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JONAS MEKAS

London, UK | Tuesday 27 March 2012
For immediate release

As the exhibition 'Jonas Mekas and Robert Polidori: Portraits' gains critical acclaim at New York's Edwynn Houk Gallery, watch Mekas tell the remarkable tales of his life and work in his own captivating words.

Born in Lithuania in 1922, Jonas Mekas has a fascinating story to tell. After escaping from a Nazi labour camp in 1945, he and his brother moved to New York in 1949 where, two weeks later, he acquired a Bolex camera and began the obsession with filming the details of his life. Best known for his work as a filmmaker, poet, philosopher and curator, Mekas is often referred to as 'the godfather of American avant-garde cinema'.

He wrote the 'Movie Journal' column for *Village Voice* from 1958-1975, and in 1961 became president of the Film-Makers' Cooperative. He was the founder in 1970 of New York's Anthology Film Archives, and continues to be its president and programme director. His work has been exhibited internationally, including Museum Ludwig, Cologne; La Biennale di Venezia; Bienal de São Paulo; the Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris, and the Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography.

In this series of truly compelling recordings, Mekas recounts pivotal moments from his life, including he and his brother's arrival in New York and how they were inspired by the culture around them: 'When we had no money we went to opera... There were tricks to get in which we had mastered, and we did not miss any film opening, any film screening, any ballet or music or theater event...

We saw absolutely everything because we had, we were craving, we were so dry we needed it all, so for like two or three years it was very, very intense.'

In 1954, together with his brother, he started *Film Culture* magazine, which soon became the most important film publication in the US, despite the risk of launching with no financial back up: 'I knew somebody in the Franciscan Monastery in Brooklyn and I knew they had a printing shop so they printed it... And then they said, where is the money? The monastery sued us, you're mugs, you shouldn't, you're holy people, how can you sue us?... Some of my Editorial Board... said, you really have no money? We thought you had money. How can you publish?... I said, if I had told that to my, you know, colleagues here, none of them would have been on the Board and we wouldn't have the magazine.'

All of Mekas' fascinating recordings can be watched as a number of short clips ranging in length between one and several minutes, with a fully searchable transcript. All Web of Stories videos are easy to share with friends and colleagues, and may be embedded into personal blogs and websites.

<http://www.webofstories.com/people/jonas.mekas/1>

NOTES FOR EDITORS ABOUT WEB OF STORIES

Everyone has a story to tell. Over time many stories become forgotten, but now Web of Stories offers members of the public the chance to tell their stories for future generations to enjoy. The project is built on the belief that we all have wonderful stories to share, and have family and friends whose tales we would like to hear.

Web of Stories began as an archive of life stories told by some of the great scientists, writers and artists of our time. As the number of stories grew, it became obvious that some were on related topics and that a web was slowly being created of connected stories.

We welcome anyone to come and talk about virtually anything they like. Just like our famous speakers, we hope you will record your stories for others to enjoy.

CONTACT

For more information on Web of Stories or any of our videos please contact the Press Desk on +44(0)20 7323 0323 or press@webofstories.com

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