

# *Dreams That Money Can Buy*

(Hans Richter, 1948)

Thursday, December 11, 2014

Northwest Film Forum

The Sprocket Society  
Seattle, WA

# This Evening's Program

As presented for the feature's world premiere on April 23, 1948, at Cinema 16 in New York City.

## Glens Falls Sequence (1937-1946)

8 minutes, color, silent, 16mm

Douglass Crockwell

Assisted by William Smith

"*Glens Falls Sequence* is a group of short animations bound together chiefly by their position in time. Each has a name of convenience such as: Flower Landscape, Parade, Frustration, etc. These are not mentioned in the film for the sake of greater unity. Generally speaking, the technique has improved the practice. A certain archaic immobility which characterized some of the earlier films has given way to a greater freedom of action which is pleasing but which may lack some of the former esthetic content. Most of *Glen Falls Sequence* and part of *The Long Bodies* [1946-1947, which used a technique of slicing hand-made blocks of colored wax] are concerned with pictorial qualities which might more rightly belong to the field of still painting. This it is possible to make an interesting print from almost any single frame gives an indication of this. In these parts the motion and timing have been secondary to the general pictorial scene. Efforts were made to play down this scenic quality with rather gratifying results. The most simple abstraction was found to take on meaning with motion. Along with others a real question is how much motion can the observer comprehend and how much immobility will he accept. The study of these points should prove very interesting...."

Douglass Crockwell, 1947 statement for the Film Department of The Museum of Modern Art

"Crockwell is concerned primarily with intuitive expression through the play and hazard of his medium. The fluid imagery is left for each one of us to interpret in our own way. He would be the last to explain the 'meaning' in the work. In this sense *Glens Falls Sequence* may be loosely termed 'surrealist' – but only in method."

Program notes, "Contemporary Experimental Films in America," *Art in Cinema*, Nov. 1, 1946

"About eight years ago [*circa 1938*] I set up an animation easel with the camera mounted overhead and the work area arranged much as a draftsman's desk, except that the working area consisted of several movable layers of glass slightly separated. The basic idea was to paint continuing pictures on these various layers with plastic paint, adding at times and removing at times, and to a certain extent these early attempts were successful. This basic process was changed from time to time with varying results and I have still made no attempt yet to stabilize the method. Somewhat as a consequence of this has been the fragmentary character of the work produced."

Douglass Crockwell, quoted in program notes for "The Animated Film as an Art Form," *Art in Cinema*, Oct. 25, 1946

# *Dreams That Money Can Buy (1948)*

84 minutes, color, sound, 16mm

Print courtesy of the Film-Makers' Cooperative (NY)

Directed by Hans Richter

Produced & directed by Hans Richter

Co-producers: Kenneth MacPherson and Peggy Guggenheim (uncredited)

Assistant director: Miriam Raeburn

Photographed by Arnold Eagle

In cooperation with: Werner Brandes, Meyer Rosenblum, Herman Shulman, and George Lubalin. (MOMA's catalog also credits Peter Glushanok and Victor Vicas.)

Second Assistant Director: John Stix

Musical director: Louis Applebaum

Sound editor: Stanley Kotis

Story by Hans Richter, in association with: Dave Vern, Hans Rehfisch, Joseph Freeman

Music: Louis Applebaum

"Joe" played by Jack Bittner

Dialogue by John Latouche

## + 7 *Dreams based on Drawings, Objects and Suggestions by...*

Max Ernst: "Desire"

Music by Paul Bowles

Marcel Duchamp: "Discs"

Music by John Cage

Fernand Léger: "The Girl with the Prefabricated Heart"

Lyrics by John Latouche

Sung by Libby Holman and Josh White

Accompanied by Norma Cazanjan and Doris Okerson

Alexander Calder: "Ballet"

Music by Paul Bowles

Alexander Calder: "Circus"

Music by David Diamond

Man Ray: "Ruth, Roses and Revolvers"

Original story by Man Ray

Music by Darius Milhaud

Hans Richter: "Narcissus"

Music by Louis Applebaum

Dialogue by Richard Hulbeck, Hans Richter

"Narcissus": Jack Bittner

"The Girl": Dorothy Griffith

For the Calder sequences, Richter had originally intended to use music by Edgard Varèse. This was even mentioned in some of the advance publicity. But late in post-production John Cage's music was used instead. The precise reasons for the change remain unclear.

