



ART IN THE MAKING

# Europe after the Rain: Dada and Surrealism

+ intro by BFI Curator Steven Foxon

Join us for a foray into the foundations of Modernism. 'Dada thrives on contradictions. It is creative and destructive. Dada denounces the world and wishes to save it.' Mick Gold's carefully crafted documentary makes sense of a defining inter-war art scene that continues to influence cultural practice today. Historical and dramatised, with archive scenes and recreations, Gold's film is a masterpiece that's as fascinating as the subject itself.

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## A contemporary review

*Europe after the Rain* is the most extensive film project ever undertaken by the Arts Council – a feature length investigation into the intertwined art movements of Dada and Surrealism, whose tentacles have spread out from their elitist origins to touch even commercial art and television humour. As the film points out, we now live in an age when anything which is remotely weird or dreamlike can be called 'surrealistic'. To stop the rot, Mick Gold has made a gallant attempt at precise definition and explanation, yet so complex is the subject that even eighty-eight minutes packed with words and images allows for nothing more than a broad outline of the relationship between Dada's nihilism and Surrealism's irrationality, and their place in the larger context of twentieth-century culture and history.

The commentary presents the movements' main events chronologically – the peripatetic journeys of Dada from one European centre to another, the arrival of new recruits, the important publications and exhibitions, the preferred techniques (collage, automatic writing), the political alliances and confrontations. Ample space is also found for the artists' own words – their sound poems (Schwitters, Raoul Hausmann), their verbal fusillades ('If you read Andre Gide aloud for ten minutes your breath will stink'), their general statements of aesthetic aims.

The visuals present the art works themselves (soberly interpreted by the camera) alongside other documentary evidence-photographs, newsreels (World War One, Trotsky in Mexico, the liberation of Paris) and various filmed interviews from other sources (including a cherishable *Late Night Line-Up* meeting between Joan Bakewell and Marcel Duchamp, filmed in 1968). Some of the key figures (Tzara, Breton) are also portrayed by actors, who pronounce their views against a black background. In this headlong rush of visual and aural data, many items inevitably pass by without close attention. There is no indication, for instance, that the close-ups of Antonin Artaud are culled from *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc*, or that the scene with Duchamp playing roof-top chess derives from *Entr'acte*.

Yet the film still manages to give a good general impression of the wide range of thought and work produced by the artists gathered together, however briefly and precariously, under the Dadaist and Surrealist umbrella. And Gold specifically treats two main aspects of the movements: the importance given

to subconscious states of mind and the relationship between revolutionary art and revolutionary politics. In the longest dramatised sequence, we see a confrontation between Breton and a Communist Party official, who questions whether the arch-priest of Surrealism is a fit candidate for membership. Breton counters the Party’s wish for a popular utilitarian art by insisting that art can only be truly revolutionary if it abandons conventional forms: by remaining hermetic, Surrealism ensures that it cannot be assimilated by the reactionary Establishment. In fact, the Establishment soon assimilated and commercialised the movement, or at least some aspects of it. However, *Europe after the Rain* amply testifies that Dada and Surrealism still retain more potency than any other art movement of the century.

**Geoff Brown, *Monthly Film Bulletin*, March 1978**

**EUROPE AFTER THE RAIN: DADA AND SURREALISM**

*Director:* Mick Gold  
*Production Company:* Mick Gold  
*Sponsor:* Arts Council of Great Britain  
*Production Assistants:* Georgina Martin, Pink Wigoder  
*Script:* Mick Gold  
*Commentary Writer:* Ruth Cubbin  
*Script Consultants:* Dawn Ades, Robert Short  
*Photography:* Nic Knowland, Derek Waterman  
*Video tapes:* Mick Hartney  
*Graphics:* Richard Mott  
*Animator:* Nick Kavanagh  
*Editor:* Barry Beckett  
*Make-up:* Judy Neame  
*Sound Recording:* Jon Sanders

**With**  
Simon Cadell  
Nickolas Grace (*Tristan Tzara*)  
Marcel Duchamp  
Edward Petherbridge  
Michael Harbour (*André Breton*)  
Joan Bakewell  
Dennis Clinton (*Communist Party Representative*)  
Max Ernst  
Raoul Hausmann (*Voice: poetry reader*)  
Kurt Schwitters (*Voice: poetry reader*)  
  
UK 1978  
87 mins

**REGULAR PROGRAMME**

**Art in the Making: Europe after the Rain: Dada and Surrealism + intro by BFI Curator Steven Foxon**  
Thu 5 May 18:10  
**African Odysseys: Raça + Q&A co-hosted by Victor Fraga, DMovies**  
Sat 7 May 14:00  
**Woman with a Movie Camera: To Die For + intro by Hannah Strong**  
Sat 14 May 14:50  
**Woman with a Movie Camera: The Bling Ring + intro by Hannah Strong**  
Sat 14 May 18:00  
**Silent Cinema: Modern Times + intro**  
Sun 15 May 15:30

**Seniors’ Free Matinee: Gregory’s Girl + discussion**  
Mon 16 May 14:00  
**Experimenta: Lensing the Landscape: River Yar + discussion with artists William Raban and Chris Welsby**  
Wed 18 May 18:15  
**Terror Vision: Ms .45 (AKA Angel of Vengeance)**  
Fri 27 May 18:30  
**Relaxed Screening: Frequencies (AKA OXV: The Manual) + intro and discussion**  
Mon 30 May 18:10  
**Projecting the Archive: Idol of Paris + intro by Josephine Botting, BFI Curator**  
Tue 31 May 18:15

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