



PHOTOGRAPHICA
AUCTION

PRESS RELEASE

45. LEITZ PHOTOGRAPHICA AUCTION:

From Concept to Prototype: Rare Leica M Models at the 45th Leitz Photographica Auction

Vienna, 31 October 2024. 2024 marks a landmark year for Leica Camera AG: 70 years ago, the company introduced the first Leica M camera, which has profoundly influenced photographic history. In celebration of this anniversary, the auction house Leitz Photographica Auction presents an exceptional selection of historical Leica M models at its upcoming Vienna auction: among them is a fully functional M prototype and several early prototype chassis, along with other rare Leica M models – including an exceptionally rare Leica M2 gray paint from 1958 and a very early Leica M3 camera, produced in black paint specifically for the Leitz’s marketing department. The 45th Leitz Photographica Auction will take place on November 23, 2024, at the Hotel Bristol in Vienna.

The catalog for the 45th edition of the Leitz Photographica Auction includes 423 lots, capturing the rich, diverse history of photography embraced by a growing global community. Leica M (“Messsucher”) models have been an integral part of this legacy since their launch in 1954, known for their technological advancements and widespread adoption by influential press photographers.

The Journey of the M Began with the First Prototypes

The market introduction followed several years of development for the Leica M, during which several non-saleable prototypes were crafted. This includes an example produced from 1948 to 1949, which will now be auctioned in fully functional condition under lot number 76. “The camera is one of the earliest known prototypes from the development of the M, without a serial number and composed entirely of unique machined and handcrafted parts. This unique M3 prototype is one of the most remarkable items we have ever offered at our auctions,” explains

Alexander Sedlak, managing director of the Leitz Photographica Auction. Estimated at between €600,000 and €700,000, this lot includes an extremely rare M-Mount Elmar 3.5/3.5cm lens. The history of the 'M' reaches back even further, as evidenced by the prototype chassis coming up for auction under lot number 79: ten prototype chassis developed by Leica engineers over 17 years, tracing the evolution of the Leica M from a modified Leica III chassis in 1936 to an aluminum Leica M body from 1953. For this lot of historical artifacts, showing significant development steps of the Leica M, a starting price of €150,000 is set, with an estimated price between €300,000 and €340,000.

Gray Paint-Leica and Custom Models in the Auction

The Leica M's adaptability made it a highly valuable tool for military and governmental use, exemplified by the Leica M2 in gray paint, serial number 1005769 – one of only 20 cameras delivered to the U.S. Air Force in Europe (Wiesbaden) in 1960. “With its rarity and exceptional condition, this camera is among the rarest Leicas ever,” says Alexander Sedlak about the M2 gray paint, which has an estimated price of €500,000 to €600,000.

Completing the list of top-valued auction lots is lot 83: a 1958 Leica M3 black paint 'Black Dial' model, originally made as a demonstration camera for Leitz's marketing department. Paired with a matching Summicron 2/5cm lens, which was also delivered to the advertising department on the same day as the camera – December 12, 1958, estimated at €280,000 to €320,000, this camera holds added historical value.

40-Year Leica M for a Good Cause

As is tradition at Leitz Photographica Auction, a selected lot will once again be donated for a good cause. In line with the anniversary year 2024, this time it is a Leica M6J with serial number 1994-10. This is part of a special edition that Leica released in 1994 for the 40th anniversary of the 'M'. The camera, in mint condition, will be auctioned with a collapsible Elmar 2.8/50mm lens; the estimated price is between €6,000 and €7,000. All proceeds from this lot will benefit the charity “Licht ins Dunkel”.

Live on site, in writing, online or by phone

Leitz Photographica Auction 45 will take place on 23 November at 11 a.m. (CET) at the Hotel Bristol, Vienna, Austria. Bids can be submitted in advance – online (www.leitz-auction.com) or in written form. Live bidding during the auction is possible on site, by telephone or at www.leitz-auction.com and www.liveauctioneers.com.

More information at: www.leitz-auction.com

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