

HANS HAACKE
RETROSPECTIVE

NOVEMBER 8, 2024 – FEBRUARY 9, 2025

WALL PANELS AND AUDIO SPOTS OF THE EXHIBITION

INTRODUCTION

The German-American artist Hans Haacke (*1936) is considered as one of the most influential figures in contemporary art. From the early 1960s onward, Haacke pursued a very broad approach: on the one hand, he picked up on tendencies from ZERO and Minimal Art, but he also worked in the fields of ecology and the natural sciences, Conceptual Art, Land Art, Institutional Critique, public art, poster art, and many others. The artist himself describes the world as “one supersystem with a myriad of subsystems, each one more or less affected by all the others.” In the process, Haacke’s work is consistently political in its stringency. He was repeatedly excluded from exhibitions as a result of his directness, and he has consistently stood up for his convictions, which includes the defense of democratic principles in particular. The exhibition at Schirn presents about 70 paintings, photographs, objects, installations, actions, poster and one film from 1959 to the present.

ROTUNDA

Gift Horse, 2014

Bronze with black patina and wax finish, stainless-steel fasteners and supports, and 5 mm flexible LED display with stainless-steel armature and polycarbonate face, Courtesy the artist and Paula Cooper Gallery, New York

The fourth plinth, on the northwest corner of Trafalgar Square in London, was meant to carry an equestrian statue of William IV (1765–1837). It is said that due to a lack of funds, he was never able to join his older brother, George IV (1762–1830), who is known for his “dissolute way of life” and whose horseback effigy occupies the plinth on the northeast corner of the square. Both kings were younger contemporaries of George Stubbs (1724–1806), the English painter of horses and other animals whose paintings are held in the collections of the Tate and the National Gallery at Trafalgar Square. In 1766, Stubbs published his study *The Anatomy of the Horse*: thirty etchings, all accompanied by very detailed explanations of the skeleton, the muscles, and other parts of a horse’s anatomy. A digitally altered version (orientation, limbs, neck, head adjusted) of the first skeleton plate of Stubbs’s *The Anatomy of the Horse* serves to illustrate my proposal for the empty plinth. A three-dimensional skeleton of a strutting horse occupies the plinth, facing the square, with the National Gallery in the back. Its size matches that of the horse carrying George IV.

A bow is tied around a frontal thighbone of the skeleton as around a gift. Both sides of the “ribbon” are capable of displaying electronic messages. They transmit, live, the FTLE 100 ticker of the London Stock Exchange (LSE). At times when no trading occurs—after hours and on weekends and holidays—the ticker of the most recent day of LSE activity is repeated.

The piece was later shown in Munich (2017), Chicago (2018), and New York (2019) where the ribbon displayed ticker information from the host country’s leading stock exchange. In Munich, *Gift Horse* was exhibited at the Haus der Kunst, formerly Haus der Deutschen Kunst (House of German Art), a neoclassical building inaugurated by Adolf Hitler in 1937. In Frankfurt, the ribbon displays the ticker of Börse Frankfurt, one of the world’s oldest and largest stock exchanges.

Hans Haacke, 2012, updated in 2024

EARLY WORK

"I believe that a rational, almost positivistic approach, sort of matter of fact, can be pushed to a point where it blossoms into something very poetic, weightless and irrational."

Hans Haacke 1967

Haacke's friendship with Otto Piene and his contact with the artist group ZERO in Düsseldorf had a formative influence on his early work from around 1960. He shared their interest in scientific phenomena, which led to experiments and processes with mirrors, acrylic glass, air, water and ice, as well as plants, and animals. During this phase, Haacke took part in a number of pioneering exhibitions on kinetics, op art, conceptual art, and land art. While Haacke's work showed commonalities with many other innovative movements of the 1960s, he never really identified with any of them: he was not interested in specific materials and styles, but rather in the fundamental connections between physical, biological, and social systems. The fact that everything is connected, "everything has to do with everything", as he called it, is shown in his early works in a pictorial way.

