Press Release

The Celebration of Photography 2026

A Leica Camera AG festive event with exhibitions and award ceremonies

Wetzlar, 09 October 2026. Once again this year, the Celebration of Photography proved to be a wonderful event. It has been an integral part of Leica's annual programme for a long time, and is one of the highlights of the calendar year at the Leitz Park Wetzlar. On 08 October, a diverse audience gathered for the presentations of the Leica Oskar Barnack Award (LOBA), the new LOBA Women Grant and the Leica Hall of Fame Award: a global circle of friends from the gallery and curatorial scenes, interested parties and patrons, photographers, past LOBA winners and, above all, enthusiasts of Leica culture, united in their passion for authentic photography. The emphasis of the event was on discussing the stories behind the images, on major photographic series, and on the unique power of the medium. Consequently, this Celebration of Photography turned out to be an unforgettable experience yet again.

Damir Faizulin and Laila AnnMarie Stevens are the 2026 LOBA winners

This year, from a pool of over 400 submissions recommended by a group of international expert nominators and selected by the high-calibre jury, these two entries emerged as the winners: Russian photographer Damir Faizulin won the 46th LOBA in the Main category for his series "Preserving Nature as Preserving Ourselves", in which he presents the unique living conditions in the mountains of Dagestan. In her black and white series "Clayton Sisterhood Project", this year's LOBA winner in the Newcomer category, Laila AnnMarie Stevens from the USA, makes a powerful statement about contemporary family structures in the USA, focusing on self-assured female figures.

The 2026 LOBA shortlist in a grand exhibition at the Ernst Leitz Museum

In addition to the two winning series, the nine other series that completed the 2026 LOBA shortlist will be on display until 18 February 2027, as part of an impressive exhibition at the Ernst Leitz Museum. The projects address issues of social relevance, such as how communities live together and wish to continue to exist in the future; how everyday life and traditions in villages and towns are changing rapidly; and how we will need to tackle complex global problems, crises and climate change. The vernissage of the LOBA exhibition was therefore one of the highlights of the evening, which was further enhanced by a number of other awards.

The LOBA Women Grant goes to Valentina Sinis

Presented for the first time, this award was granted to the Italian photographer for her series, “The Last Butterflies”, and supports her in the completion of another chapter in her long-term project in Iraqi Kurdistan. Next year, the results of her work will also form part of the celebratory presentations.

Graciela Iturbide in the Leica Hall of Fame

In 2026, Graciela Iturbide was the recipient of the Leica Hall of Fame Award for her life’s oeuvre. For all those present, seeing the work of the artist, who was born in 1942 and is considered one of the most important contemporary and international Mexican photographers, was an incomparable experience. The accompanying exhibition with over 50 images, which will remain on display at the Leica Gallery Wetzlar until January 2027, offers deep insight into Iturbide’s work. Focusing primarily on Latin American cultural history, it is defined by the exploration of universal themes, such as life and death, rituals and mundane experiences, and characterised by its poignant poetry and magic. With this year’s addition, the number of inductees to the Leica Hall of Fame has risen to 15.

The 2026 Leica Picture of the Year by Graciela Iturbide

This year’s Leica Picture of the Year was also unveiled: Graciela Iturbide’s picture, “Na’ Lupe Pan” from the “Juchitán” series, taken in Oaxaca, Mexico, in 1986. It further enhances the high-calibre collection, which has brought together works by outstanding Leica photographers since 2021.

Celebration of Photography – a feast of pictures and encounters

Leica Camera AG thanks all the colleagues, supporters and collaborating partners, who contributed to making this year’s festivities such a special event, granting a unique impression of the Leica Spirit community. A special thanks to Brieke and Weingut Leitz, our collaborating partners for the 2026 Celebration of Photography.

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).