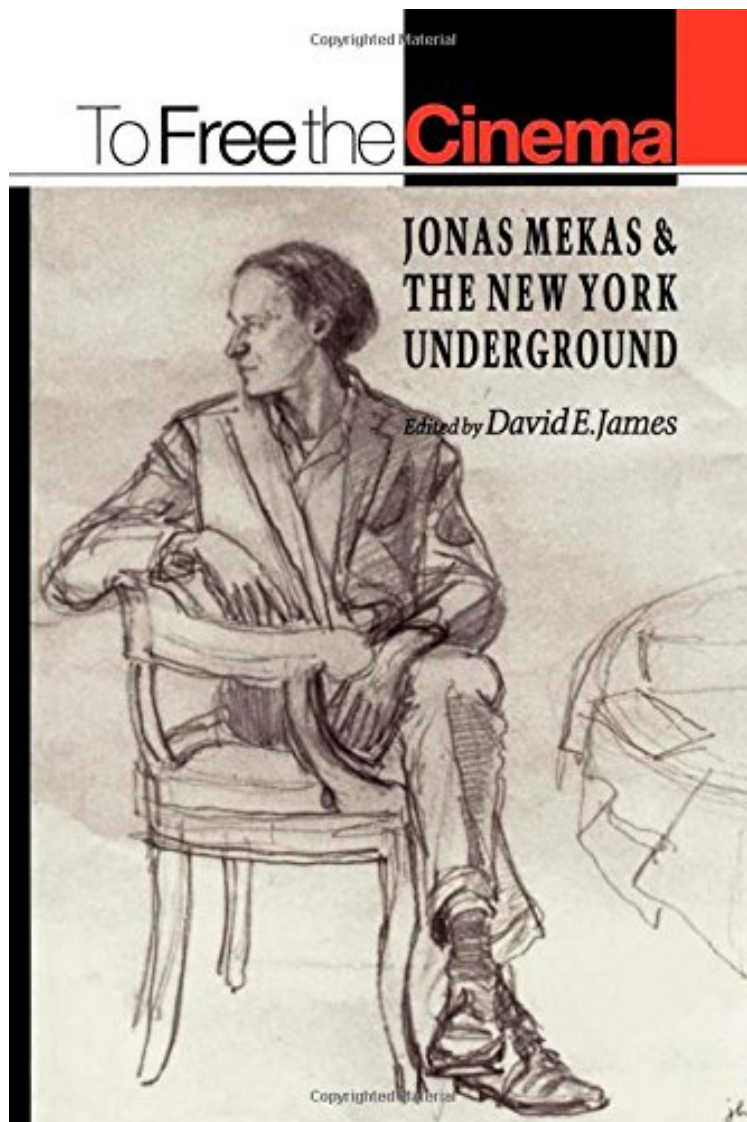


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To Free the Cinema

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From Brand: Princeton University Press : To Free the Cinema before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised To Free the Cinema:

Jonas Mekas, one of the driving forces behind New York's alternative film culture from the 1950s through the 1980s, made for an unlikely counterculture hero: a Lithuanian emigr and fervent nationalist from an agrarian family, he had not grown up with either capitalist commercialism or the postwar rebellion against it. By focusing on his sensitivity to

political struggle, however, leading film commentators here offer fascinating insights into Mekas's career as a writer, film distributor, and film-maker, while exploring the history of independent cinema in New York since World War II. This collection of essays, interviews, and photographs addresses such topics as Mekas's column in the Village Voice, his foundation and editorship of Film Culture, his role in the establishment of Anthology Film Archives and The Film-Makers Co-op (the major distribution center for independent film), his interaction with other artists, including John Lennon and Yoko Ono, and finally the critical assessment of his own films, from *Guns of the Trees* and *The Brig* in the sixties to the diary films that followed *Walden*. The contributors to this volume are Paul Arthur, Vyt Bakaitis, Stan Brakhage, Robert Breer, Rudy Burckhardt, David Curtis, Richard Foreman, Tom Gunning, Bob Harris, J. Hoberman, David E. James, Marjorie Keller, Peter Kubelka, George Kuchar, Richard Leacock, Barbara Moore, Peter Moore, Scott Nygren, John Pruitt, Lauren Rabinovitz, Michael Renov, Jeffrey K. Ruoff, and Maureen Turim.

From Publishers Weekly James, a professor of film studies at USC, aims in this collection to celebrate Mekas on his 70th birthday. A key figure in the New York film avant-garde, Mekas was an early film columnist for the Village Voice and founder of the influential magazine Film Culture, the Film-Makers Cooperative and the Anthology Film Archives. The volume alternates scholarly essays on his films and aspects of writing as a critic, poet and diarist with reminiscences from his friends and colleagues. These range from critic Andrew Sarris, who expresses admiration for Mekas as a person while rejecting his avant-garde film aesthetic, to filmmakers George Kuchar, Peter Kubelka, Stan Brakhage and Robert Breer. The scholarly essays include the insightful--Majorie Keller writes on Mekas as a "mother" figure and likens his films to writings of women diarists; Paul Arthur discusses Mekas as a representative of the '60s social and political counterculture--and the occasionally obscure. However, this collection is a valuable addition to the much-too-short shelf on American avant-garde cinema. Copyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal Mekas, a Lithuanian who was detained in labor camps during World War II, subsequently emigrated to New York and became one of the key figures in that city's postwar experimental cinema movement. The essays collected here discuss his films, including the underground classics *Walden* and *The Brig*; his founding and longtime editorship of the influential avant-garde journal Film Culture; and his widely read column in The Village Voice. Other memorable events in the New York underground scene are recalled as well, such as musician Charlotte Moorman's topless performances playing the cello during the uninhibited 1960s. Some essays are formal and scholarly, others casual and anecdotal--a rewarding mix that vividly evokes an exciting, outlandish period in filmmaking history. Recommended for academic and subject collections.- Richard W. Grefrath, Univ. of Nevada Lib., Reno Copyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc. From the Back Cover Jonas Mekas, one of the driving forces behind New York's alternative film culture from the 1950s through the 1980s, made for an unlikely counterculture hero: a Lithuanian emigre and fervent nationalist from an agrarian family, he had not grown up with either capitalist commercialism or the postwar rebellion against it. By focusing on his sensitivity to political struggle, however, leading film commentators here offer fascinating insights into Mekas's career as a writer, film-distributor, and filmmaker, while exploring the history of independent cinema in New York since World War II. This collection of essays, interviews, and photographs addresses such topics as Mekas's column in the Village Voice, his foundation and editorship of Film Culture, his role in the establishment of Anthology Film Archives and The Film-Makers Co-op (the major distribution center for independent film), his interaction with other artists, including John Lennon and Yoko Ono, and finally the critical assessment of his own films, from *Guns of the Trees* and *The Brig* in the sixties to the diary films that followed *Walden*.