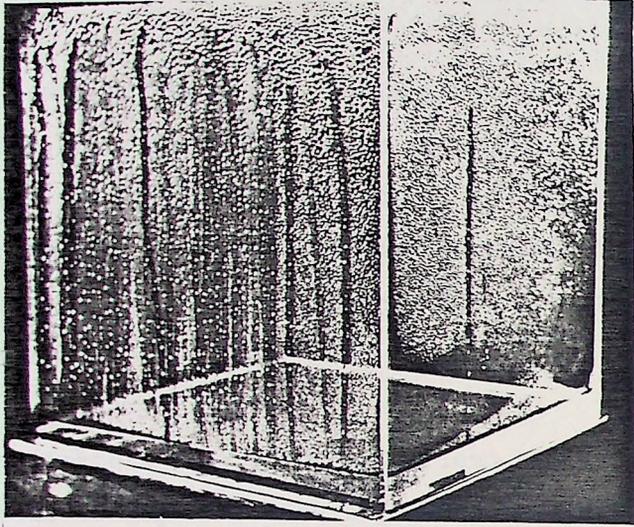
## CHAPTER I

### The early works and their context:

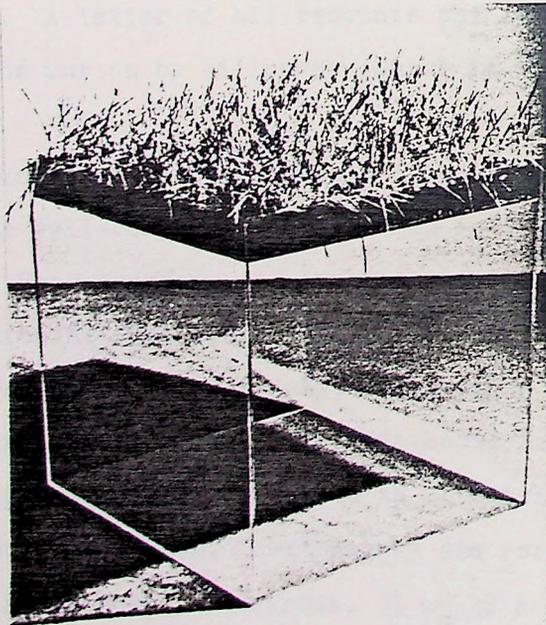
In comparison with other contemporary artists, Hans Haacke's work finds itself uniquely balanced between American and European post-formalist Art. His early water boxes, the condensation cubes, free floating balloons, sails and freezing constructions reveal a direct affinity to New Tendency/Zero aesthetics in Europe. (ca. 1956-68) (1) One could sense at that time a budding counter-movement to the prevailing mannerisms of painterliness and decorative expressionism.

We can perceive in Haacke's work of this period metaphysical links with Jean Tinguely's machines and also with Yves Klein's transformation of the elements of nature. Haacke's year in Paris (1960-61) was also valuable in that he came in contact with the magnetic sculptures of the Greek artist, Takis. In Dusseldorf, near Haacke's home city of Cologne, Otto Peine, Heinz Mack and Gunther Ucker held a number of exhibitions (1958-63) under the title of Group Zero. (2) Shadows, raised reliefs, reflective surfaces, artificial lighting and night-time spectacles played a major role in Zero's plastic principles. Some of these ideas were revived from Constructivist and Bauhaus pedagogy of the 1920s.

In the early 1960s Haacke was included in a number of important Zero exhibitions (e.g. London, U.K., Amsterdam, Berlin, Venice and Washington D.C.). On the strength of some success in Europe, Haacke returned to New York city in the Spring of 1965 and with  
an American



04. Hans Haacke, *Weather Cube*, 1965.

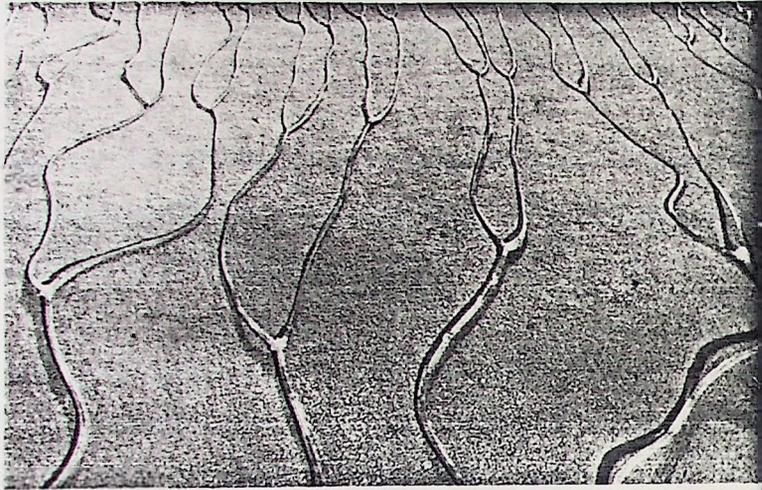


05. Hans Haacke, *Grass Cube*, 1967.

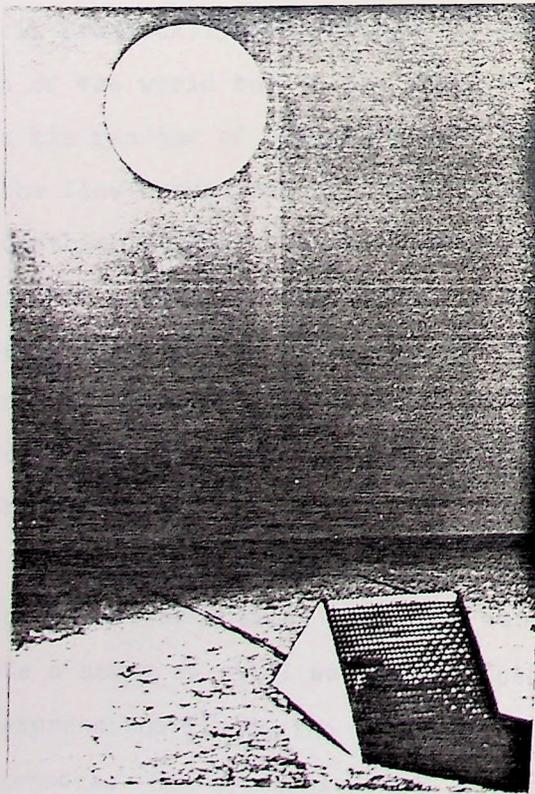
wife. He had lived with a Fullbright scholarship in Philadelphia and New York from 1961-63. On his return the situation had changed so that many of the plastic aspects of New Tendency/Zero art were very much in vogue, although it continued to remain in direct opposition to the prevailing forces of American "mainstream" formalist painting and sculpture.

In numerous letters to a very good friend of Haacke's at the time Jack Burnham, he began to show a growing fascination with his own systems as they began to take root in the real world, at the same time a growing cynicism towards some of his fellow artists. He became very wary of the chic-superficiality that surrounded so many of the kinetic light performances in which he first so willingly participated. A letter of his recounts the installation of the air art exhibition put on by Willoughby Sharp in the spring of 1968.

..... an hour before the opening tables and chairs were moved into the well-composed installation in preparation for the party. Soon everyone was smashed out of his skull. People were throwing foam around from Medall's "Cloud Canyon". The patroness danced over my white flow-piece and had a ball, other works were treated like fun-house furniture. Drinks made a profit of £300 - £10 worth of catalogues were sold, and the place was a mess! Willoughby did not attend the party given in his honor afterwards. I could be cynical now and ask, is it for this public that I am making an effort to become a popular success? I am reminded of the Tennessee museum curator who called the gallery (Howard Wise) a little while ago,



Hans Haacke. *Hydraulic Circulation System*, 1969. Fluid in plastic tubing. Approx. 12 x 24'. Courtesy Howard Wise Gallery, New York.



White sphere in air-jet, 1969

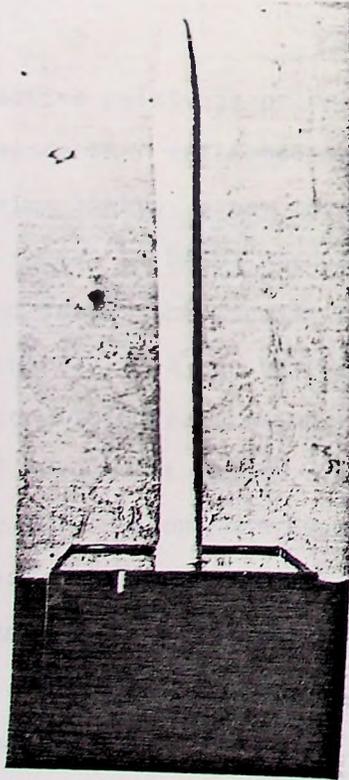
asking for an artist to give a happening at the end of his inauguration dinner at the museum. There remains a great demand for court jesters. (3)

Part of the bewilderment we experience when faced with the changing modes of contemporary art - abstract expressionism, pop, op, kinetic, environmental and conceptual, can be reduced when one examines the work of a single artist like Haacke who has ridden most of these ensuing waves.

