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Luke Skrebowski

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After Hans Haacke Tue Greenfort and Eco-Institutional Critique

Luke Skrebowski

A sealed transparent cube sits in the gallery space. It contains a small amount of water, amounting to perhaps one tenth of the volume of the overall cube. Water droplets, deposited by the processes of evaporation and condensation, cling to the sides of the cube. Every now and again a droplet swells under the pull of gravity, overcomes the tension holding it in place and streaks down a face of the cube, gathering speed as it draws other droplets into its downward race.

It is not 1965. The work is not Hans Haacke's *Condensation Cube* (1963–1965). It is 2007. The work, titled *Römerquelle Condensation Cube: After Hans Haacke 1963–65* (2007), is by the Danish artist Tue Greenfort and it is being shown at the Secession in Vienna. The cube is made from real, rather than Plexi-, glass and the water inside the cube, as the work's title alerts us, is Römerquelle, a renowned brand of Austrian mineral water. Römerquelle translates as Roman spring or source and, according to the firm's website, the water's name is no mere marketing ploy since water from the source from which the brand is drawn has been pumped since the beginning of the first millennium.¹ The water has, however, only been commercially bottled since 1948 and only sold under the brand name of Römerquelle since 1965, making the commercial brand, appropriately enough, coeval with Haacke's original *Condensation Cube*. In 2003 Coca-Cola HBC Austria GmbH took a controlling interest in Römerquelle. How should we understand Greenfort's contemporary re-articulation of Haacke's celebrated work? What does it mean to work explicitly 'after' Hans Haacke in this way?

AFTER HANS HAACKE

In English the word 'after' carries a wide series of senses indicating both straightforward chronological succession ('subsequently, at a later time, afterwards'); logical sequence ('subsequent to and in consequence of');

1. http://www.roemerquelle.at/rq_neu/de/unternehmen/geschichte.php

deference to an authority ('following as one follows a leader or guide; in obedience to, in compliance or harmony with') and a relation of artistic indebtedness or direct copying ('after the manner of, in imitation of').² All of these senses seem to operate in Greenfort's 'after' and the artist himself has acknowledged his understanding of the work in similar terms: 'I think you have a certain responsibility to know how your project is placed within a history of art and to make the meta-experience an active part of the production.'³ How, then, does Greenfort justify an apparently epigonal or even derivative relationship to Haacke as part of the 'meta-experience' of the work?

In order to address this issue it is necessary to rehearse the stakes of Haacke's original *Condensation Cube*. Although part of a wider series of condensation objects (including towers, walls and cones) and demonstrably informed by Haacke's engagement with the work of the Zero group, Haacke's cube is most regularly discussed in terms of its relation to Minimalism. Haacke critiqued the belief that Minimalism had evacuated internal relations from the work and externalized and made them a function, in Robert Morris's celebrated phrase, of 'space, light and the viewer's field of vision'.⁴ The water hermetically sealed inside Haacke's Plexiglass cube moved through cycles of evaporation and condensation as the gallery temperature fluctuated with the time of day, the number of people in the space and the heat of the lights, in the process revealing new types of internal relation, we might even say composition (albeit aleatoric), that were ultimately of the institution's, rather than the artist's or particular viewers', making. *Condensation Cube* made visible an issue hitherto of interest primarily to conservators, namely the way in which the institutional environment impacts on the work it shows. From here it was a short step to considering the broader range of determinations to which the institution subjects the artwork and *Condensation Cube* can thus be seen to anticipate the full-blown critique of institutions for which Haacke's practice remains best known.

Greenfort's remake introduces subtle but telling differences to Haacke's original: the use of plate glass (summoning Larry Bell's sheeny cubes from the mid-1960s) evokes Minimalism's affinity with 'corporate furniture' (in Anna Chave's controversial phrase), and this association is deliberately compounded by the conspicuous inclusion of branded mineral water from a company owned by a major multinational.⁵ In this way, Greenfort points to the way in which Haacke's work is implicated within Minimalism's rhetoric of power even as it critiques it. However, one might respond that Haacke's 'homeopathic' approach – in Fredric Jameson's terms – has long been well aware of this complicity.⁶ More originally then, *Römerquelle Condensation Cube* argues against the ongoing critical efficacy of the presuppositions marking Haacke's original piece: in a period characterized by the increasing commodification of natural resources previously a part of the commons, water itself, just as much as the white walls of the gallery space, is not neutral and cannot simply be bracketed out of the investigation into the institution that enframes the artwork.

Such a critique has more force than the insistence on ethical 'provenance' that defines today's discerning consumer, rightly pilloried by Slavoj Žižek.⁷ Rather, Greenfort's piece argues that under contemporary historical conditions Jameson's celebration of Haacke's work as (at least