The film premiered in New York City and then ran for weeks. But in other cities it did not do as well. The San Francisco run was cut short after attendance dropped following a bad review in the local paper. Runs in Los Angeles and Chicago were even briefer. Part of the problem was that the man handling distribution, whom Cinema 16's Amos Vogel later described as "a very crass businessman," was difficult to work with. There were also screenings in Ottawa and Toronto, evidently arranged by Louis Applebaum.

In the US, 16mm prints have remained in circulation thanks to The Film-Makers' Cooperative and the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA) in New York City.

In 2006, the British Film Institute released a DVD edition (supplanting their PAL VHS release of 2000).

In 2013, a new restoration of the film was completed by MOMA with funding from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Celeste Bartos Film Preservation Fund, and The Film Foundation.

# Making Dreams

Excerpted from: Hans Richter by Hans Richter, edited by Cleve Gray (Holt, Winston & Winston, 1971), pp. 50–54.

...I started in 1943, my film *Dreams That Money Can Buy*...

The story of my first film in America is rather complicated. I had sent over from Europe a series of my old films, the few which I had saved, and I took them to the Museum of Modern Art in New York. That was unfortunate, because Miss Iris Barry let them deteriorate and none of them were saved by the museum. I had some recovered in Europe afterwards, but some were destroyed forever. At that time, I met a young man, Herman Weinberg, a film critic and historian, now my oldest friend in the States. He recommended these films to the World Theatre on 49<sup>th</sup> Street which decided to show them commercially. But Mr. Joseph, the theatre owner, said I had to have a frame story to bind them all together. So I set to work on the frame story but that would cost about \$7,000. Then I asked Peggy Guggenheim if she could interest Mr. Kenneth Macpherson in this venture, as there might be a profit in it. Macpherson was a rich Englishman who had published an important magazine, *Close Up*, in the '30s and had done one of the most interesting English avant-garde films, *Borderline*, with Paul Robeson and a white girl falling in love with each other—at that time it couldn't be shown in America. Macpherson lived in the same house as Peggy Guggenheim on 61<sup>st</sup> Street. But when I asked her to find out if he would finance our venture she said, "But listen, if there's money to be made, why can't I finance it also?" So these two together put up \$7,500.

At that time, I used to see [Fernand] Léger every day. He told me, "You're crazy! When you have the money, make a new film. Why do you want to show these old films? Leave them, they are good by themselves." I thought it was a good idea and without telling anybody, I just started a new film.

Since 1925 I had had many discussions with Léger about a common film project. We loved Blaise Cendrars's *La Fin du Monde filmée par l'Ange N.D.* [*The end of the world filmed by the angel N.-D.*], and Léger had drawn many sketches of how to visualize it on film upon the napkins and tablecloths of *La Grande Chaumière* where

we used to eat.<sup>1</sup> Now in 1942, in New York, came a chance to realize something together, if not Cendrars perhaps something less ambitious. Léger suggested a film, *Folklore à l'Américaine!*

Léger and I went down to Grand Street, where he was fascinated by the mannequins in bridal gowns on both sides of the street. "Where do the American film-makers have their eyes? If they would only photograph this city. And look at a drugstore window—what's happening there! What folklore! Let's make a love story between mannequins."

And so *Dreams* began. The first episode was, of course, with Léger, *The Girl with the Prefabricated Heart*. Léger never saw the finished film, because in the meantime he had gone back to Europe. Now, of course, the \$7,500 were not enough for a feature film; but, as soon as we started, God knows why, we got enormous publicity. The newspaper *PM* gave us a whole Sunday section: title page, inside, four or five pages, reproductions, text.<sup>2</sup> And in no time we were swarmed with people who wanted to work with us for free. Then *Life* gave us three pages, two in color<sup>3</sup>, and *Dance Magazine* came<sup>4</sup>. Everybody wanted to write about this crazy film.

