



Press Release

100 years of Leica: Witness to a century (1925-2025)

Exhibition to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Leica I at Spiral Garden in Aoyama, Tokyo

Tokyo, 23 October 2025. Leica Camera Japan is pleased to announce the opening of the exhibition “100 Years of Leica: Witness to a Century” at Spiral Garden in Aoyama, Tokyo, from October 18 (Sat.) to October 26 (Sun.), 2025, in celebration of the 100th anniversary of the Leica I.

The exhibition offers visitors a unique opportunity to explore the world of Leica and the culture of photography. It looks back on Leica's history spanning a century up to the present day and includes a special section showcasing photographs by two figures deeply connected through the art of photography: Shoji Ueda and Masaharu Fukuyama. In addition, works by internationally acclaimed photographers who have received the “Leica Hall of Fame Award” will be on display, offering a multifaceted introduction to Leica’s rich legacy and cultural significance.

Tokyo Opens the Final Chapter of Leica’s Centennial Tour on a Delightful Autumn Evening

The global celebration titled “*100 Years of Leica: Witness to a Century (1925-2025)*” has traveled through major cities around the world including Dubai, Milan, New York, Wetzlar, and Shanghai, with Tokyo marking its final destination. Tokyo holds special significance as the city where Leica opened its first directly operated store in 2006.

On Friday, October 17, the opening ceremony was held at Spiral Garden in Aoyama, central Tokyo. Leica family members, photographers, and Leica enthusiasts from Japan and around the world gathered for a convivial evening celebrating photography.

Dr. Andreas Kaufmann, Chairman of the Supervisory Board of Leica Camera AG, reflected on the deep and longstanding relationship between Leica and Japan, highlighting the historical ties and shared journey. Karin Rehn-Kaufmann, Art Director & Chief Representative Leica Galleries International, illustrated the unique appeal of Leica through Japan-inspired keywords, and noted Leica’s continued contribution to the development of photographic culture. Additionally, Matthias Harsch, CEO of Leica Camera AG, spoke about the common values shared by the Leica brand and Japanese culture, and offered insights into the key factors behind Leica’s success in the Japanese market.



The event concluded with a violin performance by Wilfried Kazuki Hedenborg, a musician based in Vienna, Austria, and a permanent member of the Vienna Philharmonic Orchestra. His graceful melodies added a refined note to a lively event on a fine autumn evening.

The History of the Leica

"I hereby decide to take the risk." With these ambitious words, the entrepreneur Ernst Leitz II (1871–1956) decided to embark on the first-ever mass production of a 35mm camera. The unveiling of the "Leica I" at the Spring Fair in Leipzig, in 1925, sparked a major revolution in the world of photography. The commercial debut of the first Leica (Leitz camera), a compact, lightweight 35mm camera, led to photography becoming a natural part of everyday life. For the first time, it became possible to capture life as it happened and seize "the decisive moment".

In the section chronicling the history of Leica cameras, the "Ur-Leica" and the "Leica O series", the two prototypes that laid the foundation for the production of the Leica I—a milestone in Leica's history—are exhibited alongside other rare historical documents and materials.

Exhibition of rare, archival items

Another highlight of the exhibition is the display of rare cameras from the Archive of Leica Camera AG: the prototype Leica M6 made for Queen Elizabeth II; the one-of-a-kind 'LEICA M for (RED)' designed by Jonathan Ive and Marc Newson (noted for their collaboration at Apple); the Leica IIIa recovered from the site of the Hindenburg disaster in May 1937; the Leica M2 once used by Pulitzer-Prize winning photojournalist Kyoichi Sawada; the camera that saved a war photographer's life on the battlefield; a number of rare anniversary editions; and other legendary masterpieces from Leica's past.

From the Leica I to the Latest Models: A Centennial Journey in Spiral Garden

Spiral Garden's light-filled atrium is the stage for Leica's centennial. Visitors to the exhibition encounter a vibrant, immersive setting that traces Leica's century of innovation in a single 'vortex-like' spiral. Embodying Leica's timeless values and continual evolution, this soaring space transforms with the passing of the day—bathed in gentle natural light by day, and taking on a new atmosphere at night. In the evening, 100 photographic works curated by Karin Rehn-Kaufmann, Art Director and Chief Representative of Leica Galleries International, are projected across the venue, taking visitors on a photographic journey through the decades. Award-winning sound designer Shinya Kiyokawa has created a sound installation that captures the rhythm of the iconic Leica shutter, bringing a century of history to life through sound.