Photographic Notes, documenta 2, 1959

26 b/w photographs (selection), Courtesy the artist and Paula Cooper Gallery, New York

In 1959, Hans Haacke was a twenty-three-year-old student trainee helping out with the exhibition setup and supervision at documenta 2 in Kassel. The quintennial had been founded four years earlier by the painter and academy professor Arnold Bode in order to reconnect with international modernist currents after Second World War. Haacke's snapshots capture the tense and often telling interactions between the exhibition space, artworks, and viewers with an analytical gaze. He thereby held up a mirror to German society and its contradictions. While researching the documenta archive in 1981, Walter Grasskamp discovered 300 unlabeled prints whose motifs clearly stood out from other photographs of the large-scale exhibition. He published one of these photographs in the magazine *Kunstforum International* and gave Hans Haacke a freshly printed copy. A few days later, Haacke revealed himself to be the creator of the photographs, which he had hardly intended as artworks twenty-two years earlier. It wasn't until 2001 that Hans Haacke compiled a selection of twenty-six prints for the photographic series *Photographic Notes, documenta 2*. In retrospect, these early photographs already contain approaches that anticipate central elements of his oeuvre: the sociological method of observation; the critical interrogation of political, social, and cultural systems; and the disclosure of power relations.

Grass Grows, 1969

Earth, grass, H.E. Sheikh Jassim bin Abdulaziz Al-Thani and H.E. Sheikha Al-Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani

"The shape... is of no relevance. I'm not interested in the form. I'm more interested in the growth of plants – growth as a phenomenon which is something that is outside the realm of forms, composition etc. and has to do with interactions of forces and interaction of energy and information."

Hans Haacke, 1969

"The working premise is to think in terms of systems; the production of systems, the interference with and the exposure of existing systems. Such an approach is concerned with the operational structure of organizations, in which transfer of information, energy and/or material occurs. Systems can be physical, biological or social. They can be man-made, naturally existing or a combination of any of the above."

Hans Haacke, 1971

Rhine Water Purification Plant, 1972

A system for harvesting polluted water discharged by the city sewage system into the Rhine, purifying it, and using it to sustain live fish; the overflow of clean water was carried to the museum garden, where it seeped into the ground; executed at Museum Haus Lange, Krefeld, as part of a solo exhibition C-print on aluminum (printed in 2023), Courtesy the artist and Paula Cooper Gallery, New York

In 1972, Hans Haacke installed his *Rheinwasseraufbereitungsanlage (Rhine Water Purification Plant)* at the Museum Haus Lange in Krefeld as part of a solo exhibition. It was a miniature wastewater treatment plant that filtered and purified industrially polluted Rhine water. Carboys, large glass jugs, constantly refilled with Rhine water from Krefeld-Uerdingen, were lined up along the wall and served as storage tanks for the wastewater, which was then fed via a pump into a reaction tank. Chlorine bleach, caustic soda, and ferrous sulphate were added before it flowed into a further sedimentation tank. The last station was formed by two cylindrical gravel and activated carbon filters. The purified water then reached a goldfish tank and then passed through tubing in the ground back into the groundwater, that is, into the museum's garden. Haacke called such an installation a "real time system". In text panels, he also listed the companies and the quantity of substances that were discharged into the Rhine. Haacke further illustrated the extreme pollution caused by local industry with a photo of a flock of seagulls. These gathered at the discharge point of the wastewater to feed on the dead fish.

