

## About the Artist

Hans Haacke is a world-renowned artist whose work explores, both natural (such as geological and meteorological) and social (including governmental and corporate) processes. Born in Cologne, Germany, in 1936, Haacke received his degree in 1960 from the Staatliche Werkakademie in Kassel, Germany. He then worked in Paris at the print studio of Stanley William Hayter, and made his first trip to the United States on a Fulbright fellowship to study at the Tyler School of Art at Temple University in Philadelphia in 1961. In his early work, Haacke's use of water and air was influenced by his involvement with *Group Zero*, an international group of artists interested in finding new and often kinetic materials with which to make art. After working in Cologne for several years, Haacke moved to the US in 1965 and began teaching; his primary position was at the Cooper Union in New York, where he was a professor of art from 1967 to 2002. He has also taught at universities in Seattle, Philadelphia, Hamburg, Essen, and elsewhere. He is the recipient of a fellowship from the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation, a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, and, in 1993, the College Art Association's Distinguished Teaching of Art Award and Distinguished Artist Award for Lifetime Achievement. Haacke received the Golden Lion (which he shared with Nam June Paik) at the 1993 Venice Biennale for his site-specific installation *Germania* in the German Pavilion. The German parliament invited him in 1998 to propose an art project for the renovated Bundestag; after much public debate, the permanent installation was completed and inaugurated as *Der Bevölkerung* ("Of the Population") in 2000. Throughout his distinguished career, Haacke has exhibited in numerous solo and group shows around the world. In 2006, he was the subject of a career-long retrospective titled *Hans Haacke: wirklich, Werke 1959–2006*, which was shown at the Akademie der Künste in Berlin and the Deichtorhallen in Hamburg. He has participated in many documenta exhibitions in Kassel and in biennials in New York, Venice, Sydney, São Paulo, Johannesburg, Gwangju, and most recently Sharjah, in the United Arab Emirates. He lives and works in New York City.

## About the Curator

Caroline A. Jones, director of the History, Theory, and Criticism Program and professor of art history at MIT, studies modern and contemporary art, with a particular focus on its technological modes of production, distribution, and reception. Prior to completing her PhD at Stanford, she worked at the Museum of Modern Art (1977-83) and the Harvard University Art Museums (1983-85), and completed two documentray films. In addition to these institutions, her exhibitions and/or films have been shown at such venues as the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, the

Smithsonian's Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, and the Hara Museum of Contemporary Art in Tokyo. Jones is the recipient of fellowships from the National Endowment for the Humanities and the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation, among others, and has been honored by fellowships at Wellesley's Newhouse Center for the Humanities (2010-11), the Institut national d'histoire de l'art, Paris (2006), the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin and the Max Planck Institut (2001-2), the Institute for Advanced Studies in Princeton (1994-95), and the Stanford Humanities Center (1986-87). Her books include *Eyesight Alone: Clement Greenberg's Modernism and the Bureaucratization of the Senses* (2005) and *Machine in the Studio: Constructing the Postwar American Artist* (1996/98). She was the co-editor of *Picturing Science, Producing Art* (1998) and the editor of *Sensorium: Embodied Experience, Technology, and Contemporary Art*, which accompanied an exhibition at the MIT List Visual Arts Center in 2006-7. She is currently completing a book on *Desires for the World Picture: The Global Work of Art*.

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**Hans Haacke  
1967**



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**MIT LIST VISUAL ARTS CENTER**

## Hans Haacke 1967

*Hans Haacke 1967* both reinvents the solo exhibition that the artist produced at MIT (now installed in the Wiesner Building incarnation of the Hayden Gallery), and contextualizes it within the artist's broader research from the time (in the Bakalar Gallery), including the documentation of projects that were never intended to take place in a gallery setting.

The works from the 1967 solo exhibition are brought together again here for the first time in forty-four years, close on the heels of MIT's celebration of its 150th anniversary. Many needed to be refabricated, others repaired. Much has changed, not least the audience for Haacke's work. In 1967, the artist had to emphasize that his works were neither "sculpture" nor "kinetic" in the usual sense of either term. They had no knobs, buttons, or gears; but neither were they static objects on pedestals.

They were systems. Articles from the time in the student newspaper *The Tech* (amidst notices for on-campus interviews with the military contractors Grumman and Hughes Aircraft), explored this new art in the most direct way possible, by talking to the artist himself:

Haacke rejects the name 'sculpture' for his works. He calls them 'systems,' noting that they 'have been produced with the explicit intention of having their components physically communicate with each other, and the whole communicate physically with the environment.' ... Haacke deliberately designs his 'systems' to 'evolve in time and be affected by time. Changes are desired and are part of the program — they are not due to the shifting experience of the viewer.'

