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| Deren, Maya (1917-1961) |
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| Maya Deren (born Eleanora Derenkowskaia in Kiev, Ukraine)was a Russian American experimental filmmaker whose work in the 1940s and 50s had a profound impact on American avant-garde filmmaking. She was additionally a film theorist, dancer, choreographer, photographer, ethnographer, poet, and entrepreneurial promoter of the avant-garde. In her theoretical writings, Deren argues that film is a distinct form of high art uniquely suited to represent modernity. For Deren, film’s distinct nature lies in its ability to use reality creatively through manipulations of space and time by means of cinematic techniques such as the jump cut, multiple exposure, slow motion, reverse motion, and superimposition. She argues that in order for the medium to realize its potential as a unique form of art, a film should be organized according to its own organic logic, breaking with conventions adopted from literature, such as plot. Deren’s first film, *Meshes of the Afternoon* (1943; made in collaboration with Alexander Hammid), features a circular narrative structure that explores the subconscious imaginings and subjective focus of its central female figure, played by Deren. |
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| Further reading:  (Brakhage)  (Brannigan)  (Butler)  (Deren, A Study in Choreography for Camera)  (Deren and McPherson, Essential Deren: Collected Writings on Film)  (Halsem)  (Jackson)  (Michelson)  (Millsapps)  (Nichols and Deren)  (Sitney, Film Culture Reader)  (Sitney, Visionary Film: the American Avant-Garde, 1943-1978) |