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

142 b/w photographs, 142 typewritten maps, 2 excerpts from a city map, 6 charts; gelatin silver print; printed; typed ink on paper, Gratitude: MACBA. Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona
In 1971, the Shapolsky real estate group, headed by Harry Shapolsky and nominally owned by about seventy different corporations, frequently bought, sold, and mortgaged properties within the group. What amounted to self-dealing had tax advantages (mortgage payments are tax deductible) and obscured the actual ownership of the properties. The boards of these seventy odd corporations each included at least one member of the Shapolsky family or someone with close ties. The 142 known properties were located predominantly on the Lower East Side and in Harlem—both slum areas of New York City in 1971—where they constituted the largest concentration of real estate under the control of a single group. The information for the work was culled from public records at the New York County Clerk's Office. Thomas Messer, then the director of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, rejected this work and two others that had been made for a solo exhibition at the museum. He cancelled the exhibition six weeks before the opening when I refused to withdraw the disputed works. Messer called them "inappropriate" for exhibition at the museum and stated that he had to "fend off an alien substance that had entered the art museum organism" (...).

Hans Haacke, 2006

MoMA Poll, 1970

Two transparent ballot boxes with automatic counters, color-coded ballots, Courtesy the artist and Paula Cooper Gallery, New York

Visitors to the "Information" show at The Museum of Modern Art in 1970 were asked to respond on ballots to a question posted above two transparent boxes in the exhibition. Automatic counters recorded the ballots placed in the boxes. By the end of the exhibition, they had tallied 25,566 "Yes" votes (68.7 percent) and 11,563 "No" votes (31.3 percent). Of a total of 299,057 visitors, 37,129 (12.4 percent) had participated. The question referred to Nelson Rockefeller, the four-term Republican governor of the state of New York (1959–73), who was running for reelection in 1970.

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Two months before the opening of the exhibition, the United States bombed and invaded Cambodia, even though that country had declared itself neutral in the Vietnam conflict. In protest, large antiwar demonstrations were held throughout the United States. (...) Many New York artists joined the Art Strike, an ad hoc group that called for the temporary closing of museums. The Rockefeller family had played an important role in founding MoMA in 1929. Nelson Rockefeller was a member of MoMA's board of trustees from 1932 until his death in 1979 (...).
Hans Haacke, 2004

News, 1969

Teletype machine, paper, wire service, Courtesy the artist and Paula Cooper Gallery, New York

During "Prospect 69" in Düsseldorf, a teletype machine installed at the Kunsthalle printed out messages transmitted by the dpa (Deutsche Presse-Agentur) news wire service. On the day after the transmission, the paper printouts were displayed for further reading, and, eventually, on the third day, these rolls were labeled, dated, and stored in transparent tubular containers. During the time of the exhibition, the West German federal elections were held. (...) Two months later, on the occasion of a one-person exhibition at Howard Wise Gallery in New York (1969), a teletype machine in the gallery printed the UPI (United Press International) news service. In this installation, as in the previous one, the printed paper rolls were displayed after the day of transmission and then stored in twenty-six plastic containers. For an installation at the Jewish Museum, as part of the exhibition "Software" (1970), five teletype machines simultaneously recorded the wire services of ANSA (Italian), dpa (German), the New York Times News Service, Reuters, and UPI. The printouts accumulated on the floor and were not posted or preserved beyond the time of the exhibition. This was also the way *News* was presented in the exhibition "Directions 3: Eight Artists at the Milwaukee Art Center" (1971). In Milwaukee, the wire services recorded were those of the Los Angeles Times, The Washington Post, The New York Times, and UPI. For this presentation, the wire services recorded are those of Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Frankfurter Rundschau und Hessischer Rundfunk (Hessenschau).

Hans Haacke, written 1969, updated in 2024

Manet-PROJEKT '74, 1974

10 panels, color photo reproduction of Édouard Manet, *La botte d'asperges*, 1880 (Bunch of Asparagus), Courtesy the artist and Paula Cooper Gallery, New York

