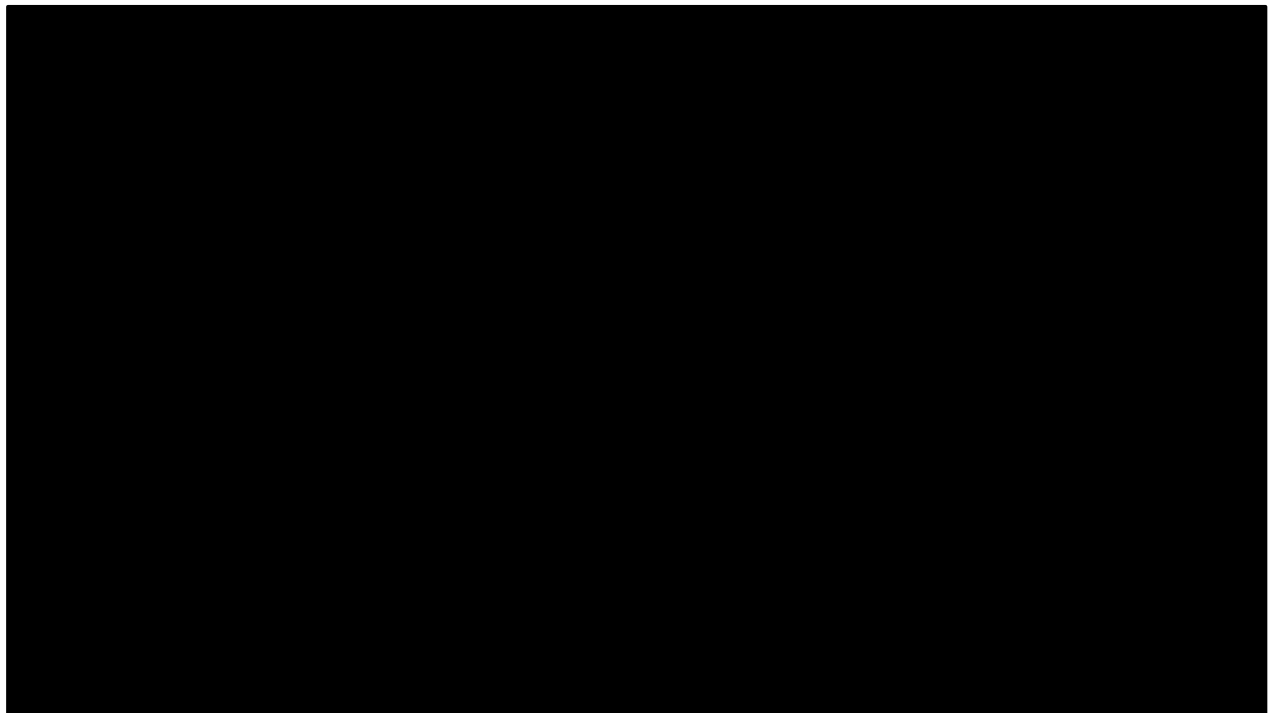


GLOBAL CONTEMPORARY ARTIST ANALYSIS

ARCHIVE PROJECT

HANS HAACKE: THE POLITICS OF THE ART WORLD

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This short art analysis paper accompanies an original video presentation produced by UTC undergraduate students, dedicated to the work of a contemporary artist and developed as part of ART 4190r: Global Contemporary Art course in Spring 2021.

Hans Haacke is one of the most controversial yet influential artists within the sphere of modern and contemporary art where his work brings awareness to the issues of social and economic inequalities, political corruption, and the power that corporations yield over art institutions by means of their monetary contributions.

Haacke was born in Cologne, Germany in 1936 where upon completion of high school he attended the art academy in Kassel, Germany and eventually finished his education at Temple University's Tyler School of Art in Philadelphia after receiving the Fulbright Scholarship in the early 1960's thus moving to New York City where he currently resides¹.

