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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 30, 2008

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SUNDANCE INSTITUTE ANNOUNCES 13 PROJECTS FOR THE 2008 JUNE DIRECTORS AND SCREENWRITERS LABS

From the Depths of Poverty in New Orleans to Circles of Privilege in Brazil, from Authentic Human Drama to Fantastical, Sinister Fables, Projects Extend across the Storytelling Spectrum

Robert Elswit, Stephen Gaghan, Atom Egoyan and Joan Tewkesbury Among Creative Advisors

Los Angeles, CA – Sundance Institute has announced the selection of 13 projects for its annual June Directors and Screenwriters Labs, which will take place at the Sundance Resort in Utah from May 26– June 26, 2008. Under the leadership of Michelle Satter and the artistic direction of Gyula Gazdag, the projects selected for this year's residency include emerging film artists from the United States, South Africa, China, Costa Rica, Brazil, and the United Kingdom. The core of the Feature Film Program, these Labs provide an opportunity for filmmakers to develop distinctive new work under the guidance of accomplished Creative Advisors in an environment that encourages innovation, collaboration, and risk taking.

The projects and participants selected for the **June Directors Lab** from May 26-June 21 are:

- **BLOOD ABUNDANCE, OR THE HALF-LIFE OF ANTOINETTE**/John Magary (writer/director), *U.S.A.*
- **CASA GRANDE**/Fellipe Gamarano Barbosa (co-writer/director) and Karen Sztajnberg (co-writer), *U.S.A./Brazil*
- **MEADOWLANDZ**/Moon Molson (writer/director), *U.S.A.*
- **PARIAH**/Dee Rees (writer/director), *U.S.A.*
- **POLETOWN**/Daniel Casey (writer/director), *U.S.A.*
- **RETURN**/Liza Johnson (writer/director), *U.S.A.*
- **SHOCKHEADED PETER**/Frank Budgen (writer/director), *United Kingdom*
- **TSHEPANG**/Lara Foot Newton and Gerhard Marx (co-writers/co-directors), *South Africa*

These fellows will be joined at the **June Screenwriters Lab** from June 21-26 by the following projects and participants:

- **AGUA FRIA DE MAR**/Paz Fabrega (writer/director), *Costa Rica*
- **ALL FALL DOWN**/Jonathan Wysocki (writer/director), *U.S.A.*
- **LOOK FOR WATER**/Jennifer Phang (co-writer/director) and Dominic Mah (co-writer), *U.S.A.*
- **THE WHITE CIRCUS**/Chris Lavis and Maciek Szczerbowski (co-writers and co-directors), *Canada*
- **THAT YEAR WHEN WE WERE YOUNG**/Peng Tao (co-writer/director) and Zeng Wenwen (co-writer), *China*

"We are thrilled to be supporting such a promising group of filmmakers who bring authenticity, urgency, and innovation to their storytelling," said Michelle Satter, Director of the Feature Film Program. "The June Lab offers a place to fully explore the potential of their material and to develop their craft as screenwriters and directors. It is heartening to know that these filmmakers are fully engaged in the world we live in and have created stories with humor and pathos that will resonate for many years to come."

Over the course of the Directors Lab, the Fellows work with an accomplished group of Creative Advisors and professional production crews, shooting and editing key scenes from their scripts. Through this intense, hands-on process, the Fellows push the boundaries of their scripts, allowing them to workshop text, collaborate with actors, and find a visual language for their film in an atmosphere where experimentation is encouraged. Directors Lab Fellows also join in the week-long Screenwriters Lab with five additional Screenwriter projects to participate in individualized story sessions under the guidance of established screenwriters.

Gyula Gazdag returns for his 12th year as Artistic Director of the Directors Lab. This year's other Creative Advisors include: Robert Redford, Michael Almereyda, John August, Ronan Bennett, Walter Bernstein, Antonia Bird, Joan Darling, D.V. DeVincentis, Atom Egoyan, Suzy Elmiger, Robert Elswit, Stephen Gaghan, John Gatins, Deena Goldstone, Susannah Grant, Randa Haines, Jeremy Kagan, Dylan Kidd, Christine Lahti, Michael Lehmann, Fernando Leon, Christopher McQuarrie, Walter Mosley, Tim Blake Nelson, Jeremy Pikser, Steven Poster, Howard Rodman, Susan Shilliday, Shawn Slovo, Iain Softley, Stewart Stern, Wesley Strick, Massy Tadjedin, Joan Tewkesbury, Camilla Toniolo, and Vilmos Zsigmond.

