



PHOTOGRAPHICA
AUCTION

PRESS RELEASE

Rare M prototype sells for 2.04 million euros at Leitz Photographica Auction 45

Wetzlar, 25 November 2024. Since its inception, the events organized by Leitz Photographica Auction have been considered as a significant gathering point for the international community around coveted collectibles from the world of photography. Among these, valuable objects from the 70-year history of the Leica M have always played an important part. First introduced in 1954, this groundbreaking system camera became the preferred choice for many of the world's most renowned photojournalists and exceptional photographers during the latter half of the 20th century. To commemorate the M series' anniversary, the auction team curated a collection of exclusive items that illuminate the history of this iconic model in all its facets – including some of the earliest development prototypes, which attracted considerable interest from a multitude of bidders.

Unnumbered M prototype and chassis collection with surging interest

Among the standout items was an early 'M' prototype (lot number 76) that proved to be the most sought-after lot of the auction, thanks to its exceptional historical significance. "Produced between 1948 and 1949, this camera is one of the earliest known prototypes from the development of the M series. It bears no serial number and is constructed entirely from a combination of unique machine-made and hand-crafted parts—undoubtedly one of the most extraordinary lots we have ever had the privilege to offer," remarks Alexander Sedlak, Managing Director of Leitz Photographica Auction. The 'M' changed hands for an impressive 2,040,000 euros including premium. This camera, auctioned with a unique M-Mount Elmar 3.5/3.5cm lens, had originally been estimated at 600,000 to 700,000 euros.

An even deeper glimpse into the history of the Leica M was provided by lot 79, comprising ten different prototype objects. These camera bodies ("chassis") were constructed by Leica engineers during the development of the later production version of the 'M', spanning an

impressive 17-year timeline—from a modified 'Leica III' chassis dating back to 1936 to an aluminum Leica M body produced in 1953. This lot was sold for 432,000 euros including premium, surpassing its estimate of 300,000 to 340,000 euros.

Air Force M and charity lot

“It is not only M prototypes which hold exceptional rarity and thus immense collector value. Many cameras from the 'M' series, along with their accessories, are particularly remarkable for a variety of other reasons—for instance, those produced in limited quantities for niche audiences,” explains Alexander Sedlak. Falling into this category is a Leica M2 grey paint, serial number 1005769, one of only 20 units delivered in 1960 to the "U.S. Air Forces in Europe" in Wiesbaden. Manufactured in 1960, the camera entered the auction with an estimated value of 500,000 to 600,000 euros and ultimately fetched 900,000 euros, including premium.

As is tradition with Leitz Photographica Auction, the auction house dedicated one lot to a charitable cause. This year, the experts selected a Leica M6J, produced in 1994 to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the M series. This special edition camera, sold with a collapsible Elmar 2.8/50mm lens, achieved a final price of 9,000 euros, including premium.

Next auction in Wetzlar.

As always, the motto holds true: after the auction is before the auction! The next event organized by Leitz Photographica Auction will take place at Leitz Park in Wetzlar, the home of Leica Camera AG. The 46th edition of Leitz Photographica Auction is scheduled for June 26, 2025, coinciding with the celebrations of the 100th anniversary of the Leica I, first introduced in 1925.

For questions regarding registration and bids, please contact:

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