Two basic premises underlie the work of Haacke: the universality of art and the pervasiveness of change. The artist's business requires his involvement in practically everything. He works in reference, not to a section of the world but to the whole world. In his study of the world, in his reading of philosophy and science and in his observation of the flow around him he came to accept the idea that the world is "something dynamic, something that constantly changes, that is always on the move, never permitting a status quo". (4) In his awareness of himself, his relationships with friends and society, in group and international interrelations he observed "a total absence of something solid and forever unchanging, nothing ever remained the same".

He ceased to look at art as futile, temporary attempts to "arrest things, to create a haven of still waters" and began consciously to let his art express the fluid, the temporal, the transitory, the ephemeral, the tenuous. His art negates the museum, the mausoleum notion of art as endurance, the platonic ideal of static being and

123. Hans Haacke, Roller (and base), 1969. Liquid and plexiglass, 20" diam. Courtesy Howard A. ...  
New York.

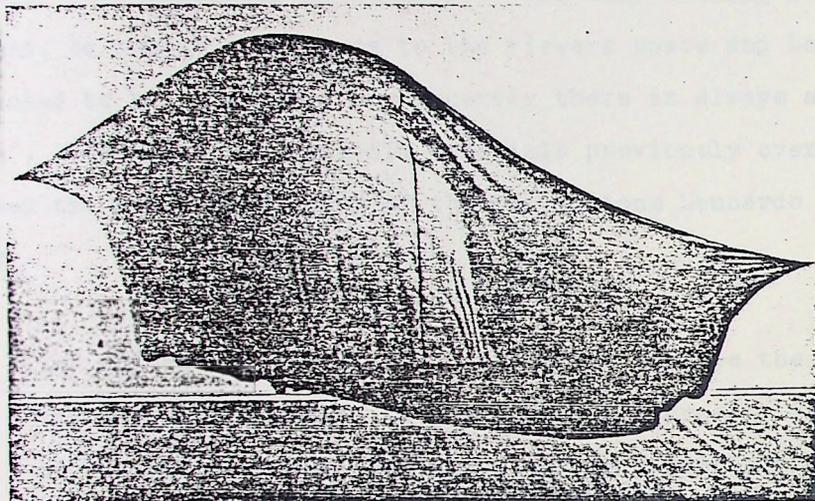


124. Hans Haacke, *Ice Stick*, 1966.

permanence; his art is the affirmation of inconsistency, the acceptance that change is not an illusion but is real.

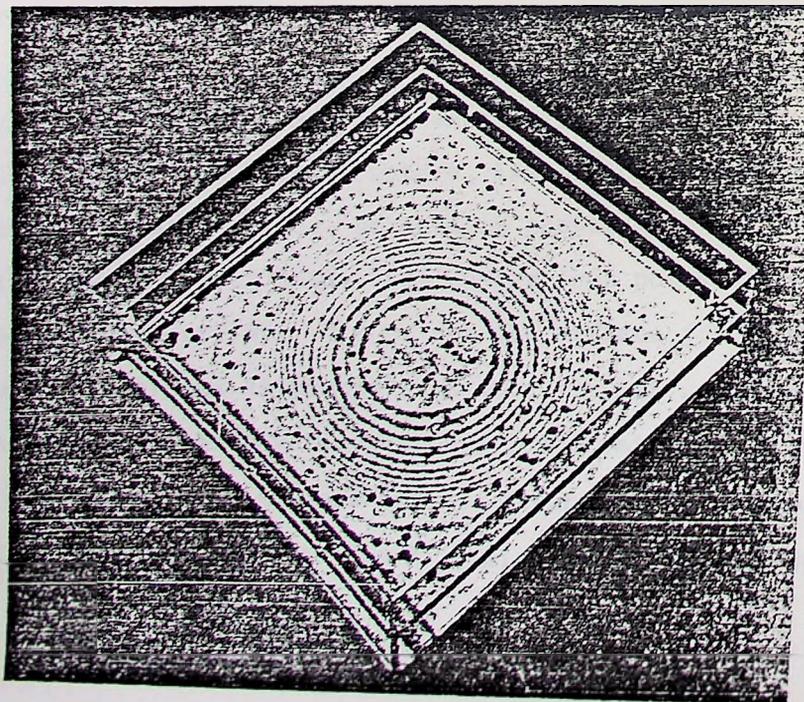
Impermanence and motion were the content of Haacke's first works. While a student in Kassel during the late fifties, his Tachist paintings were made to appear as though they had been exposed to both time and weather, showing signs of decomposition and decay. They were records of the painter's motion; but it was an arrested motion and the marks of time were illusionary. His next paintings (1960) were optical illusions, op art. The change was from an illusion on the actual canvas to illusion in the eye of the spectator and until recently the spectators active participation has been an important element in his work.

In 1961 he made reflective paintings or reliefs which would change from place to place since they reflected their environments; they also changed in changing light. Since they reflected the spectator and the place, there seemed to be no need to keep them on the wall. They became deeper and deeper and finally left the wall; the painter became a sculptor. This was not an accident, but the result of Haacke's attempt to eliminate illusion. The painter does not have to follow the laws of nature but can be a master of the arts of illusion. It was for this reason that Leonardo thought painting superior to sculpture: "Sculpture reveals what it is with little effort, painting seems a thing miraculous" (5) But if one wishes art to reveal what it is rather than what it miraculously represents, or if one wishes to deny illusion - then sculpture becomes preferable.



Blue sail, 1968

*Single Dropper*, 1963  
Acrylic plastic, water.  
To be turned over.  
14½" x 14½" x 4¾"

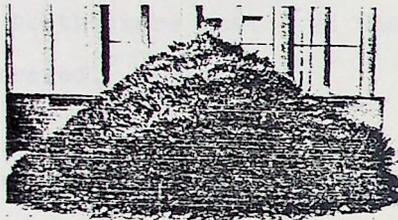


It is almost impossible to eliminate illusion from paintings, or as Haacke says regarding paintings "Never are they willing to take a stand, to commit themselves to the viewers space and be fully exposed to his SCRUTINY consequently there is always a credibility gap". New materials (and old materials previously over-looked) have freed the sculptor of many of the limitations Leonardo thought he had:

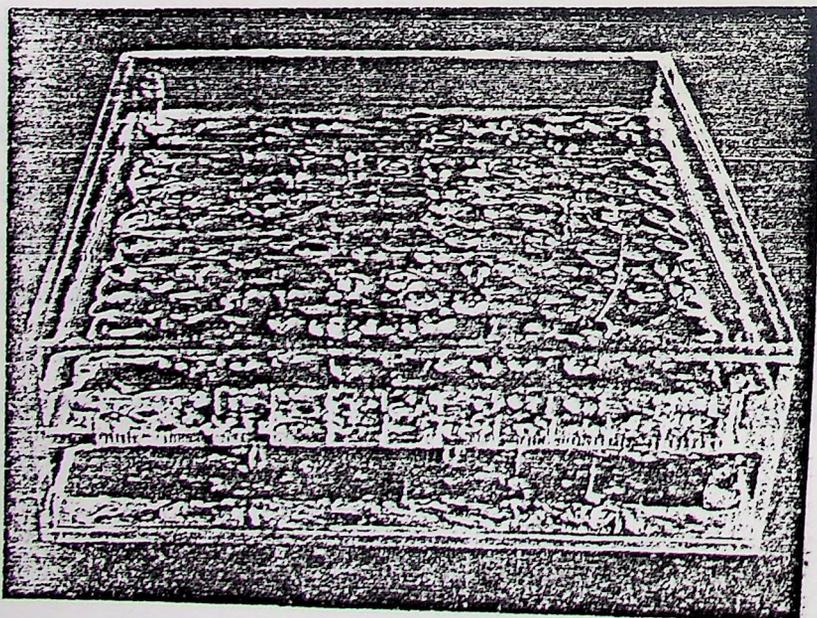
The effects of aerial perspective are outside the scope of the sculptor's work; They can neither represent transparent bodies nor luminous bodies nor angles of reflection nor shining bodies, .... nor mists, nor dull heather, nor an infinite number of things.

Haacke has taken as his sculptural province precisely those things Leonardo said he could not do; the difference is that he does not represent them, he presents them as they actually are.