In addition to the difficulty of finding rawstock to film with (the army and navy had taken over every foot), I had to find a place where I could shoot the film; it was 1944, the war was on. The first episode took so much money, more than \$1,000 alone for the studio I had rented, we

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<sup>1</sup> In fact, Léger provided the illustrations for Cendrars's text when it was first published in 1919 by Jean Cocteau's Editions de la Sirène. Originally developed as a screenplay, it was published as a novel when funding for the film project fell through. Color scans of the 1919 edition can be seen online at [http://cdm.reed.edu/cdm4/artbooks/cendrars\\_leger.php](http://cdm.reed.edu/cdm4/artbooks/cendrars_leger.php)

<sup>2</sup> The May 24, 1948 edition. *PM* was a liberal-leaning daily newspaper that ran from 1940-1948.

<sup>3</sup> "Surrealist Movie: Six ultramodern artists supply dreams for new film," *Life*, December 2, 1946, pp. 86-88. Issue archived online at

<https://books.google.com/books?id=nkoEAAAAMBAJ>

<sup>4</sup> E.G. [Ezra Goodman], "Dreams That Money Can Buy," *Dance*, Vol. XXI, No. 2 (February 1947).

had to stop. And fortunately we did stop just in time, because the owner of the studio was arrested shortly afterwards for making pornographic films there. Then a student of mine at City College, who was a comic-strip designer and had a very large studio on 21<sup>st</sup> Street in the garment center, said that he only used a little table at the window and that I could have the whole loft for free. It was terrible but a big place. So I got an electrician who put up 200 amps to the second floor, and I installed a studio there. I bought lamps from a stage designer, not very useful; and I borrowed cameras from friends, some here, some there, but what could I do? I wanted to make the film, so I made the film—under the most incredible circumstances. I worked four years on it, working only at night and over weekends. But I made it. The film never earned a penny for us, in fact, it lost every penny put into it. Although it ran seventeen weeks at the 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue Theatre I didn't get enough to pay for the prints. All my sponsors lost, and I myself. By this time as a full professor at City College, I had a good salary, but I spent it all on this film and other films.

After the Léger episode in *Dreams*, my old friends from Europe contributed new ideas: Calder, Marcel Duchamp, Max Ernst, Man Ray. For the Max Ernst episode, I asked for a suggestion. I had liked best of his work the book of collages, *Une Semaine de Bonté* [*A Week of Kindness*]<sup>5</sup>, a kind of collage of nightmares; so I said, "I have found a complete story in one of these collages" (later I used this as the cover of the catalogue). I wanted to use water rising to the bed like the collage; but the weight of the water would bring the building down. So I said I would use smoke instead, but how could I keep smoke near the floor as smoke normally rises? I called the Physics and Chemistry department of City College; their advice was to use ammonia, but that might suffocate us. I had some of my students working with me, and one of them reminded me that when the Good Humor man opens his box in the street, the dry ice makes

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<sup>5</sup> Ernst's third "collage novel," first published in a limited edition between April and December, 1935. It is divided into seven sections, one for every day of the week. Each was to be issued in its own volume, each with its own primary color. But when the first four parts didn't sell as well as expected, the final three were combined into a single final volume.

smoke. I went to see the Good Humor man who said, "Yes, and when you put water on dry ice it makes smoke, but it's dangerous, you can get third degree burns. You can get dry ice on Twelfth Avenue." I took some bed covers along, went there, bought one piece, 100 lbs., a square block, and brought it to the studio. My assistants and I chopped it into bits, poured water over it, and it really made smoke. Well, I had to bring 600 lbs., all in taxis, all myself, and then we began to shoot the scene. In the middle of shooting an accident happened. Because of the publicity we had in *PM*, without my realizing it, more than 100 people had squeezed into the studio loft, just too many people pushing against our set of the romantic bed scene with the dry ice smoking, the whole set came down and nearly started a fire.

The last sequence of *Dreams* I shot was, so to say, completely my own...at this time I had a very disturbing experience, which is much too private to explain. It boiled down to the self-realization that I was not the self-hero I thought I was...this experience was so strong that I decided to make a film about it. In the film, a man in his forties suddenly realizes he isn't the man he thought he was...he is blue. He's a bird of a different color...the idea was to make something like the story of Narcissus. Narcissus is a man who looks at his own image, but in this new version, not only at his own image but into it and into the world which is mirrored in himself... This is a good part of the artist's problem. But though I had this idea, I couldn't very easily find a form to express this inside look.

