



## PRESS RELEASE

### From Famalicão to the World: 50 Years of Leica in Portugal

**Wetzlar, 1<sup>st</sup> September 2023.** Leica stands for “Made in Germany” – German craftsmanship and tradition. Even so, for the past fifty years, a part of the Leica family has been located at a factory in Portugal. This is reason enough to celebrate the success, diversity and community that has bound Wetzlar and Famalicão together for half a century.

As a second production site, Vila Nova de Famalicão has been part of the Leica company history for a long time. More than 800 employees now produce essential components for the Leica product range at this location in northern Portugal. The site, which went into operation in 2013, has a surface area of 52,400 m<sup>2</sup>, with 12,677 m<sup>2</sup> for production space, 3,047 m<sup>2</sup> for assembly, 3,244 m<sup>2</sup> for optics, and 4,827 m<sup>2</sup> for mechanics. The turnover in the last year reached 82 million euros. More importantly, however, it is people who stand behind all these figures – people who have worked steadily on the success of the company over the past decades and have turned the traditional Wetzlar company into a European venture, which passionately conveys the values and precision of Leica to the world. The community includes not only the employees working directly at the factory, but also the photographers who use Leica cameras as their tool for capturing the world. This year, the success is being celebrated, on the one hand, with the exhibition *From Famalicão to the World: 50 years of Leica in Portugal*, and, on the other hand, with an additional exhibition presented at the Leica Gallery Porto: Alfredo Cunha. Portugal from 1973 to 2023 – the renowned photojournalist and Leica enthusiast's moving tribute to his homeland.

1973, looking back: it was the already rising costs of production in Germany in the mid-sixties that moved the Ernst Leitz Wetzlar optics factory to look for supplementary locations within Europe. The choice was made for northern Portugal and the town of Vila Nova de Famalicão, where a tradition of precision mechanics already existed. The initial phase, which was launched in June 1973, saw the manufacturing of components for microscopes and cameras. This was followed by the production of Trinovid binoculars, and, as of 1976, the assembly of the Leica

R3. The range of products grew consistently over subsequent years, including the pre-assembly of the legendary Leica M6 and with the Leica R8. In 2004, the Portuguese facility already occupied an area of 21,000 m<sup>2</sup>; and in 2008 the founding stone was laid down for the construction of the current complex, which, after an investment of 23 million euros, was inaugurated on March 21, 2013. Further extensions, such as an Engineering department, were to follow, and the Leica family continued to grow. Today, Leica in Portugal also produces cutting edge optical products, which serve for wildlife observation and hunting. The intricate, handcrafted manufacture of Leica binoculars, spotting scopes, laser rangefinders and rifle scopes, is part of the fixed production programme in the modern factory. Last but not least, 1<sup>st</sup> December 2016 saw the opening of a Leica Store – with an additional gallery and academy – in one of Porto's historic buildings in the heart of the city: the location of the former Excelsior Café. In 2017, the Leica Customer Care Sport Optics expertise and Engineering competences were established at the Vila Nova de Famalicão factory, increasing the added value and level of innovation.

Now is the time to celebrate half a century of successful collaboration. The exhibition From Famalicão to the World: 50 Years of Leica in Portugal, currently on display at Casa das Artes, and accompanied by a special edition magazine, reveals all the facets of five decades of joint effort. Though, eyes are not exclusively turned back over the years of Portuguese-German company history and friendship, but look equally towards the future; after all, innovation continues to stand at the centre of activities, both in Famalicão and in Wetzlar.

**Quotes:**

Dr. Andreas Kaufmann, Chairman Supervisory Board of Leica Camera AG: “It is an open secret that Leica's success is also deeply rooted in Famalicão and this factory. The results speak for themselves: this is one of the most advanced facilities in the optics industry.”

Vitor Freitas, Managing Director and Executive Board member: “What is found here is passion and perfection. The people here are so committed, and that, I believe, is the reason for our success. Let's just call it what it is: the way we work here is how the brand is perceived on a global scale.”

Pedro Oliveira, Managing Director and Executive Board member: “Leica stands for a certain set of values. Today we have a factory that represents an optics industry benchmark. It's important for us to grow with the people, and to develop them. Our very long-term employees are

important to us because they are the ones with the experience and knowledge about our products – knowledge that can't be found in manuals. We aim for a perfect balance of experience and innovation.”

### **Leica Camera – A Partner for Photography**

Leica Camera AG is an international, premium manufacturer of cameras and sports optics. The legendary reputation of the Leica brand is based on a long tradition of excellent quality, German craftsmanship and German industrial design, combined with innovative technologies. An integral part of the brand's culture is the diversity of activities the company undertakes for the advancement of photography. In addition to the Leica Galleries and Leica Akademies spread around the world, there are the Leica Hall of Fame Award and, in particular, the Leica Oskar Barnack Award (LOBA), which is considered one of the most innovative sponsorship awards existing today. Furthermore, Leica Camera AG, with its headquarters in Wetzlar, Hesse, and a second production site in Vila Nova de Famalicão, Portugal, has a worldwide network of its own national organisations and Leica Retail Stores.

#### **Please find further information at:**

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