

15.2 LÁSZLÓ MOHOLY-NAGY

Dynamics of a Metropolis

A Film Sketch

1921-1922

Building construction with an iron crane (Use of special trick effects—line drawings—melting slowly into the filming of nature)

Crane for construction:

shot from below

diagonally

from above

elevator for bricks

revolving crane

This movement is continued by an automobile racing

to the left. The same house is always seen

in the center of the picture.

(The house should always be re-photographed to place it in the center.)

Another automobile appears which tears along at the same speed, but in the opposite direction.

Tempo, tempo!

One row of houses rushes by in the same direction, always allowing the house in the middle to be seen. The row of houses runs past and comes back.

Rows of houses race transparently in opposite directions, and so do the automobiles. Faster and faster, so that the spectators are made dizzy.

A tiger, TIGER walks about in his cage

walks back and forth angrily.

High up, clearly visible traffic signals.

Moving automatically

a-u-t-o-m-a-t-i-c-a-l-l-y

(Close up)

up

up

down

down

up up up down down

1 2 3 4 5

Goods-station.

Shunting yard.

Warehouses and cellars

Dark

Dark

DARKNESS

Railway

Highway with vehicles. Bridge. Viaduct. Ships passing below.
 Above an overhead railway. (Elberfeld)
 View of a train from a high embankment, shot diagonally.
 A track-watcher salutes standing at attention.
 Eyes become fixed. (Close up)
 Train seen from a bridge, from above.
 From below: from the ditch between the rails the belly of the train as it
 rushes along. The turning wheels — so fast as to be an indistinct vibration.

TEMPO

TEMPO

TEM

TEM PO

TEM TEEM

M

M P O O O O O

DOWN

In a department store glass-enclosed lift with Negro children.

Obliquely.

UP

UP

Distorted perspective.

Longshot. A CROWD

At the entrance tethered dogs

Beside the glass lifts glass telephone boxes with callers

Filming from the ground floor through the glass

The FACE of a caller, painted with phosphorescent paint (so as to produce

no shadow) turns slowly to the right, directly beside the lift.

Over his head a distant airplane spirals in the air.

View from a slight altitude: a square where

many streets converge.

Masses of vehicles. Tramways, motor-cars, lorries, carts, bicycles, buses
 drive fast from the square.

Suddenly all of them go backwards.

They pile up in the center of the square.

The square opens in the middle and swallows them up.

(The camera is at an angle to create the impression of falling.)

underground
 cables

TEMPO

Gas-tank

Sewers. (deep beneath the town)

Light reflected on water.

Arc lamp.

Sparks *spraying*.

Highway at night, gleaming city streets.

Gliding automobiles from above, diagonally.

For five seconds only a black screen

Electric advertising with flashing letters:

MOHOLY

MOHOLY

Fireworks in the amusement park.

Riding on the roller-coaster.

SPEEDING.

Ferris-wheel.

Fun-house.

Distorting mirrors.

Other jokes.

Picture of exhibition in a railway station.

The camera moves in a horizontal circle,

then in a vertical circle

Taut

telephone wires and telegraph cables between houses.

Towers of porcelain insulators.

Radio-aerials on roofs.

Factory.

Wheels turning.

An acrobat twirls and turns somersaults.

Pole-vaulting. A fall shown 10 times in succession.

Variety show. Frantic activity.

Football match. Rough. Fast tempo.

Women wrestling. Kitsch!
Jazz-band instruments. (in Close-up.)

POINTED AT THE PUBLIC

A hollow, shining metal funnel is fixed on the lens of the camera.

Immediately:
a man jerks away his head in a flash. (Close-up)

A glass of WATER.
(only the surface of the water, in Close-up.)
Gushing like a fountain.
Jazz-band, *with its sound*.

FORTISSIMO

Wild dance caricature.
Prostitutes.
Boxing, Close-up.

ONLY gloves.

With slow-motion (Zeitlupe) camera

A cloud of smoke. (Coming through a bridge, as a train runs under it)
Chimney-stack, aslant.

A diver plunges down into water.
Propeller turning under the water.
Opening of drain above and under water.
Filming from motor boat along the canal to

RUBBISH dump.
Utilization of rubbish.

Hills of scrap iron.
Mounds of old shoes.
Stacks of tin cans.

Perpetual motion lift, with view. All around.

From here the whole section, back to the JAZZ BAND
(also reversed), should go from
fortissimo to PIANISSIMO

Mortuary. From above.
Military parade.

March-march.

Women riding horses
The two shots are superimposed, so that both are visible.

Slaughter-house. Oxen.
Machinery of a cold-storage plant.
Sausage machine. Thousands of sausages.
A LION'S HEAD snarling (Close-up.)

Audience.

A LION'S HEAD snarling (Close-up.)

Policeman with a rubber truncheon in the middle of a crowded square.

The TRUNCHEON (Close-up.)

Audience in a theater.

Snarling LION'S HEAD (Close-up.)

For a few seconds total darkness.

CIRCLE

Circus.

TEMPO

Trapeze.

LION, Lion

CLOWN.

LION, Lion

Clowns

clowns

clowns

Slowly. WATERFALL: with sound.

A body floats on the water.

Soldiers.

March — march.

A glass of WATER

with moving surface.

a brief,

rapid jet of water upwards.

THE END

Remarks for Those Who Refuse to Understand the Film Immediately

1921–1922

This film mostly flowed from the possibilities offered by the camera.

My aim was for a film to produce an effect by its own action, its own tempo and rhythm, instead of the still fashionable plots that force cinema to ape literature or theater.

The speeding autos are necessary for a shocking introduction. To show the breathless rush, the turmoil of a city. The tiger is used for contrast. And so that the audience would get used to such surprises and inconsistency from the start.

The purpose of this film is not to teach, nor to moralize, nor to tell a story. Its acting is purely visual.

Bridges, trains, ships, etc. are here to illustrate the services and conveniences of an urban civilization.

The belly of the train: this is a visual experience that we would not normally encounter.

The phosphorescent face that slowly turns away: reminding us of fatiguing telephone conversations. A dream-like state. (Glass, glass, glass)—the direction of the movement prepares us for the spiral course of the pilot.

The rushing of a roller-coaster: many things escape your attention. Many things pass unnoticed, because the senses are unable to perceive everything, rapid motion, moments of danger, etc. On the roller-coaster almost all passengers close their eyes at the great downward drop. But the camera does not close its eye. We rarely watch objectively babies or animals because our attention is taken by the apprehension of numerous other circumstances.

The metal funnel: is to frighten so terribly that it should almost hurt.

The surface of the glass of water: should be brilliant.

The frequent recurrence of the lion's head is a nightmare. (Again, again, again.)

The audience of the theater is gay, but we are still conscious of the lion's head.

In general one should understand more from a rapid reading of the manuscript than can ever be expressed by explanations.