In the early years of his career much of his work focused on land art and minimalism that explored the inner-workings of cycles that occurred in the natural world with his later pieces shifting to themes that would challenge the role of government and corporations and their influence in relation to art. Sculptures or installations constitute the majority of the work produced by Haacke with 'ready-made' objects being his preferred medium. The pieces that are created by Haacke are more about the message that is being conveyed through the piece rather than the piece itself. The work of Haacke is most often placed within the conceptual art

¹ Hileman, Kristen. "Romantic Realist: A Conversation with Hans Haacke." *American Art* 24, no. 2 (2010): 74-93. Accessed April 26, 2021. doi:10.1086/656460.

² Kalyva, Eve. *Image and Text in Conceptual Art: Critical Operations in Context*. Cham: Springer International Publishing AG, 2017.

movement, art that challenges the ideals and standards put in place by institutions², however the artwork of Haacke could arguably be placed in a category that is unique unto its own as it challenges multiple institutions.

The piece titled *Condensation Cube*, 1963-5 (Fig. 1) is one of his early and more well - known works which would later be installed again in 2006 (Fig. 2). The original sculpture measured at 30.5cm, 12 inches, for the length, width, and height and was constructed with acrylic panels. The later version in 2006 was almost double in size. While this may appear to be quite minimalist at first glance the message the work is conveying speaks volumes about the everchanging cycles of life in the natural world. *Condensation Cube* 1963-5, as with most of his earlier installations, work independently of their audience. For instance, the water evaporating and turning to condensation is a process that is dependent on factors attributed to elements of its environment whether individuals are present or not.

The installation of *Condensation Cube* 1963-5 marked the beginning of Haacke becoming disillusioned with the art world thus leading to his critique of museums as capitalist institutions affiliated with multinational corporations that view art as a commodity for the purpose of monetary gain³. *Condensation Cube* 1963-5 deviates from the concept that space within a gallery is an area of neutrality with objects that are consistent on display by the motion of the water as it goes through various states of being. The deeper meaning hidden within

³ Skrebowski, Luke. "After Hans Haacke: Tue Greenfort and Eco-Institutional Critique." *Third text* 27, no. 1 (2013): 115–130.

Condensation Cube 1963-5 is beautiful with regard to the natural world yet complex as it challenges the ideals of what constitutes art.

In the 1970's Haacke began to shift his interest from producing work associated with nature to pieces that were influenced by the political and civil unrest of the Vietnam War protests and those whom were advocating for civil rights and the obstacles they faced. Haacke had already begun his institutional critique however, in 1971, one of his installations would become a source of controversy that surrounded the cancellation of his show at the Guggenheim in New York. The source of the controversy was his piece titled *Shapolsky et al Manhattan Real Estate Holdings A Real Time Social System, as of May 1, 1971* (Fig. 3) which was a series of photographs and documents that pertained to buildings located within Harlem and the Lower East Side and the conditions that the residents were forced to live in⁴.

The work is comprised of 142 photographs displaying the front side of the buildings and the adjacent vacant lots coupled with typed documentation that provides important details of the acquisition of the property by specific companies, property value, previous owners and so forth⁵. *Shapolsky et al Manhattan Real Estate Holdings A Real Time Social System, as of May 1, 1971* brings awareness to fact that there were a select group of individuals who were exploiting those of lower socioeconomic standing. The mystery as to why the Guggenheim chose to cancel this exhibition remains just that as there has never been a definitive answer only speculations.

⁴ Fraone, Gina. "An Analysis of Hans Haacke's Canceled 1971 Guggenheim Exhibition". ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2009.

⁵ Fraone, Gina. "An Analysis of Hans Haacke's Canceled 1971 Guggenheim Exhibition". ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2009.

However, it would be more than a decade, by his choice, before Haacke would exhibit or sell any of his work.

Institutional critique and issues involving the dynamic between social and political dynamics are as still issues that influence the work produced by Haacke currently. The key aspects of Haacke's work reflect the views expressed by David Joselit in his book titled *Heritage and Debt*. In *Heritage and Debt* discusses how international agencies and corporations such as the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund are used to interfere in numerous issues that concern policies on a global scale⁶ which coincide with the belief held by Haacke about art located in museums being viewed as a commodity or a financial asset that can only be enjoyed by the individuals that are of a higher financial status.

