



JANUS FILMS *presents*

# THE EYES OF ORSON WELLES

**V**isionary cinema historian Mark Cousins (*The Story of Film: An Odyssey*) charts the unknown territory of the imagination of one of the twentieth century's most revolutionary artists. Granted unprecedented access to hundreds of sketches, drawings, and paintings by Orson Welles—tantalizing, never-before-seen glimpses into the filmmaker's rich inner life—Cousins sheds new light on the experiences, dreams, desires, and obsessions that fueled his creativity and inspired his masterpieces. Playful, profound, and as daringly iconoclastic as its subject, *The Eyes of Orson Welles* is a one-of-a-kind work of visual archaeology, a fresh way of looking at a cinematic giant whose singular worldview—fiercely humanist, defiantly antiauthoritarian—resonates now more urgently than ever.

## CREDITS

*Director, cinematographer,  
and writer:* Mark Cousins  
*Producers:* Mary Bell and Adam Dawtrey  
*Executive producers:* Mark Bell, Mark  
Thomas, and Michael Moore  
*Consultant:* Beatrice Welles  
*Editor:* Timo Langer  
*Composer:* Matt Regan

## BIOGRAPHY

Mark Cousins is a Northern Irish filmmaker and writer who lives in Edinburgh. His work as a director includes *The Story of Film: An Odyssey* (2011), an epic, fifteen-hour documentary that won a Peabody Award and the Traverse City Film Festival's Stanley Kubrick Award for Bold and Innovative Filmmaking; *A Story of Children and Film* (2013), a documentary that had its

world premiere at the Cannes Film Festival; *I Am Belfast* (2015), a lyrical essay film about the filmmaker's hometown; and the fiction debut *Stockholm, My Love* (2016), a grief musical starring and with music by Neneh Cherry. Cousins's latest book, *The Story of Looking*, was published by Canongate in the United Kingdom in 2017.

United Kingdom | 2018 | 115 minutes | Color | 5.1 surround | 1.78:1 aspect ratio | Projection format: DCP

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## INTERVIEW

# MARK COUSINS ON ORSON WELLES, SKETCHING WITH FILM, HIS BOOTS, CITIZEN TRUMP

By Will Tizard

*Originally published in Variety. Reprinted with permission.*

*One critic called your film a “wayward, very indulgent but deeply felt love letter to Orson Welles.” Does that sound like a fair description to you?*

Not really. To be wayward or indulgent, the film would have to go off on tangents, I think, but it stays close to the man, his politics, love life, and interest in power. It is deeply felt, though.

*You make the case that Welles’s films were an extension of his work as a graphic artist. How did you arrive at this idea?*

I spent ages looking at the drawings and paintings of Welles and started to see in them how he thought visually. He drew when he was off duty, or relaxing, or upset by work or love. We see those feelings and emotions in his art, but also his sense of composition and form.

*You’ve said your film is a letter to a dead dad, and that filmmakers today are all Welles’s children in a way. When did the Orson Welles bug first bite you?*

At the age of about eight, I think, I saw *Touch of Evil* on TV. I was too young to understand that it’s about race and sex, but wow—I loved its nighttime, seedy atmosphere, its rooms and twisting choreography. When I later went to LA, the first thing I did was visit the locations of the film in Venice Beach.

*How did you manage to enlist the help of Beatrice Welles, your subject’s daughter, in this project?*

I met her at Michael Moore’s Traverse City Film Festival—I was introduced by Phil Hallman of the University of Michigan. He’d recently acquired many of the papers and possessions of Welles.

*What was the most astonishing discovery you made with her help?*

I thought I knew Welles’s work inside out, but I came to realize how great his film of *Macbeth* is, what a wild charcoal sketch of the play.

*You make the argument that Welles was primarily a visual artist and that this is what caused him so much trouble in the studio system. Do you think he would have fared any better today?*

Yes, in part because the equipment has miniaturized and production costs have decreased. Welles was essentially an experimental filmmaker. He could make his experiments more cheaply now. We could have an *F for Fake* every year.

*How did you arrive at your technique of using a handheld Osmo Pro for your documentary work? What does this enable you to do best?*

The Osmo Pro gives a more elegant image than a handheld shot, with some of the feel of tracking. For *The Eyes of Orson Welles*, I wanted the audience to feel that it was gliding through Welles’s world. The Osmo Pro is good at gliding.

*What do you think Welles would have shot first with a rig like this?*

I think he would make a film called *Citizen Trump*.

*You’ve said your style of speaking to the subject of your film on the voice-over is a way to avoid the historian’s voice. How did you first formulate that approach?*

I spoke directly to my dad when I did the oration at his funeral. It felt warmer and more personal to say “you” rather than “he.” It was a relationship rather than an account. I liked that and applied it to my work.

*Do you feel any energy from Orson Welles when you wear his boots?*

His boots are far too big for me—his ankles were three times the width of mine—so I can’t wear them. They sit on my desk. Objects of veneration. A bit fetishy, perhaps?