



Press information

Leitz-Park – Ein Ort für das Wesentliche

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Wetzlar, 15 June 2018. Today, Leica Camera AG is celebrating the opening of the new Leitz-Park complex in Wetzlar. Two years after the first ground was broken on the Schanzenfeld site by the south-east gate of the City of Wetzlar, a unique complex has now been completed that unites spectacular architecture with cultural highlights and the development of pioneering technologies.

Around 1,000 invited guests are expected at the formal opening, among them, Boris Rhein, Minister for Science and Art of the state of Hesse, Martin Rößler, Vice President of the Giessen District, Wolfgang Schuster, District Administrator of the Lahn-Dill region and Manfred Wagner, Mayor of the City of Wetzlar, who will be joining Dr. Andreas Kaufmann, Chairman of the Advisory Board of Leica Camera AG, and Matthias Harsch, Chairman of the Executive Board of Leica Camera AG, in the festival marquee to welcome the guests to the event. 'The new Leitz-Park constitutes a leading centre of the optical industry. Here, research, art and culture enter into a symbiosis that will attract photo enthusiasts from around the world. Providing a total of around 1,200 jobs, the entire site makes an important contribution to the region in many ways and will bring significant benefits for the City of Wetzlar and the tourist industry', explains Dr Andreas Kaufmann.

The new site is home to four building complexes, one of which is the recently opened arcona Living Ernst Leitz Hotel, which offers 129 rooms, apartments and suites and an interior architecture and design concept that reflects numerous aspects of photography. In all, more than 250 works by more than 60 photographers can currently be seen in the hotel.

Immediately adjacent to the hotel is the new Leica building, which contains the museum, the archives, a photo studio, a Leica Store and the museum shop. The museum will be an important element of the Leitz-Park concept, and, in the future, will present and illustrate the entire history of Leica – from microscopes and cameras to sport optics products. The anniversary exhibition, ‘Eyes wide open! 100 years of Leica photography’, will be making a guest appearance at the opening and presenting impressive images by acclaimed Leica photographers together with numerous exhibits from 100 years of 35 mm photography.

A further building is the new head office of Ernst Leitz Wetzlar GmbH (formerly CW Sonderoptic GmbH). In the relatively short space of time since its founding by Dr Kaufmann in 2008, the company has earned an outstanding international reputation. For example, in 2015, the Summilux-C lenses played a role in the winning of four Oscars by the film ‘Birdman’, and earned the development team the highest film-industry accolade for technical products and innovations, the ‘Sci-Tech Award’, also known as the ‘Technical Oscar’.

A further building here is a representative office block that offers new office space for local businesses. The ground floor is the home of the Ernst Leitz Werkstätten, which begins its work with the opening of the Leitz-Park and will establish an entirely new and exclusive product line in the portfolio of Leica Camera AG: most complicated, high-end mechanical watches, manufactured in limited series. The premises accommodate a workshop, a studio, a store and a ‘glass manufactory’.

The concept for the overall complex was developed and realised by the Frankfurt architects Gruber + Kleine-Kraneburg, who have created an ultra-modern working environment and visitor experience in which research and development, production, and science meet culture, gastronomy and living in harmonious unity. The architectural concept of the final phase of the Leitz-Park complex distances itself from the round and rectangular forms of the existing buildings, and owes much more to the architectural style of the Italian renaissance. ‘There, cities are emotionally accessible; their streets always lead to squares with buildings it is a pleasure to enter. The buildings are never quite rectangular, but adapt their structures to the spatial dictates of the squares. The Leitz-Park intends to express a pleasurable feeling of urbanity’, explains Dr Kaufmann.

Visitors to the opening can also look forward to numerous top-class exhibitions. The new Leica Store will be showing three photographic projects, including, for example pictures shot by star skateboarder and jazz musician Ray Barbee. In addition, visitors will be able to see pictures from Tine Acke's photo book titled 'Udo Lindenberg. Stärker als die Zeit - Die Stadion-Tour' and black-and-white images from the project 'Darker Than Blue' by Mathieu Bitton, which reflect the harsh everyday world of Afro-American citizens in a life between hope and rebellion. A further exhibition, featuring, amongst other photographs, the work of Michael Agel, can be seen in the outdoor area. The focal point of this exhibition is the Leitz-Park complex and its history from the beginnings to its completion.