Press Release

Leica Camera AG is honouring Mexican photographer Graciela Iturbide with the 2026 Leica Hall of Fame Award

Wetzlar, 8 October 2026. She is Mexico's most world-renowned, contemporary photographer: this year, Graciela Iturbide has been granted the Leica Hall of Fame Award for her life's work. The award ceremony was part of this year's Celebration of Photography, which took place on 8 October 2026 at Leica World in Wetzlar. The accompanying exhibition, featuring over 50 photographs, will be on display at the Leica Gallery in Wetzlar until January 2027. Iturbide's "Na' Lupe Pan" motif from the "Juchitán" series, Oaxaca, Mexico 1986, was chosen as Leica Picture of the Year 2026.

The exhibition offers deep insight into the artist's life's work, which is primarily dedicated to Latin American cultural history. Exploring universal themes such as life and death, rituals and everyday experiences, Iturbide's imagery is characterised by its moving poetry and magic. The photographer highlights the tensions between culture and nature, tradition and modernity, identity and representation, ensuring that the images retain an enigmatic ambiguity. Deeply rooted in Mexican indigenous culture, and blending surreal elements with religion and mysticism, Iturbide has, over many decades, developed an inimitable visual language – predominantly in black and white. Birds and masks appear time and again as symbolic companions. The photographer's best-known work, the striking "Nuestra Señora de las iguanas" (Our Lady of the Iguanas), was taken in 1979 at a market in Juchitán. It is a mysterious portrait of a market woman wearing a crown of live iguanas: a Mexican Hydra, but also, in the Christian interpretation, a female Christ wearing an animalistic crown of thorns.

Iturbide's photographic work follows a humanist tradition which has incorporated psychological and spiritual elements, expanding documentary imagery into an extraordinarily multi-layered form of subjective photography. In addition to still lifes and landscape motifs, it is her social reportage on the living conditions of Mexico's indigenous communities and the significance of matriarchal social structures that has caused a stir and established her as one of Latin America's most important photographic voices.

The exhibition put together to complement the Leica Hall of Fame Award comprises over 50 photographs from five series: "Juchitán", with pictures from the Mexican city in the state of Oaxaca (1979–1988), "México Clásicas" (1974–2008), "Pájaros" (Birds, 1987–1998), "Desierto de Sonora" (Sonara Desert, 1979) and "Viajes" (Journeys), which was taken in Ecuador, Panama, Argentina and

Cuba (1972–1994).

Graciela Iturbide was born in Mexico City on 16 May 1942. As a child, she was already fascinated by photography: her father was a passionate amateur photographer. She married the architect Manuel Rocha Díaz (1936–1996) when she was 19 and became the mother of three children. In 1969 she began to study Film at the Colegio Nacional de México, the Centro Universitario de Estudios Cinematográficos (CUEC). In 1970 she spent a year as an assistant to photographer Manuel Álvarez Bravo, whom she accompanied on numerous trips, discovering rural Mexico and the diversity of its indigenous communities. A personal stroke of fate, the death of her six-year-old daughter Cláudia, changed Iturbide's life radically, and she chose to become a professional photographer. By 1975 she had her first exhibition in Mexico City, and her first one in New York City in 1976. From the 1980s onwards, she began to receive international recognition. She is the recipient of numerous awards, including the W. Eugene Smith Award (1987), the Hugo Erfurth Award (1989), the Prix des Rencontres internationales de la photographie d'Arles (1991), the Hasselblad Award (2008), the Gold Medal from the Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes y Literatura (INBAL) in Mexico City (2024) and the Princess of Asturias Award for the Arts (2025). Iturbide lives in Mexico City.

Leica Hall of Fame Award

Images that have moved the world, moments that will never be forgotten: since 2011, Leica Camera AG has been inducting outstanding photographers into the Leica Hall of Fame – photographers whose perspective of the world has made a difference and brought about change. Iconic images that have become etched into the collective memory, are a testament to their work, touching the viewer and illustrating the "conditio humana" in a timeless manner. Steve McCurry was the first to be honoured with the Leica Hall of Fame Award in 2011, followed by Barbara Klemm, Nick Út, René Burri, Thomas Hoepker and Ara Güler. Joel Meyerowitz was honoured in 2016, Gianni Berengo Gardin in 2017, and Bruce Davidson and Jürgen Schadeberg in 2018. Walter Vogel followed in 2019, Ralph Gibson in 2021, Elliott Erwitt in 2023, and Herlinde Koelbl in 2024. With the addition of Graciela Iturbide, the number of members honoured in the Leica Hall of Fame rises to 15.

During the Celebration of Photography on 8 October at Leica World in Wetzlar, it was not only Graciela Iturbide's induction into the Leica Hall of Fame Award that took place: the winners of the 46th edition of the Leica Oskar Barnack Award as well as the LOBA Women Grant – awarded for the first time – were honoured. In addition, all the series shortlisted for this year's LOBA will be on display at the Ernst Leitz Museum up until 18 February 2027.

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).