In 1974, to celebrate its 150th anniversary, the Wallraf-Richartz-Museum in Cologne organized the exhibition "PROJEKT '74". The show was to present "aspects of international art at the beginning of the 1970s." Invited to participate, Haacke submitted an outline for a new work: Manet's *Bunch of Asparagus* (1880), in the collection of the Wallraf-Richartz-Museum, is on a studio easel in an approximately 6 by 8 meters (20 by 26 feet) room of "PROJEKT '74". Panels on the wall present the social and economic positions of the persons who have owned the painting, and the prices paid for it. (...) The director of the museum, Dr. Keller, objected to the listing of Hermann Abs's nineteen positions on boards of directors (Abs had been instrumental in acquiring the painting for the museum). Dr. Keller explained: "...a grateful museum and an appreciative city ... must protect initiatives of such an extraordinary nature from any interpretation that might later throw even the slightest shadow on it ..." And he remarked: "A museum knows nothing about economic power; however, it does, indeed, know something about spiritual power." On the day of the museum's press opening, the excluded work went on exhibition at Galerie Paul Maenz in Cologne. Standing in for the original *Bunch of Asparagus* was a full-size color reproduction. Daniel Buren incorporated facsimiles of the censored panels into his work in the museum's anniversary show. The General Director of Cologne Museums, Prof. von der Osten, had them pasted over with

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paper. Until his death in 1994, Herman J. Abs was barred from entering the United States because of his role at Deutsche Bank, during the Nazi period, in the “Aryanization” of Jewish property. Recently it has become known that Abs had been chairman of the board of directors of a firm making tools for Hitler’s arms industry. The company used forced labor and prisoners of war under very harsh working conditions. 144 of those who did not perform to the company’s expectations were sent to the Buchenwald concentration camp.

Hans Haacke, 1974

Buhrlesque, 1985

Shoes, boxes, candles, fabric, color photograph under glass, wooden frame, Collection FRAC Fonds regional d'art contemporain de Bourgogne

Until 1999, Oerlikon-Bührle was the largest arms manufacturer in Switzerland. A diversified holding, it also produced machine tools, aircraft, automotive parts, welding equipment, and textiles, as well as shoes and accessories, and was active in real estate and hotel operations. Dr. Dietrich Bührle, for decades the chairman and CEO of the company, was said to be the richest man in Switzerland. Until they took it public in 1973, he and his sister were the company’s sole owners.

They retained a majority of the shares. In the 1930s, Dietrich Bührle’s father built the company, a family business, into a major weapons manufacturer. During World War II, Oerlikon supplied cannons and ammunition to the Axis powers Germany, Italy, and Romania, worth 543.4 million Swiss francs. In 1970, Dietrich Bührle received an eight-month suspended sentence for illegal arms sales to numerous countries. In spite of a UN arms embargo against South Africa, Oerlikon continued to deliver and grant licenses for the production of military equipment to the apartheid regime: guns and ammunition for ground combat, weaponry for helicopters and naval vessels, anti-aircraft guns, and military aircraft. Bührle was awarded the highest decoration of South Africa in 1978. Swiss authorities maintained friendly contacts with the apartheid regime. In 1984, a delegation of the South African army, in full battle gear, marched in a popular two-day march organized annually by the Swiss Non-commissioned Officers Association. *PARATUS*, the periodical of the South African Defence Force, celebrated this event as a successful goodwill operation.

In 1977, Oerlikon-Bührle took over Bally, a Swiss manufacturer of shoes and accessories with a world reputation for elegance. It sold its Bally shares, in 1999, to Texas Pacific Group in the United States and its military production facilities to Rheinmetall in Germany. Dietrich Bührle, like his father, Emil Bührle, who had studied art history and was an art collector, collects art and is a prominent donor to the Zurich Kunsthhaus. In 1990, the National Gallery in Washington, DC, exhibited the Bührle collection under the title “The Passionate Eye”.

Hans Haacke, 1985

The Chocolate Master, 1981

7 diptychs, 14-piece, multicolor silkscreen prints, photographs, chocolates, and chocolate wrappers, Museum Ludwig, Cologne, Acquisition with the support of the Cultural Foundation of the German Federal States, the Peter and Irene Ludwig Foundation, the Ministry of Culture and Science of the State of North Rhine–Westphalia, and the initiative Perlensucher, Society for Modern Art e.V.

