

**Mary Ellen Mark: A Seattle  
Family, 1983-2014**  
Large Print Labels

# Mary Ellen Mark: A Seattle Family, 1983-2014

Photographer Mary Ellen Mark (1940–2015) documented the lives of people overlooked and marginalized by society. In 1983, she met Erin Blackwell in the parking lot of a Seattle discotheque. Mark was working on a story for **Life** magazine about runaway teenagers living on the streets in Seattle. Erin, whose street name was Tiny, was 13, dressed up, and ready for an evening of fun. The chance meeting changed both of their lives: they forged a deep, familial relationship.

Over the next 30 years, Erin trusted Mark to document her life. Mark photographed Erin's pregnancies, addictions, arguments, and love, all with unflinching empathy. Mark often returned to Seattle with her husband, filmmaker Martin Bell, whose films **Streetwise** (1984) and **Tiny** (2015) are the source for many of the quotations accompanying photographs in this gallery.

This exhibition, alongside **Manet: A Model Family** in the New Building's Hostetter

Gallery and **Mickalene Thomas: Sandra, She's a Beauty** on the Anne H. Fitzpatrick Façade, reminds us of the importance of family as creative inspiration in the past and present.

# 1983

Erin left home when she was 13 years old. Mary Ellen Mark spent months with Erin and other children on Pike Street, near the waterfront in downtown Seattle.



## **Tiny in her Halloween costume, Seattle**

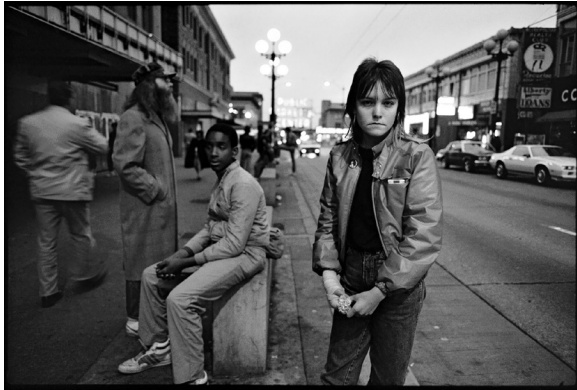
1983

Gelatin silver print

Courtesy of the Mary Ellen Mark Foundation/Howard Greenberg Gallery

Mark saw Erin as a star: “She was beautiful, engaging, and impossible to forget.”

“She just wants to get too serious at too young of an age. She is only 14 years old, and she makes it sound like she’s ready to get married.” —Rat, Erin’s close friend on Pike Street



**Erin (her street name  
was "Tiny") on Pike  
Street**

1983

Gelatin silver print

Courtesy of the Mary Ellen  
Mark Foundation/Howard  
Greenberg Gallery

"I remember the first day—I rolled on  
downtown with my skates ... I got down there  
around these people, I didn't really know  
what I was doing, who to talk to. I learned to  
become a prostitute seeing everybody else  
doing it, making all that money downtown."  
—Erin



## **Tiny with friends on Pike Street**

1983

Gelatin silver print

Courtesy of the Mary Ellen Mark Foundation/Howard Greenberg Gallery

Throughout their 30-year relationship, Mary Ellen Mark always called Erin by her street name, Tiny.

“Pinky and Dora called me Tiny ‘cause I was exceptionally small, very tiny. That’s how I got my name.” —Erin



**Lillie and her rag doll on  
Pike Street**

1983

Gelatin silver print

Courtesy of the Mary Ellen  
Mark Foundation/Howard  
Greenberg Gallery

Lillie was another friend of Erin's, part of the temporary family clan of teenagers living on the street.

"I think it is very strange that older men like little girls. They're perverts is what they is."  
—Erin



**Rat and Mike with a gun**  
1983

Gelatin silver print

Courtesy of the Mary Ellen  
Mark Foundation/Howard  
Greenberg Gallery

Rat and Mike left their homes together after arguing with their families. Mark observed them living “by begging, stealing, and eating from dumpsters” on Pike Street.

“When we get real low on money, I’d take Mike’s .45, because I sold my .38.” —Rat





**Tiny and her mother,  
Pat**

1983

Gelatin silver print

Courtesy of the Mary Ellen  
Mark Foundation/Howard  
Greenberg Gallery

While Erin was living on the street, she occasionally visited her mother in her one-room apartment.

“My mom was drinking all the time. She was never home. She never did anything with me. I didn’t have any siblings. All she cared about was drinking.” —Erin



**Tiny at the amusement  
park with "Horsey"**

1983

Gelatin silver print

Courtesy of the Mary Ellen  
Mark Foundation/Howard  
Greenberg Gallery

Mary Ellen Mark gave a stuffed animal horse  
to Erin, who treasured it and kept it for years.



**Tiny**

1983

Gelatin silver print

Courtesy of the Mary Ellen  
Mark Foundation/Howard  
Greenberg Gallery

"I wanna be really rich and live on a farm with a bunch of horses, which is my main best animal, and have three yachts or more, and diamonds and jewels and all that stuff." —Erin



**Tiny looking out of the window in juvenile detention**

1983

Gelatin silver print

Courtesy of the Mary Ellen Mark Foundation/Howard Greenberg Gallery

Erin was arrested twice for sex work while she was living on the streets.

“We were living so poor I could not stand it ...  
I was 13 when I left home, I was a virgin.”

—Erin

## 1985-1989

Erin wanted 10 kids, in part because she never had brothers and sisters. Mark returned to Seattle to photograph Erin's first pregnancy.