2. All definitions are from the *Oxford English Dictionary*, second edition, 1989.

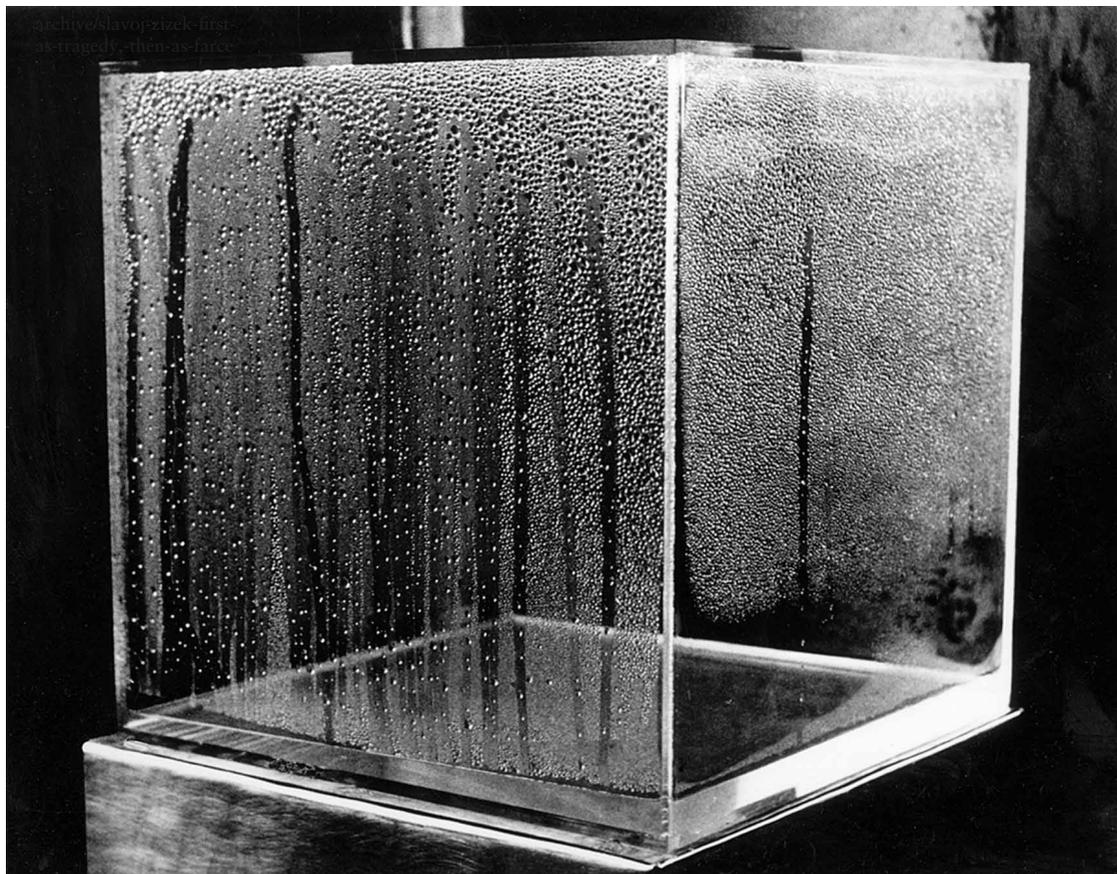
3. 'Interview between Tue Greenfort and Zoe Gray on occasion of Greenfort's solo exhibition "Photosynthesis" at Witte De With, 2006', online at: http://www.johannkoenig.de/1/tue_greenfort/texts.html#

4. Robert Morris, 'Notes on Sculpture', part II, *Artforum*, October, 1966, pp 20–23, p 22

5. Anna Chave, 'Minimalism and the Rhetoric of Power', in Francis Frascina and Jonathan Harris, eds, *Art in Modern Culture: An Anthology of Critical Texts*, Phaidon, London, p 276. Chave uses this phrase with reference to Donald Judd's work and does not discuss Larry Bell in her piece. Bell's work used Plexiglass to fashion the pedestals for his glass cubes. Greenfort's work thus re-establishes the implicit hierarchy of materials deployed by Bell, a hierarchy that Haacke had inverted.

6. See Fredric Jameson, 'Hans Haacke and the Cultural Logic of Postmodernism', in Brian Wallis, ed, *Hans Haacke: Unfinished Business*, New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York, 1986, pp 38–50, pp 42–43.

7. See, Slavoj Žižek, 'First as Tragedy, then as Farce', online at: <http://www.thersa.org/events/video/>



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

potentially) ‘political and oppositional’, an egregious but emphatically postmodern exception to postmodern art’s otherwise affirmative character, can no longer be straightforwardly sustained.⁸ Haacke’s art, for Greenfort, must acknowledge its own implication within capitalism: the social relations embedded within artworks at the level of their facture and materials – and *a fortiori* postminimalist ‘fabricated’ artworks – are just as questionable as those embedded within consumer products and should therefore be subject to the same types of activist critique. If de-skilled, post-conceptual art does not, at a minimum, reflect on the sourcing of its materials and acknowledge the working conditions of the makers of these materials (not to mention the makers of the fabricated artworks themselves) it risks embodying lower ethical standards than the product lines of any greenwashed corporation; that is, it risks ethically underperforming the very commodities it tenuously differentiates itself from as a condition of its going on as art.

More broadly, Greenfort’s *Römerquelle Condensation Cube* reflects on the fate of Haacke’s particular form of politicized conceptual art in light of what Jeff Wall has described as conceptual art’s ‘failure’ and the ‘economic and social ascendancy of Pop’ from the mid-1970s

8. Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Verso, London, p 159

9. Jeff Wall, *Dan Graham's Kammerspiel*, Art Metropole, Toronto, 1991, p 22
10. The mutton-based Maharaja Mac was successfully developed by McDonalds Inc in order to open up the beef-averse Indian market.
11. 'A whole range of artists are of great importance to me: Asger Jorn, Constant, Robert Smithson, Mierle Lademan Ukeles, Andrea Fraser, John Knight, Martha Rosler, Nils Norman, Thomas Bayrle, The Copenhagen Free University (Jakob Jakobsen and Henriette Heisse), Simon Starling, Lawrence Weiner, Hans Haacke, Douglas Huebler, Robert Barry, Dan Peterman, Dan Graham, Adrian Piper...'; quote from 'It is in vain to dream of a wildness distant from ourselves: An Interview with Tue Greenfort by Francesca Pagliuca', online at: http://www.johannkoenig.de/1/tue_greenfort/texts.html#
12. Here Haacke's *Circulation* (1969) was re-made so that it circulated pure plant oil (an alternative to bio-diesel) rather than water. This work relates to Greenfort's *A Whiter Shade of Pale* (2005) where the artist had a bus converted to run on plant oil.
13. The last two pairings are developed more extensively below.
14. See Mira Schor, 'Patrilineage', *Art Journal*, vol 50, no 2, summer 1991, pp 58–63.
15. In this sense Haacke is to Greenfort as Duchamp is to Haacke in his *Broken R.M.* (1986) and *Baudrichard's Ecstasy* (1988).