In the present exhibition catalogue, photographs of the installation in 1967 show the fascination and joy that viewers brought to their encounters with the artworks, which sometimes require human participation but more often employ wind, water, gravity, plant growth, and other physical forces. The fact that Haacke's well known *Condensation Cube* was exhibited here as *Weather Cube* should remind the present-day viewer of the continuing relevance of this work for the concerns of our own time.

## Ephemeral Projects

Contextualizing the physical objects in the Hayden Gallery across the atrium, the images in the Bakalar Gallery document a wide variety of experiments Haacke conducted during the years 1965 to 1972, when he was exploring "systems" most intensively. The concept of "systems" came to Haacke from the young sculptor and art writer Jack W. Burnham, whom Haacke met around 1961 when he was a student on a Fulbright fellowship at Temple University in Philadelphia. Burnham, who would come to MIT as a fellow at the Center for Advanced Visual Studies in 1968, was an early advocate for the application of systems theory to art. He introduced Haacke to the writings of Ludwig von Bertalanffy and Norbert Wiener (whose MIT Press book *Cybernetics* came out in a second edition in 1961), and wrote the first important monograph on Haacke's work, published in the spring of 1967 (*Hans Haacke: wind and water sculpture*, Northwestern University: Tri-quarterly Supplement). Notably, Burnham also saw Haacke's ephemeral works as Duchampian appropriations of existing phenomena, "ready-mades."

The notion of "systems" was tremendously fruitful for Haacke, liberating him from traditional aesthetic discourses that focused on the viewer's empathy, emotion, or education in the humanities. Along with others in his generation (such as minimal or conceptual artists in the US), Haacke sought not to "represent" nature but to cause its forces and operations to appear in all their autonomy. Increasingly, this involved provoking and staging time-based events: wind in water vs. water in wind (as snow, mist, rain, or condensed humidity); the cycles and feedback systems of organic life (plant and animal); the dynamism of water — freezing, evaporating, and melting (as cast ice, shoveled snow, or sprayed and frozen mist); and the production of artificial climates.

The first of the ephemeral projects Haacke staged was the *Sky Line*, a strong nylon cord lifted into the sky by hundreds of helium balloons that had been tethered to it at regular intervals, moving in response to prevailing winds. Haacke produced this work for *Kinetic Environment 1 and 2* in Central Park, New York, first in April and then again in September 1967. Along with attempts to float a massive weather balloon inside the lobby of MIT's main entrance, *Sky Line* was paraded through the halls of the Institute and liberated into the skies of Cambridge on October 24, 1967 as part of Haacke's solo exhibition.

## Haacke's Expanding Repertoire in the 1970s

Where the earlier systems art had viewed natural processes such as condensation or physical effects such as the Bernoulli principle as "absolutely independent of the viewer," by 1968 Haacke himself was deeply involved with anti-war efforts and artist rights organizations. As a co-founder of the Art Workers Coalition, he became more committed to seeing the connections between "autonomous" art and the institutions that sustained it. Simultaneously, the research he was doing on various ephemeral states and time-based projects took him outside the museum and gallery altogether, as when he contributed to a proposal from a group of architects (Berman, Roberts and Scofidio) to renovate Fort Greene Park in Brooklyn. Documented here is Haacke's wry idea, very much in the spirit of 1968: "To leave an area between two topographical contour lines of 10 feet depth uncultivated" for the lifetime of the park.

The increasingly social concerns in Haacke's work were percolating alongside these ephemeral systems projects when the Guggenheim Museum offered the artist a major retrospective, to open in 1971 under the direction of curator Edward Fry. Uncomfortable with the critical edge of one piece in particular (*Shapolsky et al., Manhattan Real Estate Holdings, a Real-Time Social System, as of May 1, 1971*), the Guggenheim's director (Thomas Messer) asked Haacke to remove the work. The artist refused, the curator was fired, and the art community staged a massive protest. In the end, the show remained cancelled and Haacke became celebrated in the 1980s as one of the original and most radical practitioners of "institutional critique," a mode of art-making that has entirely changed the way that artists, historians, and museum officials do their jobs. "Systems" remained compelling, but with very different parameters following Haacke's first MIT show. Following the MIT show in 1967, Haacke began increasingly to investigate social systems. He was included in important exhibitions such as MoMA's *Information* (1970), for which he produced a visitor's poll that explored the connection between the politics of the museum's visitors and those of its board members, such as former MoMA president Nelson Rockefeller (then the governor of New York); he also showed at Cornell's *Earth Art* exhibition (1969), Jack Burnham's *Software* show at New York's Jewish Museum (1970), and the Tokyo Biennial (1970), among many other venues. In one 1968 talk, Haacke explained his expanding repertoire in one crucial phrase: "An artist is not an isolated system."

**Caroline A. Jones, curator**