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| Jennings, Humphrey (1907-1950) |
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| Humphrey Jennings is best remembered as one of Britain’s most dynamic documentary filmmakers, but he was also at the center of the key cultural and artistic movements of the 1930s. Around 1934 Jennings began work with the nascent documentary film movement, producing and directing films and designing sets. Surrealism made a significant and enduring impact on Jennings’ aesthetics. He was especially attracted to surrealism’s interest in the unfamiliar and extraordinary dimensions of everyday life. He pursued these ideas in his painting and poetry. The influence of surrealism permeates his remarkable, genre-bending prose poem series ‘Reports,’ which were published in *Contemporary Poetry and Prose*. With André Breton, Herbert Read, and others, he organized the International Surrealist Exhibition in London in June 1936.  Late 1936 and early 1937 marked the high point of Jennings’ engagement with surrealism. In December of 1936 he laid the groundwork for Mass Observation with Charles Madge, Stuart Legg, Kathleen Raine, and David Gascoyne. The increasing sociological focus of the organization would lead to his departure in 1937 shortly after the publication of Mass Observation’s *May the Twelfth*. In the years prior to the onset of the Second World War, Jennings continued to write poetry, to paint, and even to give broadcasts on the BBC about poetry. It was during the war years, however, that Jennings created his most lasting works. Wartime films such as *Listen to Britain* (1942), *Fires Were Started* (1943), and *A Diary for Timothy* (1945) show Jennings’ continued interest in the strangeness at the heart of everyday life, an aesthetic principle that guided his interest in surrealism and early Mass Observation. Jennings died from an accidental fall in Greece in 1950 while doing preparatory work for a film.  Filmography  (As director):  *Locomotives* (1934)  *Post Haste* (1934)  *The Story of the Wheel* (1935)  *Farewell Topsails* (1937)  *English Harvest* (1938)  *Speaking from America* (1938)  *Penny Journey* (1938)  *Design for Spring* (1938)  *Speaking from America* (1938)  *Spare Time* (1939)  *The First Days* (with Harry Watt and Pat Jackson, 1939)  *English Harvest* (1939)  *S.S. Ionian* (1939)  *Spring Offensive* (1940)  *Welfare of the Workers* (1940)  *London Can Take It!* (1940)  *Heart of Britain* (1941)  *Words for Battle* (1941)  *Listen to Britain* (1942)  *Fires Were Started* (1943)  *The Silent Village* (1943)  *The True Story of Lili Marlene* (1944)  *The 80 Days* (1944)  *A Defeated People* (1945)  *A Diary for Timothy* (1946)  *The Cumberland Story* (1947)  *Dim Little Island* (1949)  *Family Portrait* (1950)  Writings  “Design and the Theatre.” (1928) *Experiment* 1  “Odd Thoughts at the Fitzwilliam.” *Experiment 2* (  “Notes on Marvell’s ‘To His Coy Mistress’.” (1929) *Experiment* 2  “Rock Painting and ‘La Jeune Peinture’.” (1931) *Experiment* 7  “A Reconsideration of Herrick.” (1931) *Experiment 7*  “The Theatre.” (1935) *The Arts Today*  “Reports.” (1936) *Contemporary Poetry and Prose* 1  “Three Reports.” (1936) *Contemporary Poetry and Prose* 4/5  “Surrealism.” (1936) *Contemporary Poetry and Prose* 8  “The Boyhood of Byron.” (1936) *Contemporary Poetry and Prose* 8  “Report on the Industrial Revolution.” (1937) *Contemporary Poetry and Prose* 10  *May the Twelfth: Mass Observation Day Surveys 1937*. (1937) Co-edited with Charles Madge.  “In Magritte’s Paintings.” (1938) *London Gallery Bulletin* 1  “Prose Poem.” (1938) *London Bulletin* 2  “The Iron Horse.” (1938) *London Bulletin* 3  “What Does That Remind You Of?” (1938) *London Bulleting* 6  “Two American Poems.” (1939) *London Bulletin* 11  “Notes on the Cleaned Pictures: Colorado Claro.” (1947) *Our Time*  “Working Sketches of an Orchestra.” (1954) *London Symphony.* Eds. Hubert Foss and Notel Goodwin.  *Poems* (1951)  *Pandaemonium: The Coming of the Machine as Seen by Contemporary Observers, 1660-1886.* (1985)  *The Humphrey Jennings Film Reader.* (1993)Ed. Kevin Jackson |
| Further reading:  Beattie, Keith (2010) *Humphrey Jennings.* Manchester: Manchester UP.  Jackson, Kevin (2004) *Humphrey Jennings*. London: Picador.  Jennings, Mary-Lou (1982), *Humprhey Jennings: Film-Maker, Painter, Poet.* London: British Film Institute.  Logan, Philip C (2010) *Humphrey Jennings and British Documentary Film: A Re-assessment*. London: Ashgate.  Remy, Michel (2001) *Surrealism in Britain*. London: Ashgate. |