

Private

Office of the President

University of California

Los Angeles

State University of New York

ART COLLECTED: Private, Corporate and Museum Contexts



Allan McCollum, *Surrogate Paintings*, 1980-81, acrylic on wood and museum board. Installation: Corporate Waiting Area, 1981. Courtesy John Weber Gallery, New York.

The art collection, both as a concept and as a physical presentation, is the subject of the artists in this exhibition. Attacks on the modernist myth of art's autonomy, and the inescapability of art existing in a social context, are truisms of the 1980s. These artists stress several themes related to the contexts of art collections: the insular nature of museum and corporate collections, conflicts inherent in mixing art and money, and the informal, idiosyncratic nature of private collections. In the end, this exhibit heightens our sensitivity to these issues and to the contexts of art collections around us.

In their series *Index: Incident in a Museum*, Art and Language present the museum as an institution in which art is collected and hermetically sealed in a clean, uninhabited cube of space, as in this example #XIII from 1986, which is based on the design of the Whitney Museum. The corporate setting is presented as equally antiseptic in Allan McCollum's series of *Surrogates*, collections of paintings in which any one can be substituted for another because they are all equally empty. These inert objects parody the mystical aura of their minimalist predecessors.

In *Global Marketing*, Hans Haacke criticizes the corporate sponsorship of art for promotional purposes, by bluntly writing the name "Saatchi & Saatchi" across the paintings. According to Haacke, corporate ownership is the main content of these paintings, which are otherwise barely distinguishable. The line between corporation and museum is often blurred in such corporate collections; Saatchi & Saatchi has an exhibition space, collection, and acquisition budget that rivals most modern museums. Data about the South African affiliates of Saatchi & Saatchi is included in the paintings, to stress the corporation's involvement in an apartheid society, despite its cultural gloss.

The interesting issue raised by Art and Language and Hans Haacke is not whether or not

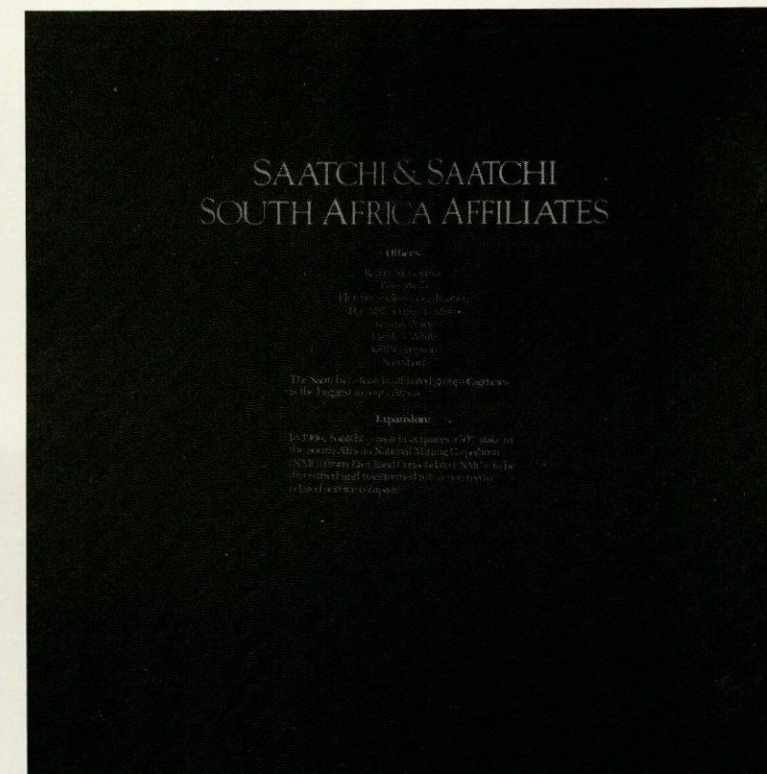
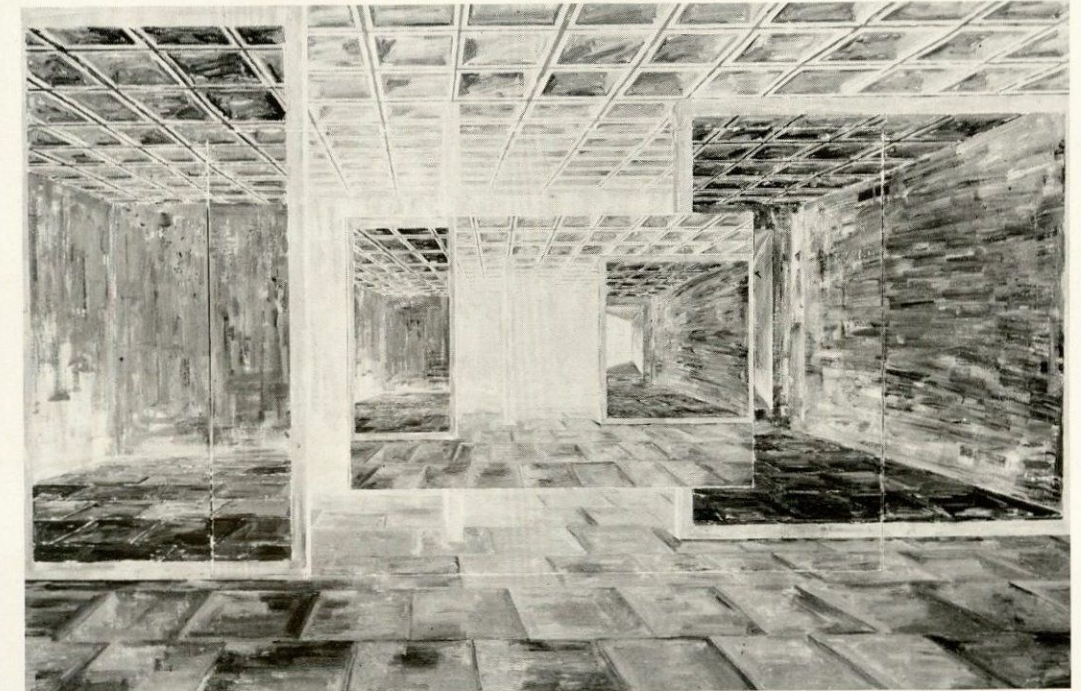
corporations and museums have a financial interest in art. Obviously they do. As Donald Kuspit has said, Art and Language's work implies that art is another form of money and the museum is the bank.¹ To deny this harkens back to the old days of the autonomy of art. The challenge is to determine how art best functions in this financial arena—for itself, and for the enormous corporate audience it would not otherwise address.

