



Press Release

Four Generations Leitz in Company Management 1869–1986

This impressive book tells the story of the Leitz family – the entrepreneurs who founded Leica Camera AG and strived to build the Leica brand's success

Wetzlar, 12 March 2025. The book “Four Generations Leitz in Company Management 1869–1986” by Dr Knut Kühn-Leitz tells the fascinating story of the Leitz family's four generations who paved the way for the company's success and secured the Leica brand's iconic status in the world of photography. First published in German in 2020, this impressive book is now also available in English to mark the 100th anniversary of the first mass-produced Leica 35 mm still camera (Leica I).

In his book, Dr Knut Kühn-Leitz provides personal insights into the history of the Leitz family of entrepreneurs, whose visionary decisions and wide-ranging commitment shaped the field of photography and had a decisive influence on how the technology has developed. The company's history began in 1869 with Ernst Leitz I (1843–1920), who took over the Optical Institute in Wetzlar from Carl Kellner, continued running it under his own name and, by the turn of the century, had developed it into a global company. He was succeeded by Ernst Leitz II (1871–1956), who, with his decision to mass-produce the Leica camera, added a completely new camera system to the company's production portfolio, thus bringing about the birth of 35 mm photography. The third Managing Director, Ernst Leitz III (1906–1979), together with his brothers Ludwig and Günther Leitz, secured the company's economic success during the post-war period, in particular by further developing research into glass, opening the second Leica production site in Vila Nova de Famalicão in Portugal, and introducing new measuring instruments based on precision optics. Dr Knut Kühn-Leitz (1936–2020) became the last member of the Leitz family to join the company management in 1971 and set about successfully restructuring the company. At the same time, he forged several international collaborations, including with Wild Heerbrugg AG, which acquired the family's company shares in 1985.

The publication “Four Generations Leitz in Company Management 1869–1986” brings to life the Leitz family's entrepreneurial success story, which Leica Camera AG is still writing to this day. The book captivates with its exceptional print quality, lively narrative style and numerous fascinating images, which include many rare photos from the company and family archive.



The book "Four Generations Leitz in Company Management 1869–1986" can be purchased from Leica Stores worldwide.

100 years of Leica: Witness to a century

In 2025, Leica Camera AG is celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Leica I. First presented to the public at the Leipzig Spring Fair in 1925, it was the first 35mm camera to be mass-produced and exceeded all expectations. Thanks to its compact and handy format, it opened up completely new photographic applications. Under the motto '100 Years of Leica: Witness to a Century', Leica Camera AG is celebrating this camera that revolutionised the world of photography around the globe. At international events organised by the Leica country organisations in the major cities of Dubai, Milan, New York, Shanghai and Tokyo, cultural projects and extraordinary special product editions will be presented throughout the year. The highlight of the celebrations is the anniversary week at the company's headquarters in Wetzlar in June. In addition, there will be high-calibre exhibitions in the worldwide network of Leica Galleries with works by outstanding photographers.

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:

Leica Camera AG

Ann-Kristin Löhr

Global PR Coordination

E-Mail: Ann-Kristin.Loehr@leica-camera.com

Internet: www.leica-camera.com