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| Jennings, Humphrey (1907-1950) |
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| Remembered as one of England’s most dynamic documentary filmmakers, Humphrey Jennings was also at the centre of key cultural and artistic movements in the 1930s. In 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. Attracted to Surrealism’s interest in the unfamiliar and extraordinary dimensions of everyday life, Jennings pursued these ideas in his painting and poetry. The influence of Surrealism permeates his genre-bending prose poem series *Reports*, which were published in *Contemporary Poetry and Prose*. With André Breton, Herbert Read, and others, he organised 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 organisation’s increasing sociological focus lead to his departure in 1937 shortly after the publication of Mass Observation’s *May the Twelfth*. In the years leading up to the Second World War, Jennings continued writing poetry, painting, and delivered BBC broadcasts 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) showcase 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. |
| Remembered as one of England’s most dynamic documentary filmmakers, Humphrey Jennings was also at the centre of key cultural and artistic movements in the 1930s. In 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. Attracted to Surrealism’s interest in the unfamiliar and extraordinary dimensions of everyday life, Jennings pursued these ideas in his painting and poetry. The influence of Surrealism permeates his genre-bending prose poem series *Reports*, which were published in *Contemporary Poetry and Prose*. With André Breton, Herbert Read, and others, he organised 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 organisation’s increasing sociological focus lead to his departure in 1937 shortly after the publication of Mass Observation’s *May the Twelfth*. In the years leading up to the Second World War, Jennings continued writing poetry, painting, and delivered BBC broadcasts 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) showcase 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,’ *Experiment 1* (1928)  ‘Odd Thoughts at the Fitzwilliam,’ *Experiment 2* (1929)  ‘Notes on Marvell’s ‘To His Coy Mistress’,’ *Experiment* 2 (1929)  ‘Rock Painting and ‘La Jeune Peinture’,’ *Experiment* 7 (1931)  ‘A Reconsideration of Herrick,’ *Experiment 7* (1931)  ‘The Theatre,’ *The Arts Today* (1935)  ‘Reports,’ *Contemporary Poetry and Prose* 1 (1936)  ‘Three Reports,’ *Contemporary Poetry and Prose* 4/5 (1936)  ‘Surrealism,’ *Contemporary Poetry and Prose* 8 (1936)  ‘The Boyhood of Byron,’ *Contemporary Poetry and Prose* 8 (1936)  ‘Report on the Industrial Revolution,’ *Contemporary Poetry and Prose* 10 (1937)  *May the Twelfth: Mass Observation Day Surveys 1937*. (1937)  ‘In Magritte’s Paintings,’ *London Gallery Bulletin* 1 (1938)  ‘Prose Poem,’ *London Bulletin* 2 (1938)  ‘The Iron Horse,’ *London Bulletin* 3 (1938)  ‘What Does That Remind You Of?’ *London Bulletin* 6 (1938)  ‘Two American Poems,’ *London Bulletin* 11 (1939)  ‘Notes on the Cleaned Pictures: Colorado Claro,’ *Our Time* (1947)  ‘Working Sketches of an Orchestra,’ *London Symphony* (1954)  *Poems* (1951)  *Pandaemonium: The Coming of the Machine as Seen by Contemporary Observers, 1660-1886* (1985)  *The Humphrey Jennings Film Reader* (1993) |
| Further reading:  (Beattie)  (Jackson)  (Jennings)  (Logan)  (Remy) |