Sony World Photography Awards

World Photography Organisation

JAMES BARNOR, *OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTION TO PHOTOGRAPHY* 2027

- **A special presentation of James Barnor's work to be shown at Somerset House, London from 16 April – 3 May 2027**
- **Barnor to be recognised at the 20th annual Sony World Photography Awards ceremony**

LONDON, 5 NOVEMBER 2026 – James Barnor is announced today as the recipient of the *Outstanding Contribution to Photography* title at the Sony World Photography Awards 2027, the landmark 20th edition celebrating two decades of championing photographers from around the world.

Recognised as Ghana's first photojournalist, Barnor documented his country's journey to independence in 1957 and later established its first colour photography laboratory. His work bridges continents and cultures, capturing Black communities in Accra and London during decades of profound transformation. Barnor is best known for his remarkable portraits, taken from the 1950s to the 1970s, celebrating the beauty, style and glamour of Black social life. From his renowned Ever Young studio, to the streets of downtown Accra and central London, Barnor captured the identity of his subjects, creating a visual archive of their daily lives. With this award, he joins an illustrious list of names whose careers have shaped the history of the medium.

A retrospective of over 50 works by James Barnor will be on view at London's Somerset House next April, as part of a special presentation at the flagship Sony World Photography Awards 2027 exhibition. Following his path from Accra to London, his studies in colour photography and his return to Ghana, the retrospective brings together photographic prints and ephemera from across his career, highlighting the moments that defined his practice.

Born in 1929, Barnor trained under his cousin, the portrait photographer J. P. D. Dodoo. In 1950, he became the first staff photographer at Ghana's newly launched *Daily Graphic*, giving voice and representation to Ghanaians in this period of rapid social change. As a photojournalist, he documented this moment in history through the eyes of those who lived it, from rallies and street parades to Kwame Nkrumah's declaration of independence. In 1953, he opened the Ever Young studio in Accra's Jamestown district, where he

photographed shop assistants, students and traffic officers alongside judges and political figures, capturing a society in the act of defining itself.

He moved to the UK in 1959 to deepen his technical knowledge of the medium, studying at Medway College of Art in Kent, and going on to work as a colour printer at Colour Processing Laboratories, one of Britain's leading colour labs. In this period Barnor also worked for *Drum*, the influential Black South African lifestyle magazine known for its anti-apartheid reporting, where his portraits of Black models and celebrities appeared on its covers and in its fashion pages. These images became part of a broader visual language of the African continent and its diaspora, serving as vital reference points for readers and inspiring photographers and artists for decades to come.

A decade later, following training with Agfa-Gevaert in Belgium and Germany, Barnor returned to Ghana as the company's technical representative. He set up the country's first colour processing laboratory, introducing colour photography to new audiences while continuing to work as a photographer and journalist. His work was instrumental in shaping the tradition of photography in Ghana and paving the way for aspiring photographers across the region.

In the early 1990s he settled back in London, where he lives today. Barnor's work has been the subject of numerous exhibitions and publications, including a touring retrospective curated by Hans Ulrich Obrist, shown at the Serpentine in London in 2021, MASI Lugano, Switzerland, in 2022 and the Detroit Institute of Arts, USA in 2023. *James Barnor: Stories, Pictures from the Archive (1947-1987)*, curated by Matthieu Humery, opened at LUMA Arles, France in 2022, and was marked by the launch of the James Barnor Prize, dedicated to African photographers. In October 2023, *James Barnor, Studio of Life* opened at FOMU Antwerp, Belgium. Coinciding with the photographer's 95th birthday, the James Barnor 95 festival was held in Accra and Tamale, Ghana, in May 2024, with a month-long programme. In 2025 his work featured in the exhibition *Ideas of Africa: Portraiture and Political Imagination* at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), USA. In 2026 Barnor's work was shown as part of Ibrahim Mahama's exhibition *Le Temps des Récoltes* at the Fondation Cartier pour l'art contemporain, France.

Commenting on his acceptance of the Award, James Barnor says: *'I am honoured to receive this award. I was lucky to be born and brought up in a family of photographers, and I took full advantage of it to absorb as much as I could. When I opened my studio in Accra, I never imagined that my work would take me so far: through Ghana's independence, to London and back again. My camera became my companion, and I have never regretted it. Wherever I went, I tried to learn so that I could share what I had learned. Today, that matters more to me than ever. Up-and-coming photographers now have every chance to go even further, and I hope this exhibition will inspire them to stay curious, to tell their own stories, and to pass on what they know.'*

The *Outstanding Contribution to Photography* award recognises the voices behind some of the most groundbreaking photographic work of our time. James Barnor joins a distinguished list of names including Martin Parr (2017), Graciela Iturbide (2021), Edward

Burtynsky (2022), Sebastião Salgado (2024), Susan Meiselas (2025) and Joel Meyerowitz (2026).