onwards.⁹ Such is the reach and penetration of corporate capital, for which Coca-Cola stands as an archetypal artistic metonym (from Robert Rauschenberg and Andy Warhol to Cildo Meireles and onwards), that even the water inside *Condensation Cube* has now to be understood as commodified. Greenfort acknowledges the fact that with the 'triumph' of neoliberal capitalism and the parallel development of a contemporary art industry, the artwork increasingly conforms to the general logic of the market. In fact, he deliberately courts this risk in order to highlight it. *Römerquelle Condensation Cube* is one of a series of remakes of *Condensation Cube* (all fabricated using 'local' mineral water brands ultimately owned by the Coca-Cola corporation) which also includes *Chaufontaine Condensation Cube: After Hans Haacke* (2006) and *BONACQUA Condensation Cube: After Hans Haacke* (2005). Greenfort's remakes of *Condensation Cube* take the same form as the skilfully franchised product, taking on just enough 'localization' to ensure 'site-specific' success. Greenfort brings the artwork uncomfortably close to the logic of the Maharaja Mac.¹⁰

Greenfort's multiple *Condensation Cube* remakes are, however, only one aspect of his engagement with Haacke's work, which is one of the most sustained engagements characterizing his practice. Although Greenfort acknowledges many artistic influences and has made works dedicated or self-consciously indebted to other artists and designers such as *Cell Structure: DIY after Victor Papanek* (2006) and *Bio-Wurstwolke: After Dieter Roth 1969* (2007), it is to Haacke's work that he returns again and again.¹¹ This can be seen most explicitly in those works entitled 'After Hans Haacke' including the previously mentioned *Römerquelle*, *Chaufontaine* and *BONACQUA Condensation Cubes* as well as *Plant Oil Circulation: After Hans Haacke 1969* (2007).¹² But Greenfort's indebtedness to Haacke is also manifest, albeit more allusively, in numerous other works: *Closed Biosphere* (2003) crosses *Condensation Cube* with Haacke's ecosystem works such as *Bowery Seeds* (1970); *PET Flasche* (2008) performs a similar awareness-raising gesture to Haacke's *Monument to Beach Pollution* (1970) but radically condenses it; *Exceeding 2 Degrees* (2007) expands Haacke's *Recording of Climate in Art Exhibition* (1969–1970); *Diffuse Einträge* (2007) invokes Haacke's *Rhine-Water Purification Plant* (1972).¹³

The extent and depth of Greenfort's engagement with Haacke's work indicates that there is more at stake here than polite homage or the art-world pressure to conform to the demands of patrilineal legitimization.¹⁴ Greenfort works in the space opened up by Haacke's particular form of conceptual art just as Haacke worked in the space opened up by Marcel Duchamp's practice.¹⁵ In both cases, however, the artists work *negatively*, in the full knowledge that the historical position embodied by their source work or works is no longer tenable in the present. An appropriate conceptual figure to encapsulate the relation might be the 'reboot', a term borrowed from commercial film production (itself borrowed from IT jargon): in a reboot an unsuccessful or tired film franchise is re-launched under the direction of a new creative team (hence the analogy to restarting a computer after a crash). Greenfort's goal is not, of course, Hollywood-style commercial success, but rather the inverse, the attempt to resuscitate a fragile critical project under intensified con-



Tue Greenfort, *Römerquelle Condensation Cube: After Hans Haacke 1963–65*, 2007, glass, silicone, Römerquelle mineral water (since 2003 part of Coca-Cola Company), 45 x 45 x 45 cm $17\frac{3}{4} \times 17\frac{3}{4} \times 17\frac{3}{4}$ in, exhibition view: 'Tue Greenfort: *Medusa*', Secession, Vienna, 2007, courtesy of the artist and Johann König, Berlin, photo: Tue Greenfort

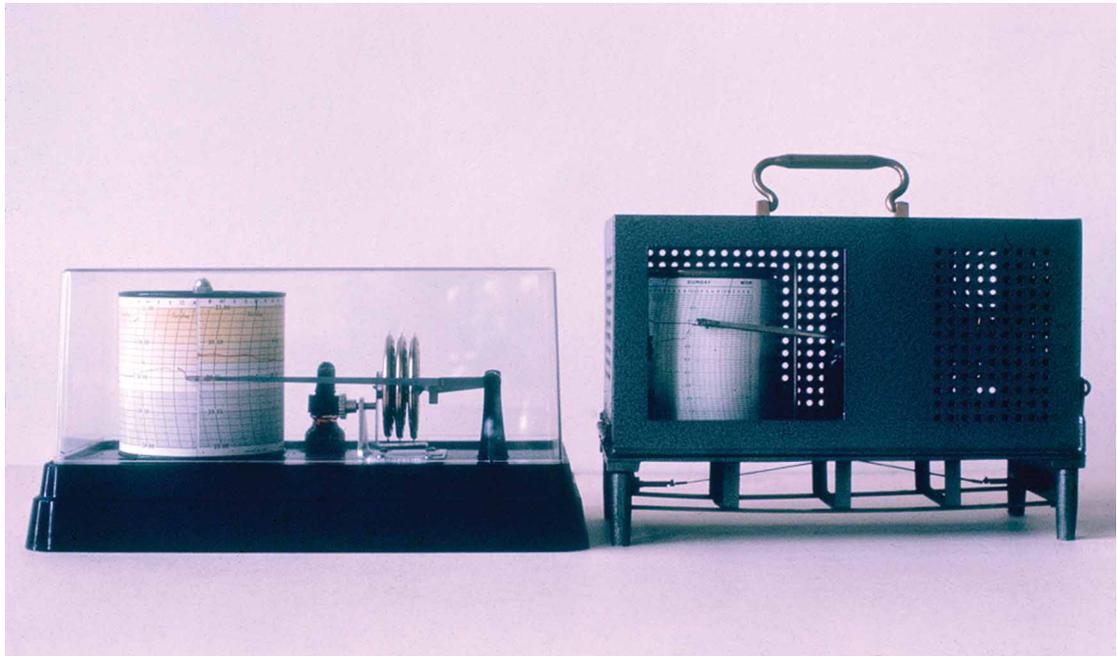
ditions of commodification in the contemporary art world and in fuller knowledge of art's implication within the environmental degradation that is the consequence of untrammelled development. As such, Greenfort's work participates particularly intensively in a broader speculative impetus to retest conceptual art's potential, which Blake Stimson has discussed as a question of 'Whether... [conceptual art's] legacy as the art of 1968 will be to pass its inherited ideal forward through neo-conceptualism and on to a future moment when avant-gardism might once again be viable, or whether it will mark a point in the history of modernism when that ideal passed into irrelevance...'.¹⁶

ECOLOGICAL INSTITUTIONAL CRITIQUE

Greenfort's work attempts to reboot Haacke's work as a resource for contemporary critical practice. In order to address how this works in more detail I will turn to another pair of related works: Haacke's *Recording of Climate in Art Exhibition* (1969–1970) and Greenfort's *Exceeding 2 Degrees* (2007).