The participants and projects selected for the 2008 June Directors Lab are:

BLOOD ABUNDANCE, OR THE HALF-LIFE OF ANTOINETTE/John Magary (writer/director), *U.S.A.*:
Set amidst poverty, with moments of both joy and upheaval, BLOOD ABUNDANCE, OR THE HALF-LIFE OF ANTOINETTE is a retelling of the chaotic life of Antoinette Dawson as she raises seven children in New Orleans.

John Magary has written and directed several short films, including SITE IN FISHKILL CREEK, WE ARE ALL GUERRILLAS, WHAT'S IT LIKE THERE? and OUR NATIONAL PARKS. His short film THE SECOND LINE was a national finalist for the Student Academy Awards, and has played at festivals around the world, including Sundance, SXSW (Special Jury Prize), Tribeca, AFI Dallas (Grand Jury Prize, Best Short), Edinburgh, and Torino.

CASA GRANDE/Fellipe Gamarano Barbosa (co-writer/director) and **Karen Sztajnberg** (co-writer), *U.S.A./Brazil*:
Exploring issues of class privilege among Rio's decadent elite, CASA GRANDE depicts a teenage boy's struggle to escape his overprotective parents as they covertly spiral into bankruptcy.

Fellipe Gamarano Barbosa is a Brazilian filmmaker who completed his MFA in directing at Columbia University. Two of his short films, LA MUERTE ES PEQUEÑA and SALT KISS, screened at the Sundance Film Festival. SALT KISS was also an official selection of the New York Film Festival and the Clermont-Ferrand Short Film Festival, and won over 10 international awards, including in Aspen, Austin and Guadalajara.

Karen Sztajnberg has spent her film career straddling the fields of writing and editing. Her Sloan Foundation Award-winning period screenplay VOLATILE was written during her Columbia University MFA studies in film. As an editor, she has cut a range of projects from award-winning documentary EN ROUTE TO BAGHDAD to MTV's series DARIA. Her work has been screened on PBS, BBC, and at the Georges Pompidou Center in Paris.

MEADOWLANDZ/Moon Molson (writer/director), *U.S.A.*:
After a black American teen finds his African immigrant stepfather passed out drunk in their tenement-building hallway, he and his friends spend the night trying to unload the stepfather as they inexorably barrel toward a violent resolution.

Moon Molson is a New York based filmmaker living in Harlem. His short film POP FOUL has screened at more than 75 film festivals worldwide and has won more than 30 international film festival awards, including the Panavision Grand Jury Prize at the 2007 Palm Springs ShortFest, the REEL Shorts Jury Prize at the 2007 South By Southwest Film Festival, the HBO Short Film Award at the 2006 American Black Film Festival, and the 2006 Student Academy Award.

PARIAH/Dee Rees (writer/director), *U.S.A.*:
A lesbian teenager in the Bronx juggles multiple identities to please friends and family, but pressure from home, school, and within corrodes the line between her dual personas, with explosive consequences.

Dee Rees is a recent alumna of NYU's Graduate Film Program. As a short film, PARIAH screened at over 40 film festivals including the 2008 Sundance Film Festival, garnering accolades including the Audience Award at the 2007 Los Angeles Film Festival and Best Student Live Action Short at the Palm Springs International Short Film Festival. Rees is currently wrapping post-production on the feature documentary EVENTUAL SALVATION, which

won the 2007 Tribeca All Access Creative Promise Award as well as grants from the 2007 Sundance Documentary Fund and Chicken & Egg Pictures.

POLETOWN/Daniel Casey (writer/director), *U.S.A.:*

Set in the heart of Detroit's dying Polish community, POLETOWN follows the story of three men whose fates collide in the wake of racially motivated murder.

