REGEN (1929)

*Regen* (*Rain*) is a black-and-white short film by Joris Ivens and Mannus Franken about a rain shower in Amsterdam. As a masterpiece of Dutch avant-garde cinema, it is an impressionist and lyrical example of a city symphony, a film form that organizes urban images according to musical guidelines by combining experimental, documentary and narrative techniques. In 1932 Ivens asked Lou Lichtveld to write a score for the originally silent film, and a second sound version was made by Hanns Eisler in 1941. The film shows the effects of a natural phenomenon on the modern city with its motorized traffic and crowds, and reveals the transforming and aesthetic qualities of this everyday event by depicting the city before, during and after the rain. In a poetic play of light and shadow, reflection and refraction, the film studies the urban textures and semi-transparent surfaces such as skylights, tram windows and canals. During the rain shower, the entire city is covered with a second, semi-reflecting surface, generating a new and modern mediated vision not unlike cinematic perception. Reflected images appear on rain-soaked streets, puddles and canals. The city becomes a screen that Ivens’s camera uncovers and doubles.

Further reading:

- Dähne, C. (2010) *Der urbane Raum in den Stadtsinfonien der 1920er Jahre. Vorgefundene und imaginierte Welten in Film, Literatur und Fotografie*, PhD Dissertation, Delft University of Technology.

- Ivens, J. (1969) *The Camera and I*, Berlin: Seven Seas Publishers.

- Nichols, B. (2001) ‘Documentary Film and the Modernist Avant-Garde’, *Critical Inquiry* 27 (4): 580-610.

- Waugh, T. (1981) *Joris Ivens and the Evolution of the Radical Documentary 1926-1946,* PhD Dissertation, Columbia University.

- Weihsmann, H. (1997) ‘The City in Twilight: Charting the Genre of the City-Film 1900-1930’, in François Penz & Maureen Thomas (eds), *Cinema & Architecture: Méliès, Mallet-Stevens, Multimedia*, London: BFI, 8-27.

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Additional information for the editors/web designers:

Copyright: Marceline Loridan-Ivens (Ivens’ widow)

Restoration and preservation: EYE Film Institute Netherlands (amongst others)

Notes on restoration and preservation: There are various versions of the film that differ in duration, images and editing. EYE alone has 11 different versions of the film in its vaults. The sound version of 1941 with the score from Hanns Eisler was lost until it was reconstructed in 2005. Earlier reconstruction attempts in the 1980s weren’t completely satisfactory.

In 2008 the European Foundation Joris Ivens published The Joris Ivens DVD box set in cooperation with CAPI Film and the Netherlands Filmmuseum (currently EYE Film Institute Netherlands), including 4 versions of *Rain*: the original silent version from 1929, the 1932 sound version with the score from Lou Lichtveld, the reconstructed 1941 version with Hanns Eisler’s score and a fourth version with a new recording of Lichtveld’s music.

Weblinks for further information:

European Foundation Joris Ivens: <http://www.ivens.nl>

EYE Film Institute Netherlands: <http://www.eyefilm.nl>