By giving up illusion many contemporaries have come to accept the limitations of the laws of nature, laws which determine that one cannot do without magic; scientific knowledge gives artists a certain command over them. But Haacke does not want to be seen as a 'scientific' artist: "It is not the artists job to make the science classrooms demonstrations more stylish". Although he has been associated with various groups concerned with relations between art and technology, he does not see technology as a 'saviour' of art, and he is opposed to E.A.T.'s missionary aspect. He feels an



*Grass Grows* (seeded and growing in exhibition)  
*Grass Mound* in *Earth Art* exhibition at Andrew  
Dickson White Museum of Art, Cornell  
University, February, 1969.  
First version appeared at MIT in 1967.

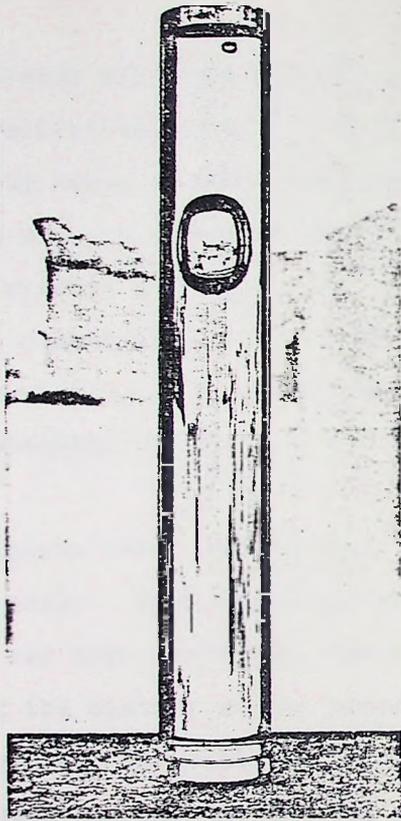


*Rainbox*, 1963  
Acrylic plastic, water.  
To be turned over.  
14 1/2" x 14 1/2" x 4 1/2"

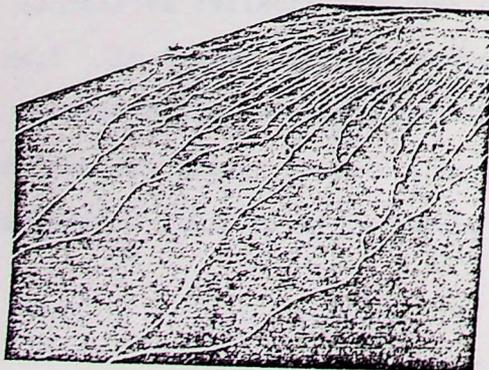
artist should be aware of his environment and that "exposure to the ideas of science, even on an amateurish level, has considerable influence." Technological means have helped him move from the illusionistic to the more real - to the more physical qualities that he has pursued.

Haacke is equally disturbed when his work is seen as romantic or as a "return to nature". Though his work is often concerned with the forces of nature, this he says "is due to expediency rather than a love of nature." Natural responsive systems and organic systems are cheaper to use and manipulate than mechanical or cybernetic systems; they are also more complex, otherwise, he has no preference. He is not blurry-eyed about science or about nature; he is neither nostalgic about the past nor about the future (as are many scientizing artists); rather he is involved with the ever present present, the flow we call now.

Haacke's concern with dematerialization, transparency, and motion led him to use water as a material. His many water boxes explore the various properties of the medium: flow, cohesion, specific gravity, condensation, waves, steam, ice, mist, rain (eventually thunder and lightning). Most of these pieces were contained in plexiglass boxes - cubes, slabs - neutral shapes like minimal sculpture. Within these containers the liquids were shaped and transformed by their natural properties and the laws governing the the processes.



*Slow Bubble*, 1965-68  
Acrylic plastic, viscous liquid, air.  
To be turned over.  
15" x 2 1/4" x 2 1/4"



*Circulation*, 1969

When Haacke completed his 'condensation cube' (1965) he realised he had created a 'self-stabilising' system. A system which did not need motivation by human or mechanical power. Haacke saw his condensation box more in terms of intellectual, and the slow beauties of its kinesis and light. He writes: " I was very excited about the subtle communication with a seemingly sealed off environment, and the complexity of interrelated conditons determining a meteorological process."

Inside his plexiglass cube condensation caused drops to form on the container's walls. When the drops grew too heavy to continue to adhere, they ran down the sides, creating everchanging patterns, traces recerding the history of the process much like his earlier Tachist paintings, but now entirely life-generated and not frozen in time. The steam box and the ice box worked together, the latter living off the former like a parasite.

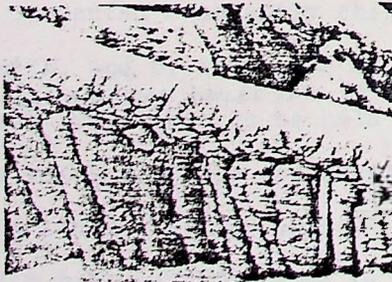
In works dealing with natural elements decisions as to shape, colour, composition, texture and spatial arrangement were decided according to practical considerations of fabrication - these in turn tended to clarify the systems involved. The systemic notion of internal and external boundaries reflects the idea of a "dialectics of transformation." In regard to this Haacke speaks of the "Independance" of his systems as self-sustaining functioning entities. Yet their fine art context allows them to share the cultural overtones of their environment. According to Haacke, this produces in the



*Live Airborne System, 1965/68*



*Wind in Water: Snow*  
Demonstration December 15, 1968, on  
Studio Roof, New York.

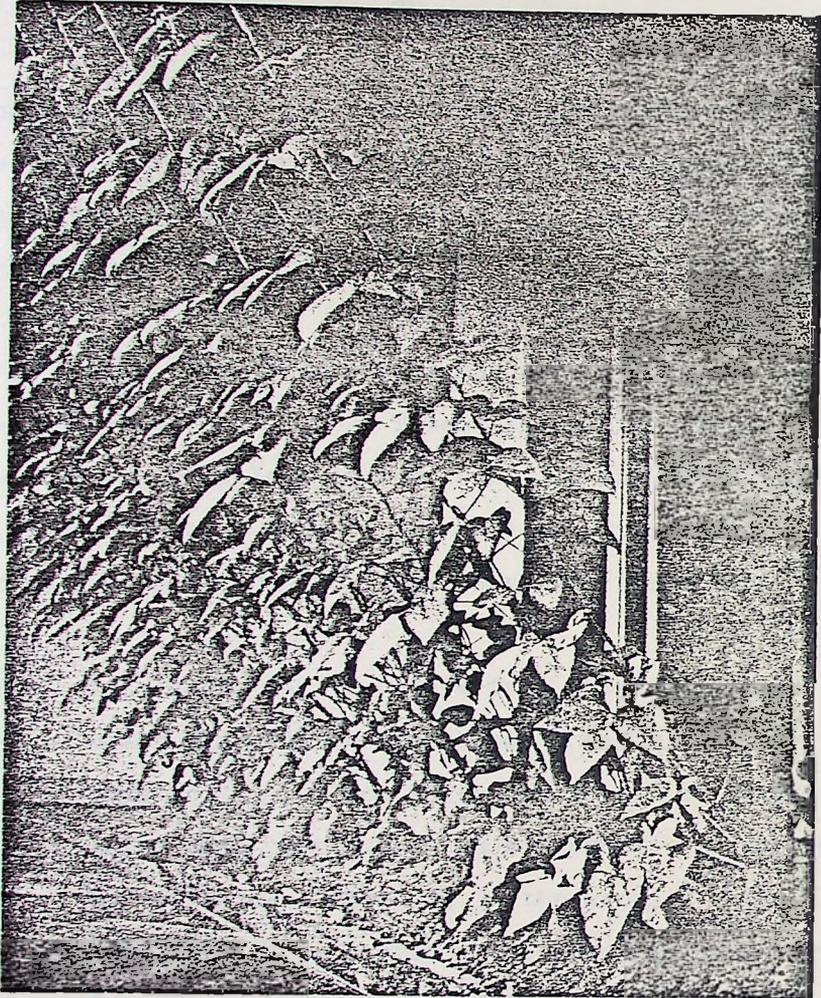


*Spray of Ithaca Falls: Freezing and Melting of Rope*  
February 6, 7, 8 . . . 1969

viewer's mind a condition of conceptual oscillation. Thus his art may be seen for its active participation with the environment (e.g. as on going physical process), or it may be construed as "art" in dialectic conflict with previous art. For Haacke this irresolution remains of prime importance.

Discovering that the laws of fluids apply equally well to air as to liquids, Haacke began to work as well with air, a material which permitted even greater transparency and immateriality. He floated chiffon sails, ribbons, balloons on jets of air, restoring the pedestal, though invisible to sculpture. "The wind-driven fabric", he wrote in 1965, "behaves like a living organism all the parts of which are constantly influencing each other. The unfolding of the organism in a harmonious manner depends on the intuitiveness and skill of the 'wind player'". His materials are wind and flexible fabric, his tools are the laws of nature.

