

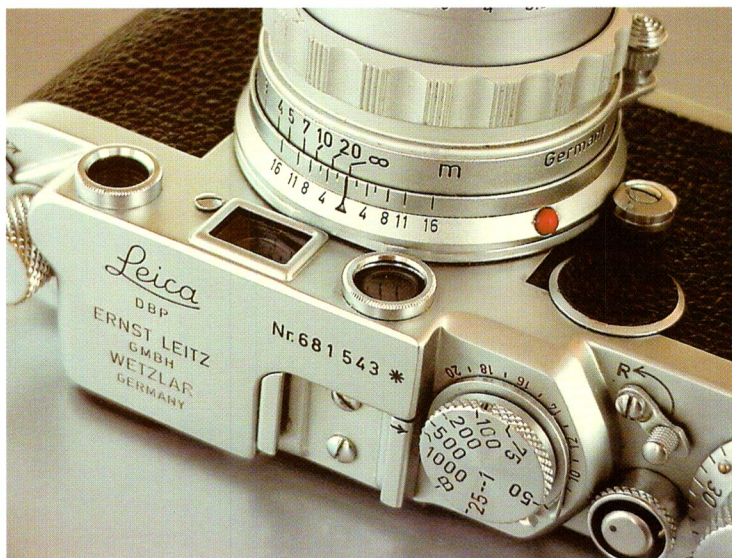
Classic CAMERA





Leica IIIf with M-type bayonet mount

There must have come a moment in which indecision between the screw and bayonet mounts was very strong at Leitz. In fact, there are a number of traditional screw mount cameras that represent experimentation with the new bayonet mount. Their existence is not completely unknown because they have been published in a number of books and Lager himself published photographs of two Leica IIIg bayonet mount experimental models without serial number. The Leica shown here bears the serial number 681543*, fairly close to the number 700,000, and has a modern 50/2.8 Elmar from the 1970s as well as a 35/1.4 Summilux from the '60s. Note that the bayonet, although compatible with these lenses, is not identical to the one that actually went into production. Photo credit: Luigi Crescenzi



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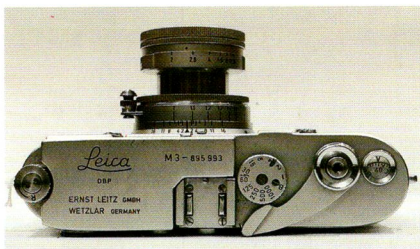
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CLASSIC CAMERA

FEBRUARY 2002

Dedicated to the Leica M



Leica M3 no. 895993 type 3.



Leica M2 no. 1005857 type 3.



Leica MD2 no. 1529601 with black finish.



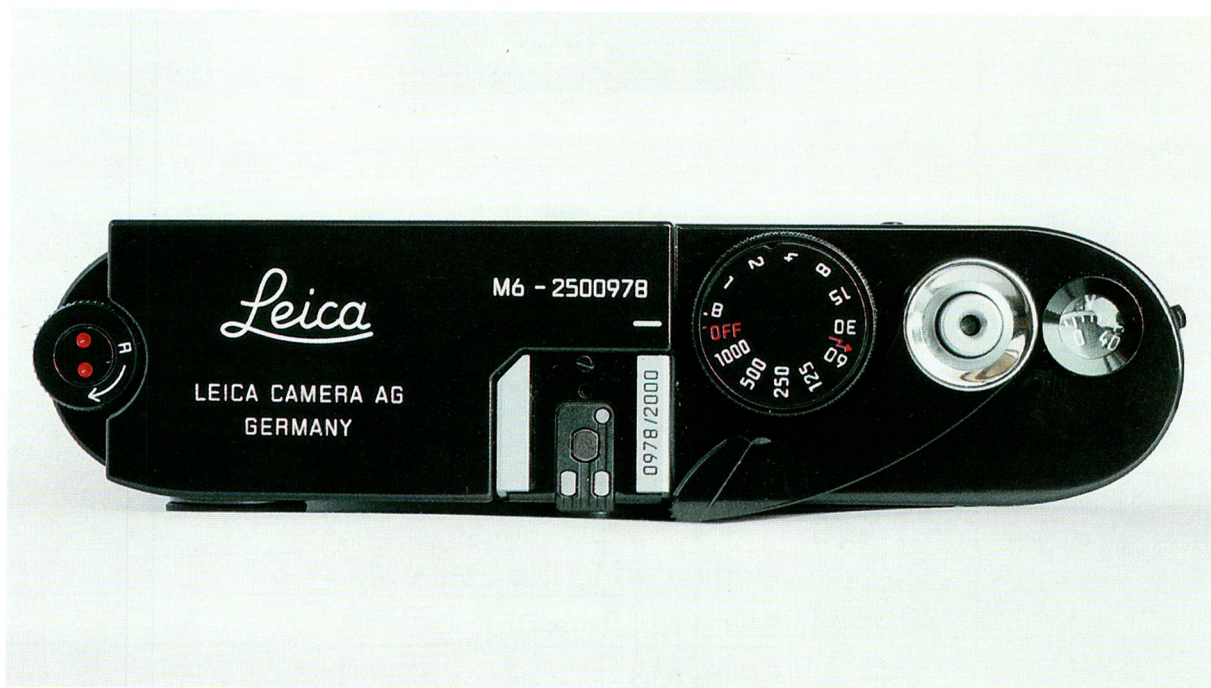
Elmar 50mm f/2.8 with collapsible mount, the classic standard lens.



Leica M4 KE-7A from 1972, equipped with (uncommon) 3.3cm f/3.5 Stemar stereoscopic lens of much earlier construction and corresponding auxiliary finder.

