



PHOTOGRAPHICA AUCTION

Press Information

39TH LEITZ PHOTOGRAPHICA AUCTION

1.2 million Euros for a 1950s Leica: Leitz Photographica Auction 39 confirms the hype surrounding black paint Leica cameras.

Vienna, 24 November 2021. Just before the start of the nationwide lockdown in Austria, Leica Camera Classics – a subsidiary of Leica Camera, Germany – held the 39th Leitz Photographica Auction at Vienna’s Hotel Bristol. The world’s largest vintage camera auction has been attracting collectors and investors for some twenty years, and has come to serve as a reference point for the market value of historical cameras. Once again, black paint variants were the highlights of the auction – spearheaded by the Leica MP Black Paint No. 55 from the year 1957, which sold for 1.2 million Euros¹.

A total of 488 lots changed hands at Vienna’s Hotel Bristol on November 20. Participants from over 100 countries placed their bids on site, online or via telephone. The auction catalogue spanned from special editions of historical cameras to 1920s billboards – with prices ranging from ‘affordable’ to ‘virtually unattainable’. A wide variety of brands were represented; as in previous years, the demand for black paint vintage Leicas was enormous. “This is a trend we have been observing for several years now,” says Alexander Sedlak, Managing Director of Leica Camera Classics. “To name just one example: at the Leitz Photographica Auction 38 in June 2021, a black paint Leica IIIg sold for € 408,000 including premium – more than ten times the initial estimate.”

64-Year-Old Camera: 1.2 million Euros

The popularity of vintage black paint Leicas was further emphasised by the auction’s 39th edition: its highlight was a Leica MP Black Paint with the serial number MP-55 (estimated at

¹The hammer price (in this case, one million euros) does not include the so-called ‘buyer’s premium’ – an additional 20% fee payable to the auction house.

€ 300,000), which went under the hammer for € 350,000. The MP model was created in the mid-1950s at the behest of American press photographers Alfred Eisenstaedt and David Douglas Duncan – who suggested that the Leicavit rapid winder (which enabled a fast succession of consecutive exposures, but was only available for the Leica IIIf at the time) should also be integrated into their Leica M cameras. Only 141 MPs with a black paint finish were ever produced. The MP-55 has now been acquired by an anonymous collector for 1.2 million euros (incl. premium).

Earlier in the auction, the hotel's Schönbrunn Salon became the backdrop to a fierce bidding war, centred around the Leica M3 Black Paint First Batch (serial no. 959491). The camera, which was produced in 1959, eventually went under the hammer for € 264,000 (incl. premium) – significantly exceeding the initial estimate of € 60,000 to 70,000.

Similarly, a Leica M4 Black Paint First Batch (serial no. 1181779) from 1968 was expected to reach € 12,000 to 14,000, but achieved a winning bid of € 60,000.

Lenses and Prototypes: In Great Demand

In addition to black paint Leicas, rare lenses are also highly coveted among collectors and investors – and can attract remarkably high bids, as this recent auction illustrates. The Summarit M 5 cm f/1.4 First One Prototype Nr. A of 1958 (estimated at € 120,000 to 140,000) went to a new owner for € 264,000 (incl. premium). Another highlight was the Summicron 2/50 Rigid prototype of 1956 (estimate: € 16,000 to 18,000), which was auctioned for € 96,000.

Speaking of prototypes: this edition's 'Charity Lot' – which always attracts a great deal of interest – was a prototype of a special-edition Leica. Released in 2019 to mark the centenary of the Society of Cinematographers, the Leica M10-P 'ASC 100 Edition' with the serial no. 5152614 (estimate: € 8,000 to 9,000) achieved a winning bid of € 15,600 (incl. premium). All proceeds are donated to the charity 'Licht ins Dunkel'.

After the Auction is Before the Auction

"We are pleased that we have, once again, achieved unexpectedly high bids, and are seeing a continuing increase in demand within the vintage camera market – particularly with regards to the Leica brand," Alexander Sedlak comments on the 39th Leitz Photographica Auction. "I am sure we will top these outstanding results at the 40th edition, as we are set to present

international photography enthusiasts with something truly spectacular.” What exactly this will be, is to be revealed in January 2022.

As always, the end of one auction marks the run-up to another: as of now, the team at Leica Camera Classics accept cameras for the upcoming Leitz Photographica Auction 40, scheduled for June 2022.

For further details visit www.leicashop.com and www.leitz-auction.com

About Leica Camera Classics:

The tradition-steeped German company Leica Camera AG has two subsidiaries in Vienna: Leica Camera Austria GmbH, and Leica Camera Classics GmbH. The latter specialises in vintage cameras, and displays around 1,500 items in its shop at No. 40 Westbahn Street. The premises also contain the world’s largest spare parts warehouse for historic Leica cameras. Due to these unique holdings, on-site technicians are able to inspect and, if necessary, restore historic Leica cameras to the most exacting collectors’ standards prior to the auction.

Twice a year (in mid-June and late November) Leica Camera Classics organises the Leitz Photographica Auction – the most important auction for vintage cameras worldwide, which frequently attracts bidders from over 100 countries. In addition, the LCC online store permanently offers a selection of around 5,000 products.

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