



Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Leading film director honoured by Leeds Arts University

One of Britain's foremost film directors is to receive Leeds Arts University's first-ever honorary Master of Arts degree.

Clio Barnard will be recognised by the North of England's only specialist arts university during a graduation ceremony on Thursday, 23 November.

"It will be a huge privilege for me to accept an honorary degree from Leeds Arts University," said Barnard, whose first feature film *The Arbor* established her as a leading light in the UK film industry.

"The University has long played a vital role in shaping the lives and careers of so many people in the creative arts. With new courses starting next year, including a degree course in Filmmaking, the future is even more exciting for the University."

Barnard said she has fond memories of studying at the University - which at the time was called Jacob Kramer College - completing a Foundation Diploma in Art & Design in 1984.

"Honestly, it was my favourite year of my entire education," she said. "I really loved it. It was an exciting time - I had left home and I was learning to experiment and be creative. We were encouraged to play and it was very free. It's where it all began for me."

Professor Simone Wonnacott, Vice-Chancellor, Leeds Arts University said: "Clio Barnard has made a major contribution to the UK film industry with her extraordinary and thought-provoking Yorkshire dramas.

"We are delighted to present her with the University's first-ever honorary Master of Arts degree and I hope Clio's success will inspire other young filmmakers to make their mark in the industry."

Barnard's latest film, *Dark River*, will be released in the UK in February 2018 and stars Ruth Wilson (*The Affair*) and Mark Stanley (*Broken*, *Game of Thrones*). The film explores the fragility of family relationships when a young woman returns to the family farm in Yorkshire following her father's death. During shooting, Leeds Arts University students joined the production team, working on props and costumes, gaining invaluable work experience.

Barnard's previous film, *The Selfish Giant*, is an emotionally-charged morality tale focussing on the lives and friendship of two schoolboy outsiders who attempt to sell scrap metal after being expelled from their Bradford school.

A huge critical success on its release in 2013, *The Selfish Giant* premiered during Directors' Fortnight at the Cannes Film festival, later winning the British Film of the Year at the London Critics Circle Film Awards along with a host of other festival awards, including the Europa Cinema Label's Best European, while Barnard was named one of Variety's "Top 10 Directors to Watch in 2013". The film was nominated for Outstanding British Film in the 2014 BAFTA Awards and also for seven BIFAs including Best Director, Best Screenplay and Best British Film. In 2017, *The Selfish Giant* was included in the Daily Telegraph's list of 75 best British films ever made.

Barnard's debut feature, *The Arbor*, was released in 2010. A ground-breaking drama-documentary, it recalled the life of the late West Yorkshire playwright Andrea Dunbar, best known for *Rita, Sue and Bob Too*. Barnard spent two years recording dialogue from Dunbar's friends and family on the Bradford estate where Dunbar had lived, before actors then lip-synched the words for the film.

Also a huge critical success, it won numerous awards including The Douglas Hickox Award at the British Independent Film Awards (BIFAs), Best Screenplay at the Evening Standard British Film Awards, Best British Newcomer at the BFI London Film Festival, Best New Documentary Filmmaker at Tribeca and The Grierson Award for Best Cinema Documentary. Film critic Mark Kermode has described *The Arbor* as "emotionally engaging, stylistically radical and utterly unforgettable".

Alongside critical success as a feature film writer and director, Barnard has exhibited her video art in galleries such as Tate Modern and New York's Museum of Modern Art.

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Editor's Notes

Leeds Arts University graduation ceremony will take place between 11.30pm-1pm Thursday, 23 November.

Founded in 1846 as the Leeds Government School of Art and Design, Leeds Arts University has contributed significantly to the development of art education in Britain and across the world. In 2016 the University was granted Taught Degree Awarding Powers, and in 2017 was awarded full university status.

Leeds Arts University has an impressive history of notable past students, Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth were students in 1919 and 1920. In later years Damien Hirst, Marcus Harvey, Eric Bainbridge, Clio Barnard and Georgina Starr all studied at the University, known then as the Jacob Kramer College. The University's recent graduates continue to win prestigious international awards year on year and enjoy successful careers in the creative industries.

Leeds Arts University has been recognised for its industry standard facilities at the Whatuni awards (winners in 2014 and 2016, runner up 2017) and has recently been ranked the highest arts university in the UK, and the highest ranked university in Yorkshire for student satisfaction in the National Student Survey 2017.

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