The German chocolate manufacturer and art collector Peter Ludwig once said: “The market for Pop Art has been determined by the activities of Mr. and Mrs. Ludwig.” Through donations of artworks, promised gifts, and loans, he also tried to determine the programming and professional appointments in public museums. His contract with the City of Cologne provided: “Appointments for the position of director as well as the professional staff of the Museum Ludwig are made in

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consultation with Mr. and Mrs. Ludwig or the surviving spouse. Prof. Dr. Ludwig and his wife are fully apprised of the museum's ongoing work (e.g. exhibitions, acquisitions, publications)." The construction of the museum, a condition for Ludwig's contributions, cost the city DM 273 million. Busts of the collector and his wife, sculpted by Arno Breker, were unveiled at the museum's opening in 1986. Yearly maintenance was estimated at DM 40 million. In 1983, Peter Ludwig sold 144 illuminated manuscripts to the Getty Museum (since 1977 the City of Cologne had paid two curators for research on the manuscripts and the publication of a four-volume catalogue). A Ludwig Foundation for Art was endowed with DM 30 million from the sale. It invested its capital in Ludwig's ailing chocolate enterprise. Nevertheless, licensing agreements and factories eventually had to be sold or closed. After the Getty sale, the collector was charged with nonpayment of DM 1.5 million in property taxes. Shortly before his death in 1996, Peter Ludwig asked the 1,400 unionized workers in his German factories to agree to an increase of their work week by two hours, the reduction of vacation days by three, and the elimination of overtime pay—all without wage adjustments. If his demands were not accepted, Ludwig threatened to move his production to Poland and Turkey. Two years after his death, his widow, Irene Ludwig, sold the company. She passed away in 2010.

Hans Haacke, 2006

Calligraphie, 1989

m 2 color photographs, 1 b/w photograph, text panel, architectural model

The site of the proposal is the cour d'honneur of the Palais Bourbon, part of the French National Assembly's building complex in Paris. Members of the French Parliament were to contribute a rock from their respective election district. The rocks were fitted together and polished to form a perfect cone in the center of the upper part of the court. Raised, gold-leaf calligraphy on its surface spell, in Arabic, the motto of the French Republic: "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity." A jet of water shoots up from the top of the cone. The water then flows down its surface and the sloping terrain toward the center of a balustrade. It rushes through a breach, which its force seems to have broken, onto the main court underneath, which is occupied by a large area in the shape of France. Common French crops are grown there in a four-year cycle: wheat, corn, rapeseed, cabbage, sunflowers, beans, peas, and potatoes. In the fourth year, the field lies fallow. The water is carried around the planted area in a shallow, graded trough toward the gate of the court, where it disappears into an opening in the ground. The entire volume of water is recycled.

Hans Haacke, 2004

DER BEVÖLKERUNG (TO THE POPULATION), 2000

Photographs of a selection of used burlap sacks from the archive *DER BEVÖLKERUNG (TO THE POPULATION)*, 2001; original burlap sack for soil contributions, designed by Hans Haacke, 2000; information leaflet, publisher: Deutscher Bundestag

DER BEVÖLKERUNG (TO THE POPULATION), 2000

Time-lapse webcam video from 2000 to 2024, loop, 3:20 min.

DER BEVÖLKERUNG (TO THE POPULATION), 2000

Federal Horticulture Show, close-ups of flora & fauna: *DER BEVÖLKERUNG (TO THE POPULATION)*, 2001–08, 60 photographs (of 224), Courtesy the artist and Sfeir-Semler Gallery, Beirut/Hamburg

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DER BEVÖLKERUNG (TO THE POPULATION), 2000

View of installation *DER BEVÖLKERUNG (TO THE POPULATION)* in the northern atrium of the Reichstag building in Berlin, 2008, C-print on aluminum, Courtesy the artist and Sfeir-Semler Gallery, Beirut/Hamburg

