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## **Ann Arbor Film Festival Receives \$80,000 Warhol Foundation Grant Leadership Changes Support New “Focus on the Filmmaker” Initiative**

**Ann Arbor, May 13th, 2008** – The Ann Arbor Film Festival (AAFF) has received a two-year \$80,000 grant from the New York-based Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts for a “Focus on the Filmmaker” initiative. Concurrently, festival leaders will change roles to expand capacity and support the initiative.

The multi-year grant is the AAFF’s first award from the Warhol Foundation. It will allow the festival to support filmmakers advancing the art of cinema and cutting-edge media. The grant comes on the heels of a highly successful 2008 AAFF which broke all attendance records.

Christen McArdle will lead the initiative as Artistic Director, a new position, moving from her role as Executive Director of the festival for the past three years. She will focus on building audiences and recognition for filmmakers participating in the AAFF, along with expanding the festival’s artistic vision and programming.

McArdle will continue to work with Donald Harrison, newly appointed as Executive Director by the festival’s Board of Directors. Harrison joined the AAFF in October 2007 as Director of Community & Development. Harrison previously worked at the Film Arts Foundation in San Francisco as Director of Membership & Business Relations and at One World Music in Oakland, CA as Director of Momentum.

“Focus on the Filmmaker” will expand core areas of the festival:

- Additional retrospective screenings will be added for the 47<sup>th</sup> and 48<sup>th</sup> AAFF, showcasing influential filmmakers who helped shape the art of cinema with their visionary work.
- The annual AAFF traveling tour, which provides participating filmmakers with direct financial support and exposure, will add venues both nationally and internationally.
- The initiative will also increase multi-media and art-based installations during the festival to enhance the engaging, imaginative and memorable experience for which the AAFF is renowned.

In addition, the “Focus on the Filmmaker” initiative will allow the AAFF to provide in-depth profiles of participating filmmakers, helping to bridge the gap between non-commercial filmmakers and audiences who love and support cutting-edge independent film. The AAFF will also further its support of artistically-driven filmmakers with its first forays into distribution, with the release of a DVD collection of short films that will pay filmmakers directly for each copy sold.

Many new and expanded programs are under development as the AAFF approaches its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary year in 2012. Watch for announcements of these exciting festival changes.

**About the Ann Arbor Film Festival**

The Ann Arbor Film Festival is internationally recognized as a premiere showcase for creative, inspiring, and influential films of all types: avant-garde and experimental, story-based narratives, documentaries, and animation. As the longest-running film festival of its kind in North America, the AAFF is steeped in a rich tradition of ground-breaking cinema. Thousands of influential filmmakers have showcased early work at the AAFF, including luminaries such as Kenneth Anger, Agnes Varda, Andy Warhol, Yoko Ono, Gus Van Sant, Barbara Hammer, Lawrence Kasdan, and George Lucas. The 47<sup>th</sup> Ann Arbor Film Festival takes place March 24 – 29<sup>th</sup>, 2009.

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