



Mary Ellen Mark

The lives of women

june 17th - august 14th 2022

maisondoisneau.grandorlyseinebièvre.fr

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Mary Ellen Mark

The lives of women

from june 17th to august 14th 2022

at Maison de la Photographie Robert
Doisneau, Gentilly

opening exhibition
Thursday june 16th 2022 à 6:00 pm

production by



Tiny, Seattle, USA, 1983
© Mary Ellen Mark

Mary Ellen Mark

The lives of women

Mary Ellen Mark (Philadelphia, 1940 - New York, 2015) was probably one of the most amazing and unique photographers of the 20th century, undoubtedly thanks to her unerring ability to confront the unvarnished reality of the world, a raw and often painful reality that can be difficult to face without flinching. By dint of observation, she got up real close, tenaciously taking hold and not letting go. Over time, she tamed this raw reality, creating a dialogue that allowed her to reveal every aspect, while keeping her presence hidden. Mary Ellen Mark lived fully in the world, while studying its fringes, just as Eugène Atget had observed the people who lived in the suburbs of Paris and the vagrants in Port-Royal at the turn of the century.

She observed this society full of infamous people. People who, as Michel Foucault said, are not characterised by “an excess in wickedness”, but whose condition excludes from the social hierarchy imposed during the Roman Empire and governed by the Censor. An infamous person is someone we do not look at, a transparent shadow

that haunts the underworld like a person sentenced to death by society.

Throughout her career, Mary Ellen Mark surveyed this hidden world, tirelessly turning her gaze towards the dark side of America. In silence, she moved through a shadowy world stalking what Pierre Mac Orlan called the fantastique social (social fantasy), the strange and monstrous dimension of

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modern life that only photography, this “light -filled art form at the service of the night” can truly capture. Mary Ellen Mark knew where to find it in the faces of the poor and the eyes of prostitutes, transvestites and drug addicts. It was to be found hiding in the shadow of hell, where Neo-Nazi groups or the obscure forces of the Ku Klux Klan lie. This grotesque and social fantasy advances unseen, only visible to those who know of its existence. Mary Ellen Mark had the patience to lie in wait, on the lookout for its bite and the ensuing detonation, ready to record this tear in reality in a fragment of eternity.

The exhibition brings together diverse images that result from the exhaustive selection carried out by Mary Ellen Mark herself at the start of the 2000s, when she undertook to put her archives in order. They are emblematic of her best-known series - “Ward 81”, “Indian Circus”, “Streetwise”, “The Damm Family” and “Twins”- and have often been published in leading magazines, such as Time, Life and Vanity Fair. These photos taken from different moments in her career are a part of history in that they have become an iconic part of our collective visual culture. They bear witness to a dazzling, exemplary career and above all, Mary Ellen Mark’s tireless commitment to women for whom she became the spokesperson, as evidenced by their recurrent presence across her entire body of work. She has left behind a poignant testimony, a record of the history of humanity that documents a past that we should put an end to.

Anne Morin / Curator



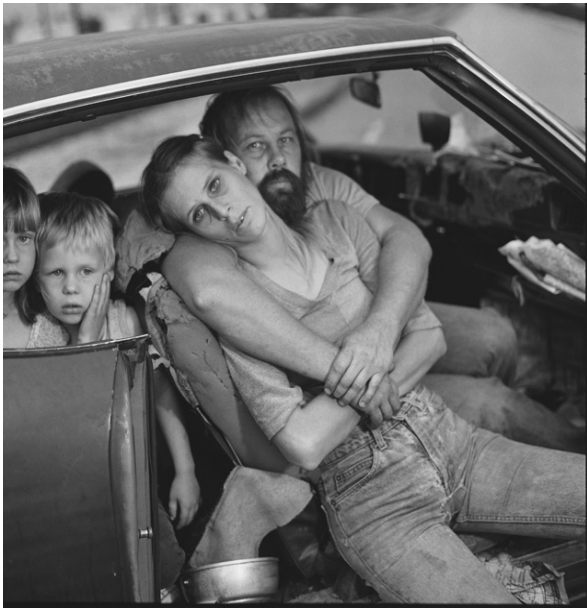
Amanda and her cousin Amy, Valdese, North Carolina, USA, 1990
© Mary Ellen Mark