Throughout Haacke was concerned with forms and patterns that could not be precisely determined. The condensation pieces and the air suspension pieces presented constantly changing forms bound only by statistical limits, and by the walls of the containers. In 1965 Haacke proposed <sup>(FOR AN EXHIBITION CALLED 'ZERO ON SEA')</sup> which was to be held in Holland) to provide food for sea gulls which would be attracted to the specified location and make a living, flying piece. The proposal was not used, and he finally realised the piece in the Winter of 1970 at Coney Island. Another example of how Haacke began to let the material entirely free to determine its own shape can be seen in his grass pieces. The first one was a plexi-cube with shaggy grass



growing from the top. The second was a free form mound of earth sown with Winter rye and left to itself. The piece was executed in the gallery at Cornell University in February 1969 for the Earth art exhibition.

In an interview which Haacke made for Art and Artists magazine in 1970 he spoke to John Anthony Thwaites about a current exhibition in the John Weber gallery in New York. In the interview he explains to Mr. Thwaites about some of his earlier water boxes and his more recent growing piece "Gerichtetes Wachstum" (bean plants).

Thwaites: I have admired your work from the time of the dripping boxes and condensation boxes onwards for their classic simplicity, but don't you think that in some of the later ones that verges on a 'reductio ad absurdum'? For instance, "The goat in the woods." What is really proven by tying a goat up at various places around a forest and letting him nibble, except that if you do tie up a goat that is what he will do?

Haacke: I don't try to prove anything. With the goat I have not done anything principally different from letting water drop through a hole. Something very simple and even banal. An animal feeds off its environment and thereby changes its environment and itself. Presenting this relationship in an isolated context makes one conscious of the almost symbiotic interchange.

Thwaites: - but the water is dropping as you said before - a situation which you have set up. Whereas the goat situation isn't really one you have set up, everybody knows that goats have good appetites - where is the statement?

Haacke: Everybody knows that water drops through holes. Both situations are set up and both follow existing patterns of natural behaviour.

Thwaites: In the case of the bean plants that you planted in the exhibition - it was suggested that this was really an "artificial" situation because you had to give the plants strings to grow along in a different direction than they would otherwise normally have taken.

Haacke: The fact that I took soil into the gallery, that I planted indoors instead of outdoors and that I pulled strings at an angle and not straight for the beans to grow along, all these circumstances create a friction between something cultural and something natural. It is this which makes the system recognizable. Only due to a shift out of the normal can we perceive common things anew, and in a way that they become transparent for meanings beyond themselves.

In 1968 Haacke began to use air pressure to separate water into tiny particles, creating mist or light rain. The clouds he made on the roof of his studio would be swept over the roof by the wind. In

December he sent invitations to a show on his roof; the night before New York had it's first snow. When the spectator climbed the stairs to the roof, he could look out and see snow sculptured into waves by the wind. Haackes atomized water had vapourised and formed clouds which were to fall as snow back on the spot where they had originated. He controlled the weather.

In February of the following year he made an ice piece below the falls at Ithaca near Cornell by stretching a rope around which he had wrapped screen, across the stream. Spray from the falls settled on the rope and froze, creating a frosty white coating which continued to grow. A fall of icicles grew from the rope as the sun melted some of the frost. Eventually the weight of ice pulled the rope down into the flowing water below, completely altering the shape and appearance of the work.

The movement towards transparency has lead Haacke towards things which are not visible at all. "The surface visual appearance is intriguing, but if that were all there were it wouldn't be much". He visualized possibilities where the object would not be important at all. Environmental and social systems were similar to the work he had been doing, and indeed in late 1969 and early 1970 this was the direction Haackes work took.

## ARE THE RICH A MENACE?

Some people think they are, so let's look at the record.

Suppose you inherit, win or otherwise acquire a million dollars net after taxes. That would make you rich, wouldn't it? Now, what's the first thing you'd do? Invest it, wouldn't you?—in stocks, bonds or in a savings bank.

So, what does that mean? It means that you have furnished the capital required to put about 30 people to work.

How is that? National statistics show that for every person graduating from school or college, at least thirty thousand dollars of capital must be found for bricks, fixtures, machinery, inventory, etc. to put each one to work.

Now, on your million dollar investments you will receive an income of sixty thousand, eighty thousand, or more dollars a year. This you will spend for food, clothing, shelter, taxes, education, entertainment and other expenses. And this will help support people like policemen, firemen, store clerks, factory workers, doctors, teachers, and others. Even congressmen.

So, in other words, Mr. Rich Man, you would be supporting (wholly or partially) perhaps more than 100 people.

Now, how about that? Are you a menace? No, you are not.

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*The 9,240,000 Unemployed in  
The United States of America  
Demand The Immediate Creation of  
More Millionaires*

CHAPTER 2

Haacke's political growth:

'In reading over Haacke's letters before 1968 I was struck by the absence of political remarks, although Haacke has always impressed me as being a keenly political figure. Compared to most artists Haacke's reading interests remain abnormally large. He has an addiction for news periodicals, Der Spiegel and the New York Times being always at hand. Haacke's emotional energies are periodically directed by current news events and how they fit into his particular world-view. Political art as such has rarely interested Haacke, usually, I suspect, because of its labouredness and predictability. He maintains that socialist realism has nothing to offer.' (7)

Haacke lived as a child with his parents in Cologne and in a suburb of the city of Bonn. He retains memories of the period of World War II when he was 3 to 9 years of age. His parents were anti-Nazi; his father was a member of the Socialist Democratic Party as a youth and he later became a follower of Antroposophy, a synthesis of mystical beliefs banned by the Nazis. His father lost his job with the city of Cologne because he was not prepared to join the Nazi party. Survival under such circumstances meant that Haacke was taught from his earliest years to be completely discreet about his family's views among his school friends and with adults. This has engendered in Haacke a certain natural secretiveness and anonymity. Haacke still refuses either to sign his art works or to allow photographs to be taken of him. Given the American mania for publicity

particularly in the arts, sports and politics, this appears somewhat odd, something on the order of a phobia. However the objective and anonymous character of his work almost demands it, and this is particularly true of his later political pieces.

Haacke's willingness to bring social issues to the public's attention may be in part due to his year in Paris after he finished art school (1960-61). At the time he had the opportunity to witness police reprisals against students, intellectuals and leftists who marched in protest against French colonial policies in Algeria. Involved as he was on the fringes of these sometimes violent demonstrations, it seemed obvious that the police were organised into para-military squads so as to protect, not the civil order, but the interests of the white Algerians.

For Haacke as for many Americans <sup>the</sup> Vietnam war provided a long and enervating exposure to the near futulity of trying to change a nations policies - even as the existing policies proved to be grossly wasteful and immoral. Collectively, it generated a vast degree of frustration which had no effective outlet. Artist committees, rallies, and petition signing were token efforts which only gained in effectiveness as they became nation-wide. At the occasion of Martin Luther King's assassination, Haacke wrote in a letter dated April 10th, 1968:

.... Last week's murder of Dr. King came as a great shock.  
Linda (his wife) and I were gloomy for days and still have

not quite recovered. The event pressed something into focus that I have known for long but never realized so bitterly and helplessly, namely, that what we are doing, the production and the talk about sculpture, has no relation to the urgent problems of our society.

Whoever believes that art can make life more humane is utterly naive. Mondrian was one of those naive saints ... Nothing but really absolutely nothing is changed by whatever type of painting or sculpture or happening you produce on the level where it counts, the political level. Not a single napalm bomb will not be dropped by all the shows of "Angry Arts." Art is utterly unsuited as a political tool. No cop will be kept from shooting a black by all the light-environments in the world. As I've said, I've known that for a number of years and I was never really bothered by it. All of a sudden it bugs me. I am also asking myself, why the hell am I working in this field at all. Again an answer is never at hand that is credible, but it did not particularly disturb me. I still have no answer, but I am no longer comfortable.

In Haacke's work real/Historical time (8) and measurable space have replaced the ideal or magic time and space context in which previous art normally functioned. As an extension of the real-time systems concept, Haacke's works quite often bear a resemblance to Marcel Duchamp's Ready-mades. Like Duchamp, Haacke employs everyday objects in his art. Often their meanings are inverted or heightened by their usage in a gallery or museum. But unlike Duchamp Haacke's assemblies of functional objects and conventions continue

operating in their normal way and are not meant to be baffling or esoteric. Their purposes are generally apparant. Haacke has used tele-type machines, refrigeration machinery, chicken incubators, polling devices, and sewage filtering equipment in a relatively straight forward manner. Haacke bows to the fact that Duchamp paved the way for such an approach. He experimentally demonstrated that the context in which the object was shown can change its connotation and since art is in the business of meanings the context has not only to be reckoned with but can become an integral part of the work.