White neon letters beam the words “DER BEVÖLKERUNG” (TO THE POPULATION) upward toward the sky from the center of the northern courtyard of the Reichstag building. The letters, forty-seven inches (1.2 meters) high, lie on the ground along the courtyard’s longitudinal axis. When viewed from the Assembly Hall, they are read from west to east. Visitors on the roof of the building can see the illuminated letters on the floor of the courtyard. The typeface is the same as that of the inscription “DEM DEUTSCHEN VOLKE” (TO THE GERMAN PEOPLE) above the west gate of the Reichstag building. Members of the Bundestag are invited to bring approximately one hundred pounds (50 kilograms) of soil from their election districts to the courtyard. The soil comes from 669 different regions of the Federal Republic (the current number of deputies) and is deposited into a wooden trough around the neon letters. Seeds and roots are naturally embedded in the soil from their respective places of origin and left to sprout, as are airborne seeds from Berlin. They develop freely, without tending. When legislators leave Parliament, a portion of soil commensurate with their contribution is removed. Newly elected members of Parliament, in turn, are invited to contribute to the soil in the courtyard and, in so doing, to the vegetation. The process of plant growth and the ongoing addition and removal of soil, corresponding to the rhythm of the parliament terms, continue as long as democratically elected legislators meet in the Reichstag building. Panels are installed at locations from which the words “DER BEVÖLKERUNG” can be seen: in the Assembly Hall, on the press floor, and in public areas on the roof. Listed on these panels are the names of all of the members of Parliament with their party affiliations and the districts and states they represent. The panels also provide concise information on the conceptual references of the lettering, the process of plant growth, and the dates on which members contributed soil. At the beginning of each legislative term, the panels are replaced so that they reflect the changed membership of the Parliament. In order to assure the highest possible public accessibility—outside the building as well—this information, together with a current photograph of the courtyard, is posted on a website established for this purpose. A webcam overlooking the courtyard from a fixed position is programmed to take a photograph at 2 p.m. and 8 p.m., with the images saved on an ongoing basis. The site is updated daily. Thus, a databank develops with a constantly expanding picture archive, which allows the tracking of changes in the courtyard, compressed as if in a time-lapse recording. A link on the website provides the legislators who have contributed soil to the courtyard an opportunity to present their own texts and images. Objects not intrinsic to the project are excluded from the courtyard.

Hans Haacke, October 1999

AUDIO SPOTS IN THE EXHIBITION

At eight selected stations in the exhibition, visitors can listen to Hans Haacke’s own texts about his works. They were specifically recorded for the exhibition in German and can be accessed free of charge using a smartphone via QR codes next to the labels. These audio spots offer in-depth insights during the tour. In German, with English text translations online. Available during the exhibition at schirn.de/audiospots

WORKS WITH AUDIO SPOTS

Blue Sail, 1964–65

Chiffon, oscillating fan, fishing weights, and thread, Ca. 272 × 272 cm, Edition of 3, exhibition copy 2, Courtesy the artist and Paula Cooper Gallery, New York

If wind blows into a light piece of material, it flutters like a flag or swells like a sail, depending on the way in which it is suspended. The direction of the stream of air and its intensity also determine its movements. None of these movements are without an echo from the others. A common pulse goes through the membrane. The swelling on one side makes the other side recede; tensions arise and decrease. The sensitive fabric reacts to the slightest changes in air conditions. A gentle draft makes it swing lightly; a strong air current allows it to swell almost to the bursting point or pulls so that it furiously twists itself about. Since many factors are involved, no movement can be predicted precisely. The wind-driven fabric behaves like a living organism, all parts of which constantly influence each other. The unfolding of the organism in a harmonious manner depends on the intuitiveness and skill of the “wind player.” Their means to reach the essential character of the material are manipulations of the wind sources and the shape and method of suspending the fabric. Their materials are wind and flexible fabric; their tools are the laws of nature. The sensitivity of the wind player determines whether the fabric is given life and breathes.