Cayla et Mylee Simmermon, Twinsburg, Ohio, USA, 2001.
© Mary Ellen Mark



Central Park, Manhattan, New York, USA, 1967
© Mary Ellen Mark



The Damm Family in Their Car, Los Angeles, 1987
© Mary Ellen Mark



Aquagym, Saint Petersburg, Florida, USA, 1986
© Mary Ellen Mark

La Maison Doisneau et Le Lavoir Numérique

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du mercredi au vendredi 13h30 / 18h30
samedi et dimanche 13h30 / 19h
fermée les jours fériés

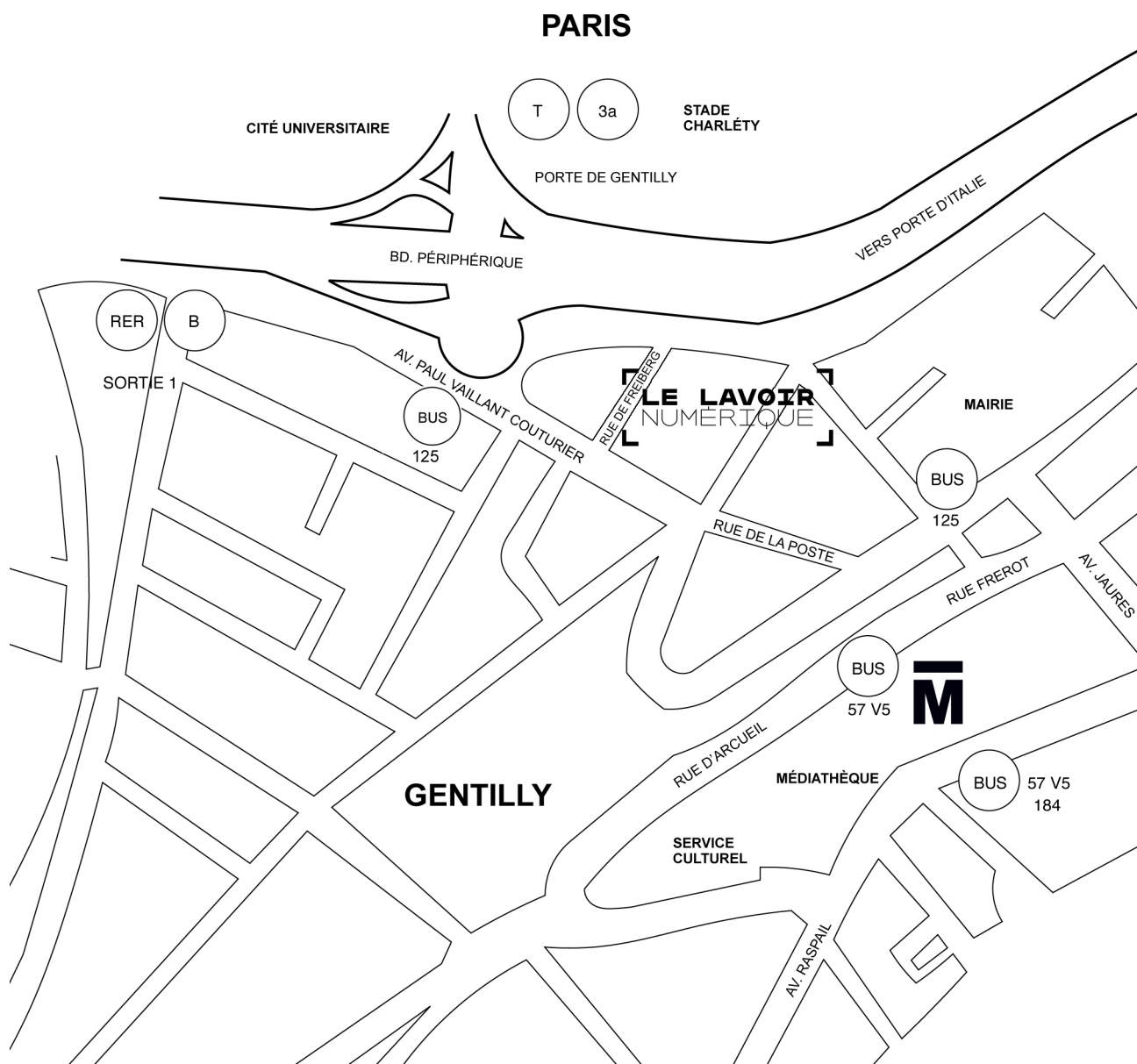
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