James Barnor will be presented with his award at the annual gala ceremony in London on 15 April 2027, during an evening of celebrations where the overall winners of the Sony World Photography Awards 2027 will be announced.

NOTES TO EDITORS

For press inquiries, please contact:
Polly Brock / Vanda Ivančić / Wiktoria Czajka
media@creoarts.com

JAMES BARNOR
Born in Ghana in 1929, James Barnor opened his renowned Ever Young studio in Accra, where he immortalised a nation at the moment of its independence. He was one of the first photojournalists to collaborate with *The Daily Graphic*, a newspaper published in Ghana by London's Daily Mirror Group. In 1959, two years after Ghana's independence, Barnor moved to London to deepen his technical knowledge of the medium. He discovered colour photography at the Medway College of Art and his pictures were published on the front page of *Drum*, an important magazine founded in South Africa in 1951 and symbol of the anti-apartheid movement. He eloquently captured the spirit of Swinging London and the experiences of the African diaspora in the British capital. In the late 1960s, he was recruited by Agfa-Gevaert and returned to Ghana to set up the country's first colour laboratory. He stayed there for the next twenty years, working in his new Studio X23 as a freelance photographer and for state agencies in Accra. Today, Barnor lives in the United Kingdom and devotes most of his time to his work, in a spirit of transmission. His works are held in institutional collections around the world, including at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), Tate, the Victoria and Albert Museum, the National Portrait Gallery, the Centre Pompidou, the Musée du quai Branly – Jacques Chirac, the Detroit Institute of Arts, the National Gallery of Art in Washington DC, and Photo Elysée.

SONY WORLD PHOTOGRAPHY AWARDS
Produced by Creo under its photography strand the World Photography Organisation, the internationally acclaimed Sony World Photography Awards are one of the most important fixtures in the global photographic calendar. Now in their 20th year, the Sony World Photography Awards have become a definitive platform for celebrating contemporary photographers, setting the standard for visual storytelling. Elevating the work of photographers to global audiences, the Awards offer career-defining opportunities and exposure, alongside prizes including Sony Digital Imaging equipment, cash prizes, and the chance to exhibit at the prestigious annual exhibition at Somerset House in London, which goes on to tour across venues internationally. Each year the Awards additionally recognise the world's most influential artists working in the medium through the Outstanding Contribution to Photography award; the acclaimed photographer James Barnor is the 2027 recipient, joining a distinguished list of iconic names including Martin Parr (2017), Graciela Iturbide (2021), Sebastião Salgado (2024), and Joel Meyerowitz (2026). worldphoto.org

WORLD PHOTOGRAPHY ORGANISATION
World Photography Organisation is a leading global platform dedicated to the development and advancement of photographic culture. Its programming and competition initiatives provide valuable opportunities for artists working in photography and help broaden the conversation around their work. The Sony World Photography Awards are the World Photography Organisation's principal programme. Established in 2007, they are one of the world's biggest and most prestigious photography competitions; celebrating the work of leading and emerging practitioners and attracting tens of thousands of visitors annually to their exhibitions worldwide. World Photography Organisation is the photography strand of Creo, which initiates events and programming across three sectors: photography, film and contemporary art. worldphoto.org

FOLLOW WORLD PHOTOGRAPHY ORGANISATION ON SOCIAL MEDIA
Instagram: @worldphotoorg
LinkedIn: World Photography Organisation
Facebook: World Photography Organisation

CREO
Creo initiates and organises events and programming across three key strands: photography, film and contemporary art. Established in 2007 as World Photography Organisation, Creo has since grown in scope, furthering its mission of developing meaningful opportunities for creatives and expanding the reach of its cultural activities. Today, its flagship projects include the Sony World Photography Awards, Sony Future Filmmaker Awards and PHOTOFAIRS. Working in partnership with Angus Montgomery Arts, Creo helps deliver the group's ventures, comprising some of the world's leading art fairs. Taking its name from the Latin for 'I create', it is in this spirit that Creo sets out to empower and give agency to creative voices. creoarts.com

SONY GROUP CORPORATION
Sony Group Corporation is a creative entertainment company with a solid foundation of technology. From Game & Network Services to Music, Pictures, Electronics Products & Solutions, Imaging & Sensing Solutions and Financial Services - Sony's purpose is to fill the world with emotion through the power of creativity and technology. For more information, visit: sony.com/en

SONY CORPORATION
Sony Corporation is a wholly owned subsidiary of Sony Group Corporation and is responsible for the Entertainment, Technology & Services (ET&S) business. With the mission to "create the future of entertainment through the power of technology together with creators," we aim to continue to deliver Kando* to people around the world. For more information, visit: sony.net
**Kando is a Japanese word that roughly translates to the sense of awe and emotion you feel when experiencing something beautiful and amazing for the first time.*