



Press Release

100 Years of Leica I

For 100 years, the Leica brand has been profoundly influencing the technological and cultural development of photography and crafting an enduring entrepreneurial legacy

Wetzlar, 1 March 2025 – The first mass-produced Leica camera is celebrating a big anniversary today. Exactly 100 years ago, on 1 March 1925, the Leica I was presented to the public for the first time at the Leipzig Spring Fair. Its compact and nimble design changed the world of photography forever. In celebrating this epochal anniversary of an iconic camera, Leica Camera AG is also commemorating the visionary entrepreneur Ernst Leitz II, who established 35 mm photography through his brave decision to mass-produce the Leica camera. The centenary anniversary is not only a retrospective of fascinating company history but also a glimpse into the future of photography.

“I hereby decide: we will take the risk.” With these fateful words, Ernst Leitz II decided to mass-produce Oskar Barnack’s ingenious invention, the Ur-Leica. Despite technical challenges in difficult economic times, a completely new camera system was added to the Leitz factory’s production range. The launch of the Leica I at the Leipzig Fair (1 to 11 March) also proved to be a visionary and decisive business move. The fair had already developed into a very popular international platform for technical innovations. The Leitz booth, number 194/195 on the upper level of the fair hall, acted as a springboard for a revolution in photography in 1925. Paired with the Anastigmat 50 f/3.5 lens, the Leica I was a runaway success, establishing the 24×36mm compact camera format as the global standard.

Renowned photographers like Alexander Rodchenko, Gisèle Freund and André Kertész quickly recognised the possibilities opened up by the compact, inconspicuous and efficient Leica camera. For the first time, a camera made it possible to capture real life – immortalising the decisive moment. This sparked a paradigm shift in photography: the birth of modern photojournalism and fine-art photography. In the first year alone, the Leitz factory sold around 1,000 cameras, laying the foundation for the Leica brand’s iconic status in the world of photography.

By continuing to develop the Leica I and adding innovative interchangeable lenses in the years that followed, Leica consolidated the success of its camera system. The first Leica camera with a bayonet mount and three interchangeable lenses was launched in 1930. The Leica II, introduced in 1932, featured



the first rangefinder, enabling fast, precise focussing. Seven interchangeable lenses with standardised bayonet mounts were available at that time. The network of avid Leica photographers also grew steadily. Today, they remain a cornerstone of Leica's company culture, thanks to their unwavering commitment to promoting culture.

Dr Andreas Kaufmann, Chairman of the Supervisory Board of Leica Camera AG: "Over the last 100 years, Leica has been profoundly influencing the technological and cultural development of photography through its innovative strength, craftsmanship and engineering. Our focus remains on *Das Wesentliche* (the essentials): a passion for taking unique, authentic pictures, documenting and preserving world events. For this reason, it only makes sense to celebrate this company anniversary, namely 100 years of camera production, together with many renowned photographers worldwide and to put the spotlight on their work."

With innovative products and investments in forward-looking technologies, Leica Camera AG keeps on writing the entrepreneurial success story that began with the Leica I. The company continues to forge innovative paths today to strengthen the brand and reach new target groups by expanding its business horizons. A particular area for development is the mobile segment, which opens the door to the "World of Leica" experience. Most recently, February saw the launch of the Leica LUX grip, an innovative camera grip that, together with the Leica LUX app, enables a unique photography experience when using an iPhone.

About Leica Camera

Leica Camera AG is an international premium manufacturer of cameras, lenses and sports optics products with over 150 years of company history. As part of its growth strategy, the company has expanded its business to include mobile imaging (smartphones) and the manufacture of high-quality eyeglass lenses and watches and is represented in the home cinema segment with its own projectors. Headquartered in Wetzlar (Germany) and with a second production site in Vila Nova de Famalicão (Portugal), Leica Camera AG has a global network of its own sales companies with over 120 Leica Stores. The company employs 2,400 people and achieved a turnover of 554 million euros in the 2023/24 financial year.

The Leica brand stands for excellent quality, German craftsmanship and industrial design combined with innovative technologies. An integral part of the brand culture is the promotion of the culture of photography with around 30 Leica Galleries worldwide, Leica Academies and international awards such as the Leica Hall of Fame Award and the Leica Oskar Barnack Award (LOBA).

Please find further information at:

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