JONAS MEKAS

Jonas Mekas was born in 1922 in the farming village of Semeniškiai, Lithuania. Currently living and working in New York City, he is an artist, poet and filmmaker whose movies are a cornerstone of independent cinema worldwide.

In 1944, Jonas and his brother Adolfas were deported by the Nazis to a forced labour camp in Elmshorn, Germany. At the end of 1949 the UN Refugee Organization brought both men to New York City, where they settled down in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. Thanks to the friendship with his compatriot George Maciunas, immediately Mekas became active in the Fluxus group. It is well known, for instance, that he filmed “Bed-In” (1969) and “Up Your Legs Forever” (1970), two major performances by Yoko Ono, who, more recently in February 2015, has awarded him with the Lennon Courage Awards for the Arts at the MoMA, Museum of Modern Art, New York.

In 1949, two months after his arrival in New York, the artist bought his first Bolex camera. He soon got deeply involved in the American Avant-Garde film movement, at first curating screenings for the non-profit organization Film Forum and the Carl Fischer Auditorium. In 1954 he founded Film Culture magazine, which soon became the most important film publication in the US. In 1958 he began his legendary Movie Journal column in The Village Voice. At the end of 1960 he signed the New American Cinema Manifesto, which is representative of an entire generation of independent filmmakers such as Stan Brakhage, Jack Smith and Kenneth Anger among others. Developing the ideas expressed in the manifesto, in 1962 Mekas founded the Film-Makers' Cooperative and in 1964 the Film-Makers' Cinematheque, which eventually grew into the Anthology Film Archives, one of the world's largest and most important repositories of avant-garde cinema.

Jonas Mekas is largely credited for progressing diaristic forms of cinema. His second film, The Brig, was awarded the Grand Prize at the Venice Film Festival in 1963. His filmography includes masterpieces such as Walden (1969), Reminiscences of a Journey to Lithuania (1972), Lost Lost Lost (1975), As I was Moving Ahead I saw Brief Glimpses of Beauty (2000), A Letter from Greenpoint (2005), Sleepless Nights Stories (2011) and Out-takes from the Life of a Happy Man (2012). In 2007 Jonas Mekas completed a series of 365 short films released on his website - one film every day - and since then has continued to share new works online as a way to experiment with cinema in the Internet era. This part of his production was the topic of The Internet Saga, an exhibition that has been presented at Palazzo Foscari Contarini on the occasion of the 56th Venice Biennale of Visual Arts.

It is difficult to find an avant-garde filmmaker who has not been influenced by Jonas Mekas: from Andy Warhol's feature-films to Michael Snow's structural cinema, to Stan Brakhage's expressionist cinema, to Stan VanDerBeek's expanded cinema. Many Confirmed artists of the late twentieth century recognized his fundamental role, almost preparatory, for their career: Joan Jonas, Carolee Schneemann, Chantal Akerman, Douglas Gordon, Harmony Korine to name a few.

Jonas Mekas' work has been celebrated over the years in the most relevant contemporary art events in the world: from Documenta XI and XIV to La Biennale di Venezia (Utopia Station in 2003 and Lithuanian Pavilion in 2005). More recent are the retrospective exhibitions at the Serpentine Gallery in London (2012), the Centre Pompidou in Paris (2012), MUAC in Mexico City (2013), the Hermitage Museum in Saint Petersburg (2013), MMCA in Seoul (2017).

HONORS AND AWARDS

1962 Grand Prize awarded to GUNS OF THE TREES at the Porretta Terme Film Festival
1964 Grand Prize (Documentary) awarded to THE BRIG at the Venice Film Festival
1966 Gold Medal, Philadelphia College of Art, "for the devotion, passion, and selfless dedication to the rediscovery of the newest art"
1977 Guggenheim Fellowship
1989 Creative Arts Award, Brandeis University
1992 Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres, Ministry of Culture, France
1995 Lithuanian National Award
1996 Special Tribute, New York Film Critics Circle Award

Doctor of Fine Arts, Honoris Causa, Kansas City Art Institute
1997
Pier Paolo Pasolini Award, Paris
International Documentary Film Association Award, Los Angeles
Governors Award, Skohegan School of Painting and Sculpture
Doctor of Fine Arts, Honoris Causa, Universitatis Vytauti Magni, Lituanica