Haacke's work, first shown at 'Conceptual Art and Conceptual Aspects' (1970) at the New York Cultural Center, comprised a working hygrothermograph, barograph and hydrograph (the finely calibrated tools used by the conservator to monitor atmospheric conditions in the museum) which recorded the climate in the exhibition in real

16. Blake Stimson, 'The Promise of Conceptual Art' in Alexander Alberro and Blake Stimson, eds, *Conceptual Art: A Critical Anthology*, pp xxxviii–lii, xlvii, MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1999



Hans Haacke, *Recording of Climate in Art Exhibition*, 1969–1970/2009, hygrothermograph, barograph and chart paper
 chart paper: measuring at seven day increments and pinned to the wall each week of exhibition, hygrothermograph: 11 3/4 x 13 1/8 x 6 3/4 in (29.8 x 33.3 x 17.1 cm), barograph: 11 1/2 x 12 1/4 x 5 1/2 in (29.2 x 31.1 x 14 cm), © Hans Haacke/DACS, courtesy of Paula Cooper Gallery, New York



Tue Greenfort, *Exceeding 2 Degrees*, 2007, thermo-hydrograph (meteorological instrument), coffee table, Malaysian rubber wood, glass, human hair, plastic membrane, photography, climate diagram, certificate, map, format variable, exhibition view: 'Still Life: Art, Ecology and the Politics of Change', 8th Sharjah Biennial, Sharjah Art Museum, Sharjah, 2007, courtesy of the artist and Johann König, Berlin, photo: Tue Greenfort

time. The work can be understood in terms similar to those which I have already used to discuss *Condensation Cube*, namely as a work of proto-institutional critique, a condensed and elegant invocation of the museum's function as the preserver of artworks' capital value (both financial and symbolic).

Greenfort's *Exceeding 2 Degrees*, first shown at the Sharjah Biennial, invokes *Recording of Climate in Art Exhibition* by similarly displaying the distinctive tools of the conservator (here a thermo-hydrograph unit combining the functions of thermograph and hydrograph). In this work, in contrast to his treatment of *Condensation Cube*, Greenfort departs more markedly from his model. The table on which the thermo-hydrograph sits is as significant as the device itself within the work's mise-en-scène. Fabricated from Malaysian hardwood by Japanese craftsmen and bought cheaply by Greenfort in Dubai before being assembled and exhibited in Sharjah, the table embodies contemporary industry's globalized conditions of manufacture, distribution and consumption.¹⁷ As a self-reflexive and ostensibly compensatory gesture for the work's own participation within these circuits of production and exchange – albeit as a specialized sub-section of the luxury market – Greenfort set the air conditioning of the gallery space two degrees centigrade higher than would normally be considered optimal, mildly jeopardizing the longevity of his work but in the process saving money on the

17. Greenfort states of the table that it was 'really easy to install and cheap, almost like an Asian version of IKEA'; see http://www.johannkoenig.de/inc/index.php?n=2,1,1&art_id=1&bild_id=1085.

cost of the show. Greenfort calculated the approximate amount of money that would be saved on air conditioning during the exhibition and used this sum to purchase and protect an area of rainforest in Ecuador, using the Danish environmental organization Nepenthes as an intermediary. A further layer of significance was added to the project by the fact that the *Stern Review* (authored by economist Nicholas Stern for the British Government) – copies of which were distributed around the show – states that if no concerted global action is taken on carbon dioxide emissions, there is more than a seventy-five per cent chance of global temperatures rising between two and three degrees over the next fifty years.¹⁸ Greenfort's *Exceeding 2 Degrees* evokes Haacke's *Recording of Climate in Art Exhibition* but only in order to complicate its own ambivalent critical character by foregrounding its complicity with the contemporary conditions of globalized production and their associated ecological impact.

Some of Haacke's work from the early 1970s had evinced a concern with ecology and the environment – developing from an earlier body of work exploring the incorporation of biological systems within the gallery such as *Grass Cube* (1967) and *Grass Grows* (1969) – as Michael Corris has observed:

... it is the notion of an ecosystem that is most relevant to Haacke's projects of the early 1970s, imparting a sense of structure and coherence on works such as *10 Turtles Set Free* (1970) and *Goat Feeding in Woods, Thus Changing It* (1970). *Beach Pollution* (1970) – a pile of driftwood and other rubbish that had been collected on a Spanish seafront – not only signals Haacke's concern with environmental issues, but also initiates a dialogue with the anti-formalism of the late-1960s... what distinguishes Haacke's work is not its physical composition as a pile of scavenged rubbish; rather, its conceptual relationship to *the exogenous cultural space of the emerging environmental movement*.¹⁹

Yet what Haacke conceived as an *exogenous* conceptual relationship between the artwork and the environmental movement Greenfort reconceives as *endogenous*, drawing environmentalism into the immanent problematic of the institutionally critical artwork to demonstrate that art itself is not environmentally neutral and that both artist and artwork are not external to the art system that they subject to critique. As such, as TJ Demos has observed, Greenfort's work might be considered an 'innovative eco-institutional critique' wherein the artistic critique of the institution of art is reminded of its own negative ecological impact and dubious carbon footprint.²⁰ However, as Demos has also noted, *Exceeding 2 Degrees* in no way presents a solution to the problem it discloses; rather it intensifies the shortcomings inherent to carbon offsetting and thereby 'in an act of critical negation' reveals the 'daunting complexity' of the problem it addresses 'by entangling itself in its paradoxes...'.²¹

Greenfort's work is consequently thoroughly and self-consciously 'entangled' in the structural paradoxes attending so-called third-generation institutional critique – most thoroughly thematized in Andrea Fraser's artistic and theoretical work – wherein the artist and the artwork are held to be completely internal to that which is subjected to critique. Greenfort has acknowledged Fraser as an influence on his practice and,²² glossing her own artistic genealogy, Fraser, like Greenfort,

