

On the gallery entrance doors

Portrait of Jonas Mekas by Christine Ljubanovic, Paris, 2003

At age six Jonas Mekas composed his first poem, an improvised epic about farm life that he recited to his father. The demands of farming in fact delayed Mekas’s formal education, which he began at age nine. To catch up with his peers, he completed the equivalent of four years of schooling in one winter. Mekas was primarily self-taught with a profound love of reading and writing; prior to becoming a filmmaker he was a prolific poet in his native Lithuania.

When Mekas fled the country in 1944 he was twenty-two years old. After the war he and his younger brother, Adolfas, lived in displaced-persons camps throughout Germany in Flensburg, Wiesbaden, and Kassel. Despite living stateless and homeless, Jonas continued to voraciously read and write, discussed literature and films, and even produced (with fellow displaced persons) the literary journal *Glimpses (Žvilgsniai)* and an early version of *Idylls of Semeniškiai (Semeniškių Idilės)*, still in publication today. When Jonas and Adolfas finally arrived in the United States in 1949, they carried with them the clothes on their backs and nine crates of books.

From left to right

Jonas Mekas as a young student, 1940

Jonas, Adolfas, and their mother, Elžbieta Mekas, 1944

Jonas Mekas’s work card for the Elmshorn forced labor camp, 1944
Mekas’s nationality is listed as “unclear.”

Top row

Postcard from Elmshorn, Germany, site of a Nazi forced-labor camp, 1944

Identification photograph of Jonas Mekas, 1946–47

Postcard from Wiesbaden, Germany, site of a displaced-persons camp, 1945

Jonas Mekas’s pass to the Mainz city library, c. 1945

Französische Film Kunst program, 1947

Middle row

Jonas Mekas’s identity card for the Lithuanian Committee at the Flensburg displaced-persons camp, 1945

Bottom row

Postcard from Elmshorn, Germany, site of a Nazi forced-labor camp, 1944

Identification photograph of Adolfas Mekas, 1946–47

Postcard from Kassel, Germany, site of a displaced-persons camp, 1945

Jonas Mekas’s academic transcript, University of Mainz, 1946

Mainz Film Festival program, 1947

On the bottom shelf

Notebook of Mekas’s poems, c. 1943

Notebook of poems Mekas transcribed from the Birzai library, Lithuania, 1940

Glimpses (Žvilgsniai) magazine 3, 1947

Idylls of Semeniškiai (Semeniškių Idilės), 1948

Letter from Adolfas and Jonas Mekas to the United States Immigration office, 1949

They write to request the transport of their clothes and books to New York.

In An Instant It All Came Back to Me, 2015

Thirty-two digital prints on clear vinyl applied to extra-clear glass
Courtesy of the Estate of Jonas Mekas and Apalazzo Gallery,
Brescia, Italy

In An Instant It All Came Back to Me deals with the tempo, patterns, and flow of everyday life and the passage of time. The self-referential work is composed of 2304 individual 16mm-film frames Mekas extracted from his own footage, the constant mining and revisiting of which were central to the artist's practice. The composition's flickering rhythms allude to the shifting nature of reality, identity, and belonging. Like the complex film diaries seen throughout this exhibition, *In An Instant It All Came Back to Me* documents the lived experience that undergirds Mekas's body of work.

The companion volume to the exhibition is on sale in the Cooper Shop.