2000
Officier de l’Ordre des Arts et des Lettres, Ministry of Culture, France

2006
REMINISCENCES OF A JOURNEY TO LITHUANIA added to the National Film Registry of the Library of Congress
Directors Guild of America Award

2007
Los Angeles Film Critics Association awards special citation for "contribution to film art"
Special Award from the Roswitha Haftmann Foundation, Zürich

2008
Baltic Cultural Achievement Award
Austrian Decoration of Honor for Science and Art (Österreichische Ehrenzeichen für Wissenschaft und Kunst)

2010
Life Achievement Award at the second annual Rob Pruitt's Art Awards

2011
George Eastman Honorary Scholar Award

2012
'Carry Your Light and Believe' Award, Ministry of Culture, Lithuania

2013
Commandeur de l’Ordre des Arts et des Lettres, Ministry of Culture, France
Francis J. Greenburger Award
Elected member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences

2015
Yoko Ono Courage Award

LIST OF EXHIBITIONS

1968  Walden (Diaries, notes, sketches), Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo
1973  The Diary Film, Museum of Modern Art, New York
1983  Hara Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo
1992  Galerie National du Jeu de Paume, Paris
       agnès b. Galerie du Jour, Paris
       Still Gallery, Edinburgh
       Luarence Miller, New York
       Metropolitan Museum of Photography, Tokyo
       agnès b. Galerie du Jour, Paris
1997  Madrid Art Fair
       Museum of Contemporary Art, Vilnius
       Gandy Gallery, Prague
1999  Susan Inglett Gallery, New York
       Pupelis Gallery, Obeliai, Lithuania
       agnès b. Galerie du Jour, Paris
2000  "La Beauté" festival, Avignon. Films and installation
       "Laboratorium," Antwerp
       "Voilà," Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris
       agnès b. Galerie du jour, FIAC art fair, Paris
2002  Maison Européenne de la Photographie, Paris
       Documenta XI, Kassel
Utopia Station, 50th Venice Biennale
"Dedication to Fernand Léger," Museum of Contemporary Art, Vilnius
Sideshow Gallery, Williamsburg, Brooklyn
Maison Européenne de la Photographie, Paris
"Fables de l'Identité," Centre National de la Photographie, Paris
2005
"Farewell to Soho," Moderna Museet, Stockholm
"Fragments of Paradise," Maya Stendhal Gallery, New York
"As I Was Moving Ahead," Pavilion of Lithuania at the 51st edition of the Venice Biennale
2006
"Destruction Quartet," Darren Knight Gallery, Sydney
"Onestar Stop," Galerie Erna Hécy, Brussels
"The Expanded Eye," Kusthalle Zürich
Baltic Art Center, Visby
Hirshhorn Museum, Washington D.C.
"To New York with Love," Gallery Toki no Wasuremono, Tokyo
"He Stands in the Desert Counting the Seconds of his Life," Tamayo Contemporary Art Museum, Mexico City
"The Diary Film," Göteborgs Konsthall, Sweden
"It All Comes Back Now in Glimpses," Sketch Gallery, London
"Brief Glimpses of Beauty," Mead Gallery, Warwick Arts Center, UK.
Centrum Sztuki Współczesnej Zamek Ujazdowski, Warsaw
2007
"Recent Work," Maya Stendhal Gallery, New York
Serpentine Gallery, London
"Jonas Mekas: The Beauty of Friends being Together," MoMA/P.S.1
Jonas Mekas Visual Arts Center, Vilnius
"My Night Life" (with Auguste Varkalis), The Film Gallery, Paris
2008
Fondazione Ragghianti, Lucca
Museum Ludwig, Cologne
2009
"1968," Kunsthalle Bielefeld, Germany
"The Beast," FIAC art fair, The Film Gallery, Paris
"Destruction Quartet," James Fuentes Gallery, New York
"1989", Kunsthalle Wien
"Jonas Mekas", Gallery Toki no Wasuremono, Tokyo
"To New York with Love", Bas Fisher Invitational, Miami
"Destruction Quartet", Kings County Biennial, Brooklyn
2010
"Cassis", James Fuentes Gallery, New York Armory Show
The Brucennial, New York
"To New York with Love". James Fuentes Gallery, New York
2011
"Musique Plastique", agnès b. Galerie du jour, Paris
agnès b. Howard Street boutique, New York
"This Side of Paradise", agnès b. Rue du Jour boutique, Paris
2012
"Musique Plastique", agnès b. Howard Street boutique, New York
"The 365 Day Project", 2B Gallery, Budapest
"Reminiszenzen aus Deutschland", Stadtuseum, Wiesbaden
"Prisiminimai iš Vokietijos", Jonas Mekas Visual Arts Center, Vilnius
"Images out of Darkness", James Fuentes Gallery, New York
Serpentine Gallery, London
"The 365 Day Project", Centre Pompidou, Paris