18. 'At a Glance: The Stern Review', on the BBC website at: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/business/6098362.stm>

19. Michael Corris, 'Systems Upgrade (Conceptual Art and the Recoding of Information, Knowledge and Technology)', *Mute*, vol 1, no 22, online at: <http://www.metamute.org/editorial/articles/systems-upgrade-conceptual-art-and-recoding-information-knowledge-and-technology>, emphasis added

20. TJ Demos, 'Art After Nature', *Artforum*, April 2012, pp 190–197, p 194

21. *Ibid*, p 194

22. See note 11.

23. 'Beyond the most encompassing list of substantive spaces, places, people, and things, the "institution" engaged by Haacke can best be defined as the network of social and economic relations between them.' Andrea Fraser, 'From the Critique of Institutions to an Institution of Critique', in John C Welchmann, ed, *Institutional Critique and After*, JRP Ringier, Zurich, 2006, pp 122–135, p 124
24. See Andrea Fraser, 'Why Does Fred Sandback's Work Make Me Cry?', *Grey Room* 22, winter 2006, pp 30–47
25. Fraser, 'From the Critique of Institutions', op cit, p 124
26. 'Interview between Tue Greenfort and Zoe Gray on occasion of Greenfort's solo exhibition "Photosynthesis" at Witte De With, 2006', online at: http://www.johannkoenig.de/1/tue_greenfort/texts.html#
27. Isabelle Graw, 'Beyond Institutional Critique', *Institutional Critique and After*, pp 137–151, p 139
28. Andrea Fraser, 'L'1%, C'est Moi', *Texte zur Kunst*, vol 21, no 83, September 2011, pp 114–127, p 124
29. Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, Gregory Elliott, trans, Verso, London, 2005, p 468
30. This in part being due to the way in which the *practice* of the critique of institutions was transformed into the *genre* of Institutional Critique. It is the so-called 'third generation' of theorist/practitioners who develop institutional critique as a distinctive genre of artistic work and no one has been more influential in this effort than Fraser herself. Such a situation, as the artist readily admits, leaves her in an ambivalent position: 'And so I find

identifies Haacke as a central influence, claiming that Haacke was the pre-eminent exponent of the more sophisticated understanding of the 'institution' from which her practice has developed.²³

In Fraser's work, however, in contrast to Greenfort's, the art system and its 'network of social and economic relationships' is not related to the 'environmental systems' within which it inheres. If Greenfort expands institutional critique's reach externally – *ecologically* – then Fraser extends it internally – *psychologically*.²⁴ That Fraser does not address ecological questions in her work should not be construed as a shortcoming as such: Greenfort does not focus on the issues of artistic subjectivity that Fraser has foregrounded in her more recent psychoanalytically informed work such as *Projection* (2008). Both positions, however, are attempting to move beyond the same problem. Fraser states:

Today, the argument goes, there no longer is an outside... How, then can we imagine, much less accomplish, a critique of art institutions when museum and market have grown into an all-encompassing apparatus of cultural reification?²⁵

Greenfort claims:

[T]here can be no such thing as an autonomous work. The cultural and institutional framework is what constitutes the artwork.²⁶

Isabelle Graw has suggested that recent examples of institutional critique risk becoming reactionary:

... it seems necessary to analyse how the artistic competencies usually associated with institutional critique (research, teamwork, personal risk-taking and so on) actually feed, sometimes quite perfectly, into what sociologists Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello have described as 'the new spirit of capitalism'.²⁷

Indeed, Fraser has seemed to concede as much recently:

Any claim that we represent a progressive social force while our activities are directly subsidised by the engines of inequality can only contribute to the justification of that inequality – the (not so) new legitimization function of art museums.²⁸

Consequently, Boltanski and Chiapello's broader challenge to contemporary artists and theorists acquires a particular timeliness:

... perhaps the artistic critique should, to a greater extent than is currently the case, take the time to reformulate the issues of liberation and authenticity, starting from the new forms of oppression it unwittingly helped to make possible.²⁹

Given both artists' focus on the 'institution' invoked by institutional critique, and the impasse this has brought them to, the question presents itself as to whether there might still be resources to discovered in 'critique' in its strong philosophical and historical sense as an emancipatory critical project, notwithstanding the suspicion that has been directed toward critique in recent theory.³⁰ My contention will be that taking up Boltanski

myself enmeshed in the contradictions and complicities, ambitions, and ambivalence that Institutional Critique is often accused of, caught between the self-flattering possibility that I was the first person to put the term in print, and the critically shameful prospect of having played a role in the reduction of certain radical practices to a pithy catchphrase, packaged for co-optation.' Fraser, 'From the Critique of Institutions', op cit, p 127

and Chiapello's challenge will involve revisiting the historical origins, and limitations, of critique in Immanuel Kant's work, specifically the way in which his account of aesthetic judgement was understood by Friedrich Schiller to model, but not to realize, the promise of freedom embodied in aesthetic experience as communicated by the sensation of the free play of the faculties. This issue, as we will see, is addressed in Haacke's work, albeit obliquely, and can be recovered through a careful re-reading of its terms, contrasting his practice to the broader history of conceptual art. Such a reading of Haacke's work is intimated by, but not ultimately realized in, Greenfort's attempt to reboot Haacke's practice.

A RENEWED POLITICS OF AESTHETICS?