A native of Detroit, **Daniel Casey** holds an MFA from the American Film Institute. Casey has been awarded four Emmys for his work in public service announcements, as well as the Herman Fox Award for Breakthrough Filmmaking and AFI's prestigious Tom Yoda Scholarship. Casey's feature film, THE DEATH OF MICHAEL SMITH, made for just over five hundred dollars, took the Grand Jury Prize for Excellence at the 2007 Slamdance Film Festival and the Best Feature Award from the 2007 Silver Lake Film Festival

RETURN/Liza Johnson (writer/director), *U.S.A.:*

Home from a tour of duty, a young mother struggles to recover her place both within her family and in the rust-belt town she no longer recognizes.

Liza Johnson's work has been exhibited widely in film festivals, galleries, and museums, including the Berlin and Rotterdam Film Festivals, the Wexner Center for the Arts, the Walker Art Center, Mass MOCA, MIX-NY, and many others. Her short film SOUTH OF TEN was selected to open the New York Film Festival in 2006.

SHOCKHEADED PETER/Frank Budgen (writer/director), *United Kingdom:*

Adapted from the award-winning West End stage show, via the nineteenth century nursery rhymes of Heinrich Hoffmann, SHOCKHEADED PETER is a deliciously gruesome, hilariously nasty, cautionary tale for adults.

Frank Budgen started directing commercials full-time in the early 1990s after leaving BMP-DDB advertising agency where he was an award-winning copywriter and creative director. He co-founded Gorgeous Enterprises, which frequently tops the UK Production Company of the Year list.

TSHEPANG/Lara Foot Newton and Gerhard Marx (co-writers/co-directors), *South Africa:*

A devastating portrayal of child abuse in rural South Africa, TSHEPANG is a vivid portrait of a town cut off by poverty from its own heart.

Lara Foot Newton earned an honors degree in drama from the University of Witwatersrand in Johannesburg. Among the 34 productions she has directed to date, 23 have been new South African works, including a staging of Zakes Mda's novel WAYS OF DYING. She has won the Standard Bank Young Artist of the Year Award; served in a senior directing post at the Market Theatre and as resident director and dramaturge at the Baxter Theatre Center, and has been mentored by Sir Peter Hall. Foot Newton, in collaboration with Gerhard Marx, won six international awards for their short film AND THERE IN THE DUST.

Gerhard Marx is an artist, scenographer, animator, and theatre maker. His work, including AND THERE IN THE DUST, a short animated film co-directed with Lara Foot Newton and animated by Marx, has won numerous awards. His scenographic and theatre work has received international acclaim and has won him two Naledi Theatre Awards (Best Set Design 2003, 2004).

The participants and projects joining them at the 2008 June Screenwriters Lab are:

AGUA FRIA DE MAR/Paz Fabrega (writer/director), *Costa Rica:*

On the south Pacific coast of Costa Rica, a chance meeting with a strange little girl brings on a crisis of unsuspected proportions for a woman of privilege.

Born in San Jose, Costa Rica, **Paz Fabrega** studied at the London Film School. Her graduation film, TEMPORAL, was selected Best Short at the Biarritz Film Festival and received a special mention from the jury at the Uppsala International Short Film Festival. Fabrega began development of AGUA FRIA DE MAR, her first feature project, at the Binger Film Institute in Amsterdam. The project went on to win the ARTE prize at the Buenos Aires Lab, and was one of the finalists for the Sundance/NHK International Filmmakers Award.

ALL FALL DOWN/Jonathan Wysocki (writer/director), *U.S.A.:*

In the fear-filled atmosphere of October 2001, a troubled family is tested when nine-year-old Sebastian Weber decides to be Osama bin Laden for Halloween.

Southern California native **Jonathan Wysocki** grew up in the theatre, his experiences spanning from Europe to Africa. He went on to obtain an MFA in Film Production at UCLA, where he wrote, directed and edited four short narratives, including the award-winning films *THE WAY STATION* and *THE VESSEL PITCHES*. Wysocki was a Project:Involve Honoree at Film Independent and worked for director Charles Herman-Wurmfeld. Currently, he teaches Film Studies at Chapman University and is a feature programmer for the Los Angeles Film Festival. He recently served as Associate Producer on the Adam Carolla comedy *THE HAMMER*, distributed by the Weinstein Company.

