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The New Babylon / Novyj Vavilon

Grigory Kozintsev & Leonid Trauberg, 1929; 80m

While Eisenstein was developing his theories about film editing (see *October*), Kozintsev and Trauberg had founded FEKS (the Factory of the Eccentric Actor) in Leningrad to develop their own, equally radical approach to filmmaking. *The New Babylon* was their masterpiece, a perfect synthesis of their use of stylized performances and off-kilter, unsettling visual compositions. In 1871, during the Franco-Prussian War, a group of revolutionaries created the Paris Commune; an entire cross-section of Parisian citizenry comes alive during the rise and fall of this noble experiment, but the film especially focuses on the love affair between Louise, a shop clerk in the giant department store the New Babylon, and a heroic young soldier. Traces of Manet, Renoir, and Zola can be felt throughout, blended together in a dazzlingly original FEKS concoction.

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