

MEDIA RELEASE

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Jonas Mekas *A Tribute to Jonas Mekas*

March 14, 2020 through May 9, 2020

Deborah Colton Gallery is pleased to present *A Tribute to Jonas Mekas*, which will highlight a variety of Jonas Mekas' still-framed photographs, his films, and his life and accomplishments. All works are available for acquisition.

Jonas Mekas: the Founder of Anthology Films in New York, the filmmaker, poet, writer, curator and artist. Jonas Mekas captured moments that we all cherish in art history, in American history, in life... from film producers, Salvador Dali, the Kennedy's, Warhol, Yoko Ono and John Lennon, Elvis Presley, the World Trade Center... to more personal, special moments of nature, his family, being human, celebrating life and cherishing each experience to the fullest. Jonas made a major contribution to the art world and is greatly missed. He passed away on January 23, 2019 at 96 years old. Since then, there have been many events celebrating his life last year, including *Homage to a Happy Man: Celebrating Jonas Mekas (1922 – 2019)* at St Mark's Church last May. This is the first solo art exhibition paying Tribute to his artistic career since his passing.

Jonas Mekas was born in 1922 in Semeniskiai, Lithuania. In 1949 he emigrated to the U.S. together with his brother, settling in New York. He has been one of the leading figures of American avant-garde filmmaking playing various roles. In 1954 he founded Film Culture magazine; in 1958, Mekas began writing his "Movie Journal" column for the Village Voice; in 1962 he co-founded the Film-Makers' Cooperative (FMC) and in 1964 the Film-makers' Cinematheque, which eventually grew into Anthology Film Archives. His own artistic creations vary from narrative films ("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 I Saw Brief Glimpses of Beauty" (2000), "Sleepless Night Stories" (2011) and "The Out-takes from the Life of a Happy Man" (2012). Known as an icon of contemporary American culture, Mekas documented the era that promoted peace through his acclaimed independent film and still-frame photography, which feature Yoko and John in "Happy Birthday to John and Bed-In." His films have been screened extensively at festivals and museums around the world. In 2005, he represented Lithuania at the Venice Biennale. The exhibition was noted with Special Mention for extraordinary presentation of contemporary classic art. Mekas was invited again in 2015 to exhibit at the Venice Biennale, where his installation *The Internet Saga* was on view in the sixteenth century Palazzo Foscari Contarini.

Through his accomplished career Jonas Mekas has received awards from New York State Council on the Arts; Rockefeller Foundation; National Endowment for the Arts; the Long Wharf Theater Foundation; and has been a member of the American Center of P.E.N and the American Academy of Motion Picture Arts. He also received a Golden Medal from Philadelphia College of Art; Guggenheim Fellowship in 1966; Creative Arts Award in 1977; Brandeis University in 1989; Mel Novikoff Award at San Francisco Film Festival, 1992; Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres from Ministry of Culture, France in 1992 and 2000; Lithuanian National Award, 1995; Doctor of Fine Arts; Honoris Causa from Kansas City Art Institute in 1996; Special Tribute; New York Film Critics Circle Awards in 1996; Pier Paolo Pasolini Award, Paris in 1997; International Documentary Film Association Award, Los Angeles, 1997; Governors Award, Skohegan School of Painting and Sculpture, 1997; Artium Doctoris Honoris Causa; Universitatis Vytauti Magni, Lithuania in 1997, among many others.

In 2011 Jonas Mekas was honored at the Los Angeles Film Critics Association's award ceremony for his significant contribution to American film culture and had a solo exhibition at Ludwig Museum in Cologne, Germany. In December of 2012 Mekas participated in an extensive presentation at Serpentine Gallery, London and the Centre Pompidou in Paris. In 2013 an exhibition of his works opened at the State Hermitage Museum in Saint Petersburg, Russia, at the Cinémathèque Royale and the Bozar Center for Fine Arts, both in Brussels, Belgium. In 2014 he showed at the Centre Pompidou, the Cesis Art Festival in Latvia, and at the Center for Art and Media Karlsruhe, Germany. Since then Jonas Mekas participated in many creative projects and exhibitions worldwide.