A point of focus for Haacke's first political art was his 'Gallery-Goers' birthplace and residence profile' at the Howard Wise Gallery, New York during November 1969. Visitors were requested to mark with pins their place of birth and present residence on large scale maps of New York City, the area within 50 miles of New York, the United States and the World. This piece was extended by a series of photographs taken at all locations marked as residences with pins on the Manhattan map, which was exhibited at the Paul Maenz Gallery, Cologne in January 1971. For Haacke it was revealing just how closely confined the gallery-going 'world' really is. This and subsequent polls proved that it represents a relatively narrow spectrum of professional and economic interests.

(SEE OVER)

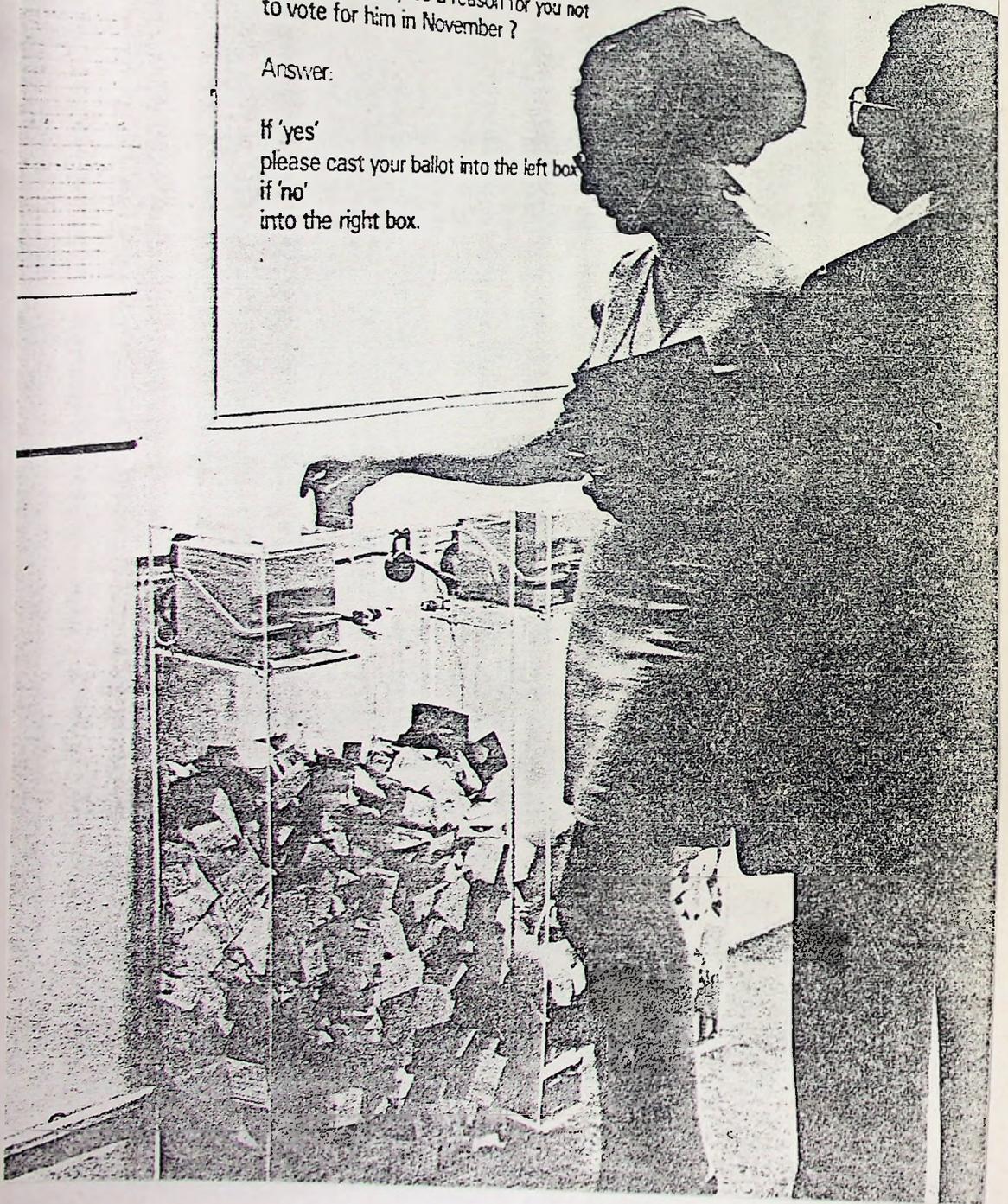
There was also the 'Rockefeller Poll' for which the question was withheld from the exhibition organisers at the Modern until the day before Haacke's show was to open. Haacke suspected that the museum never appreciated the pointedness of his political question, but on

Question:

Would the fact that Governor Rockefeller has not denounced President Nixon's Indochina policy be a reason for you not to vote for him in November?

Answer:

If 'yes'  
please cast your ballot into the left box  
if 'no'  
into the right box.



MOMA poll, 1971

the other hand their sense of public relations prevented them from making an issue over it. Before the Rockefeller Poll Haacke had submitted several proposals for the "Art and Technology" project (1971) at the Los Angeles County Museum. He sent plans for several 'wind' and 'warm-cold' environments and his most interesting proposal, "Environmental transplant." It consisted of a cylindrical room in the museum which was to receive on a real-time basis, television images from a moving truck scanning greater Los Angeles projecting them from a revolving projector onto the wall. This proved too complex and costly for the "Art and Technology" project, as did another work which was to be an ongoing computerized poll. Certainly the last two mentioned proposals have mild political overtones and it became clear to Haacke that any museum could reject a proposal purely on a technological and cost basis and thereby use this as a convenient smokescreen for their ideological bias. It also became apparent that art could be used to grease the ideological wheels of museums and businesses, his own works not excluded. Thus since then he has worked on the premise that all galleries and museums function under specific ideological constraints.

Haacke has been questioned as to why he even bothers to show his work in a museum or gallery context since it appears to represent a negation of high art values, and to have more to do with various practical academic pursuits. His reply is that he sees the museum and gallery context as an absolutely necessary element for the meaning and functioning of his works; in other words, in his attempts to desecralize art, Haacke needs the dialectic foil of the



Hans Haacke: *Goat Feeding in Woods, Thus Changing II, 1970*. Woods near St. Paul de Vence.

art environment to provide the necessary contrast. For Haacke a book of his polling results would provide little social weight in the art world. The questions had to be asked in the galleries and the gallery public had to be confronted with its "self-portrait" in that same environment. The walls of the museum or gallery are as much a part of his work as the items he chooses to display on them. These works also need the "impregnation" of the gallery to set them in opposition to other contemporary art.

For the summer of 1970 Haacke was invited by Dore Ashton to take part in an exhibition entitled "Art vivant Américain" sponsored by the Fondation Maeght at St. Paul de Vence in the South of France. Haacke comments on the general conditions of the artists at the Fondation: "I got really pissed at M. Maeght because he treated the artists who were invited to do work on the sites like dogs. He was incredibly arrogant - ending up dealing with the artists like his servants". On the other hand, Haacke observed: "He (M. Maeght) visited Chagall every few days. Chagall had a villa up the road. Compared to Chagall we were not in a price bracket where he felt he had to treat us like human beings".

Possibly as a reaction to the manicured environment at the Fondation Haacke produced some of his crudest and freest ecological works, simple gestures employing a goat, turtles and wild vegetation also structured a piece, entitled, 'On sale at the Fondation Maeght' in which a taped female voice announced the names of artists, titles



Hans Haacke, *10. Tortiles Set Free*, 1970.

and prices of a series of original prints on sale at the book store at the Fondation, a supposedly non-profit organisation, All the prints happened to be by artists shown regularly at the Galerie Maeght in Paris. Their aggregate value was over \$130,000. These price quotations were regularly interrupted by a man reading over the telephone incoming teletype reports by Agence France presse from the office of the local news paper. The director of the Fondation attempted to halt the performance, but was unable to when he could not explain his reasons for doing so in public.



214 W 3 St.  
Block 305, lot 11  
5 story walk-up old law tenement

Owned by Harwood Realty, Inc., 600 E 11 St., NYC  
Contracts signed by Harry J. Shapolsky, President (1963)  
Harry Shapolsky, President (1964)  
Francis Harry J. Shapolsky (according to Real Estate  
Directory of Manhattan)

Acquired 8-21-1963 from John the Baptist Foundation,  
c/o The Bank of New York, 40 Wall St., NYC,  
for \$237,000.- (also 7 other bldgs.)

