

ANDREWS GALLERY



WILLIAM & MARY

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Jonas Mekas: Still Beautiful in My Memory

The Andrews Gallery at the College of William & Mary presents *Still Beautiful in My Memory*, an exhibition of works by pioneering avant-garde filmmaker Jonas Mekas (1922–2019). Organized in collaboration with The Jonas Mekas Estate, Deborah Colton Gallery, OUTPOST NYC DCG, and Lee Matney Gallery, the exhibition brings together Mekas's rarely exhibited framed still images – known as the “Frozen Frames” – with a continuous screening of his five-hour epic, *As I Was Moving Ahead Occasionally I Saw Brief Glimpses of Beauty* (2000). Together, these works explore fragmentation, memory, displacement, and the poetic construction of a life through cinema.

Born in Lithuania in 1922, Mekas was forced to flee his homeland during World War II amid the successive occupations of Eastern Europe. After being detained by Nazi authorities and later living in displaced persons camps in Germany, he emigrated to the United States in 1949 as a refugee. His arrival in America marked not only the beginning of a prolific artistic life, but also the continuation of a journey shaped by exile and survival. His story underscores how refuge can foster extraordinary artistic innovation and enrich the cultural fabric of a nation.

The “Frozen Frames” are individual images physically cut from 16mm film strips during Mekas's editing process. These interstitial fragments – moments once removed in the shaping of a sequence – are scanned and presented as archival prints. What was excised becomes the work itself. Suspended between motion and stillness, these images preserve fleeting gestures, flashes of light, partial figures, and transitional instants that would otherwise remain unseen. As conceptual anchors for the exhibition, the Frozen Frames reflect Mekas's lifelong commitment to cinema as a diary form – an art built from fragments, impressions, and lived experience.

At the heart of the exhibition is *As I Was Moving Ahead Occasionally I Saw Brief Glimpses of Beauty* (2000), presented on an infinite loop. Intended to be entered at any moment, the film invites viewers to experience it non-linearly. Visitors may encounter it mid-scene or mid-thought, returning again to find a different rhythm, image, or memory. This open structure mirrors Mekas's own editing process for the film: drawing intuitively from decades of personal 16mm footage – his archive of daily life – he assembled reels without strict chronology, allowing association and recollection to guide the composition.

The resulting five-hour work is an expansive meditation on family, friendship, artistic community, exile, and the fragile radiance of ordinary moments. Described by *The New York Times* as “a first—the home movie as epic,” the film transforms personal documentation into a universal reflection on time and presence.

Together, the *Frozen Frames* and *As I Was Moving Ahead* create a dynamic dialogue between stillness and movement, absence and continuity, fragment and accumulation. The cut frame and the continuous reel operate as parallel forms of memory – one isolated and fixed, the other unfolding and immersive. Through this interplay, the exhibition considers how lives are edited, how histories are assembled, and how beauty persists in fragments, relationships, and recollection.

The presentation of these works at William & Mary reflects ongoing research and curatorial stewardship by Lee Matney, situating Mekas's images and films within broader conversations about archival practice, exile, and the relationship between moving image and photographic form. Presented within an academic setting, the exhibition extends that dialogue and underscores the continued relevance of Mekas's diaristic cinema for contemporary museum and university audiences.

Jonas Mekas: Still Beautiful in My Memory offers a focused exploration of Mekas's enduring influence and invites audiences to inhabit his cinematic language: intimate, diaristic, and profoundly human.