Deborah Colton Gallery first debuted Jonas Mekas in Houston in the solo exhibition *Film Framed* in 2005. In 2007, Jonas Mekas was also included in the group exhibition at Deborah Colton Gallery, Chemical City. Since then Deborah Colton Gallery has continued to represent Jonas Mekas, including with her projects with OUTPOST NYC DCG that she co-founded. Additionally, Deborah Colton has served on the Anthology Film Archives Advisor Board for many years now.

"It has been my great honor to support Jonas Mekas and Anthology Film Archives over the years due to my deep respect for Jonas and everything that he believed in... with Anthology being the most highly regarded institution in preserving, exhibiting and promoting avant-garde, independent film and video, dating from its origins up to the present and beyond" states Deborah Colton.

Jonas Mekas was a featured artist and special guest of the 2013 Houston Cinema Arts Festival, which presented his film *Sleepless Night Stories* as part of the festival's "Cinema on the Verge" programming that highlights the most adventurous film and installation work by experimental media artists. Having made this project happen for Cinema Arts Festival with Mekas, Deborah Colton Gallery at the same time had the solo exhibition, *LIFE GOES ON....I KEEP SINGING*, curated by Deborah Colton and Jonas Mekas. In 2015, Deborah Colton Gallery supported an exhibition of still-framed photographs and screenings of Mekas films, entitled *Frozen Film Frames: Portraits of Filmmakers* by Jonas Mekas at the Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art in Eugene, Oregon which was an excerpt of the exhibition Deborah Colton Gallery debuted at Paris Photo LA 2013 and then at Deborah Colton Gallery's solo in 2013 at the time of the Houston Cinema Film Festival. Deborah Colton was invited by the museum to be guest Co-Curator and to attend and moderate at Skype Interview with Jonas.

A Tribute to Jonas Mekas will focus on a body of work that Jonas and Deborah Colton selected together that he was very pleased with. The exhibition will include his family, his friends, his colleagues in the art world and in an American dream that he believed in. In addition to the video created by Jonas for our original exhibition, *FRAGMENTS OF PARADISE*, Deborah Colton Gallery will be featuring the video "WTC HAIKUS", video 14 min. 2010. As Colton states, "This video was always dear to Jonas.... and he said when he watched it, he would get teary."

As Jonas describes this beautiful film:

"Looking through my finished and unfinished films, I was surprised how many glimpses of the World Trade Center I caught during my life in SoHo. I had a feeling I was Hokusai glimpsing Mount Fuji. Only that it was the World Trade Center. The World Trade Center was an inseparable part of my and my family's life during my SoHo period from 1975-1995. This installation is my love poem to it. My method in constructing this piece was simply to pull out images of the WTC from my original footage, while including some of the surrounding scenes. The result I felt came close, albeit indirectly, to what in poetry is known as the Haiku.

Colton states:

This exhibition is very personal to me. Jonas was like a big brother or father to me in many ways. We didn't really spend that much time together, but we had a mutual respect and trust in each other. He checked on me by email whenever there was a bad storm or a hurricane in Houston. I always kept him in my best thoughts and prayers too. I loved his happy, positive and kind spirit. He had the energy of a 30 year old and never tired or complained. I liked his love for his children, his high character and his humbleness.... in addition to his being so talented. I liked his determination to achieve his dreams, yet he did this in such a harmonious way with such ease. Jonas loved living and lived his life to the fullest... I feel this is what Jonas would want me to feature for his *Tribute* exhibition during FotoFest 2020. For it's a time now where peace and harmony is more important than ever... which is the meaning of "WTC HAIKUS" plus much of the content of the exhibition. I will have a room dedicated to Jonas also, his books and poems he wrote, photos of him and his family and other materials and published articles that were dedicated to Jonas."

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.