The eclectic, real-life context of the private collection is brought to us in Louise Lawler's *Living-room Corner*; competing for our attention are Stevie Wonder on the TV, a Roy Lichtenstein Pop Art lamp, an African mask, and, looming behind it all, a riveting landmark of early 20th century abstract art, Robert Delaunay's *Simultaneous Disk* of 1912. Lawler underscores the importance of this grouping by her subtitle, *Arranged by Mr. and Mrs. Burton Tremaine*, who are the collectors and chief contributors to the context in which this work is seen.

A premise of this exhibit is that private, corporate, and museum contexts have a powerful influence on one's perception of the art object and, indeed, on the nature of the work itself. This is true to a point. The benefit of this exhibit is that it increases our awareness of context; however, it also encourages us to seek art which is unable to fade into its setting as wall decoration because it communicates something important about the human condition. Is it impossible for such art to exist in private, corporate, and museum contexts? Well, there's no surrogate for Delaunay's *Disk*. Is passionate art necessarily drained bloodless, stamped with the insignia of its owner, and made into a mere commodity by these contexts? I think not. No more than playing a Stevie Wonder tune on the elevator turns it into background music.

by Lynn Gamwell

1. "Of Art and Language," *Artforum*, May 1986, p. 128.



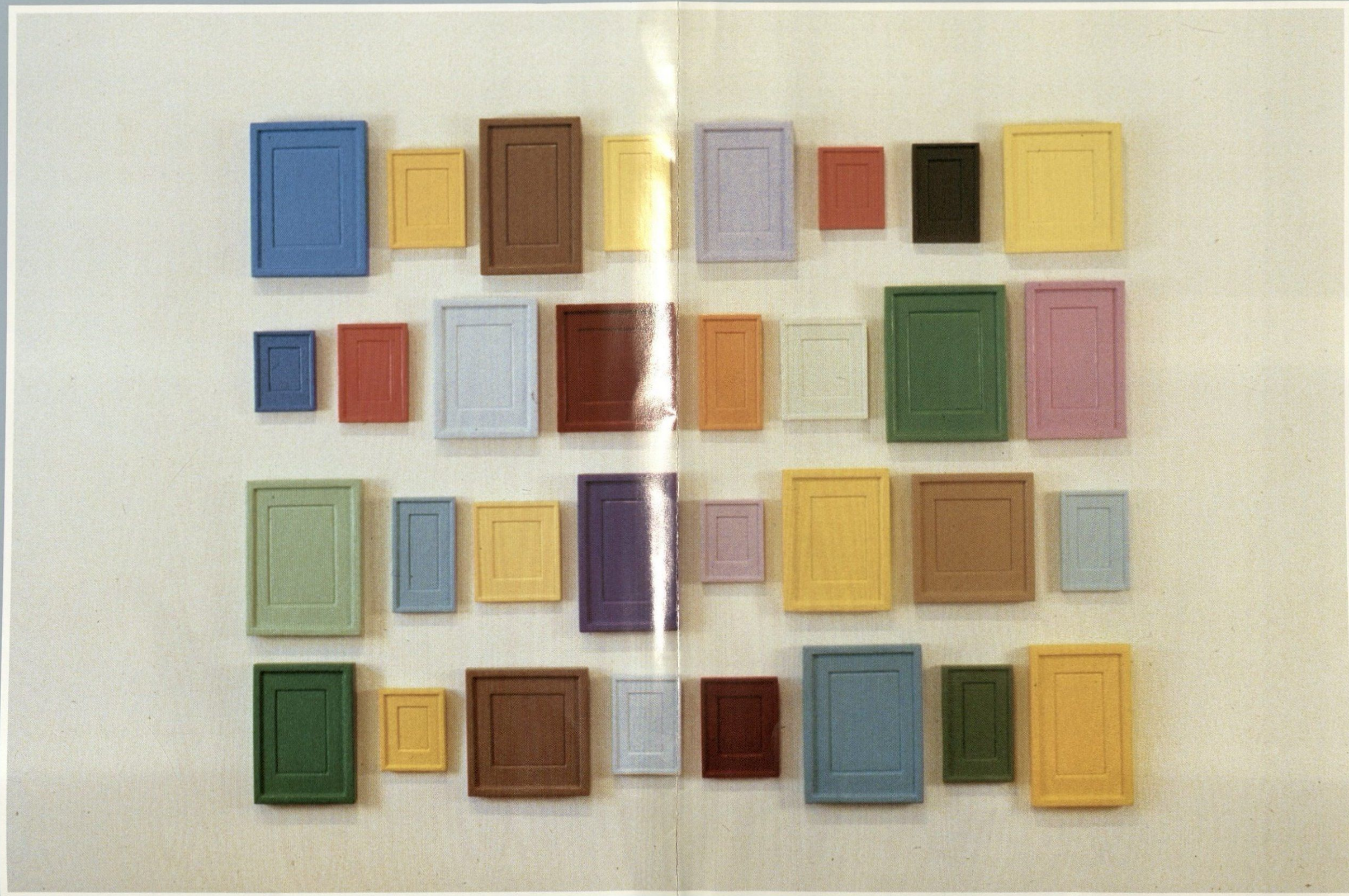
Above: Art and Language, *Index: Incident in a Museum XIII*, 1986, oil on canvas, 174" x 271". Courtesy Marian Goodman Gallery, New York.

