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### ACCLAIMED PHOTOGRAPHER MARY ELLEN MARK TO DELIVER STATE OF CINEMA ADDRESS AT 52ND SAN FRANCISCO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

#### Behind-the-Scenes Observer Brings Her Iconic Film-Set Photos to Life

**San Francisco, CA** – The San Francisco Film Society announced today that acclaimed American photographer Mary Ellen Mark will deliver the annual State of Cinema address at the **52nd San Francisco International Film Festival (April 23–May 7)** at the **Sundance Kabuki Cinemas** at **1:00 pm, Sunday, May 3**.

Her presentation—delivered replete with full-screen projection of the iconic images from her newest book, *Seen Behind the Scene: Forty Years of Photographing on Set* (November 2008, Phaidon)—will take the audience on a private tour of her film-set images, discussing the legendary figures in the frame, as well as what was going on around them, and how what she experienced has informed her photographic and film work. Mark will also show and discuss her photo essay *Twins* and screen its companion short film, made with her husband, Martin Bell, and discuss photography and cinema with the audience.

“Mary Ellen Mark has captured the backstage poetry of filmmaking like no other photographer,” said Graham Leggat, executive director of the San Francisco Film Society. “Our audiences will be delighted by her State of Cinema Address, which promises to bring to life some of the most enchanting scenes and most brilliant actors and directors of our time.”

For 40 years Mary Ellen Mark has been publishing photographs of uncommon immediacy and insight. Her signature imagery and particular genius belong in the realm of the long-form photo essay. With an uncanny ability to forge deep, extemporaneous connections with her subjects, she has proven to be a consummate storyteller. Her work has included photo-narratives about Bombay prostitutes, Seattle street kids and residents of an Oregon mental hospital. Through several seminal exhibitions and books, her body of work—inspired as much by Diane Arbus and Garry Winogrand as by the hallowed traditions of the Magnum photo agency—has long been recognized as an inimitable touchstone in the photo documentary canon.

The sensibilities that anchor Mark’s personal work—strength, compassion and fearlessness—have also brought her great success on assignment for many of the world’s most prestigious magazines. In this capacity she has been much sought-after by legendary directors as a “special stills photographer” on more than 100 movie sets. Beginning with Arthur Penn’s *Alice’s Restaurant* (1969) and a *Look* magazine assignment documenting Federico Fellini directing

*Satyricon* (1969) in Rome, she quickly has established herself as a photographer unusually suited to capturing actors and directors at work on what she knowingly calls the surreal atmosphere of the film set.

Her newest book, *Seen Behind the Scene: Forty Years of Photographing on Set*, collects scores of illuminating portraits of consummate actors—Marlon Brando, Jack Nicholson, Catherine Deneuve, Cate Blanchett and Johnny Depp—and superlative directors, including Francis Coppola, Milos Forman, Woody Allen, Luis Buñuel and François Truffaut. Many of these images—a bloodstained Brando contemplating a dragonfly perched on his fingertip on the set of *Apocalypse Now* (1979; SFIFF 1990), for instance, or Benicio Del Toro, shrouded in cigar smoke, channeling Che Guevara—transcend the journalistic to become objects of beauty and contemplation in themselves.

In the book's foreword, Mark reveals the inspiration she draws from cinema, "I feel very lucky to have worked on so many film sets. I've watched the greatest directors direct the finest actors. I've seen brilliant costume designers and set designers at work and beautifully written scripts translated into magical cinema. I've watched amazing cinematographers light a scene and move the camera to tell the story. I've been in awe of dedicated crew and technicians working long hours in the most difficult of situations. I've witnessed creative and powerful producers pull this whole complex circus together and, in the end, make great films...My own experience of observing this world has helped me immensely in my work outside of it."

Mark's experience as a producer on the documentaries *Streetwise* (1984), *Twins* (2004) and *Alexander* (2007), as well as on the feature *American Heart* (1992)—inspired by her own photographs of homeless Seattle teens, and directed by her husband, Martin Bell—further adds to her insight into the state of cinema. "I've seen amazing people work," she acknowledges modestly, "and I've learned some things."

Mark was presented with the Cornell Capa Award by the International Center of Photography in 2001. She has also received the Infinity Award for Journalism, an Erna & Victor Hasselblad Foundation Grant and a Walter Annenberg Grant. Other awards include the John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship, the Matrix Award for outstanding woman in the field of film and photography, three fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Photographer of the Year Award from the Friends of Photography, the World Press Award for Outstanding Body of Work Throughout the Years, the Victor Hasselblad Cover Award and two Robert F. Kennedy Awards.

Each year, the Film Society invites a well-known public figure to talk about the intersecting worlds of contemporary cinema and visual arts, culture and society, images and ideas. Previous State of Cinema speakers have been acclaimed publisher and technology maverick Kevin Kelly (2008), theater and opera director Peter Sellars (2007); the provocative Oscar-winning actress Tilda Swinton (2006); Brad Bird, Oscar-winning director/writer of *The Incredibles* (2005); B. Ruby Rich, renowned film critic, curator and cultural commentator (2004); and Michel Ciment, longtime editor of the influential French film magazine *Positif* (2003).

Presented with support from Lynn Kirshbaum.

**San Francisco Film Society**

The San Francisco Film Society is a nonprofit arts and education organization dedicated to celebrating the world of film and media in four core areas: Internationalism and Cross-Cultural Exchange; Educating and Inspiring Bay Area Youth; Showcasing Bay Area Film Culture; and Exploring New Media.

SFFS shows the best of world cinema year-round on its SFFS Screen at the Sundance Kabuki Cinemas and presents the San Francisco International Animation Festival, New Italian Cinema and French Cinema Now annually in the fall. In all, the Film Society presents more than 300 days of programming each year, reaching a total audience of more than 100,000 people. Its acclaimed youth education program introduces international cinema and media literacy to more than 7,000 teachers and students annually.

The Film Society publishes a daily online magazine, SF360.org, with broad-ranging news and features on Bay Area film culture and provides crucial support to the Bay Area filmmaking community through SFFS filmmaker services including grants & residencies, fiscal sponsorship, production assistance and development, networking and conference events, and professional-level filmmaker classes and workshops.

**52nd San Francisco International Film Festival**

The 52nd San Francisco International Film Festival runs April 23–May 7, 2009 at the Sundance Kabuki Cinemas, the Castro Theatre and Landmark's Clay Theatre in San Francisco; and the Pacific Film Archive Theater in Berkeley. Held each spring for 15 days, the International is an extraordinary showcase of cinematic discovery and innovation in the country's most beautiful city, featuring 25 juried awards, 200 films and live events with upwards of 100 participating filmmakers and diverse audiences of 75,000+ people.

For tickets and information, go to [www.sffs.org](http://www.sffs.org) or call 925-866-9559.

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