A final pairing of works: Hans Haacke, *Rhine-Water Purification Plant* (1972); Tue Greenfort, *Diffuse Einträge* (2007). In Haacke's work, originally presented at the Museum Hans Lang in Krefeld, a series of chemical



Hans Haacke, *Rhine-Water Purification Plant*, 1972, colour photograph c-print, 20 x 30 in (51 x 76 cm), © Hans Haacke/DACS, courtesy of Paula Cooper Gallery, New York

agents and filters were used to purify polluted water from the Rhine. The purified water was then let out into a large tank on the gallery floor filled with goldfish and the survival of the fish throughout the duration of the exhibition attested to the quality of the water so treated. An outlet hose carried the excess water that overflowed from the oversized goldfish tank out to the garden of the museum where it seeped into the ground, returning to the broader ecosystem outside the gallery. Haacke's work carried a particular political charge because at the time it was produced the city of Krefeld was a major polluter, releasing forty-two million cubic metres of untreated household and industrial waste into the Rhine annually, a fact Haacke addressed in his companion work *Krefeld Sewage Triptych* (1972).³¹

Greenfort's work focused on another polluted body of water, the Aasee in Munich. Swimming in the lake is prohibited even though it is located in a park that is a popular recreation area for the city's residents. A high concentration of phosphates enter the lake as runoff from the intensive farming industry that surrounds Munich and these phosphates stimulate algal blooms which produce a substance that makes the lake water poisonous to humans. Keen to address the problem, the city established a scientific committee dedicated to returning the lake to recreational use and it proposed that introducing iron(III)-chloride into the lake would reduce the flowering of algae by chemically binding and thus neutralizing them. However the iron(III)-chloride solution would have to be continually introduced into the water or the process of eutrophication would begin again. Greenfort's *Diffuse Einträge*, presented at Skulptur Projekte Münster in 2007, produced a micro-realization of the scientific committee's proposal consisting of a modified manure spreading machine on top of which sat a 100-litre tank of iron(III)-chloride feeding in to the main tank of the machine. A water fountain connected to the front of the main tank sprayed the mixture of water and iron(III)-chloride into the lake.

While Haacke's work presented itself as at least potentially curative – the fish lived, the purified water was returned to the wider ecosystem – Greenfort's work, in contrast and similarly to *Exceeding 2 Degrees*, self-reflexively troped the futility of the solution it proposed – the volume of iron(III)-chloride introduced by Greenfort was manifestly inadequate to the task of rendering the lake safe to swim in. At one level Greenfort's piece parodies the emerging discipline of geoengineering, which proposes various 'solutions' to the problem of anthropogenic environmental degradation and global climate change by means of large-scale environmental interventions.³² At a more philosophical level, however, Greenfort's work criticizes the instrumental rationality marking contemporary technoscience in general, a rationality that can only conceive technocratic solutions to problems of technocratic society's own making. Such a point famously finds its antecedent in T W Adorno and Max Horkheimer's account of the 'dialectic of enlightenment' in which the social promise of enlightenment rationality – encapsulated by Kant's critical injunction 'sapere aude' ('dare to know') – has led to a paradox wherein 'the wholly enlightened earth is radiant with triumphant calamity'.³³

Greenfort's *Diffuse Einträge* thus operates at the tail end of the trajectory of conceptual art as influentially described by Benjamin Buchloh in

31. Here I am indebted to TJ Demos's discussion of both these works by Haacke. Demos also compares *Rhine-Water Purification Plant* with Greenfort's *Diffuse Einträge*, a comparison I develop below. See TJ Demos, 'The Politics of Sustainability: Art and Ecology', *Radical Nature*, pp 16–30, pp 21–22, p 27.

32. Geoengineering has developed various techniques focused principally on either carbon dioxide removal (CDR) or solar radiation management (SRM).

33. Immanuel Kant, 'What is Enlightenment?', Mary C Smith, trans, available online at: <http://www.columbia.edu/acis/ets/CCREAD/etscc/kant.html>; Max Horkheimer and T W Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Edmund Jephcott, trans, Stanford University, Stanford, California, 2002, p 1



Tue Greenfort, *Diffuse Einträge*, 2007, modified manure spreading machine, 100-litre tank filled with iron(III)-chloride, water fountain, format variable, photo: Roman Mensing, artdoc.de

terms of a development from an ‘aesthetic of administration’ that unconsciously mimicked instrumental rationality to a ‘critique of institutions’ wherein instrumental reason was self-consciously turned back on itself and the social institutions from which it was held to emanate:

Paradoxically, then, it would appear that Conceptual Art truly became the most significant paradigmatic change of postwar artistic production at the very moment that it mimed the operating logic of late capitalism and its positivist instrumentality in an effort to place its auto-critical investigations at the service of liquidating even the last remnants of traditional aesthetic experience. In that process it succeeded in purging itself entirely of imaginary and bodily experience, of physical substance and the space of memory, to the same extent that it effaced all residues of representation and style, of individuality and skill. That was the moment when Buren’s and Haacke’s work from the late 1960s onward turned the violence of that mimetic relationship back onto the ideological apparatus itself, using it to analyse and expose the social institutions from which the laws of positivist instrumentality and the logic of administration emanate in the first place. These institutions, which determine the conditions of cultural consumption, are the very ones in which artistic production is transformed into a tool of ideological control and cultural legitimation.³⁴

Yet, as we have seen, the limitations of this strategy have become apparent in the impasse besetting third-generation institutional cri-

34. Benjamin Buchloh, ‘Conceptual Art 1962–1969: From the Aesthetic of Administration to the Critique of Institutions’, *October* 55, winter 1990, pp 142–143

tique where the attempt to turn instrumental reason against itself seems to have run aground, whether that be in Fraser's fragile hopes for a psychological institutional critique (where critical artistic subjectivity seeks to make a virtue of its historical capture by the institution) or, as is the primary focus here, in Greenfort's ecological institutional critique (where the necessity and the impossibility of an art-immanent ecological expansion of institutional critique is dialectically staged).