Left: Hans Haacke, *Global Marketing (On the Wall)*, 1987, silkscreen on metal, 4 pieces, 48" x 48" each. Courtesy of the New Museum, New York.

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Curated by Lynn Gamwell



Above: Allan McCollum, *Surrogates*, 1988, enamel on hydrostone, 32 pieces, 41¾" x 54½". Courtesy John Weber Gallery, New York.

Below: Louise Lawler, *Livingroom Corner* (arranged by Mr. and Mrs. Burton Tremaine), 1984, cibachrome. Courtesy of the artist and Metro Pictures, New York.



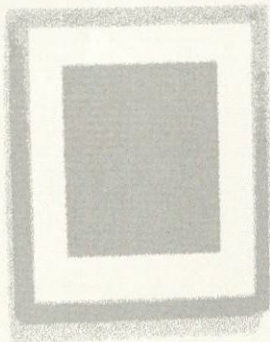
University Art Museum

March 9-April 16, 1989 State University of New York at Binghamton

Works in the Exhibition

Hans Haacke

Global Marketing (On the Wall), 1987, silkscreen on metal, 4 pieces, 48" x 48" each. Courtesy of the New Museum, New York.



Louise Lawler

Arranged by Donald Marron, Susan Brundage, Cheryl Bishop at Paine Webber, Inc., New York, 1982, silver print. Courtesy of the artist and Metro Pictures, New York.

Fragment/Framed/Text: The Younger Child Died Early, 1984, cibachrome. Courtesy of the artist and Metro Pictures, New York.

Fragment/Framed/Text, 1984, cibachrome. Courtesy of the artist and Metro Pictures, New York.

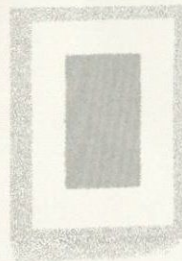
Cezanne (Jeu de Paume), 1982, c-print. Courtesy of the artist and Metro Pictures, New York.

Legs Camondo (Jeu de Paume), 1982, silver print. Courtesy of the artist and Metro Pictures, New York.

Untitled, 1950-51, 1987, cibachrome. Courtesy of the artist and Metro Pictures, New York.

Allan McCollum

Surrogates, 1987, enamel on plaster, 20 pieces. Courtesy of John Weber Gallery.



Surrogates, 1988, enamel on hydrostone, 32 pieces, 41 3/4" x 53 1/2". Courtesy John Weber Gallery, New York.