\$150,000.- mortgage at 6% interest, 8-19-1963, due  
8-19-1968, held by The Ministers and Missionaries Benefit  
Board of the American Baptist Convention,  
475 Riverside Drive, NYC (also on 7 other bldgs.)

Assessed land value \$15,000.-; total value \$75,000.-  
(including 212 and 216 E 3 St.), 1971

*Shapolsky et al Manhattan Real Estate Holdings, a Real-  
Time Social System, as of May 1, 1971, Excerpt.*

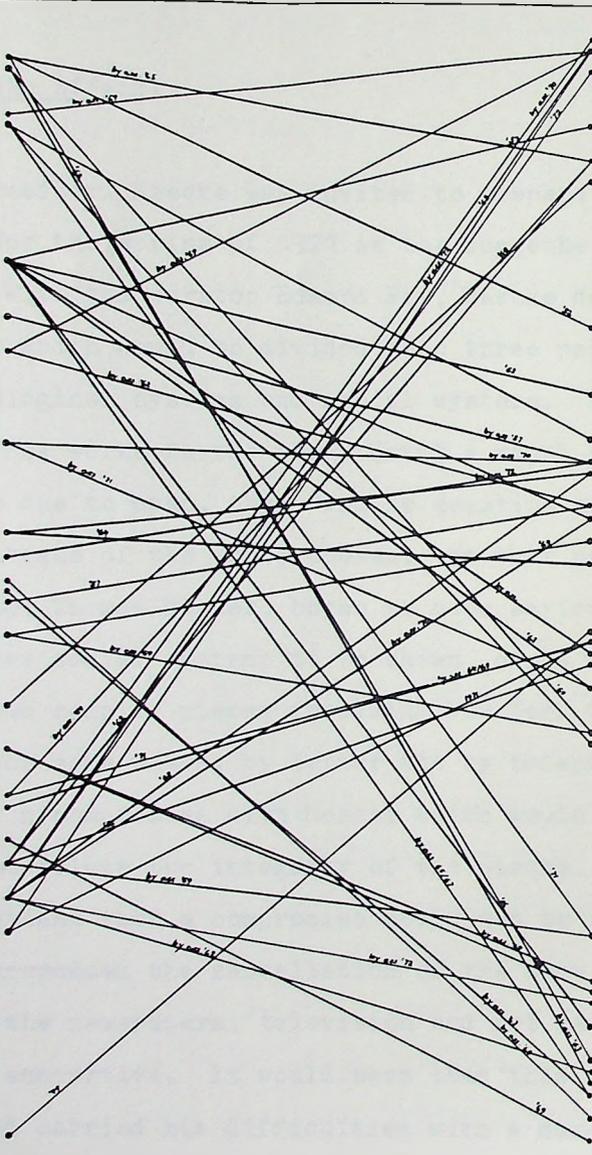
corporation

holds mortgage

from

corporation

Apache Realty Corp. 1  
 Arm Estates, Inc. 2  
 Ave. 3 & East 14th St. Corp. 3  
 Brower Realty Corp. 4  
 Anna Callipari 5  
 Callipari Construction Corp. 6  
 Ernest Callipari 7  
 Ernest Callipari Estate 8  
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 George Greenberger 26  
 Anna Gruber 27  
 Harry Gruber 28  
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 Jeth Realty Corp. 36  
 Daniel Kirshenbaum 37  
 Sam Kirshenbaum 38  
 Kirby Realty Corp. 39  
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 Knapack Realty Corp. 41  
 Leticia Realty Corp. 42  
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 Marya Realty Corp. 46  
 Clara Shostovits 47  
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 1771 1st Ave. Realty Corp. 64  
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 Sarah Estates, Inc. 67  
 Satura 1850 Estates, Inc. 68  
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 Scotty Lee Realty Corp. 70  
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 Myrlis Shapolsky 78  
 Pearl Shapolsky 79  
 Sam Shapolsky 80  
 Donald Sherman 81  
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 28 Ridge St. Corp. 85  
 292 E 3 St. Corp. 86  
 278 Tenth, Inc. 87  
 213 Madison Jefferson Corp. 88  
 232 Harper Estates Realty, Inc. 89  
 227 E 127 St. Corp. 90  
 2257 Realty Corp. 91  
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 Seymour Weinfeld 93  
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 West No. 3 Realty Corp. 98  
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 Womart Realty Corp. 101



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 Winthrop Properties, Inc. 100  
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### CHAPTER 3

#### The Guggenheim Affair:

Shortly thereafter, Haacke was invited to prepare a one-man exhibition for the spring of 1971 at the Guggenheim museum in New York City. With the curator Edward Fry, Haacke decided on a presentation which would be divided into three parts: physical systems, Biological systems and social systems. The artist constructed new works for the show. Until a month and a half before the show was due to open, there was no question as to the validity or appropriateness of the works chosen. At that point the director of the museum, Thomas Messer, began to have serious doubts about allowing three social systems to be shown, one a visitors poll and the others two complex pieces involving New York City real estate holdings. For some weeks, by letter and by telephone, Haacke tried to arrive at a compromise with Messer which would satisfy the director but would not dilute the integrity of the pieces. In late March it became evident that a compromise could not be reached. Messer publicly announced the cancellation of the show, and Haacke took his case to the newspapers, television and art magazines - the last being quite supportive. It would seem that this was the first time an artist had carried his difficulties with a museum effectively into the mass media. As many have already observed, the ensuing controversy and public furore did more to focus upon Haacke and his work than half a dozen one-man exhibitions at the Guggenheim. If nothing else, Haacke proved that museums could no longer censor or reject artist's works - once a proposal is accepted for exhibition - on purely arbitrary grounds.

Two of Haacke's incriminated pieces for that show were investigations of the holdings of two New York real estate groups, one dealing primarily with slum properties, the other representing the largest private real estate conglomerate in all of Manhattan. With only public records at his disposal, Haacke traced the web of ownership for each of the real estate groups, cross-indexing names of relatives, business associates and dummy corporations. Each property was described by a photograph of the site, its address, the nominal legal owner, corporate officers, mortgages and their holders, the assessed value and a large map showing their exact geographic location.

Thomas Messer, Director of the Guggenheim, cancelled the exhibition on the grounds that it might engender legal action by the real estate operators. Also he felt that this work violated the political "neutrality" of the Guggenheim museums' character as a public educational institution, reducing the museum to a forum for any and all political issues. In a guest editorial written for 'Arts Magazine' in June 1971, Messer makes the point that the Haacke Guggenheim confrontation would never have taken place if they had relied upon the traditional system of selecting finished objects instead of relying on artists' proposals, the "improvisational working mode". (9) In other words, censorship remains undetected when a museum makes its decisions on completed art before announcing a public commitment to the artist.

In the same editorial response to a prior editorial by 'Arts Magazine', Messer asserts that he never doubted Haacke's artistry but that .....

To the degree to which an artist deliberately pursues aims that lie beyond art, his very concentration upon ulterior ends stands in conflict with the intrinsic nature of the work as an end in itself. The conclusion is that the sense of inappropriateness that was felt from the start toward Haacke's "social system" exhibit was due to an aesthetic weakness which interacted with the forcing of art boundaries. The tensions within this contradiction in the work itself transferred itself from it onto the museum environment and beyond it into society at large. Eventually, the choice was between the acceptance of or rejection of an alien substance that had entered the art museum organism."

All this sounds very strange indeed when one remembers the 19th and early 20th century politically engaged artists, e.g. David, Géricault, Delacroix, Courbet, Monet, Tatlin, Kdehenks, Picasso, Grosz and rivera, to name but a few of the most prominent. Before the Solomon R. Guggenheim museum's rise to power in the late 1950's one should remember that it was a museum of Non objective art, and that it was in part responsible for performing the "Rites of Purification" for the acceptance of avant-garde art into the American mainstream. This was first and foremost a content free art; one allowing no "alien substance" to penetrate the museum's sanctified environment. As Messer perceives, in the context of the museum, Haacke's work does present a "contradiction", but it is a contradiction which implicitly points towards the financial foundations of the Guggenheim itself and this is what Messer could not tolerate.

One might ask how the Guggenheim Foundation is able to dispense hundreds of thousands of dollars in grants every year, induce wealthy patrons to contribute, structure spectacular social evenings, involve itself in intricate financial affairs, and then insist that it is "not competent" to comment on social ills? In reality any public or semi-public institution is 'a priori' a political symbol. The museum's avowed duty is to choose and possess the superior artifacts of our culture. But what if these turn out to be floor sweeping compound florescent lights or typed filing cards? Beauty at any rate is no longer an issue.