Part of the reason for the seemingly entrenched nature of this impasse lies in the ongoing legacy of conceptual art's 'Kantianism' and the implications that this has held for the contemporary framing of questions concerning the ontology of art and the nature of aesthetic experience. While conceptual artists rejected Clement Greenberg's aesthetic formalism, they inherited elements of his idiosyncratic interpretation of Kant wherein reason's task of establishing its legitimacy by setting its own proper limits through rational self-criticism was *transposed* to art, such that advanced art's task was held to lie in establishing its own proper limits by means of self-criticism. Conceptual artists rejected Greenberg's insistence that art's self-criticism was obliged to proceed through medium-specificity (also overturning Donald Judd's liminal category of the specific object) but held on to the notion that rational self-criticism was the proper means of ontological self-grounding for art. Such a position resulted in a cognitivism: conceptual art insisted on the priority of art's cognitive value, seeking to divorce art from its historical association with an aesthetic dimension. There were of course strong reasons for this development: conceptual art turned against 'traditional aesthetic experience' (Buchloh) and the traditional art forms that were held to be its occasion (painting, sculpture and relief), not only as a local rejection of Greenbergian formalism but also as a broader gesture rejecting the affirmative character of culture.³⁵ Yet in jettisoning the issue of art's relation to aesthetics, conceptual art also rejected the connection – always provisional, even in Kant – not only between art and aesthetics but also thereby between art and the promise of freedom embodied by the aesthetic response. And although conceptual art's attempt to *absolutize* its anti-aestheticism is widely acknowledged to have failed, its broad anti-aesthetic impulse has proved enduringly influential, as evidenced by critical postmodernism's long history of 'anti-aesthetic' conviction, comprehensively set out by Hal Foster and echoed by Greenfort over twenty years later, when he claims that 'aesthetics is a cultural construction'.³⁶

What, though, if we were to try to move beyond what Jameson has appositely described as the 'limited and Kantian project of a restricted conceptual art' and its ramified legacy?³⁷ Jameson's incisive critique of 'restricted' conceptual art was occasioned by his discussion of Haacke's contrasting achievements:

In Haacke it is not merely with museum space that we come to rest, but rather the museum itself, as an institution, opens up into its network of trustees, their affiliations with multinational corporations, and finally the global system of late capitalism proper, such that what used to be the limited and Kantian project of a restricted conceptual art expands into the very ambition of cognitive mapping itself (with all its specific representational contradictions).³⁸

35. Marcuse considers traditional high culture to have an affirmative character because the aesthetic experience of the free play of the faculties that it occasions (and therein the intimation of freedom) finds no adequate means of social actualization and thus functions predominantly as a *consolation* and thereby a means of reconciliation to the status quo. See Herbert Marcuse, 'The Affirmative Character of Culture', *Negations: Essays in Critical Theory*, Jeremy J Shapiro, trans, Allen Lane, London, 1968, pp 88–133.

36. Hal Foster, 'Introduction', in Hal Foster, ed, *The Anti-Aesthetic; Essays on Postmodern Culture*, New Press, New York, 1998, ix–xvii, xvi–xvii; 'Interview between Tue Greenfort and Zoe Gray', *op cit*

37. Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism*, *op cit*, p 158

38. *Ibid*

39. 'The final departure of Haacke's work from the limitations of a systems-aesthetic approach really occurs in 1969 when – beginning with his Polls – he transfers his interests from biological and physical systems to social systems that implicate the spectator in an immediate interaction.' Benjamin Buchloh, 'Hans Haacke: The Entwinement of Myth and Enlightenment', in Hans Haacke, 'Obra Social', Fundació Antoni Tàpies, Barcelona, 1996, p 49
40. See Luke Skrebowski, 'All Systems Go: Recovering Hans Haacke's Systems Art', *Grey Room* 30, winter 2008, pp 54–83.
41. TJ Demos, 'Art After Nature', op cit, p 194, emphasis in the original; 'Interview between Tue Greenfort and Zoe Gray', op cit
42. I discuss this issue at length in Luke Skrebowski, 'The Artist as Homo Arbitrator: Art and Interaction in Jack Burnham's Systems Essays', Samuel Bianchini and Erik Verhagen, eds, *Practicable: Audience Participation in Contemporary Art and New Media from the 1950s to the Present Day*, CNRS, Paris, forthcoming 2013. For an account of Burnham's relation to a wider discourse relating art to systems ecology in the same period, see Demos, 'The Politics of Sustainability', op cit, pp 21–24.
43. Burnham, *Art in the Marcusean Analysis*, Pennsylvania State University, Philadelphia, 1969, p 9
44. Marcuse makes this point clear in his own discussion of the stakes of the ecology movement: 'The ecology movement reveals itself in the last analysis as a political and psychological movement of liberation. It

However, in valorizing Haacke's expanded critical project as an exercise in 'cognitive mapping', Jameson moves beyond 'restricted' conceptual art's idiosyncratic 'Kantianism' but not its cognitivism. If we are to understand what it means to work 'after Hans Haacke' today we must revisit our understanding of the character and achievements of Haacke's practice. We need to understand Haacke's work not, with Jameson, as characterized principally by its ambitious project of cognitive mapping, nor, following Buchloh, as split between an early uncritical phase characterized by a misguided adherence to Jack Burnham's theory of 'systems aesthetics' and a later critical one marked by his abandonment of this position.³⁹ The reading of Haacke's practice that proves salient in the present recognizes his work as characterized throughout by adherence to a systems aesthetics, a theoretical position that subtends all of his investigations of increasingly complex systems, from organic elements, through plants, animals, and finally to human beings.⁴⁰ If Fraser adheres to Buchloh's orthodox reading of Haacke's work, then Greenfort is surely closer to Burnham's. As Demos points out, 'Greenfort's work successfully demonstrated *the connection between* economic, ecological, and institutional systems' and the artist has stated that 'the idea of art itself as an ecosystem is very interesting'.⁴¹

Yet while the 'systems' component of Burnham's theory of systems aesthetics has been well discussed in the scholarly literature, the theoretical character of its 'aesthetics' remains less remarked.⁴² There was a specifically aesthetic character to Burnham's work – in the strong philosophical sense of the term – one that derived from his (problematic) adoption and adaptation of Herbert Marcuse's work. In his little-known pamphlet *Art in the Marcusean Analysis*, Burnham proposed that postformalist art should adopt Marcuse's Neo-Schillerian project to overcome the opposition between instrumental and aesthetic reason: 'A fusion of artistic and technical reason is inevitable once art ceases to function as illusion and ideal appearance.'⁴³ However, Burnham had misunderstood Marcuse's speculative claims for the potential *sublation* of technological rationality by aesthetic rationality, mistakenly arguing for the possibility of *synthesis* between incompatible rationalities. Nevertheless, influenced by Marcuse, Burnham's work set out the wider possibilities of an aesthetics conceived along Neo-Schillerian lines, one that was missed by the 'restricted' and 'Kantian' form of conceptual art but that was picked up in Haacke's ecological works, which use art to model a non-exploitative relation to nature and thereby to model liberation itself.⁴⁴

