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| Berkeley, Busby (1895-1976) |
| **[Enter any *variant forms* of your headword – OPTIONAL]** |
| Busby Berkeley (29 November 1895- 14 March 1976) was an American film choreographer. Berkeley is widely considered to be the first musical director to conceive of musicals as a filmic spectacle, and not simply a stage production transferred to the screen. He employed crane shots, dynamic editing, and elaborate choreography involving chorus girls arranged in geometric designs. At the same time, Berkeley staged his musical numbers on large sound stages and often incorporated giant and unusual props and swimming pools. His most famous sequences include numbers from a trio of Warner Bros. films he worked on in 1933: ‘We’re in the Money’ and ‘Remember My Forgotten Man’ from *Gold Diggers of 1933,* ‘By a Waterfall’ from *Footlight Parade,* and the title song from *42nd Street.* Berkeley turned to directing and met actress/swimmer Esther Williams on the set of his *Take Me Out to the Ballgame* (1949). He would stage water spectacles for her in *Million Dollar Mermaid* (1952) and *Easy to Love* (1953). Martin Rubin sees in Berkeley’s spectacles a direct descendant of the ‘superabundance’ of American three-ring circuses, in which more action occurs than any one viewer can absorb. Other critics have noted the relationship of Berkeley’s patterns to Leni Riefenstahl’s Nazi documentary films: both utilize what Siegfried Kracauer called ‘the mass ornament’, the image of multiple bodies used to construct a visually reassuring, but ultimately dehumanized, whole. |
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| Further reading:  (Rubin) |