What is Journalism?

The Art and Politics of a Rupture

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Cover illustration: Detail of DER BEVÖLKERUNG, 2000-. Hans Haacke. Photo 2007. © Hans Haacke-Artists Rights Society (ARS)

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For
Wendy, Emma and Luke,
Hans and Linda,
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The Case for a Rupture

Hans Haacke is a German-American artist born in 1936 in Köln, Germany, and since 1965 living in New York. His practice is related to conceptual art, with a long list of works, exhibitions, commissions, international honours and publications to his credit. In 1970 Haacke was invited by the Guggenheim Museum in New York to stage a one-person show, which was "for a German-born artist just thirty-five years old …. a remarkably early canonisation."[1] Shortly before the exhibition was due to open in April 1971, the Museum Director, Thomas Messer, cancelled it on the grounds that three of the works produced for the exhibition were not art but journalism.

The rejected works were *Shapolsky et al. Manhattan Real Estate Holdings, a Real-Time Social System, as of May 1, 1971* and *Sol Goldman and Alex diLorenzo Manhattan Real Estate Holdings, a Real-Time Social System, as of May 1, 1971*, plus a proposed anonymous survey for exhibition visitors. The survey comprised twenty questions about demographic status and political, social, and economic attitudes (Fig. 1.1). The two real estate works comprised a series of black and white frontal photographs of slum tenement buildings in a flat uninterpretive style, supplemented with publicly available information from the New York City County Clerk's Office detailing lot number, address, basic building description, ownership and most recent transfer, assessed land value, and mortgage status (Fig. 1.2). A street map identified the location of the properties (Fig. 1.3), and charts detailed the various companies and individuals that owned the properties, the interconnections between them, and the sources of mort-