The atrium also includes a display of special-edition Leica cameras created in collaboration with world-renowned artists and designers, alongside the current product lineup—offering visitors the opportunity to experience Leica’s past and present side by side. A key highlight is the Leica M11 100 YEARS OF LEICA “TOKYO, JAPAN”, a special anniversary edition limited to 100 units to mark the 100th anniversary of the Leica I.

Leica Hall of Fame Award: Timeless Masterpieces

Since 2011, Leica Camera has been honouring outstanding Leica photographers with the “Leica Hall of Fame Award”. The award celebrates photographers who have captured unforgettable moments that have touched the hearts of people around the world. Photographers who have created masterpieces that define their era and that by portraying the essence of humanity in vivid and timeless ways have etched themselves into our collective memory. This exhibition showcases prize-winning works from 2011 to 2024.

Shoji UEDA x Masaharu FUKUYAMA: Visual Conversation

Shoji Ueda, the master who was known for capturing landscapes and people with a still, artful gaze. Masaharu Fukuyama, the mentee who, inspired and guided by Ueda’s singular vision, has pursued his own path in photography.

“Visual Conversation” marks the first joint exhibition of photographs by Fukuyama and the mentor he reveres. Now, transcending time, the perspectives of these two men meet here, in a photographic “dialogue”. Images captured by Ueda and Fukuyama in different time periods are brought together in quiet harmony.

Although Shoji Ueda frequently worked with larger, medium-format cameras, in this exhibition we showcase a selection of photographs he made with his precious, “palm-sized” Leica.

Following his personal conviction that “with this beautiful camera, one can achieve truly excellent photographs,” Ueda enjoyed the Leica’s lightness, using it to create a body of spontaneous snapshots.

Hiroshi Masutani, Shoji Ueda Office

Something stationary appears to be moving.

Something moving appears to be stationary.

Then and now, I have always been “lead to shoot” by Leica.

But it is precisely this compelling force that guides me beyond my limits into new photographic experiences.



As Shoji Ueda used to say:

"Photograph what you love, the way you love it. I want to remain an amateur at heart."

I remain an amateur to this day -both to Shoji Ueda and Leica.

Masaharu Fukuyama

Related Events at Leica Store Omotesando & Leica Gallery Omotesando

From Wednesday, October 1 to Sunday November 30, Leica Gallery Omotesando hosts "In Conversation: A Photographic Dialogue Between Elliott Erwitt and John Sypal", a special exhibition exploring connections between past and present photography. The exhibition brings together the work of the late master photographer Elliott Erwitt and Tokyo-based American photographer John Sypal in a cross-generational photographic "dialogue". The exhibition is the tenth of 12 exhibitions taking place at Leica Galleries worldwide to mark the 100th anniversary of the Leica I.

On Saturday October 18, John Sypal joined Junko Ogawa (former Director of Magnum Photos Tokyo) for a talk on the exhibition. On the same day, another talk show featured Herbie Yamaguchi and Anju, who shared their insights on photography and Leica.

The Leica Store Omotesando hosts a special preview of a number of collectibles that will be auctioned at the 47th "Leitz Photographica Auction" in Vienna. The items are on display from Friday, October 24 to Saturday, October 25. The auction team visiting from Austria also give presentations on the items scheduled for auction in November.

100 years of Leica: Witness to a century

In 2025, Leica Camera AG is celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Leica I, which was first presented to the public at the Leipzig Spring Fair in 1925. As the first 35 mm still camera to be mass-produced, it exceeded all expectations. With its compact and handy format, it opened up a whole range of new photographic applications. All around the globe, Leica Camera AG is celebrating 100 years of continuous camera production and the camera that revolutionised the world of photography, under the motto "100 Years of Leica: Witness to a Century". Cultural projects and extraordinary special-edition products will be launched throughout the year at international events organised by the Leica national subsidiaries in the major cities of Dubai, Milan, New York, Shanghai and Tokyo. The anniversary week, which took place at the company's headquarters in Wetzlar in June, marked the high point of the celebrations. On top of that, visitors can look forward to top-class 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. As part of its growth strategy, the company has expanded its portfolio to include mobile imaging (smartphones) and the manufacture of high-quality spectacle lenses and watches, and is also represented in the home cinema segment with its own projectors.

Leica Camera AG, having its headquarters in Wetzlar, Germany, and a second production site in Vila Nova de Famalicão, Portugal, operates a global network of its own distribution companies with around 120 Leica Stores worldwide.

The Leica brand stands for excellence in quality, German craftsmanship and industrial design, combined with innovative technologies. An integral aspect of the brand culture is the promotion of the culture of photography, with around 30 Leica Galleries worldwide, the Leica Akademie 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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