



Press Release

Two new entries in the top 5 most expensive cameras: Historic milestones of photography auctioned to celebrate 100 years of Leica I

Wetzlar, 30 June 2025. Never before has photography developed as rapidly as in the past 100 years, both in terms of its technical innovations and its cultural significance. The Leica I, the world's first serially produced 35mm camera, which was presented to the public in 1925, marked the beginning of this immensely prolific period. To celebrate its 100th anniversary, Leica Camera AG is dedicating numerous festivities around the globe to the Leica I. Hosted by the Leica Century Event in Wetzlar, Leitz Photographica Auction 46 was held on 27 June. Among the historic rarities auctioned were the hundredth Leica series camera ever produced, the Leica M3 No. 700000, a Leica MP engraved by King Nerd, a rare M prototype and two Leica military cameras. The O-Series No. 112 (a prototype of the Leica I) claimed the highest price, fetching 7,200,000 euros including premium¹.

The Leica I revolutionised the world of photography 100 years ago with its compact and handy format. Before production commenced in 1925, Leica Camera AG (in its previous iteration Ernst Leitz Werke) had built a few prototypes – the so-called O-Series with the serial numbers 101-125. The existence of almost a dozen of these Leica O-Series cameras is still known today. As milestones in the history of photography and trailblazers of photojournalism, they are now coveted collector's items. This also includes the Leica O-Series No. 112, auctioned on June 27 at Leica World in Wetzlar.

“It is a truly special occasion for our auction house, to offer a O-Series in the midst of the 100th anniversary of the Leica I. Even more so, since this particular O-Series was received by Oskar Barnack² after production”, says Alexander Sedlak, Managing Director of Leitz Photographica Auction. According to him, the impact of the O-Series on modern photography cannot be emphasised enough. “These prototypes were used to develop the trailblazing Leica I, which took photojournalism into new spheres and transformed photography from an extravagant hobby into an ubiquitous phenomenon. The fact that the O-Series No. 112 fetched 7,200,000 euros is absolutely appropriate for this extraordinary piece of history.”

¹ Buyers pay a fee of 20 percent of the hammer price to the auction house.

² The inventor of the 35mm camera.



Charity lot, engraved by King Nerd

The charity lot is regarded as a cherished tradition at Leitz Photographica Auction. This time, the auction house provided a work of art for the good cause – a Leica MP on which British designer John Dowell (famous for engraving luxury items under his alias King Nerd) captured the Leitz-Park in Wetzlar. Estimated at 14,000 to 15,000 euros, the MP fetched 18,000 euros for Austrian charity organisation “Licht ins Dunkel”. Leitz Photographica Auction does not charge a premium for the charity lot.

Leica I Mod. A Anastigmat

The highlights of Leitz Photographica Auction 46 also included the hundredth Leica series camera ever produced. Fittingly for the Leica Century Event, the Leica I Mod. A Anastigmat with the serial number 225 is exactly one hundred years old. Delivered to the British advertising and marketing agency Ogilvy on 29 January 1925, the camera was probably the first Leica to arrive in the United Kingdom. An extremely rare and historically significant Leica, which sold for 132,000 euros including premium.

Leica M3 Nr. 700000

In 1955, Leica gifted Professor Stefan Kruckenhauser, a renowned Austrian ski and mountain photographer, a camera – the Leica M3 no. 700000. As the first serial-numbered unit of the iconic M-series, the camera holds significant historical value. The camera is documented in numerous publications, and its presentation to Professor Kruckenhauser serves as an example of Leica’s long-standing tradition of honoring influential figures. Leica M3 No. 700000 was auctioned for 3,360,000 euros, including premium.

Leica M prototype

Prototypes of iconic cameras have drawn the attention of collectors for decades. Leitz Photographica Auction 46 offered several of these fascinating lots, for instance a unique prototype M camera, which combines features of the M2 and M4 and may be an early experimental model designed to test the angled rewind knob. The top plate is highly customised and unlike that of any other production Leica. The prototype dates back to 1966 and fetched 432,000 Euros including premium. The estimate of 200,000 to 240,000 euros was thus clearly exceeded.

Leica cameras for the Bundeswehr

In recent years, Leitz Photographica Auction has seen a high level of interest in cameras from former army stocks. In particular, olive Leica cameras produced for the Bundeswehr (i.e. the West German Army) prove immensely popular today. In this respect, Leitz Photographica Auction 46 offered an exceptional lot. The Leica M4 olive Bundeswehr is one of only 31 olive M4 cameras ever made. In contrast to the example on offer, not all of these cameras bear the engraving ‘Bundeseigentum’ on the back of



the top plate. Estimated at 240,000 to 280,000 euros, this rare M4 eventually found a new owner for 456,000 euros including premium.

Noctilux 0.95/50mm ASPH. 11612 Edition 'Titan'

A Noctilux lens provided a surprise at Leitz Photographica Auction 46. The Noctilux 0.95/50mm ASPH. 11612 Edition "Titan", which was introduced two years ago and limited to 100 pieces, was estimated at 50,000 to 60,000 euros, yet ended up fetching almost eight times that amount. A bidder bought the lens for 240,000 euros including premium.

Leica ZM 1 Gold Edition

For the first time, Leitz Photographica Auction offered a Leitz Watch ZM1 Gold Limited Edition. The watch is No. 21 of only 50 pieces worldwide. Featuring a dual-metal case of 18k gold and Grade 5 titanium, it pays homage to Leica's craftsmanship, inspired by the 1929 Leica I Model A Luxus. Quite a few camera collectors were instantly taken with the rare masterpiece which sold for 26,400 Euros including premium.

See you again in Vienna

As usual, the preparations for the next auction start right away. Leitz Photographica Auction hosts two more auctions in autumn, both of them in Vienna. On 30 October, the photography auction "Gestures" will take place at the Leica Gallery Vienna. Shortly after, on 22 November, Leitz Photographica Auction 47 will be held at Hotel Imperial in Vienna. The team of Leica Camera Classics is already accepting cameras and photographs for these auctions.

Please visit www.leitz-auction.com/auction for more detailed information.

About Leica Camera Classics:

The German Leica Camera AG has two branches in Vienna: Leica Camera Austria and Leica Camera Classics. The latter specializes in vintage cameras and has approximately 1,500 devices on display in its store at Westbahnstraße 40. The location also houses the largest spare parts warehouse for historic Leica cameras in the world. Because of this unique inventory, on-site technicians can inspect historic Leica cameras to the highest collector standards and restore them as needed before they are auctioned.

Twice a year – in mid-June and late November – Leica Camera Classics organizes the Leitz Photographica Auction, the world's most important auction of vintage cameras, attracting bidders from over 100 countries. In addition, around 5,000 products are permanently offered in the LCC online store.



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 a global premium manufacturer of cameras, lenses, and sports optics products, with a company history spanning over 150 years. As part of its growth strategy, Leica has expanded into mobile imaging (smartphones), high-quality eyeglass lenses and watch manufacturing, and is also present in the home cinema segment with its own projectors.

Headquartered in Wetzlar, Germany, with a second production facility in Vila Nova de Famalicão, Portugal, Leica Camera AG operates a global network of sales subsidiaries and more than 120 Leica Stores.

The Leica brand represents excellent quality, German craftsmanship, and industrial design, seamlessly combined with innovative technology. An integral part of the brand's culture is its commitment to fostering photographic culture, exemplified by approximately 30 Leica Galleries worldwide, Leica Academies, and prestigious 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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