Hans Haacke
Weather, or not

On the fourth floor of X Initiative, New York-based artist Hans Haacke presents his first solo exhibition in a New York institution since 1986. The artist displays reinterpretations of some of his historical works along with new pieces conceived for this presentation. *Weather, or not* combines large-scale kinetic installations, photographs, and text-based works in a dramatically experiential environment. The show addresses political issues of the present and natural processes that the artist has been exploring for over 40 years: Haacke has taken a wide variety of approaches to core issues such as economics, politics, and ecology. His work combines fundamental critical positions with radical gestures, which make his practice even more relevant today.

Some of the works presented in this exhibition at X are recreations of pieces from the Sixties, a period in which one of the artist's main focuses was the exploration of natural processes such as the movement of air, water and meteorological changes. Investigations of climatic and organic phenomena are part of Haacke's interest in dynamic open systems. Whether natural or social, their interdependent and interactive components appear to follow similar patterns and sometimes work as metaphors of each other. Throughout his career, the artist has been attentive to the relationships between nature, art, power and money so as to sketch an atlas of the world's dynamics.

The central installation on the fourth floor of X is ***BONUS Storm*** (2009), a work that consists of six industrial fans installed along a wall and a neon sign above, which flashes, in red, the word 'BONUS.' Recalling one of the artist's most powerful installations from the Sixties, *Wind Room* (1968-69), originally created for the Henry Gallery, University of Washington, Seattle, ***BONUS Storm*** gives the articulation of natural forces a political angle relating them to our current climate.

On view in the back room is ***Vertical Flow*** (1967/2009): a large piece of white silk kept in constant motion by a fan. As the air blows the fabric, it ripples like a liquid surface. Originally installed horizontally, the work gains a new dimension in this show as it is hung vertically, parallel to a wall of the gallery space. It is accompanied by the projection of a still image: ***Venice, May, 31, 2009, 1:59 PM*** (2009), the photograph of a rainbow with a crane looming in the distance.

Among the works in which the artist investigates natural processes is ***Recording of Climate in Art Exhibition*** (1970), composed of a hygrothermograph and a barograph that register the temperature, humidity and atmospheric pressure of the exhibition space. Traditionally used to control the quality of the air in museums, here the instruments have been placed on a pedestal, in effect, becoming sculptures. They have been elevated – with an ironic twist – to the rank of art, while also being rendered useless: the windows of the exhibition space are left open for the entire duration of the show, resulting in drastically altered humidity and temperature conditions. The graphs produced by the instruments are displayed on the gallery wall, turned into abstract drawings that may allude to the highly controlled and often claustrophobic conditions in art institutions.

Along with these recreations, Haacke presents a group of new works that explore the realm of politics in a direct, almost confrontational manner. ***West Bank, 1994 – 27th Year of Occupation*** (2007/2009) is a photograph taken by the artist in 1994 of a three-year old boy, while visiting Deheisheh, a Palestinian refugees camp near Bethlehem. Invited in 2007, by an organization of



Israeli and Palestinian artists, to contribute an image to a traveling group exhibition promoting peace and an end to the occupation of the West Bank, Haacke selected this photograph as a memento of a conflict that has been lasting now for more than 40 years. The photograph is accompanied by a text about the background of its creation and first exhibition in 4 languages: English, Italian, Arabic and Hebrew. Other photographs, spread throughout the space, depict moments of social contrasts, of historic irony, and of a 1969 intervention by Haacke in a winter setting.

The diptych ***Thank you, Paine Webber***, realized by Haacke in 1979, shows two images appropriated from the 1977 annual report of Paine Webber, the American stock brokerage company. With its references to both the Great Depression and the speculations of Wall Street, the piece resonates strongly today, when, once again, the sign "Work is what I want," carried by an unemployed worker in Detroit in the photograph on the reports cover, takes on a new sense of urgency. It is juxtaposed with Paine Webber's claim that its knowledge of "Portfolio Dynamics was right for you."

The new production ***The Invisible Hand of the Market*** (2009) consists of Adam Smith's perennially quoted dictum, rendered in the font of the Wall Street Journal's masthead, and, in the place of the word, the cut-out image of a hand that waves to the viewer like a metronome. The text on the wall is accompanied by five empty, grey lockers scattered throughout the exhibition space. Like relics of a prehistoric past, they stand or lie on their backs like tombstones – lonely reminders of lost jobs.

Hans Haacke (born Cologne, 1936) had major solo exhibitions at Tate Gallery, London (1984), New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York (1986), Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris (1989), Venice Biennial, German Pavilion (1993), Serpentine Gallery, London (2001), Akademie der Künste, Berlin/Deichtorhallen, Hamburg (2006). His works were exhibited at Documenta (1972, 1982, 1987, 1997), Skulptur Projekte, Münster (1997), and the Biennials of Venice (1976, 1978, 2009), São Paulo (1986), Sydney (1984, 1990), Tokyo (1970), Johannesburg (1997), Gwangju (2008), and the Whitney Biennial, New York (2000). Recent group exhibitions include *A Minimal Future? Art as Object 1958-1975*, MOCA, Los Angeles (2004), *Open Systems: Rethinking Art c. 1970*, Tate Modern, London (2005), *The Art of Participation 1950 to Now*, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (2008*), Art of Two Germanys/Cold War Cultures*, Los Angeles County Museum (2009), *Radical Nature,* Barbican Center, London (2009),*Time as Matter,* MACBA, Barcelona (2009). With Nam June Paik he was awarded a Golden Lion for best pavilion at the Venice Biennial in 1993. Some of his interventions have led to disputes extending well beyond those of the art world and its market, as in 2000, when a large work by the artist, commissioned by the German Parliament, was permanently installed at the Reichstag in Berlin only after a heated national debate.