



Press Release

Leica Oskar Barnack Award 2026

With the appointment of the new jury members, the selection process for the 46th edition of the prestigious photography award is entering its decisive preparation phase

Wetzlar, 9th April 2026 – Once again, the internationally renowned photography award will be making an exciting and important statement concerning the role and significance of contemporary photography. Current photo series by international photographers will be presented, and the chosen ones will be honoured. With the appointment of the jury, which is newly constituted each year, the selection process for the latest edition of the Leica Oskar Barnack Award (LOBA), established in 1980, has now begun. This year, the winners will again be selected from among proposals submitted by a body of nominators. The final decision regarding the shortlist and the winners in the Main and Newcomer categories will be made by a five-member jury, consisting of the following professionals:

Gu Zheng, Professor at Fudan University School of Journalism, Shanghai (China)

Jane'a Johnson, Scholar and Curator, Curatorial Assistant, The Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), New York (USA)

Celina Lunsford, Artistic Director and Curator of the FFF, Fotografie Forum Frankfurt (Germany)

Paolo Pellegrin, Photographer (Italy)

Karin Rehn-Kaufmann, Art Director and Chief Representative of Leica Galleries International (Austria)

For comprehensive biographies, please go to: www.leica-oskar-barnack-award.com/loba-2026/die-jury.html

The jury will come together in May, at Leica Camera AG's headquarters in Wetzlar, to debate and produce a shortlist with a maximum of 12 series. The winners of the LOBA Main and Newcomer categories will be chosen from among these series. In addition, the winner of the first LOBA Women Grant will be announced at the same time as the LOBA winners, although the work resulting from the grant will only be presented the following year.

Over 130 photography experts from 48 countries have submitted their proposals. Based upon



personal expertise and experience, each nominator has chosen up to three photo series, with between 15 and 20 images in each series. The prerequisite for receiving a nomination for the Leica Oskar Barnack Award is that the photo series must include works of documentary or conceptual photography that explore the relationship between humanity and the environment. The LOBA Award has remained true to this humanistic endeavour since it first came into being in 1979. That year, Oskar Barnack, the inventor of the Ur-Leica after whom the award is named, would have turned 100.

The Leica Oskar Barnack Award Newcomer has complemented the Main category since 2009. It is granted to photographers under 30 years of age. The honoured series in this category will be chosen in collaboration with, and from proposals submitted by, around 28 international institutions and universities in 18 countries.

In addition to information about the LOBA, and interviews with past jury members and nominators, the LOBA website is already hosting the current LOBA 2026 list of nominators: www.leica-oskar-barnack-award.com/loba-2026/die-nominatoren.html

This year, the LOBA process is introducing a special innovation with a new category: the LOBA Women Grant. The competition is open to professional female photographers, aged 21 and over. In contrast to the two existing LOBA awards, there is no selection of nominated proposals. Instead, the competition is to be determined by free submissions from applicants with a meaningful project outline. During the now-completed application phase, numerous new projects and one ongoing project were submitted for the LOBA Women Grant. The current LOBA jury will select the grantee – with the announcement being made at the 2026 LOBA award ceremony – and enable the project to be completed by the next LOBA edition in the following year. The LOBA Women Grant series will then be part of the LOBA shortlist for 2027. The LOBA Women Grant is endowed with €10,000, and the selected applicant will also receive a Leica Q3 camera and professional support during the implementation and production period. <https://www.leica-oskar-barnack-award.com/en/loba-women-grant/information.html>

The reputation of the LOBA has been growing steadily. It is among the most important international photography awards, not least because of the financial support it provides. The Main award winner receives €40,000 and Leica camera equipment valued at €10,000; while the Newcomer award winner receives €10,000, as well as a Leica Q3. In addition, the winning LOBA series, together with the other shortlisted ones, will be part of a touring exhibition, which will first be on display at the Ernst Leitz Museum in Wetzlar on the occasion of the award ceremony in October. Afterwards, the series will be exhibited at Leica Galleries and select photography festivals worldwide.

The series by both winners and all shortlist candidates will also be presented in detail in an



accompanying catalogue.

Over the coming summer months, all the shortlisted series will be presented on the LOBA website. The award ceremony, announcing and celebrating the winners in each category, will take place in Wetzlar in October 2026.

Further information available at: www.leica-oskar-barnack-award.com

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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