



## Press Information

### **Dr. Andreas Kaufmann has been honoured with the Federal Cross of Merit for his economic commitment to the region of Wetzlar**

**Wetzlar, 27 May 2021.** Due to Covid-19, it is only now that the Cross of Merit 1st Class, of the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany, awarded to Dr. Andreas Kaufmann in 2020 by the President of the Federal Republic of Germany, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, has finally reached Dr. Kaufmann's hands. This special award recognises and publicly acknowledges the significant work the honouree has done for the economy in the Wetzlar region.

Dr. Kaufmann's name is indivisibly linked to the Leica brand; as current Chairman of the Supervisory Board of Leica Camera AG, he has been defining the course of the company for over 15 years now. "Thanks to your great personal commitment, you have saved a traditional German company from going down and have transformed it into an unparalleled success story," Hesse's Minister President, Volker Bouffier, said in his tribute. "You not only use your entrepreneurial activities to create and secure jobs, but also enable the city and the region of Wetzlar – and consequently its inhabitants – to participate significantly in your success." Volker Bouffier underlined in particular that Dr. Andreas Kaufmann has made "an important contribution in the field of business and culture for the benefit of civil society – and not only in the state of Hesse".

Kaufmann's success as an entrepreneur is not only due to his family background and professional career: his enterprising flair and personal interest in photography have connected to underline his commitment with the best possible outcome. As a passionate photographer and ardent Leica admirer, it was his heart's desire to preserve the tradition and perfection of handmade cameras. Consequently, through his great personal and financial commitment to the company, he ensured that it became a success story. In addition to the on-going development of camera technology, there has also been the expansion of the distribution systems and, above

all, the visionary founding of the Leitz-Park in Wetzlar. It is here that the production and administration, with about 800 Leica Camera employees, have found a home, alongside the employees of the other ACM Group companies: Viaoptic, Weller Feinwerktechnik and Ernst Leitz Cine Wetzlar. In addition, the history of Leica can also be explored at the Leitz-Park, in the Ernst Leitz Museum, a museum especially created for the purpose. With his many innovations and investments, Kaufmann has further broadened the international standing of the renowned Leica company, and has restored the brilliance of the Leica brand.

Dr. phil. Andreas Kaufmann was born in Mannheim in 1953, received his Doctorate in Literary Science in 1991, and was a teacher at the Waldorf School in Göppingen up until the year 2000. In 2001, together with his brothers and Wolfgang Kisselbach from Wetzlar, he founded ACM Projektentwicklung (Project Development) GmbH. The involvement with Leica in 2004, ensured that the threat of insolvency to the traditional Wetzlar company was averted in 2005, while targeted restructuring over the next few years led to economic consolidation. His commitment to the common good was already acknowledged in 2015 with the Hessian Order of Merit, and in 2017 he received the German Founders Award. Dr. Andreas Kaufmann is married, has three children and lives in Salzburg.

### **Background information on the Federal Order of Merit**

Since its establishment in 1951 by the first Federal President of the Federal Republic of Germany, Theodor Heuss, the Order of Merit has been awarded to German and foreign citizens for special achievements in the political, socio-economic, cultural, spiritual and honorary fields. It is the only general Order of Merit in Germany, making it the highest honour granted by the Federal Republic for services to the common good.