One day, as I was breaking my head about how to approach this theme, I was walking around my apartment with a telephone on a long cable, then I sat down. Suddenly the rubber cable started falling over by itself. The movement followed through the whole cable until it came back to the box in the wall. This unexpected movement suddenly struck something in me. I felt, "That is a story!" As in a trance, I got up and followed this cable, following this line of "inspiration." I have followed this line my whole life and am going to follow it in the future. I decided to make the story of a man who follows his "line" no matter whatever happens. This was the way I conceived the *Narcissus* episode and shot it accordingly.

At the end of this sequence, the bust of Zeus explodes (the blue man's memories, his past, his traditions explode and enlighten him at the same time). For this scene I needed some smoke powder, but in New York it was forbidden by the 4<sup>th</sup> of July laws to use it. My assistant got it in New Jersey, but he got five pounds instead of just a bit. Anyhow, I used just a spoonful of it every time for the shooting, very carefully putting it on a film can and lighting it only after having put the five pound bag into the icebox. Fine. Then one day we were shooting the scene where the blue man starts to climb out of the window with the bust of Zeus (tradition saved). We were standing on the fire escape, two flights down to get shooting distance, I called out to my assistant in charge upstairs, "All right, put one spoon in the can, light it and we will start shooting." Then I yelled up, "Everything ready?" "Ready!" The camera was rolling—suddenly, a terrific explosion—a huge flame shot out of the window—it's in the film—al this followed by terrible black smoke. I ran up to the studio. I couldn't see my hand before my eyes; it was the thickest smoke I ever saw. We were in a fix, because this was still [during the] war, and I was a German, not even an American citizen yet. Our loft faced the back yard, around us were a lot of factories; the

workers were always looking down at us from their windows to see what we were doing; we couldn't hide. It seems that a spark had fallen into the bag of powder and exploded the whole five pounds. The problem was how to get rid of the smoke without alarming the fire department. The smoke was so heavy that we took the big cardboards we used for the backgrounds and literally shoveled the smoke out of the windows for hours. To avoid the police and fire departments, I sent the blue man out on the fire escape to tell all the people who were looking from the factories—there were hundreds—that everything was O.K., that the smoke was only incense. Of course, the factory workers were having a lot of fun, they had never seen a blue man on a fire escape yelling out, "It's incense, only incense!" Later, the man who had his shop downstairs, an artificial leather man, came up: "Mr. Richter, Mr. Richter, what's the matter? I am full of smoke downstairs and I'm losing business. A customer came it and he couldn't even find me."

In the end, though, everything turned out well and *Dreams* even won the International prize at the [Vienna] Biennale 1947 as the "best original contribution to the progress of cinematography."

## Sources and Suggested Reading

*Hans Richter by Hans Richter* (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), edited by Cleve Gray – Profusely illustrated large-format book.

Robert Russett & Cecile Starr (eds.), *Experimental Animation: Origins of a New Art* (Da Capo Press, 1988. Originally published as *Experimental Animation*, Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1976) – This excellent book includes chapters on the pioneering film experiments of Hans Richter, Douglass Crockwell, and many others.

Herman G. Weinberg, "Films by Hans Richter: An Index of the Creative Work of Hans Richter," Stendahl Gallery web site ([http://stendahlgallery.com/?page\\_id=1015](http://stendahlgallery.com/?page_id=1015)). The web version is revised from the original edition published in 1946 by the British Film Institute (No. 6 in the Index Series).

Frank Stauffacher (ed.), *Art in Cinema* (Art in Cinema Society / San Francisco Museum of Art, 1947; reprinted: Arno Press, 1968) – A catalog of the seminal film series, with program notes, essays, etc.

Scott MacDonald (ed.), *Cinema 16: Documents Toward a History of the Film Society* (Temple University Press, 2002) – Select transcripts of original correspondence, ephemera, and other primary documents, augmented with interviews of original participants conducted by the editor.

Scott MacDonald (ed.) with Robert A. Haller, *Art in Cinema: Documents Toward a History of the Film Society* (Temple University Press, 2006) – Transcripts of original correspondence, plus a nearly complete transcription of the 1947 Art in Cinema catalog cited above.

