



Jonas Mekas, John Kennedy Jr. and Anthony Radziwill in *This side of paradise* 1969/1999, Courtesy of the artist

JONAS MEKAS

**Celebration of the small and personal
in the times of bigness**

Curator: Liutauras Psibilskis

**Venue: Faculty Gallery, Art & Design Building,
Monash University, Caulfield Campus**

Dates: 13 July – 16 August 2006

**Presented by the Monash University Museum of Art (MUMA)
in association with the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art (ACCA).**

This acclaimed exhibition was initially developed for the Lithuanian Pavilion of the 51st Venice Biennale in 2005 and is a project of Lithuanian Art Museum, Vilnius.

‘Jonas Mekas’ work asks what the emotional value of images can be. His films about love are the best I saw in 2005.’

Jan Verwoert, *Frieze Contemporary Art and Culture* magazine, Feb 2006

Filmmaker, artist, writer, critic and curator Jonas Mekas, a driving force behind American independent cinema and the founder and artistic director of Anthology Film Archives, is presented in an extensive exhibition consisting of video installations and film screenings.

The exhibition reflects Jonas Mekas’ philosophy, with particular focus on his ideas of subjectivity. Mekas writes:

In this exhibition, as in my work in general, I am concerned with the discovery and celebration of small, insignificant, personal moments of our life, my life, life of my family, my close friends; joys, celebrations, being together, small daily events, feelings, emotions, friendships.

The eight-monitor video installation *Home Videos* (1995–2005) features images of Mekas’s family and friends. In no particular order the monitors roll personal material shot after he switched from Bolex to video camera. Visitors are invited to move from one monitor to another and “make their own movie”. Other films document his life and artistic associations with the Fluxus movement and more legendary figures including Andy Warhol, John Lennon, Yoko Ono and George Maciunas.

The exhibition takes us through the development of Mekas’s work, which is already part of the history of independent filmmaking, and also showcases a few of his most recent projects. Additionally a new video installation *The Destruction quartet* 2006 will be launched at this exhibition: it includes fragments of symbolic and real-life destruction acts that Jonas Mekas witnessed and filmed through the years: Nam June Paik destroying a piano; Australian based artist Danius Kesminas’ fire piece in New York in 1983; the destruction of the Berlin Wall in 1990; and 9/11.

The exhibition surveys the scope of Jonas Mekas oeuvre from the 1950s to the present, and will include the celebrated earlier films *Diaries, Notes & Sketches a.k.a. Walden* 1964-1968, *Lost, Lost, Lost, He Stands in a Desert Counting the Seconds of his Life* 1949-1963 edited 1976, *Reminiscences of a Journey to Lithuania* 1971-1972, *As I Was Moving Ahead I Saw Brief Glimpses of Beauty, Biographical Quartet* 1992 and one of the most recent films *A Letter From Greenpoint* 2004.

For the full screening program details, visit www.monash.edu.au/muma/mekas

Biography

Jonas Mekas was born in Semeniskiai, Lithuania, in 1922. He lives and works in New York. After being imprisoned by the Nazis in a forced-labour camp and a period in Belgian Displaced Person camps, Mekas studied philosophy at the University of Mainz 1946–1948. He then emigrated with his brother Adolfas to the United States, settling in Williamsburg, Brooklyn.

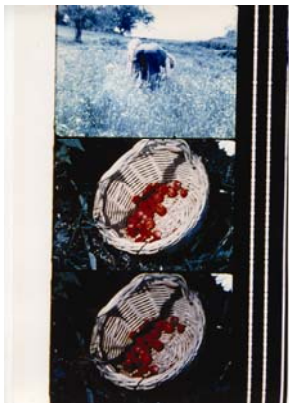
Mekas discovered avant-garde film at venues such as Amos Vogel's Cinema 16, and began to screen his own films in 1953. In 1954 he became Editor-in-Chief of *Film Culture* magazine, and in 1958 he began his groundbreaking "Movie Journal" column in *The Village Voice*. In 1962 Mekas founded the Film-makers' Cooperative (FMC) and in 1964 the *Filmmakers' Cinematheque*. The latter eventually grew into Anthology Film Archives, one of the world's largest repositories of avant-garde film, which Mekas continues to direct.

Mekas' film output includes narrative (*Guns of the Trees*, 1961), documentary (*The Brig*, 1963) and diaries (*Walden*, 1969; *Lost, Lost, Lost*, 1975; *Reminiscences of a Voyage to Lithuania*, 1972; *Zefiro Torna*, 1992, and *As I Was Moving Ahead, Occasionally I Saw Brief Glimpses of Beauty*, 2001).

In addition to his prolific output in film, Jonas Mekas has published 24 volumes of poetry, essays, interviews, and diaries, and has been the subject of 12 book-length studies. His films have been exhibited in museums and galleries around the world, including Jeu de Paume in Paris, the Metropolitan Museum of Photography in Tokyo, Documenta 11, the Venice Biennale, and many others.



Jonas Mekas
Yoko Ono and her daughter in Diaries, Notes & Sketches a.k.a Walden 1964-68 (1968-69),
Courtesy of the artist



Jonas Mekas
He stands in a desert counting the seconds of his life 1969/85,
Courtesy of the artist

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