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| Anemic Cinema |
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| Considered one of the most important experimental films of the pre-war European avant-garde, *Anemic Cinema* (1926) is a short experimental film by Marcel Duchamp, who authored the film under his pseudonym Rrose Sélavy. Earlier in the decade, Duchamp had experimented with a series of optical devices and motorized sculptures that would later form the basis for *Anemic Cinema*. These mechanical pieces, which Duchamp called ‘rotoreliefs,’ involved the rotary movement of black concentric circles painted onto flat cardboard discs whose spinning, powered by a phonograph turntable, created a pulsating optical illusion or pseudo-3D effect. After a series of unsuccessful attempts, Duchamp, along with Man Ray and Marc Allégret, successfully filmed these rotoreliefs in motion for the finished version of *Anemic Cinema*. The structure of the film is simple: a static camera films ten shots of spinning optical rotorelief discs alternating with nine spinning textual discs. These spinning textual discs, read from the outer concentric rings to the inner, intentionally confound the spectator’s fixed and stable position. It is near impossible to read these counter-clockwise spinning discs, for example, without craning one’s neck or adjusting one’s viewing position. Drawing his text and allusions from such disparate sources as French advertising copy and homosexual innuendo, Duchamp’s clever and idiosyncratic use of French puns, idioms, and alliteration had a bewildering effect on French-speakers, and made transliteration into other languages a futile prospect. Duchamp would later adapt his optical rotorelief discs for a sequence in Hans Richter’s feature-length experimental film *Dreams That Money Can Buy* (1948). |
| File: Have you ever.jpeg  “Have you ever put the marrow of the sword into the stove of a loved one”  Source: Contact author; no link/image provided.  File: Let us flee.jpg  “Let us flee the bruises of the Eskimos who have exquisite words”  Source: Contact author; no link/image provided.  Considered one of the most important experimental films of the pre-war European avant-garde, *Anemic Cinema* (1926) is a short experimental film by Marcel Duchamp, who authored the film under his pseudonym Rrose Sélavy. Earlier in the decade, Duchamp had experimented with a series of optical devices and motorized sculptures that would later form the basis for *Anemic Cinema*. These mechanical pieces, which Duchamp called ‘rotoreliefs,’ involved the rotary movement of black concentric circles painted onto flat cardboard discs whose spinning, powered by a phonograph turntable, created a pulsating optical illusion or pseudo-3D effect. After a series of unsuccessful attempts, Duchamp, along with Man Ray and Marc Allégret, successfully filmed these rotoreliefs in motion for the finished version of *Anemic Cinema*. The structure of the film is simple: a static camera films ten shots of spinning optical rotorelief discs alternating with nine spinning textual discs. These spinning textual discs, read from the outer concentric rings to the inner, intentionally confound the spectator’s fixed and stable position. It is near impossible to read these counter-clockwise spinning discs, for example, without craning one’s neck or adjusting one’s viewing position. Drawing his text and allusions from such disparate sources as French advertising copy and homosexual innuendo, Duchamp’s clever and idiosyncratic use of French puns, idioms, and alliteration had a bewildering effect on French-speakers, and made transliteration into other languages a futile prospect. Duchamp would later adapt his optical rotorelief discs for a sequence in Hans Richter’s feature-length experimental film *Dreams That Money Can Buy* (1948). |
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