2013
DOX Centre for Contemporary Art, Prague
MUAC, Mexico City
"I Lift My Glass of Wine to You, My Vienna Friends!", Krinzinger Projekte, Vienna
Paris Photo L.A., Deborah Colton Gallery, Los Angeles
"Outlaw: New Works", Microscope Gallery, Brooklyn
agnès b. Marseille
"The Sixties Quartet", KIASMA, Helsinki
"Let Me Introduce Myself, My Russian Friends!" State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg
"Jonas Mekas: In Praise of the Ordinary", The Phi Centre, Montreal
"Jonas Mekas / The Fluxus Wall", Bozar Centre for Fine Arts, Brussels
"Life Goes On... I Keep Singing", Deborah Colton Gallery, Houston

2014
"Jonas Mekas: One Man Show", Cēsis Arts Festival, Latvia
"365 Day Project", ZKM, Karlsruhe

2015
“All These Images, These Sounds, APALAZZOGALLERY, Brescia, Italy
“The Internet Saga”, Palazzo Foscarini Contarini, collateral event in conjunction with the 56th Venice Biennale

2016
“Let Me Introduce Myself,” Nina Johnson Gallery, Miami
Documenta 14, Athens and Kassel

2017
“I Sing I Celebrate,” La Neomudéjar, Madrid
Boo-Hooray Summer Rental, Montauk

FILMOGRAPHY

Guns of the Trees (1962), 75 min.
Film Magazine of the Arts (Summer, 1963), 20 min.
The Brig (1964), 68 min.
Award Presentation to Andy Warhol (1964), 12 min.
Report from Millbrook (1965/1966), 12 min.
Hare Krishna (1966), 4 min.
Notes on the Circus (1966), 12 min.
Cassis (1966), 4 min.
The Italian Notebook (1967), 15 min.
Time and Fortune Vietnam Newsreel (1968), 4 min.
Reminiscences of a Journey to Lithuania (1971-1972), 82 min.
Lost Lost Lost (1976), 2 hrs. 58 min.
In Between: 1964-8 (1978), 52 min.
Notes for Jerome (1978), 45 min.
Paradise Not Yet Lost (aka Oona's Third year) (1979), 96 min.
Self-Portrait (1980), 20 min., video.
Street Songs (1966/1983) 10 min.
He Stands in a Desert Counting the Seconds of His Life (1969/1985), 2 hrs. 30 min.
Scenes from the Life of Andy Warhol (1990), 35 min.
A Walk (1990), 58 min., video.
Mob of Angels: Baptism (1990), 61 min., video.
Mob of Angels at St. Ann (1991), 60 min, video.
Dr. Carl G. Jung or Lapis Philosophorum (1991), 29 min.
Quartet Number One (1991) 8 min.
Zefiro Torna or Scenes from the Life of George Maciunas (1992), 34 min.
The Education of Sebastian or Egypt Regained (1992), 6 hrs. video.
Imperfect 3-Image films (1995), 6 min.
Happy Birthday to John (1996), 24 min.
Cinema is Not 100 Years Old (1996), 4 min., video.
Memories of Frankenstein (1996), 95 min.
Letters to Friends (1997), 1 hr. 28 min., video.
Birth of a Nation (1997), 85 min.
Symphony of Joy (1997), 1 hr. 15 min.
Scenes from Allen's Last Three Days on Earth as a Spirit (April 1997), 67 min., video.
Letter from Nowhere -- Laiškai iš niekur N.1 (1997), 75 min., video.
Song of Avignon (1998), 5 min.
Laboratorium Anthology (1999), 63 min., video.
This Side of Paradise (1999) 35 min., 16 mm.
Notes on Film-Maker's Cooperative (1999), 40 min., video.
Mozart & Wien and Elvis (2000) 3 min.
Silence, Please (2000), 6 min., video.
Letter to Penny Arcade (2001), 14 min. 33 sec., video.
Ein Märchen (2001) 6 min., video.
Ar Buvo Karas? (2002), 2 hrs. 28 min.
Notes on Utopia (2003-5) 55 min., video.
Father and Daughter (2005), 4 min. 30 sec., video.
Notes on an American Film Director at Work: Martin Scorsese (2005), 1hr 20 min.
Scenes from the Life of Hermann Nitsch (2005), 58 min., film and video.
Lithuania and the Collapse of the USSR (2008), 4 hrs. 49 min., video.
I Leave Chelsea Hotel (2009), 4 min.
Sleepless Nights Stories (2011), 114 min.
My Bars Bar Movie (2011), 86 min.
Correspondences: José Luis Guerin and Jonas Mekas (2011), 99 min.
Re: George Maciunas and Fluxus (2011), 87 min.
Mont Ventoux (2011), 3 min.
Happy Easter Ride (2012), 18 min.
Reminiszenzen aus Deutschland (2012), 25 min.
Out-takes from the Life of a Happy Man (2012), 68 min.

