CFP: Jonas Mekas: Legacies (Vilnius, 23-24 Sep 27)

Vilnius, National Gallery of Art, Sep 23–24, 2027
Deadline: Apr 6, 2027

Lina Hall

Jonas Mekas (1922–2019) was one of the most distinctive cultural figures at the intersection of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. His creative and cultural legacy extends far beyond any single artistic discipline. His practice brought together film, literature, photography, visual art, music, publishing, performance, criticism, and cultural organizing. Over more than six decades, Mekas created and sustained networks of artists, founded and developed cultural institutions, published journals and books, wrote about his own work and that of others, and built archives. Mekas was not only a seminal figure in the history of experimental cinema but also an active force in shaping the wider field of avant-garde art and culture.

The international conference Jonas Mekas: Legacies is organized by the Lithuanian National Museum of Art (LNDM) and Jonas Mekas Estate, and we warmly invite scholars, researchers, archivists, curators, and other practitioners to participate.

The organization of the conference is closely connected to the Jonas Mekas Archive currently on loan to the Lithuanian National Museum of Art from Jonas Mekas Estate. The archive provides an important context for revisiting Mekas's work and legacy, while also opening broader questions concerning artistic archives, self-archiving, memory, preservation, institutional stewardship, and the ways in which artistic legacies are constructed, interpreted, and transmitted.

This international conference invites scholars to reconsider Jonas Mekas's multifaceted body of work and legacy. We therefore consider not only what Mekas created, but also the forms of artistic practice, cultural exchange, community, institutional structures, archival practices, and intellectual frameworks that his work and legacy have influenced. The conference seeks to bring together perspectives from different disciplines and contexts in order to consider Mekas as a profoundly interdisciplinary figure and to examine his significance not only for the history of twentieth-century avant-garde art and cinema, but also for contemporary culture.

We are seeking original research papers and presentations that critically engage with the work and impact of Jonas Mekas across various contexts, including but not limited to:
• Cinema and the Moving Image: Examining Mekas's contributions to experimental and avant-garde cinema, including diary film, autobiographical filmmaking, amateurism, spontaneity, and the aesthetics of everyday life; exploring his cinematic language and its reception, his relationship to film and photography, moving and still images, expanded cinema, and his place within the history of experimental film.
• Literature and Writing: Investigating Mekas's poetry, diaries, prose, notebooks and their relation

to filmmaking; exploring autobiography, self-fiction, self-representation, memory, time, and everyday life; considering the translation and international reception of his writing and his literary legacy.
• Visual Art and Interdisciplinary Practices: Examining Mekas's engagement with photography, visual art, performance, and other avant-garde practices; exploring intermediality, media crossings, collaboration, collective artistic practice, and the relationship between art and life; considering Mekas's place within the histories of twentieth- and twenty-first-century visual art.
• Publishing, Criticism, and Cultural Infrastructure: Investigating Mekas as publisher, editor, critic, curator, and institution-builder; examining the significance of Film Culture, artists' publications, alternative cultural media, film and art criticism, and independent cultural institutions and spaces, including Anthology Film Archives.
• Networks, Communities, and Cultural Histories: Exploring Mekas's artistic and intellectual networks, the New York avant-garde, Fluxus and its wider contexts, collaboration and artistic friendships, and friendship as a creative and cultural practice; considering diasporic and transnational artistic networks, as well as the significance of Lithuania, exile, diaspora, and cultural identity in Mekas's work and legacy.
• Archives, Memory, and Legacy: Examining Mekas's archives and practices of self-archiving, and considering the artist's archive as an extension of artistic practice; exploring diaries, letters, correspondence, and personal documents, as well as institutional approaches to artists' archives; addressing questions of preservation, conservation, restoration, digitization, digital legacies, memory, posthumous reception, and the making and interpretation of artistic legacy.
• Mekas and Contemporary Artistic Practice: Investigating Mekas's influence on contemporary artists and filmmakers and his continuing relevance to cinema, visual culture, and new media; exploring his significance for artistic education, contemporary artistic and curatorial practices, and emerging digital forms; considering what it might mean to follow, reinterpret, or become a successor to Mekas today.
• Analyzing Specific Works: Presentations focused on in-depth analysis of specific films, photographs, writings, artworks, publications, archives, or collaborative projects by Mekas, addressing their formal and thematic dimensions, historical and cultural contexts, and significance within his broader oeuvre.

Submission Guidelines:
• Abstracts of no more than 250 words should be submitted along with a short biographical note and institutional affiliation (if applicable).
• All submissions should be in English.
• Submission Deadline: April 6, 2027.
• Selected speakers will be notified by April 20, 2027.

All abstracts, biographical notes, and general inquiries should be sent to: mekas.conference@lndm.lt

All applications will be reviewed by a committee consisting of:
dr. Arūnas Gelūnas (chair, LNDM)
dr. Ramūnas Čičelis (VDU)
Lina Hall (LNDM)
dr. Lolita Jablonskienė (LNDM/VDA)

Sebastian Mekas (Jonas Mekas Estate)

The conference will provide the basis for a special issue of Visual Arts Texts (Vizualiųjų menų tekstai) dedicated to Jonas Mekas.
Following the conference, selected participants will be invited to develop their presentations into full-length contributions for publication. All submissions will be subject to the journal's editorial and peer-review procedures.
The special issue is planned for publication in early 2029.

Reference:
CFP: CFP: Jonas Mekas: Legacies (Vilnius, 23-24 Sep 27). In: ArtHist.net, Nov 23, 2026 (accessed Nov 23, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/57194>.