By connecting physical decay with specific financial transactions Haacke has attacked the holy institution of private property in a capitalist society. If the real estate pieces were merely a matter of exposing housing malpractises, they would indeed be tame works. But Haacke is producing sacred art in the oldest sense of the word: the revelation of unresolvable contradictions. In essence the hidden esthetic of the real estate pieces proclaims that the 'sacred place' (i.e. the museum) is also responsible for the oppressive ugliness of New York City.

Howard Wise, Haacke's friend and previously his dealer, followed the cancellation with a thoughtful letter to Messer:

It seems to me that in the two "real estate" works, Haacke's approach is in the classic tradition of art. He looks at the landscape (Manhattan) and seeks to bring order out of chaos by emphasizing certain aspects and minimizing others to

treat a clearer picture and to afford the viewer new understanding and insights. I cannot comprehend what "ulterior motive" he might have had except the desire to create a "realistic" work; in other words, he is "telling it like it is". (10)

Wise ends the letter noting that the museum has the option of either assisting the vitality of contemporary art or retarding it. "Either way", he comments to Messer, "You now become part of the work of art". This last sentence is important because it reconfirms something which Haacke had been striving for: that is, the complete integration of his art, leaving no essential dividing line between his professional life and his existence as a social and political creature. Messers decision was, in effect, one esthetic alternative to his proposals.

Possibly one of the most serious personal consequences of the whole Guggenheim affair was the dismissal of curator Ed Fry from the staff of the museum. From early on Fry worked closely with Haacke on the artists exhibition. When news of the cancellation came Fry fought the decision in the front office and backed Haacke in the press. While trying to be tactful he stressed that the Directors decision produced grave implications for the museum's future, and particularly in its role as a free institution supporting public expression.

On Monday, April 26th Ed Fry was dismissed. In a single gesture the Guggenheim museum had not only lost a capable scholar but perhaps the only member of its curatorial staff with the guts

to defend artists' integrity and the right to reasonable expression.

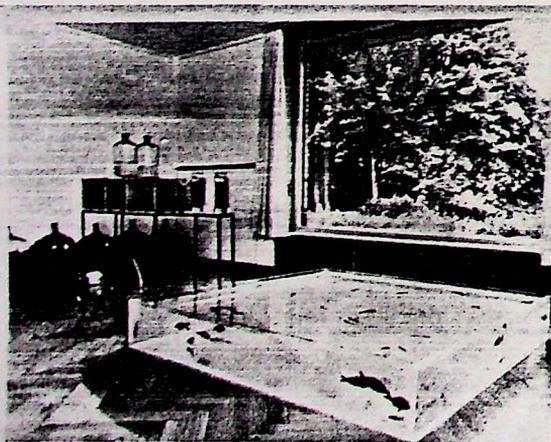
There is something profoundly pathetic in a great museum becoming a frightened third-rate institution. After the decision the response from the art community was decisive. A number of artists categorically refused to have their work in the building. By the following season the museum could well have been reduced to exhibiting its permanent collections and the art of a few obscure contemporaries.

In March and April of 1974, almost exactly three years after the Guggenheim affair, Haacke exhibited a set of brass framed charts detailing the Solomon R. Guggenheim museum's Board of Trustees and their corporate affiliations. What came to light were the interlocking ties between members of the Board of Trustees and a certain Kennecott Copper Corporation. Haacke notes in his panels statements from President Salvador Allende of Chile where some of Kennecott's copper mines are located. Allende in a statement says "They have dug their claws into my country" and in a military coup in 1971, his government seized the property on which the copper mines were located.

For the museums Haacke's art represents something of a catch 22 situation, if they accept it, it constitutes to some degree, but not always, a form of self indictment; if they reject it for specious reasons, usually the ensuing publicity is far more revealing than a forthright statement could have been. There have been occasions such as Haacke's exhibition at the museum Hus Lange of the city of



Chickens hatching, April 14, 1969



Rhinewater Purification Plant

1972. View of Installation in One-man show at Museum Haus

Krefeld, West Germany, (1972), where the dynamics are somewhat different. The artist analysed and displayed raw sewage pouring into the Rhine river from the Krefeld sewage plant. In this instant the museum's director a civil servant was entirely sympathetic with Haacke's ecological statement and thus a certain dialectic tension is missing from the piece. One reporter in a Krefeld newspaper noted that some of Haacke's art transcends the art world and has civic implications. On telephoning the local official responsible for environmental protection and asking what response his agency would have to the problem he was told: "My God, who goes there (to the museum) anyhow?" Museums may be able to afford the piety of ecological ideals because these are issues that do not concern them directly.

CHAPTER 4

Les Poseuses (1975)

One of Haacke's most well known and most recent works is called Les Poseuses which he exhibited in the Lisson Gallery in 1975. The material he presented for this exhibition consisted of a one-for-one colour reproduction of Seurats painting, Les Poseuses (small version), and the documentary panels, each of which outlined the biography, business interests, official and corporate positions, and cultural and political affiliations of each of the successive owners of the painting. Haacke offered no interpretation or analysis. In 1971 when he first exhibited the work, he said: "I leave it up to you as far as how you evaluate the situation. You continue the work by drawing your own conclusions from the information presented".

The conclusions in the instance were inevitable. The first panel demonstrated that Seurat, himself, was both a perceptual and a political radical. His 'pointillist' paints, which drew on contemporary findings in optics and light theory, met largely with derision. Few were sold; many were given away as presents to close friends in the circle of Artists, intellectuals and anarchist communists in which he moved. He died unacknowledged in 1891, aged 32. The first owners of Les Poseuses tended to be largely prosperous, middle class associates of Seurat's circle; men who shared his aesthetic intellectual and political interests, in spite of their social positions. Gradually Les Poseuses passed into the hands of 'enlightened' businessmen, financiers, aesthetes, and investors. It was subject to a progressive increase in exchange value. In 1970

## "Les Poseuses"

(small version)

\$1,033,200 auction bid at Christie's, 1970, half share held by

### Artemis S.A.

Incorporated April 2, 1970 in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg; private holding company of subsidiaries incorporated in the United Kingdom (David Carritt, Ltd., London) and other countries. Invests and trades in works of the fine and decorative arts of all periods and cultures.

Inventory included old masters, impressionists, classical modern art, contemporary art; antique, African, Asian sculpture; decorative silver.

Collaborating art dealers include E.V. Thaw & Co., New York; Fourcade, Droll, Inc., New York; R.M. Light & Co., Boston; Heinz Berggruen & Cie., Paris; Heinz Herzer & Co., Munich; P. & D. Colnaghi, London; Heim, London; Lefevre, London; Fischer Fine Art, London.

Works sold among others to National Gallery, Washington; Cleveland Museum; Norton Simon Foundation; Ashmolean Museum, Oxford.

#### Board of Directors

*Baron Léon Lambert*, Chairman since 1970. Chairman of Compagnie Bruxelles Lambert.

*Eugene Victor Thaw*, managing director since 1974. Head of E.V. Thaw & Co. Private dealer. 1970-72 President of Art Dealers Association of America, Inc.

*David Carritt*, since 1970. Head of David Carritt Ltd., Artemis subsidiary in London. Old Master expert, formerly with Christie's, London.

*Count Christian zu Salm-Reifferscheidt*, 1970-73. Art historian, expert in antique art. Former curator of Bavarian State Museum, Munich. Deceased.

*Philippe R. Stoclet*, since 1970. Former representative of Loeb, Rhoades & Co., New York. Chief executive officer of Brussels financing company. Descendant of Alphonse Stoclet, international railroad builder and collector, who commissioned architect Josef Hoffmann of "Wiener Werkstätten" to build Palais Stoclet, Brussels.

*Count Artur Strachwitz*, since 1970. Born 1905. Brother-in-law of Prince of Liechtenstein. Former cultural attaché at Brussels Embassy of German Federal Republic.

*Baron Alexis de Rédel*, since 1970. Financial consultant, collector. Among major beneficiaries of inheritance of his late friend, Arturo Lopez, South American financier. Lives in 17th century Hôtel Lambert, Paris, rue St. Louis en Ile, now owned by Baron Guy de Rothschild, a friend.

*Walter Bareiss*, since 1973. Born Tübingen, Germany. Chairman of family business Schachenmeyr, Mann & Cie. GmbH., Salach, Germany, yarn factory. Chairman of Cobar Industries, Inc. Served in U.S. Army in World War II. Married to Molly Stimson, cousin of Henry L. Stimson, late US Secretary of War. Collector. Member collection committee 20th century art, chairman Gallery Association Bavarian State Museum, Munich. Trustee Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1964-73, acting director 1969-70, member committee on drawings and prints. Lives Munich and Greenwich, Conn.

*Heinz Berggruen*, since 1974. Head of Paris art gallery, Heinz Berggruen & Cie..