Hans Haacke, Cologne, August 1965

Large Condensation Cube, 1963–67

Acrylic glass, distilled water, 76.2 × 76.2 × 76.2 cm, Edition of 5, exhibition copy, Courtesy the artist and Paula Cooper Gallery, New York

I have partially filled plexiglass containers of a simple stereometrics form with water and have sealed them. The intrusion of light warms the inside of the boxes. Since the inside temperature is always higher than the surrounding temperature, the water enclosed condenses: a delicate veil of drops begins to develop on the inside walls. At first, they are so small that one can distinguish individual drops only at a very close distance. The drops grow—hour by hour—small ones combining with larger ones. The speed of growth depends on the intensity and the angle of the intruding light. After a day, a dense cover of clearly defined drops has developed, and they all reflect light. As the condensation continues, some drops reach such a size that their weight overcomes the forces of adhesion and they run down the walls, leaving a trace. This trace starts to grow together again. Weeks after, Manifold traces, running side by side, have developed. The size of the drop varies according to its age. The process of condensation does not end. The box has a constantly but slowly changing appearance, which never repeats itself. The conditions are comparable to a living organism that reacts in a flexible manner to its surroundings. The image of condensation cannot be precisely predicted. It changes freely, bound only by statistical limits. I like this freedom.

Hans Haacke, New York, October 1965

Ice Stick, 1966

Stainless steel, copper, refrigeration unit, 173.7 × 61.3 × 62.5 cm

A “sculpture” that physically reacts to its environment can no longer be regarded as an object. The range of outside factors affecting it, as well as its own radius of action, reach beyond the space it materially occupies. It thus merges with the environment in a relationship that is better understood as a “system” of interdependent processes. These processes evolve without the viewer’s empathy. They become a witness. A system is not imagined; it is real.

Hans Haacke, New York, 1967

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Sphere in Oblique Air Jet, 1964

Weather balloon, helium, fan with housing, electrical connection, Base: 58.4 x 27.9 x 38.7 cm, Exhibition copy

In talking about nature, we most often think only in terms of trees, the blue sky, etc., and not of the underlying forces and patterns of organization. Neither do we immediately realize that these same conditions are the basis of all technological achievements. An airplane is subject to the same aerodynamic laws as the seagull. We seem to be so accustomed to looking at the gestalt of natural phenomena and interpreting it in a heartwarming, romantic manner that we neglect to perceive the physical laws forming the gestalt.

Hans Haacke, 1964, updated in 2011

The Right to Life, 1979

Color photograph on tricolor silkscreen print, in brass frame under glass 127 x 101 cm, Edition 2/2
The Allied Chemical Corporation, like American Cyanamid, has required the sterilization of female employees of child-bearing age if they wanted to continue in certain jobs. Two women have undergone the operation. Other large chemical companies have also practiced “protective discrimination”, usually restricted to moving women of child-bearing age into lower paid jobs within the company, where they are not exposed to toxic substances. Reported among these companies are Dow Chemical, Monsanto, DuPont, General Motors, Bunker Hill Smelting, St. Joseph Zinc, Eastman Kodak, and Firestone Tire and Rubber. In 1980, several women affected by American Cyanamid’s “fetal protection policy” sued the company. After three and a half years of pretrial proceedings, the case was settled for \$200,000, plus costs and attorney’s fees. In another lawsuit against American Cyanamid, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia, in an opinion authored by Judge Robert Bork (appointed by President Reagan), ruled on the Occupational Safety and Health Act. This law stipulates that an employer must provide a safe workplace. American Cyanamid is a diversified multinational Corporation with headquarters in Wayne, New Jersey. Among the company’s better known perfumes are Temps, Niki de Saint Phalle, Pierre Cardin, and Geoffrey Beene; it also makes Old Spice aftershave for men.