Doris Berger, "The Moving Canvas: Hans Richter's Artistic Practice in the 1940s." In exhibition catalog: Timothy O. Benson (ed.), *Hans Richter: Encounters* (Los Angeles Museum of Art / Del Monico Books / Prestel, 2013). Available online at [https://www.academia.edu/3500540/The\\_Moving\\_Canvas\\_Hans\\_Richters\\_Artistic\\_Practice\\_in\\_the\\_1940s](https://www.academia.edu/3500540/The_Moving_Canvas_Hans_Richters_Artistic_Practice_in_the_1940s)

Patricia King Hanson & Amy Dunkleberger (eds.), *American Film Institute Catalog of Motion Pictures Produced in the United States, Volume F4: Feature Films, 1941-1950, Film Entries A-L* (AFI / University of California Press, 1999), pp. 651-652 – A full entry is devoted to Richter's feature.

Max Ernst, *Une Semaine de Bonté: A Surrealistic Novel in Collage* (Dover Publications, 1976) – A reprint of the 1934 original, it is still in print. The source for Ernst's segment in *Dreams*. Available direct from the publisher via <http://store.doverpublications.com/0486232522.html>

Detlef Mertins & Michael W. Jennings (eds.), *G: An Avant-Garde Journal of Art, Architecture, Design, and Film, 1923-1926* (Getty Research Institute, 2010) – Hans Richter's mid-twenties art magazine in facsimile translations that approximate the special typography and graphic design of the originals.

Stephen Coates, "The stuff of dreams," *The Guardian* (London), August 18, 2006. Archived online at <http://www.theguardian.com/film/2006/aug/18/popandrock.edinburgh2006> – First-person article about the rescoring of the film by Coates' band, The Real Tuesday Weld.

## Original Press Coverage and Reviews

"Surrealist Movie," *Life*, December 2, 1946, pp. 86-88. Archived online at <https://books.google.com/books?id=nkoEAAAAMBAJ&printsec=frontcover>

"Ideas on film: eyewitnessing the world of the 16mm motion picture, 'Dreams That Money Can Buy,'" *Saturday Review*, April 12, 1952.

Bosley Crowther, "'Dreams That Money Can Buy,' Psychological Study, at 5th Ave. Playhouse – Raft Film at Loew's State," *New York Times*, April 24, 1948. Archived online at <http://www.nytimes.com/movie/review?res=9A01E7D9153CE23BBC4C51DFB2668383659EDE>

George A. Lelper, "'Dreams That Money Can Buy' at the Old South," *Harvard Crimson*, October 28, 1948. Archived online at <http://www.thecrimson.com/article/1948/10/28/dreams-that-money-can-buy-pa/>

E.G. [Ezra Goodman], "Dreams That Money Can Buy," *Dance*, Vol. XXI, No. 2 (February 1947).

Miscellaneous citations: *Variety*, April 28, 1948, p. 22. *PM* (newspaper), May 24, 1948. *Hollywood Reporter*, July 15, 1948, p. 3.