#### Art Advisory Board

Baron and Baroness *Élie de Rothschild*, 1970-73; Prof. Abraham Hammacher, 1970-73; Douglas Cooper, 1971-73; Roderic Thesiger, 1971-73; Heinz Herzer, since 1971; Count Cesare Cicogna Mozzoni, 1972-73; Valentine Aaby, since 1974.

Year	Holding Company and Subsidiaries		
	consolidated profit	total assets	assets works of art at cost
1970-71	\$ 43,042	\$ 5,431,299	\$2,207,680
1971-72	641,992	5,703,195	3,676,507
1972-73	778,448	8,010,350	5,787,507
1973-74	733,397	10,256,991	7,864,400

Authorized capital: 1,000,000 shares of \$10 nominal value per share. Issued capital: 413,025 shares of \$10 each: \$4,130,250 (Oct. 1974).

£1,033,200 was bid for the painting at Christies, and it was acquired by Artemis, an international company existing solely for the purpose of speculative trade in the fine arts. A half-share in the painting was retained privately by Richard Feigen, dealer and Artemis associate.

In 1974 Haacke made 'On social greese': this consisted of six quotations from businessmen (most of whom also held administrative posts in the arts), each photo-engraved on a magnesium plate mounted on aluminium. Characteristically, the David Rockefeller quote read:

From an economic standpoint, such involvement in the arts can mean direct and tangible benefits. It can provide a company with extensive publicity and advertising, a brighter public reputation, and an improved corporate image. It can build better customer relations, a readier acceptance of company products, and a superior appraisal of their quality. Promotion of the arts can improve the morale of employees and help attract qualified personnel."

All the quotations demonstrated that those who involved themselves in large scale patronage did so because they were aware of ways in which art could be made to serve the interests of the prevailing ideology and the economic system which determined it. Attempts to censor or surpress certain of Haacke's pieces, usually by museum curators and directors acting in what they take to be the immediate interests of their trustees, thus themselves became a part of his work: they appear

to realise the ideological limits within which the artist seems to be constrained to work as a pre-condition for large-scale public exhibition.

However, this exhibition of his Seurat piece exemplified the contradiction that has been evident in Haacke's work since 1968. The Seurat reproductions were on sale at the Lisson Gallery as a work of art. The intended meaning of Haacke's work would appear to be to demonstrate that in the case of Seurat's *Les Poseuses* there was a dichotomy between, on the one hand, the meaning of the painting as defined by the artist's aesthetic intentions and cultural affiliations, and on the other, the subsequent use made of the canvas as an investment commodity; Haacke further demonstrated that this dichotomy widened as the canvas passed through time and history. It is not easy to identify any other meaning Haacke's work may be intended to imply. But, through the representation of of this single meaning as a 'work of art', available for purchase by museums or private collections, Haacke's intervention immediately becomes subject to the very phenomena, the exposure of which is its sole 'raison d'être'

Haacke's quite considerable 'reputation' as an artist accounts for the quite considerable prices that his works, such as the Seurat piece can command. This reputation and these exchange-values, have in in large part been built up through documenting the very contradictions off which they feed. Haacke's contribution may have been doomed, from the start, to inevitable invalidation as a result of the form (an art work') through which it was presented. It might have happened that he failed to develop a reputation as 'an artist'

in which case his works would not have been exhibited in museums, or bought or sold by dealers and collectors: their meaning would not then have been discussed at all. In fact his reputation continues to increase and both that reputation

and the works themselves become an ever more entrenched part of the problem, the exposure of which is their sole reason for being in the first place. There are no boundaries on the 'art worlds' capacity for assimilation of either artists or the objects they produce. Even if Haacke makes token gestures, such as refusing to allow his photograph to be taken and not signing his works, the irony is that when he is censored, or rejected by a particular museum, this becomes one of the factors which increases his reputation and the exchange values he can command, within the art world overall.

However although Haacke's work must thus be castrated, this was not true of, for example, Seurat's work. Certainly, Seurat made use of certain prevalent aesthetic conventions of his time, such as paint and canvas; the modes of production he used had been determined by the class interests of those who owned capital and bought paintings. But Seurat used paint in such a way that his work challenged traditional modes of perception; potentially, when realised within perception, his images contained a 'moment of becoming', which spoke of ways of seeing the future. This was the true use - value of his painting, and although it may have been obscured and mystified by the subsequent false use of his work as capital investment, it was not thereby destroyed. It would have been, of course, if he had used his chosen form solely to comment on the contradictions under which that

form was produced. The implicit analysis contained in Haacke's work is indisputably correct. However, it can only be by extracting it from art objects and exhibitions altogether and by developing it as theory and criticism, that its truth can be realised in a way that does not negate itself.

Haacke has been swept along by the mainstream of his own fluids and is now riding the crest of one of his own waves, not knowing what the next bend will bring. As he stated looking back over his previous work:

"It is only in retrospect that I can discern continuity and a logical consistent step by step development. As has been the case until now, I have only an extremely vague notion of where this course is heading. The only guideline in this venture into the unknown is what Kandinsky called the "Principle of inner necessity".

Notes

(1) NEW TENDENCY

The new tendency crystallised in Europe towards the end of the 1950's and it became a reasonable alternative to both 'constructivism' and later 'object art'. It undertook to represent problems of physical order that, while they might have been anticipated by the formalists of the 1920's, were then considered irrelevant. The rising of the New Tendency had its premier with some of the one-night exhibitions held by Otto Peine and Heinz Mack in Dusseldorf (1957).

In the following year both artists opened more exhibitions to artists of all nationalities working in a similar direction. For the seventh of these, the 'red picture' exhibition, a catalogue was issued explaining the paintings as a post-tachist "beginning"; an attempt to purify and reestablish the ties between human nature and the fields of energy which emanate from the painted surface. This idea was more fully defined in a less inclusive exhibition 'Vibration' in which the grid paintings of Mack, Almir Mavignier and Peine were shown. Here with paintings, actually low reliefs, light was articulated and vibrated in shifting field patterns. In one sense this began the New Tendency's drive to escape the confines of painting and sculpture by bringing them together into relief form via field dynamics.

(2) ZERO GROUP

ZERO GROUP was founded in Dusseldorf, West Germany, in 1957. There were only three consistent members in the group, Otto Peine, Gunter Ucker, and Heinz Mack. They called themselves ZERO because they wanted to make a new beginning, to start essentially from nothing.

In 1957 Peine himself, the strongest member of the group, began by punching thousands of holes through card and using light made what he termed vibrating light paintings. As his ideas progressed so did his need for new and updated mechanical means. He started building light machines and began to realise the ability of the medium to carry energy from the painting to the spectator. Technology, Peine states, had nothing to do with the formation of ZERO but it had much to do with its development. Technology enabled him and his fellow artists to go beyond the production of parlour pieces, as in the early ZERO years 1957/58, to address larger audiences and approach nature on an appropriate scale.

ZERO displayed a familiar impatience with the gallery system in Dusseldorf and elsewhere prompting the "night exhibitions" held in the lofts of Peine and Mack, 1958 - 1959. The exhibition lasted for one night only and radiated an aura of performance, especially in Peine's light ballets, although the members presented objects in the traditional sense as well.

- (3) Quoted from a letter by Hans Haacke to Jack Burnham dated April 28, 1968.
- (4) All quotations by the artist are either from unpublished statements or from taped conversations with the artist.
- (5) Leonardo Da Vinci.
- (6) E.A.T.: EXPERIMENTS in art and technology.
- (7) Jack Burnham, Steps in the formulation of a real/time political art, 1975.
- (8) The term "real-time" is a concept that was first developed in the late 1950's and early 1960's by the designers of the computer systems network for the United States Air Force Strategic Air Command. Their goal was to develop a world-wide monitoring network that would provide minute-to-minute response to any sign of a missile or bomber attack, or even an air-incursion, at any point on the globe. Gradually, the term "real-time" has been applied to time-sharing computer systems where there is no more than a normal conversational interval between a computer and its user. In other words, the computer responds at a rate of speed which is not too different from that used by persons engaged in normal conversation. Traditionally, art works exist in "mythical time", that is in an ideal historical time-frame separated from the day-to-day events of the real world. Some systems and conceptual artists, such as Haacke, attempt to integrate their works into

the actual events of the "real world", that is the world of politics, money-making, ecology, industry, and other pursuits. In effect, the work becomes not only the original concept or piece but any significant public or official response to it, or any further variations which the work may take as a result of its engagement with the world-at-large.

- (9) Messer, Thomas R. Director of Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum.  
Guest editorial 'Arts Magazine' New York, June 1971.

P.P. 4 - 5

- (10) From a letter by Howard Wise to Thomas Messer dated April 8  
1971.

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