Another key aspect between the writing of Joselit and the work of Haacke references the concept of a dual modernized institution that consists of slaves, the poor, imperialism, and the rich, in which the poor are indebted to⁷. The images used in *Shapolsky et al Manhattan Real Estate Holdings, A Real Time Social System, as of May 1, 1971* allude to the residents of the buildings being the "slaves" to the "imperialists" whom are the corporations that feel the tenants are indebted to them while simultaneously displaying the influence that is yielded by corporations within the institution of art. The works produced by Haacke are more than pieces of art to be viewed in a gallery they are stories that depict greed and the heavy price that has been paid due to globalization.

⁶ Joselit, David. *Heritage And Debt*. www.utc.edu accessed April 27, 2021

⁷ Joselit, David. *Heritage And Debt*. www.utc.edu accessed April 27, 2021

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Image Citations

Figure 1 Hans Haacke, *Condensation Cube*, 1963–1965, clear acrylic, distilled water, climate in area of display, 12 x 12 x 12 in (30.5 x 30.5 x 30.5 cm), © Hans Haacke/DACS, courtesy of Paula Cooper Gallery, New York accessed April 27, 2021 <https://www.tandfonline-com.proxy.lib.utc.edu/doi/full/10.1080/09528822.2013.753195>

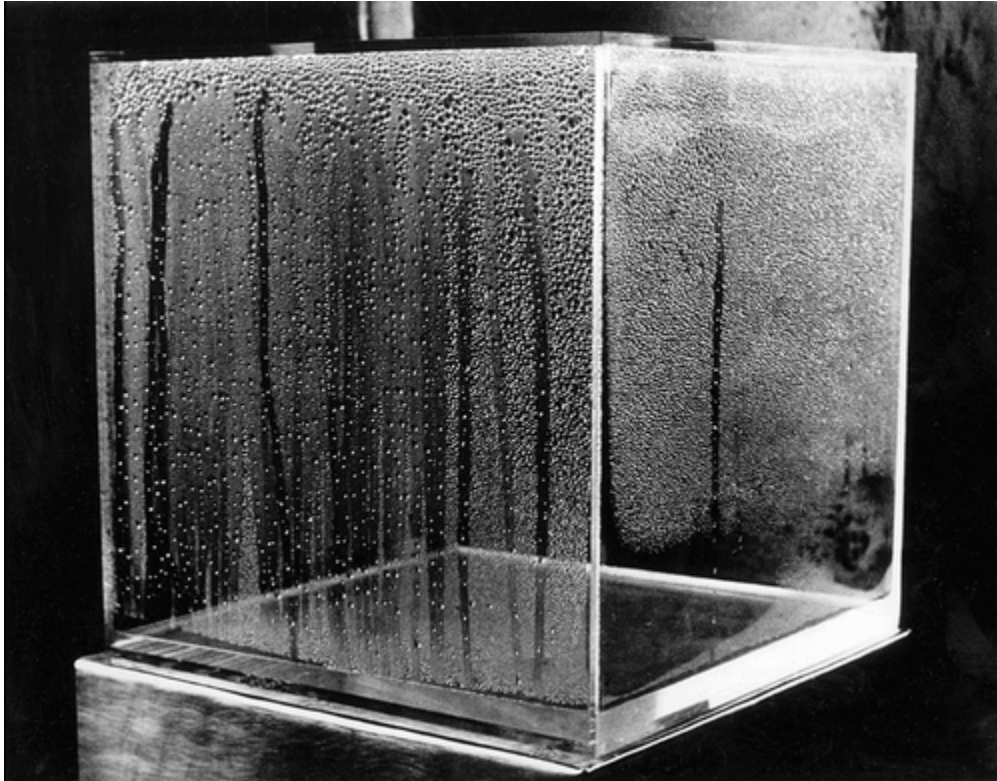


Figure 2 Hans Haacke – *Condensation Cube*, 1963–1965/2006, Plexiglass and water, 76 x 76 x 76 cm, installation view, Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, photo: [CC BY 2.0](#) by [Ron Cogswell](#) accessed April 27, 2021 <https://publicdelivery.org/hans-haacke-condensation-cube/>