### **Tiny pregnant with Daylon**

1985

Gelatin silver print

Courtesy of the Mary Ellen Mark Foundation/Howard Greenberg Gallery

"I did feel I was ready to have a child ... I was young, by myself, didn't have no brothers or sisters and not really a mother, and this was my child. I get to raise this baby and teach him everything." —Erin



**Tiny holding baby  
Daylon**

1986

Gelatin silver print

Courtesy of the Mary Ellen  
Mark Foundation/Howard  
Greenberg Gallery

"I always wanted a baby because it was something that was mine, that I could say was mine, and I could love and do things for."  
—Erin



**Tiny sleeping  
with Daylon and  
LaShawndrea**

1989

Gelatin silver print

Courtesy of the Mary Ellen  
Mark Foundation/Howard  
Greenberg Gallery

By 1989, Erin was addicted to crack cocaine. Her children Daylon and LaShawndrea were put in foster care. Erin and her new baby, Keanna, visited them regularly.

## 1993-1999

As Erin's family grew and she settled into a quieter life during recovery from addiction, Mark continued documenting frank and intimate moments in Erin's life.



**Tiny and Pat, along the road**

1993

Gelatin silver print

Courtesy of the Mary Ellen  
Mark Foundation/Howard  
Greenberg Gallery

"I love my mom, but it's not a close love or bond. We have a distant relationship. She does what she does, and I just choose to stay away from it ... she is an alcoholic, she's never going to change, and she never takes the kids, she doesn't do grandma things." —Erin





**LaShawndrea looking  
out a window waiting  
for Tiny**

1993

Gelatin silver print

Courtesy of the Mary Ellen  
Mark Foundation/Howard  
Greenberg Gallery

“Yeah ... waiting out the window, waiting for her and just ... excited when she comes in. I just, like, loved her a lot and ... I dunno, it’s kinda weird when I think about things now. It is like I think I had that feeling she was my older sister.” —LaShawndrea



**LaShawndrea and Tiny  
on the couch**

1999

Gelatin silver print

Courtesy of the Mary Ellen  
Mark Foundation/Howard  
Greenberg Gallery

“I wanna tell her, you know, how much I love  
her and how much I ... like I’ve always wanted  
her love back, and I love her unconditionally.”  
—LaShawndrea



**Tiny vacuuming the living room**

1999

Gelatin silver print

Courtesy of the Mary Ellen Mark Foundation/Howard Greenberg Gallery

“My life is kind of boring, but I would rather be doing what I’m doing now than be running around downtown looking for my next hit or a place to sleep or eat. My life is my kids.”

—Erin



**Rayshon and Tiny**

1999

Gelatin silver print

Courtesy of the Mary Ellen  
Mark Foundation/Howard  
Greenberg Gallery



**Keanna and  
LaShawndrea playing  
dress-up**

1999

Gelatin silver print

Courtesy of the Mary Ellen  
Mark Foundation/Howard  
Greenberg Gallery

## 2003-2004

Erin was 30 when she met William Charles on a chat line. Together, they achieved Erin's childhood dream and cared for 10 children. They separated after 16 years of marriage.

"In my work as a photographer I've always liked to return—to the same street, to the same people. The stories I've photographed are open-ended. With Tiny, each time I return, I pick up my camera and it's as if I never left ... she has always been such an incredible character, so alive and honest."  
—Mary Ellen Mark



**Tiny in the bathroom  
with Rayshon and E'Mari**  
2003

Gelatin silver print  
Courtesy of the Mary Ellen  
Mark Foundation/Howard  
Greenberg Gallery



**Family portrait,  
clockwise from top:  
Tiny's husband Will  
(holding Julian), Tiny  
(holding Rayshon),  
Keanna, Daylon, E'Mari  
(with soccer shirt),  
Ranaja on Mikka's lap,  
and LaShawndrea  
2003**

Gelatin silver print  
Courtesy of the Mary Ellen  
Mark Foundation/Howard  
Greenberg Gallery





**Tiny crying and smoking**  
2004

Gelatin silver print  
Courtesy of the Mary Ellen  
Mark Foundation/Howard  
Greenberg Gallery



**Tiny holding Kayteonna**  
2004

Gelatin silver print  
Courtesy of the Mary Ellen  
Mark Foundation/Howard  
Greenberg Gallery

"I'm Catholic ... I don't actively practice the religion, no, but I do believe in some of the things that they believe in like the abortions that I don't think should be." —Erin

## 2014

"Yeah, I never got a horse, never got a farm, never got three yachts. Like, what was I thinking? Oh man, NO. What I do have is I have a clean and sober life today and I'm not doing all that stuff. That's better than anything else and I have my kids." —Erin



**Kayteonna with a hobby horse**

2014

Gelatin silver print

Courtesy of the Mary Ellen Mark Foundation/Howard Greenberg Gallery

"I only dreamed of my mom once. I was with my mom and the rest of the family. We went to the beach. We're all in the ocean and I went a little too far. And I drowned. But she came and saved me." —Kayteonna





**Kayteonna with her  
Barbie Dolls**

2014

Gelatin silver print

Courtesy of the Mary Ellen  
Mark Foundation/Howard  
Greenberg Gallery



**Rayshon and E'Mari at  
the YMCA pool**

2014

Gelatin silver print

Courtesy of the Mary Ellen  
Mark Foundation/Howard  
Greenberg Gallery



**J'Lisa with a starfish**

2014

Gelatin silver print

Courtesy of the Mary Ellen  
Mark Foundation/Howard  
Greenberg Gallery



**Tiny with her dogs Bean and Khloe**

2014

Gelatin silver print

Courtesy of the Mary Ellen Mark Foundation/Howard Greenberg Gallery



**J'Lisa peeks through the blinds while Khloe stands in the doorway**

1999

Gelatin silver print

Courtesy of the Mary Ellen Mark Foundation/Howard Greenberg Gallery

"J'Lisa is a handful. She's all ten of my kids in one. She's smart and she's persistent." —Erin