WRITINGS BY JONAS MEKAS

Knyga Apie Karalius ir Žmones, Tubingen, 1947 [in Lithuanian].
Laiškai iš niekur, Vilnius, 1997 [in Lithuanian].
APALAZZOGALLERY

As I Was Moving Ahead..., Editions Kinoshita, Tokyo, 2002 [in Japanese]. Text and narration from the film.
To Petrarca, Editions Dis Voir, Paris, 2009 [in both French and English editions]
Articles on cinema in Film Culture, Sight & Sound, Bianco e Nero, The New York Times, Cahiers du Cinema, Isskustvo Kino, etc.

POETRY

Gėlių Kalbėjimas, Chicago, 1961 [in Lithuanian].
Poezija, Vilnius, Vaga, 1971 [in Lithuanian].
Reminiscijos, New York, Fluxus, 1972 [in Lithuanian].
Dienoraščiai, New York, Žvilsgniai, 1985 [in Lithuanian].
There is No Ithaca (English edition of Semeniškių Idilės and Reminiscijos), translated by Vyt Bakaitis, Black Thistle Press, New York, 1996.
Dienų Raštai, Vilnius, 1998 [in Lithuanian].
Žmogus Be Vietos (Lithuanian edition of I Had Nowhere to Go), Baltos Lankos, 2000.
Poezija, Lietuvos Rašytojų sąjungos Leidykla, Vilnius, 2002 [in Lithuanian].
Žodžiai ir Raidės, Baltos Lankos, Vilnius, 2007 [in Lithuanian].

DIARIES

Žefiro Torna or Scenes From the Life of George Mačiunas, Arthouse, New York, 1998.
Žmogus Be Vietos (Lithuanian edition of I Had Nowhere to Go), Baltos Lankos, 2000.
Ningún lugar adonde ir (Spanish edition of I Had Nowhere to Go, translated by Leonel Livchits), Caja Negra, Buenos Aires, 2008.

CATALOGS

The Avante-garde from Futurism to Fluxus, Jonas Mekas Visual Arts Center, Vilnius, 2007 [in English and
Lithuanian editions].
*Jonas Mekas*, Fondazione Ragghianti, Lucca, Italy, 2008 [in Italian].
*Jonas Mekas*, published by Koenig Books, on the occasion of the exhibition "Jonas Mekas" at the Museum Ludwig, Cologne, 2008 [in English and German].

**EXTENDED ESSAYS AND INTERVIEWS**