

The Museum of Modern Art

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MUSEUM TO SHOW A FILM-MAKER'S DIARY

The Museum of Modern Art will present Jonas Mekas' three hour, five minute film, "Diaries, Notes and Sketches," Tuesday, June 23, 5:30 P.M., as part of the bi-monthly Cineprobe Series, conducted by Adrienne Mancina, Assistant Curator of the Department of Film. The film is also known as "Walden."

Film-maker Mekas, a lecturer, critic for the Village Voice and editor of Film Culture, will be present to discuss his latest work. The founder of the Film-makers' Cooperative and Film-makers' Cinematheque, Mekas has been the spokesman and sustaining force of the "underground" film for the past 15 years.

Since 1950, Mekas has continued to shoot the footage for "Dairies, Notes and Sketches." As the title implies, it is a film diary of what the film-maker calls "situations, friends, New York, seasons of the year." Sustained sequences alternate with brief fragments, some only a few seconds long, all reflecting and "celebrating" the world around the film-maker -- both the personal world of his friends and feelings and the external world from the pastoral setting of Timothy Leary's home at Millbrook to the streets of New York. Also shown are several weddings, the circus, and a trip to the home of film-maker Stan Brakhage in the mountains of Colorado.

Because it is a diary, all the footage appears exactly as it was filmed. Mekas has said, "There was no way of achieving the final film in the editing room without destroying its form and content...either you get it now, as you film it, or you don't get it at all." Reviewing the film in the New York Times, Vincent Canby wrote,

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"Mekas has a remarkable gift for making us see, as if for the first time, what we've been looking at all our lives." On the soundtrack, Mekas himself says, "They tell me, I should always be searching; but I'm only celebrating what I see."

Born in Lithuania in 1922, Jonas Mekas came to this country in 1950 and immediately became involved in making films. Two of his most well-known works are "Guns of the Trees" (1961) and "The Brig" (1964), the latter a film of the Living Theater production of Kenneth Brown's play.

The efforts of Mekas as a sponsor and organizer of other independent film-makers and their work has complemented his own film-making. Largely through his endeavors The Film-makers' Cooperative was founded in 1962 to deal with one of the most basic problems shared by independent film-makers -- the problem of distribution. The Cooperative accepts and distributes those films submitted to it, and since its formation numerous other similar cooperatives have opened throughout the world. The Film-makers' Cinematheque once served as a theater showcase for the independent cinema and now its films are screened weekly at the Jewish Museum in New York.

Additional information available from Mark Segal, Assistant, and Lillian Gerard, Film Coordinator, Department of Public Information, The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53rd Street, New York, N.Y., 10019. Telephone: (212) 956-7296.