By reconsidering Haacke's legacy in terms of its manifestation of a systems aesthetics we can discern a way for contemporary art to feel its way beyond the impasse characterizing third-generation institutional critique's attempts to deploy instrumental reason against itself. Here Schiller might once again serve as a model. In *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* Schiller famously seeks to realize the freedom intimated in Kant's account of aesthetic judgement (the free play of the subject's faculties in aesthetic response) as social freedom by means of aesthetic education of the populous. As Jacques Rancière has summarized Schiller's project, 'the "gratuitous" activity of play can simultaneously found the autonomy of a specific domain of art and the construction of forms for a new collective life...'⁴⁵ Schiller is no panacea of course,

is political because it confronts the concerted power of big capital, whose vital interests the movement threatens. It is psychological because (and this is the most important point) the pacification of external nature, the protection of the life-environment, will also pacify nature within men and women. A successful environmentalism will, within individuals, subordinate destructive energy to erotic energy.' Herbert Marcuse, 'Ecology and the Critique of Modern Society', *Capitalism, Nature, Socialism: A Journal of Socialist Ecology*, vol 3, no 3, September 1992, pp 29–38. The article is a transcription of a talk given by Marcuse in 1979.

45. Jacques Rancière, 'Aesthetics as Politics', in Rancière, *Aesthetics and its Discontents*, Steven Corcoran, trans, Polity, Cambridge, 2009, pp 19–44, p 29

46. Gayatri Spivak, 'Introduction', in Spivak, *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 2012, pp 1–34, p 12

and Rancière's own influential remobilization of Schiller to produce an account of 'art in the aesthetic regime' has also proved contentious. Of specific significance here is the fact that Rancière's account does not acknowledge the ontological challenge to art in the aesthetic regime that was mounted by conceptual art. Addressing the shortcomings of Rancière's account would involve mediating his salutary revivification of the emancipatory ambition announced in Schiller's post-Kantian aesthetics *with the history of conceptual art*.

Such a project is suggested by Greenfort's attempt to reboot Haacke's practice as a ground for his own. Furthermore, in his ecological expansion of institutional critique, Greenfort has broadened the practice's geographical scope. *Exceeding 2 Degrees* self-reflexively acknowledges that it is a locational practice, that its site is determined by its relation to multiple other sites, and that it intervenes in and interlinks numerous geographies by means of the diverse social relations that crystallize in its production and circulation. Although such a claim is not made equally clearly in every work, Greenfort's practice insists that the critique of the art institution cannot be decoupled from a critique of the broader globalized circuits that allow such a critique to be enunciated and enable it to circulate. In this sense Greenfort moves beyond the Western parochialism of much institutional critique – notwithstanding its postcolonial inflection in the work of Renée Green, Fred Wilson and others. But he does so while also heeding Gayatri Spivak's injunction – made in the course of her own project to redeploy Schiller under contemporary globalized conditions – that simply 'proposing alternative non-European epistememes is a variant of the old anthropologism'.⁴⁶

Yet despite its sophisticated expansion of the field of critical production, Greenfort's work ultimately remains within the paradigm of institutional critique: while it frames the problem of the 'institution' in a richer, more geographically extensive manner – just as Fraser frames the practice in a richer, more psychologically intensive manner – it does not model an alternative to art's institutional capture, that is, it does not suggest a way to abolish art *by* realizing it, which would be consistent with a (Neo-)Schillerian aesthetics. Greenfort continues institutional critique's project to challenge instrumental reason but does so by self-consciously foregrounding the insufficiency of this gesture. In so doing he might seem to risk a cynicism, but this aspect of his practice might better be understood as the deliberate cultivation of cognitive dissonance: cognitive mapping is amplified to the point at which the promise and the limit of (this form of) artistic critique are entertained at the same time. In Greenfort's work institutional critique has to be understood as internal to the ecological crisis brought about by the instrumental rationality that it would challenge. In so doing, his work produces a sophisticated conceptualization of the problems inherent to the critique of institutions, when a clear distinction between the social and the natural can no longer be sustained in such a way as to bracket the art system. Such an emphasis on the hybrid imbrication of the social and the natural produces a sophisticated ecological expansion of the critique of institutions that is productive for the wider project of a critical eco-art today (Greenfort's art remains productively suspicious about any merely local form of activism). Ultimately, however, Greenfort recovers the systematic but not the aesthetic element of a systems aesthetics

from Haacke via Burnham: instrumental rationality is turned against itself but not overturned. In a work such as *Diffuse Einträge* the limitations of instrumental reason are clearly demonstrated but the potential of aesthetic reason to sublimate it is not seriously entertained. Aesthetic affect does not operate as beautiful consolation, in the manner of traditional aesthetic art, but nonetheless aesthetic reason remains subordinated and disempowered, reduced to a mordant form of decoration for critical art in the expanded field. Ultimately the work exhibits a scepticism about the power of art to enact a profound revolution of the sensible, which is a corollary of its realism, its anti-utopianism. In negating the fragile ecotopian moment of Haacke's *Rhine-Water Purification Plant* in the name of a legitimate scepticism about the limits of single-issue politics, *Diffuse Einträge*, and Greenfort's work more generally, also forecloses on the moment of aesthetic liberation that was embodied in Haacke's modest (with hindsight, all-too-modest) gesture of restorative ecology.

Greenfort's work is highly cognizant of the 'new forms of oppression' that Boltanski and Chiapello point out, that the art of the 1960s 'unwittingly helped to make possible' but has not yet managed to 'reformulate the issues of liberation and authenticity'. Finding a way out of the impasse of third-generation institutional critique might involve mediating Greenfort's ecological approach with Fraser's psychological approach, which is to say in finding a new way to connect 'nature' and the 'subject' – a founding ambition of Kant's Third Critique and thus the modern philosophical tradition – *after the self-evidence of both categories has been lost*.⁴⁷ Such might be the grounds of a renewed critical artistic project to come.

47. In the *Critique of Judgment* Kant argues that we must assume nature's purposiveness for the subject's cognitive faculties.