

FILM ON FILM FOUNDATION presents...

Revolution by Cinema
This Easter Sunday,
March 23

Only
\$7



7pm

guns of the trees

A Jonas Mekas Double Feature!



8:45pm

THE Brig

PFA Theater, 2575 Bancroft Way, Berkeley

"We don't want false, polished, slick films. We prefer them rough, unpolished, but alive; we don't want rosy films - we want them the color of blood." -Jonas Mekas, 1961

"What I want to achieve - ideally - with my film: is overthrow the government." -Jonas Mekas, Diaries, 11 August 1960

The Film on Film Foundation (www.filmonfilm.org), an organization dedicated to encouraging the exhibition of celluloid motion picture film in the manner it is meant to be screened, presents at the PFA Theater the third program in its on-going series "Radical Strategies": a Jonas Mekas double-bill of *Guns of the Trees* and *The Brig*.

At 7pm: *Guns of the Trees*

In 1960, Jonas Mekas stood at a crossroads. An acclaimed Lithuanian poet in his youth who fought and suffered at the hands of both Nazis and Soviets, he had emigrated to the US in 1949 and swiftly established himself at the center of New York's film scene. As founder of what was arguably America's first serious cinema publication, **Film Culture**, as organizer of various screenings of independent film all over Manhattan, and as champion of the movement he would proclaim the **New American Cinema** in the pages of the soon-to-be legendary **Village Voice**, his intellectual influence was omnipresent. He and his brother Adolfas had been "practicing" with their Bolex for some time, and now the challenge of films such as **Cassavetes' Shadows** and his increasing alignment with a radical Beat ethos in the face of the Bomb, the rapidly evolving civil-rights movement, and regular police incursions into Greenwich Village coffeehouse bohemia forced his hand at inventing by-any-means-necessary feature filmmaking. Although *Guns of the Trees* was scripted, the hallmark of his efforts would be a commitment to spontaneity, both in form and content, in the service of creating a "New Man" who would radically transform society.



Stolen equipment was secured. Money for film was begged and borrowed. The rag-tag crew (including a young **Peter Bogdanovich**) roamed all over the New York environs, shooting off-the-cuff, shoplifting food, being chased from locations by over-zealous cops. By the end of their journey, they had created a portrait of an America on the brink of apocalypse, by means of intertwining stories of two couples, one white, one black, who try to make sense of it all. Featuring the **Brando-esque Ben Carruthers**, acclaimed for his role in *Shadows*, and voice-over poetry by **Allen Ginsberg**, *Guns* would prove daring enough to earn Mekas a visit from the FBI.

Not on video!

Winner of First Prize at Porretta Terme, Italy, 1962

1961 B+W 16mm 85 mins.

At 8:45pm: *The Brig*

By 1964, post-JFK assassination, the American atmosphere was considerably grimmer. In a year in which he spent time in jail for exhibiting **Jack Smith's Flaming Creatures** and **Jean Genet's Un Chant d'amour**, Mekas attended the original production of Kenneth Brown's *The Brig*, a proto-Guantanamo hallucinatory vision of a play set in a Marine base in Japan. Simultaneously electrified and horrified by the all-too-real events transpiring before his eyes, he immediately resolved to film it in a *cinema-verite* manner, and shortly thereafter completed what is possibly the shortest schedule in the history of fiction feature-film production: *The Brig*, photographed with the camera hand-held by Mekas himself, took no more than three hours to shoot. The film proved a major success of the New American Cinema, and was a further salvo in the direction of what would become Mekas' *modus operandi* of a completely spontaneous and responsive filmmaking form. Although it could be called "scripted", the shooting itself was almost entirely improvised--this dichotomy mirroring what Mekas increasingly found to be the paradigm of the modern world: the fixed "establishment" reality vs. that of the free, the open, the brave. He was well on his way towards becoming the self-described "raving maniac of cinema"....

"The Mekas brothers are no longer the gentle poets that we thought they were: they are two wild Indians drying scalps." -Cahiers du cinema

Not on video!

Winner of Prize for Best Fictional Film at the 15th International Documentary Festival of Venice, 1964.

1964 B+W 16mm 68 mins.

Just added: Storm De Hirsch's *Newsreel: Jonas in the Brig*, a visual document of Mekas at work filming *The Brig*.
1964 B+W 16mm 5 min. silent