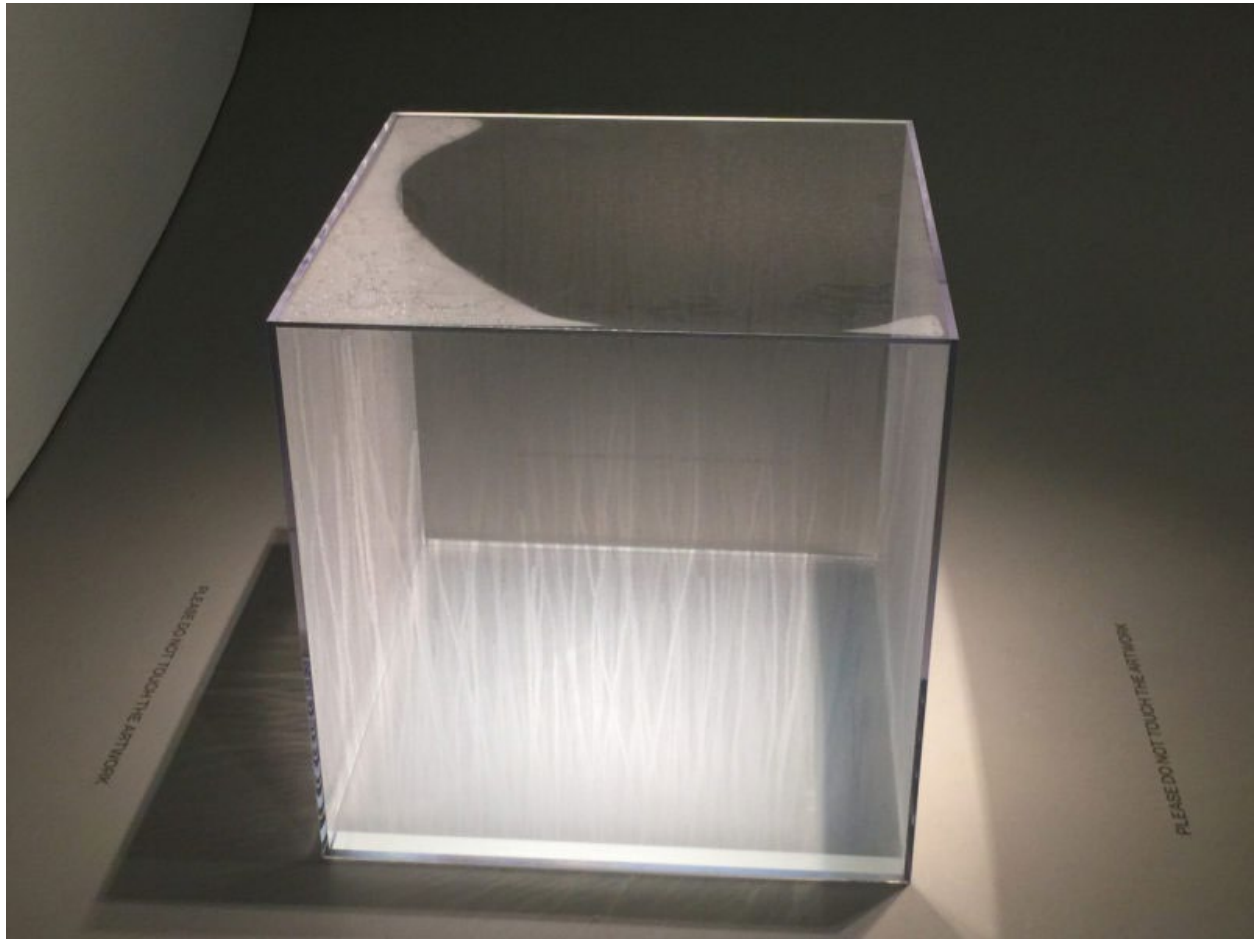


Figure 3 Hans Haacke, *Shapolsky et al Manhattan Real Estate Holdings, A Real Time Social System, as of May 1, 1971*, 1971, 9 photostats, 142 gelatin silver prints and 142 photocopies, varied dimensions, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; purchased jointly by the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York with funds from the Director's Discretionary Fund and the Painting and Sculpture Committee, and the Fundació Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona

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Accessed April 27, 2021 <https://whitney.org/collection/works/29487>

