

MEDIA RELEASE

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Behind The Lens: William John Kennedy, Jonas Mekas, and Suzanne Paul

Exhibition Dates: July 9 through August 20, 2016
Public Opening Reception: Saturday, July 9th, 6:00 to 9:00 pm

Deborah Colton Gallery is pleased to present *Behind the Lens*, a selection of works from the archives of William John Kennedy, Jonas Mekas and Suzanne Paul. The photographs in this exhibition provide an uncharacteristic glance through the lens of some of the artists who helped establish film and photography as fine art in the late twentieth century.

Jonas Mekas, born in 1922 in Semeniskiai, Lithuania, immigrated to the United States with his brother in 1949. Settling in New York, he started to become recognized as one of the leading figures of American avant-garde filmmaking. Through his accomplished career as a filmmaker, photographer, poet and organizer, Mekas firmly established filmmaking as a widely accepted means of artistic expression: in 1954 he founded *Film Culture* magazine; in 1958 began writing his "Movie Journal" column for the *Village Voice*; he co-founded the Film-Makers' Cooperative (FMC) in 1962, and then the Film-makers' Cinematheque in 1964. Later this became Anthology Films Archives, which Mekas founded and is the most highly regarded archive of independent film in the world today.

Through his lens, Jonas Mekas has always captured moments that are cherished in art history, in American history and in life, including noted filmmakers, the Kennedy's and artists like Salvador Dali, Andy Warhol, Yoko Ono and John Lennon, Elvis Presley, and the World Trade Center, to the more intrinsically personal moments of nature: family, being human, and appreciating life beyond the conventional. The films of Jonas Mekas vary from narrative films like *Guns of the Frees*, (1961) to documentaries *The Brig*, (1963) and to "diaries" such as *Walden* (1969), *Lost, Lost, Lost* (1975) and *As I was Moving Ahead*, and *Occasionally I Saw Brief Glimpses of Beauty* (2001). Known also as a curator and an icon of contemporary American Culture, Mekas documented the era that promoted peace through his acclaimed independent film and still frame photography, which features Yoko and John in *Happy Birthday to John* (1970) and *Bed-In For Peace* (1969). His films have been screened extensively at festivals and museums around the world, including in 2005 when he represented Lithuania at the Venice Biennale and this exhibition was noted with Special Mention Prize for extraordinary presentation of contemporary classic art. The creator of still framed photography through the use of his films, this work also has been exhibited at the finest museums world wide. Deborah Colton Gallery first exhibited Jonas Mekas in the solo exhibition *Jonas Mekas: Film Framed* in 2005 and since then has shown his work at museums, art fairs and private galleries throughout the United States.

Born in Glen Cove, New York 1930, William John Kennedy attended Syracuse University College of Visual and Performing Arts, and Pratt Institute. After working as an assistant and studio manager for American fashion photographer Clifford Coffin (1913-1972), Kennedy became recognized as one of New York's top

freelance editorial photographers. With his work featured in world-renowned publications such as *LIFE* magazine and *Sports Illustrated*, Kennedy's work also laid a foundation in the commercial field. He created corporate campaigns for national and international clients, most popularly Avon, GE, IBM, RJR Nabisco, American Express, and Xerox. Although these commercial projects gave Kennedy a nice lifestyle and they refined his photographic skill, his love for fine art photography endured and remained his true passion.

Through such photographic work, Kennedy reveals the human side of his subjects with a genuine, artistic approach, capturing artists on the rise in the early 1960s, including Andy Warhol, Robert Indiana, James Rosenquist, Roy Lichtenstein, Henry Geldzahler, Dorothy Miller, Claes Oldenburg and Eleanor Ward. First shown in 1967 at Sydney Janis Gallery in New York, this work was not on public view until 2007. Since then, William John Kennedy's work has been shown in biennials and exhibitions around the world, from Moscow to London, Miami to Pisa and can be found in the permanent collections of The Andy Warhol Museum, Whitney Museum of American Art, the Indianapolis Museum of Art, and the Detroit Institute of Arts, among many others. Deborah Colton Gallery introduced William John Kennedy's work to both Houston and Dallas in 2011.

Born in Houston, Texas in 1945, Suzanne Paul practiced photography from the age of nine. Paul received her BFA from the University of Houston in 1968 and did graduate work at the University of California, Berkeley. Coming back to Houston, Paul became an important part of the Houston art world: capturing the artists, the patrons, the curators, the museum directors and gallery owners starting in the mid-70's. Documenting so much of Houston's art history, and moments in New York while living there also, Suzanne Paul was always at every event that was noteworthy with her camera. Suzanne Paul's ability to capture the essence of people also contributed to her vast accomplishments, including solo exhibitions at the Contemporary Art Museum of Houston, the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston, the Fort Worth Art Museum, the Galveston Arts Center and the University of California in San Francisco. Paul's photographic works have been regularly featured in both solo and group presentations by FotoFest International since its founding in 1983 including the most noteworthy solo, *Being Human*. Deborah Colton Gallery has been representing the Estate of Suzanne Paul and has been protecting her archives and exhibiting Paul's work since her passing in 2005.

Deborah Colton Gallery is founded on being an innovative showcase for ongoing presentation and promotion of strong historical and visionary contemporary artists world-wide, whose diverse practices include painting, works on paper, sculpture, video, photography, performance, conceptual future media and public space installations. The gallery aspires to provide a forum through connecting Texas, national and international artists to make positive change.

