**Ghosts Before Breakfast**

*Ghosts Before Breakfast* (German title: *Vormittagsspuk*) is a short experimental avant-garde animated film from 1928 by Hans Richter. The film, coming almost four years after the dissolution of the Dada movement in Europe, was undoubtedly influenced by Richter’s involvement with Dadaism and its attack on the rational order of bourgeois society. A mixture of live action and stop motion animation, the film also clearly displays the absurdist tone and influence of the newly emergent Surrealist movement where contradictions both collapse and are brought into conflict. Taking place during the ten minute time period between 11:50 and noon, the film plays with real and diegetic time, and it concerns the short-lived irrational rebellion of everyday objects resisting both their original use value but also their insertion into the regimented rhythm and time system of modern European capitalism. Bowler hats fly around residential neighbourhoods fending off attempts by humans to place them on their heads, bowties unravel and resist their owner’s attempt to fasten them, fire hoses unravel to playfully spray the flying hats. Richter’s film also explores the possibility of the camera to play with time and to manipulate and transform visual reality through negative-positive reversals, split screen, the speeding up and reversal of time, and ‘stop trick’ techniques. When the Nazis came to power, they destroyed the soundtrack version of the film, composed by Paul Hindemith, as an example of “degenerate art”.

**Further Reading:**

Foster, S. C. (ed.) (1998) *Hans Richter: Activism, Modernism, and the Avant-Garde*.

Cambridge, Mass, MIT Press.

von Hofacker, M. “Richter’s Films and the Role of the Radical Artist, 1927-1941.”

in Foster pp. 122-160.

**Paratextual Material:**

Attached:

1. Hats begin their revolt against their enslavement to an over-rationalized society. An image from *Ghost Before Breakfast* (1928).

2. From *Ghost Before Breakfast* (1928).

*Vormittagsspuk* (1928) – out of copyright

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bqguzDeejFk

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