LOOK FOR WATER/Jennifer Phang (co-writer/director) and **Dominic Mah** (co-writer), *U.S.A.:*

A young couple wakes up and literally loses sight of each other; a kidnapper displaces misfit girls to an alternate world; a dowser explores her mysterious ability to find lost objects, and the paths of abductees and runaways intersect in this emo-thriller.

A Berkeley-born daughter of Chinese-Malaysian and Vietnamese heritage, **Jennifer Phang** is a graduate of the MFA Directing program at the American Film Institute. Her feature debut *HALF-LIFE*, a pre-apocalyptic suburban drama, premiered this year at the Sundance Film Festival, then screened at South by Southwest and the Gen Art Film Festival, receiving the Gen Art Grand Jury Award. Phang got her start as a fellow at Film Independent's Project: Involve, working under the mentorship of director Tony Bui.

Born in Berkeley, California, **Dominic Mah** is a playwright, screenwriter, director, and licensed professional card player. In the 1990s he made rock operas with his award-winning theater company Emerald Rain Productions. His first play, *LOOK FOR WATER*, has been performed in New York and Los Angeles, and had its world premiere with the esteemed Eureka Theatre in San Francisco. Mah has directed various short films and music videos, and also wrote the English adaptations of the Japanese comic books *KAZAN*, *SARAI* and *TOMIE*, among others.

THE WHITE CIRCUS/Chris Lavis and Maciek Szczerbowski (co-writers and co-directors), *Canada:*

In this dark fable set in a world where war has no end, a young pilot loses his innocence and an old man's mysterious destiny is revealed.

Chris Lavis and **Maciek Szczerbowski** are the co-creators of the Oscar-nominated short *MADAME TUTTLI PUTTLI*. In addition to their roles as filmmakers, they wear many hats: animators, sculptors, collage artists, and writers. In 1997, Lavis and Szczerbowski founded Clyde Henry Productions, a Montreal-based film and production company specializing in multimedia, stop-motion animation and visual effects. They have received acclaim for their award-winning films, illustrations, and provoked a cult following for *THE UNTOLD TALES OF YURI GAGARIN*, a serial comic strip published in *Vice* magazine.

THAT YEAR WHEN WE WERE YOUNG/Peng Tao (co-writer/director) and **Zeng Wenwen** (co-writer), *China:*

As young adults flood into the rural cities of China in search of work, one man's seduction of a woman reveals itself to be a means to force her into prostitution. As personal misgivings begin to override outside pressures, this story of the weak exploiting the weaker takes an unexpected turn.

Born in Beijing, **Peng Tao** graduated from the Beijing Film Academy, where his short film *STORY IN THE WINTER* won the Best Short Film prize at the Beijing Student Film Festival. His first feature *LITTLE MOTH*, which he wrote and produced independently, won several awards including the NETPAC Prize at the Locarno Film Festival, the Golden Award at the Cairo International Film Festival and the Norwegian Peace Film Award at the Tromsø Film Festival.

Zeng Wenwen received her bachelor's and master's degrees from the Law School of Peking University. She served as the producer and production designer on *LITTLE MOTH*, directed by Peng Tao, which won several awards at international film festivals. *THAT YEAR WHEN WE WERE YOUNG* will be her second feature, on which she is the co-writer and producer.

As of May 2, 2008, Sundance Institute Feature Film Program is made possible by leadership commitments from the Annenberg Foundation, the Doris Duke Foundation for Islamic Art, Hollywood Foreign Press Association, the James Irvine Foundation, NHK Enterprises 21 Inc., Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, Time Warner Inc., and the National Endowment for the Arts. Additional major support is provided by the Rockefeller Brothers Fund and

SAGIndie/Screen Actors Guild. Sundance Institute also gratefully acknowledges the generous assistance provided by Directors Guild of America, The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, Christopher McQuarrie, The Cissy Patterson Foundation, and Writers Guild of America, west for their support of Sundance Institute Feature Film Program. Travel support for New York-based Fellows and Creative Advisors is made possible, in part, through the Baisley Powell Elebash Advancement Initiative. Sundance Institute's Feature Film Program would like to thank the following companies for their recent contributions to the 2008 Director's Lab: Avid Technology, Inc., Canon Broadcast and Communications Division, Kodak Entertainment Imaging, Microsoft, Pacific Title and Art Studio, Inc., Panavision Film and Digital Imaging, and Sony Electronics, Inc. Sundance Institute also recognizes the generous support provided by its Board of Trustees and by contributors to the Sundance Alumni and Filmmaker Fellowship Fund.

