4. Documentarist as... PAINTER

Definition(s):
Painters defined film as a “pictorial art in which light was the medium”

Key Concepts & Issues:
Painters infiltrated the ranks of filmmakers in the 1920s; with other artists, they joined cine-clubs (anti-commercial)

Transference of principles of the work of painter-artists to the world of the filmmaker-artist

Two factors resulted in a lessening of the importance of the painter filmmaker: (1) the coming of sound, and (2) the tension introduced by the depression (the functions of the documentary would necessarily change)

Key Documentarists:
1. Abstract film as documentary
   Viking Eggeling (Sweden) and Hans Richter (Germany), both Dadaists, began experiments in abstract film, using familiar objects and materials (e.g., Richter’s *Racing Symphony* (1928), which used horserace footage—“fragments of actuality,” “Muybridge fused with abstractionism”)
   Fernand Leger and Dudley Murphy’s *Ballet Mechanique* (1925)
   Jean Painleve’s *Le Vampire* (1939) (Painleve’s films “gave the avant-garde filmmakers a link with science”; this film juxtaposes multiple “real” elements of horror to make a social commentary (??))

2. Beyond these experiments--The City Symphony
   Walter Ruttmann—a painter and architect who worked with Eggeling and Richter, and later advised Leni Riefenstahl on editing *Olympia*; with DP Karl Freund, directed *Berlin: Symphony of a Great City* (1927) and released it generally, creating a new theatrical genre, the “City Symphony”; *Berlin* is characterized by:
   1—rhythms and patterns/people as objects, incidental
   2—shows a day in the life of a city
   3—machines, often without human operators
   4—a “crossbreeding” of all the arts
   Jean Vigo (D) and Boris Kaufman (DP)—for *On the Subject of Nice* (1930), Kaufman shot the boardwalk from a wheelchair with a camouflaged camera in his lap; the film adds satire to the city film repertoire
   Joris Ivens—His *Rain* (*Regen*, 1929), shot over four months in Amsterdam, depicts a “single” rain storm (like Richter’s *Racing Symphony*, truth but not reality??); has been called “the most perfect product” of documentarist as painter