## Home Video

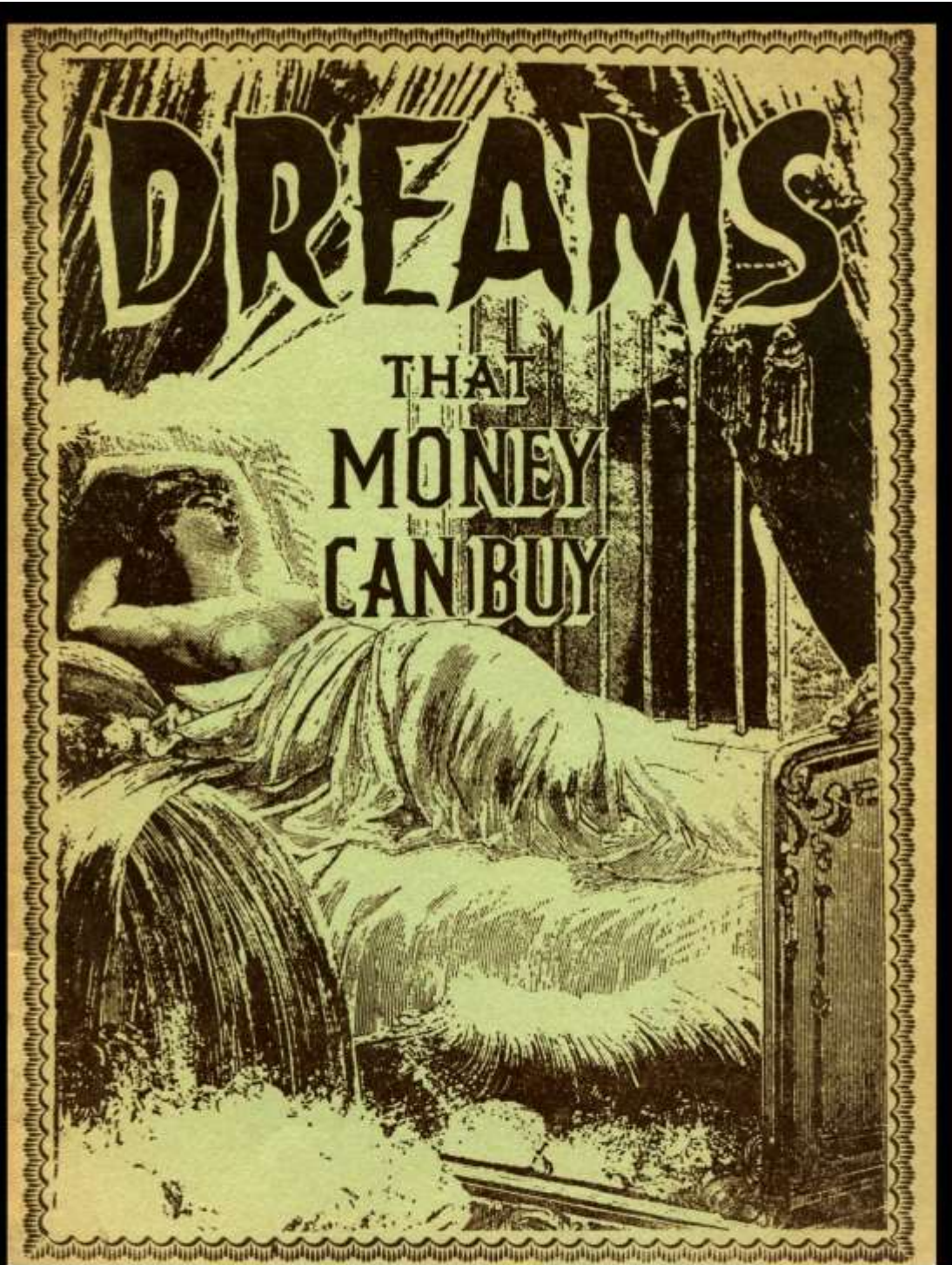
*Dreams That Money Can Buy* (BFI Video, 2006) Region 2/PAL DVD, with booklet – A very good capture of the original film. Includes an alternate soundtrack by the band The Real Tuesday Weld, with narration by Cibelle and David Piper. Also includes three of Richter's shorts: *Rhythmus 21* (1921), *Ghosts Before Breakfast* (1928), and *Everyday* (1929).

*Hans Richter: Early Works* (Re:Voir, 2008) PAL DVD – Includes eight of his short films, 1921-1929. Available direct via [http://www.re-voir.com/boutique/product.php?id\\_product=65](http://www.re-voir.com/boutique/product.php?id_product=65)

*Hans Richter: Everything Turns – Everything Revolves* (Hudson West Productions, 2013) DVD – An hour-long documentary about Richter directed by Dave Davidson, professor of film at the City College of New York. More info via <http://hudsonwest.org/our-films/hansrichter/> Available for purchase from the Los Angeles County Museum of Art via <http://thelacmastore.org/products/hans-richter-everything-turns-dvd>

*Unseen Cinema: Early American Avant Garde Film 1894-1941* (Image Entertainment, 2005) 7xDVD box set, with book – A restored version of Douglass Crockford's *Glens Falls Sequence* can be found on Disc 3, *Light Rhythms: Music and Abstraction*.





**THURS. DECEMBER 11, 2014 ~ 8:00 PM**

The Sprocket Society co-presents a rare screening of the 1948 surreal omnibus feature by  
**Hans Richter, Marcel Duchamp, Man Ray, Max Ernst, Fernand Léger & Alexander Calder**  
with music by **John Cage, Darius Milhaud, Paul Bowles, David Diamond & Louis Applebaum**

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