Sundance Institute Feature Film Program

Since 1981, the Sundance Institute Feature Film Program (FFP) has supported more than 450 independent filmmakers whose distinctive, singular work has engaged audiences worldwide. Program staff fully embrace the unique vision of each filmmaker, encouraging a rigorous creative process with a focus on original and deeply personal storytelling. Each year, up to 25 emerging filmmakers from the U.S. and around the world participate in a year-round continuum of support which can include the Screenwriters and Directors Labs, Composers Lab, Independent Producers Conference, ongoing creative and strategic advice, significant production and post-production resources, a rough-cut screening initiative, a Screenplay Reading Series, and direct financial support through project-specific grants and artist fellowships. In many cases, the Institute has helped the Program's fellows attach producers and talent, secure financing, and assemble other significant resources to move their projects toward production and presentation.

In January 2008, the FFP launched the Creative Producing Initiative, a year-long Fellowship program for emerging independent producers, which will include a Creative Producing Lab, industry mentorship, and financial support.

Over its 27 year history, the Feature Film Program has supported an extensive list of leading independent films including Ryan Fleck and Anna Boden's *HALF NELSON*, Josh Marston's *MARIA FULL OF GRACE*, John Cameron Mitchell's *HEDWIG AND THE ANGRY INCH*, Tamara Jenkins' *SLUMS OF BEVERLY HILLS*, Paul Thomas Anderson's *HARD EIGHT*, and Quentin Tarantino's *RESERVOIR DOGS*.

This year, several Feature Film Program-supported films have premiered on the festival circuit, including Alex Rivera's *SLEEP DEALER*, which won the Waldo Salt Screenwriting Prize and the Alfred P. Sloan prize at the Sundance Film Festival and the Amnesty International Prize at the Berlin Film Festival; Fernando Eimbcke's *LAKE TAHOE*, which won the Alfred Bauer Prize for Independent Vision at the Berlin International Film Festival and is screening as the "Revelation of the Year" at the FIPRESCI International Critics Week at the upcoming Cannes Film Festival; Aditya Assarat's *WONDERFUL TOWN*, which won the New Currents Award at the Pusan International Film Festival and a Tiger Award at the Rotterdam International Film Festival; Lucia Cedron's *CORDERO DE DIOS*, which was the Opening Night screening at the Rotterdam International Film Festival; Annemarie Jacir's *SALT OF THIS SEA*, making its premiere in the Un Certain Regard section of the upcoming Cannes Film Festival; and Emily Hubley's *THE TOE TACTIC*, which premiered at the SXSW Film Festival. *SLEEP DEALER*, *WONDERFUL TOWN*, and *THE TOE TACTIC* all recently screened in New York as part of MoMA's prestigious New Directors/New Films series.

In addition, there is a significant number of Feature Film Program-supported films currently in post-production, including Cary Fukunaga's *SIN NOMBRE* for Focus Features; Sophie Barthes' *COLD SOULS*, starring Paul Giamatti; acclaimed Iranian visual artist Shirin Neshat's debut feature, *WOMEN WITHOUT MEN*; Derick and Steven Martini's *LYMELIFE*, starring Alec Baldwin; and So Yong Kim's *TREELESS MOUNTAIN*, the follow-up to her award-winning first feature *IN BETWEEN DAYS*, among many others.

Sundance Institute

Dedicated year-round to the development of artists of independent vision and to the exhibition of their new work, Sundance Institute was founded by Robert Redford in 1981. The Institute has grown into an internationally recognized resource for thousands of independent artists through its Film Festival and artistic development programs for filmmakers, screenwriters, composers, playwrights and theatre artists. The original values of independence, creative risk-taking and discovery continue to define and guide the work of Sundance Institute, both with US artists and, increasingly, with artists from other regions of the world.