Hans Haacke, 1986

Photo Opportunity (After the Storm / Walker Evans), 1992

B/w reproduction of Walker Evans photograph, framed; light box with press photograph and neon lamp, Photograph: 37 x 44.5 cm, light box: 96.2 x 185.4 x 7.6 cm Courtesy the artist and Paula Cooper Gallery, New York

During the Great Depression in the United States, Walker Evans, on assignment with the Farm Security Administration, photographed impoverished people in the South. His photographs are in the collection of The Museum of Modern Art, New York, and other institutions. On November 3, 1991, The Washington Post reported on a storm that had struck the East Coast of the United States the preceding day, describing how it had damaged President George H. W. Bush’s vacation home in Kennebunkport, Maine. A photograph illustrated the article.

Hans Haacke, 2000

Thank You, Paine Webber, 1979

Two mounted color photographs in black anodized aluminum frames under glass Diptych, 107.3 x 222.3 cm (overall), Edition 1/2

After thirty years, *Thank You, Paine Webber* gained an Unfortunate new topicality. While much had changed, we were rudely reminded that much is still the way it was then. The exploitation of people’s misery— in this particular case, for PR purposes, but indicative of corporate attitudes and behavior more generally—continues unabated. The use of a photo of an unemployed worker from

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Detroit during the Great Depression on the cover of a powerful brokerage firm's 1977 annual report is a telling sign of how ingrained this "culture" really is—not to speak of the consequences of investment strategies that led to that depression and more recent economic disasters. The lead essay in the 1977 annual report had the promising title "Where Do Jobs Come From? A Concise Report on Unemployment and Wall Street's Role in Preventing It." A year later, the annual report offered another enlightening piece: "Do You Sincerely Want to Be Poor? Paine Webber's Centennial Essay on the Future of American Capitalism."

At the opening of the new millennium, Donald B. Marron, the smiling young man on the left in the group photo of the Paine Webber 1977 annual report, led the merger of his Brokerage firm with UBS, the giant Swiss bank and wealth manager. During his twenty years as CEO of Paine Webber, Marron amassed a substantial corporate art collection. The Museum of Modern Art in New York opened its new building in 2005 with an exhibition of this collection under the UBS logo. It so happened that Marron—now CEO of the private equity firm Lightyear Capital—had been the president of the museum's board of trustees for many years and, in 2005, was its vice president. Another link to the art world: UBS has been the main Sponsor of the Art Basel fairs in Basel, Miami Beach, and Hong Kong. UBS, like its American brethren, invested massively in the subprime mortgage casino and was bailed out by Swiss taxpayers. On top of that, the US government accused UBS of knowingly assisting wealthy US taxpayers in tax avoidance. The bank was pressured to reveal the names of thousands of the beneficiaries of its assistance. Today, these accretions are part of our reading of these two panels from 1979.

Hans Haacke, 1986, updated in 2019

Oil Painting: Homage to Marcel Broodthaers, 1982

Oil on canvas, brass plaque, stanchions with velvet rope, red carpet, b/w photo mural, painting light, Oil painting: 90 x 74.9 cm, brass plaque: 11.4 x 30.4 cm, carpet: width 89 cm, length variable, photo mural: variable dimensions

A week before the opening of documenta 7, in June 1982, President Reagan attended a NATO summit conference in Bonn, Germany, and delivered a speech to the Bundestag, the Parliament of the Federal Republic of Germany, to gain support for the stationing of cruise and Pershing II missiles in West Germany. His visit was met with a huge demonstration against nuclear arms, the largest demonstration in Germany since World War II. Hans Haacke took the photograph of that rally. Two days after the rally in Bonn, a record-breaking anti-nuclear march, attended by over 500,000 people, wound through the streets of New York to Central Park. As a result of a lessening of tensions between the Soviet Union and the United States, a treaty was signed in 1987 eliminating all intermediate-range nuclear missiles that the two powers had stationed on European soil.

Hans Haacke, 2006