Dedicated to the Leica M	2
Leica M Literature	5
Leica M3	6
Leica M2	10
Leica M1	14
Leica MD	16
Leica M4	20
Leica M5	22
Leica M4-2 and Leica M4-P	25
Leica M6	28
Leica military cameras	31
Commemorative Leicas	33
Leica M lenses	39
Infrequently encountered	42
Collecting and Markets	46

DEDICATED TO THE LEICA M



Why a monograph issue dedicated to Leica? And why the Leica M? The answers are myriad. First of all, because Leica brand cameras have been on the photographic market for over 75 years and are still being actively manufactured. There are not many camera companies that can boast a similar curriculum vitae and this alone deserves recognition. But this is not reason enough. Production of Leica rangefinder cameras has remained a constant for the last half century and represents a mark of continuity despite the technological upheavals that have characterized camera making. But this is still not reason enough.

Leica is a universally known and recognized marque that stands apart somewhat from

the workaday fray. And, finally, only the Leica marque represents almost fifty percent of the monetary value and volume of photographic collecting throughout the entire world.

Out of all Leica cameras manufactured, the production of the Leica M from 1954 to the present day emerges for its homogeneity, novelty, continuity and uniqueness. Unlike the screw mount Leicas, the Leica M has not been copied and has continued even when other camera manufacturers no longer had the courage to produce rangefinder cameras. The simultaneous production of the Leica R reflex and compact Leica Mini has not influenced Leica M output in the least. Unlike any other camera, the

differences between the 1954 Leica M3 and 2000 Leica M6 are practically non-existent. It is for this reason that among all traditional, mechanical cameras that are both collectors' items and functional at the same time, the Leica M is perhaps *the* classic. And it is for this reason that we have dedicated a special issue of *Classic Camera* to the Leica M.

The Leica M's long road

There are not many camera companies who have kept their cameras unchanged and have not varied their lens mounts over the last fifty years. Leica is one of them, and perhaps the only one.

The first Leica in the M series was released on the market in 1954 as the M3 and it is

LEICA M CHRONOLOGY

1954 – Leica M3 original		
1955 – Leica M3 with selector		
	1956 – Leica MP Leicavit	
1957 – Leica M3 scale	1957 - Leica M2 button	
1958 – Leica M3 single stroke lever	1958 – Leica M2 lever	
	1958 – Leica MP2	
	1958 – Leica M2 self-timer	
		1959 – Leica M1
		1964 – Leica MD
		1966 – Leica MDa
1967 – Leica M4		
1968 – Leica M4M		
	1969 – Leica M2R sprocket	
	1971 – Leica M5	
1972 – Leica M4 KE7A		
1974 – Leica M4 black		
1975 – Leica M4 50 Jahre	1975 – Leica M5 50 Jahre	
1977 – Leica M4-2		
1979 – Leica M4-2 Gold		
1980 – Leica M4-P		1980- Leica MD2
1983 – Leica M4-P Silver		
1984 – Leica M6		
1989 – Leica M6 Platin		
1992 – Leica M6 TITAN		
1994 – Leica M6J		
1997 – Leica M6 0.85		
1998 – Leica M6 TTL 0.72		
1998 – Leica M6 TTL 0.85		
1999 – Leica M6 Platin 150 Jahre		
2000 – Leica M6 Black Paint		
2000 – Leica M6 0.58		

still compatible with the lenses of the Leica M6 currently in production today, and vice versa. The decision to remain faithful to its optical and mechanical tradition has been rewarded by the commercial success of the Leica Ms, not only those models currently in production, but also the collecting success and prestige this popular family of cameras has enjoyed in the past and continues to enjoy. In the course of almost a half-century, production technologies have changed and even the Leica M was modified to include some electronic components such as the meter circuit in the Leica M5 and Leica M6, the electrical motor in the Leica M4-2 and M4-P and Leica M6, the hot shoe in the Leica M5 and subsequent models, the

flash meter circuit of the Leica M6 TTL, and very little else.

In essence, Leica cameras from the M3 to the M6 models have remained true to themselves with their mechanical focal plane shutter, rangefinder focusing system, lens compatibility, body design and dimensions (with the exception of the Leica M5), and in their manufacturing and operating philosophy. A Leica M is and remains a Leica M despite the passing of time, fads and market vagaries. And in its virtual immutability lies a part of its commercial success.

Despite the vicissitudes the company and Leitz family itself have undergone, including the passing of stock holdings from

one financial group to another, transfer of production from Wetzlar to Canada, back to Wetzlar and finally to Solms, the Leica M has remained an élite camera continuously in demand, admired and coveted. Its production is not characterized by large output, but rather quality and reputation, with numbers sometimes even too limited for the increasingly frequent commemorative models. Over its 50-year history, the Leica M has undergone a certain evolution marked by crucial junctures, inevitable hiatuses and sometimes risky changes. Apart from the special, experimental, modified or simplified models for specific applications (such as the Leica M1 and MD), the imaginary thread that

connects the various versions of the Leica M does not always unwind in a straight line along the progression from the Leica M3 to the M2, M4, M5, M4-2, M4-P and, finally, the M6.

The 1954 Leica M3 was the progenitor of them all, the basic model that was to offer the best performance, be the absolute reference point, the universal camera to be used on all occasions with wide-angle or telephoto lenses, for shooting with ambient lighting or using flash, for "stolen" pictures or close-ups, photo journalism or portraits, architectural or scientific photography. But the Leica M3 proved perfectible and was modified during the course of its own manufacture.

The Leica M2 model, dated 1958, was created as a simplified version without automatic film counter and self-timer, but its larger finder to encompass the 35mm lens field and its ability to utilize the Leicavit made it something special.

The Leica M3 and M2 continued to coexist until 1967 when they were replaced by the Leica M4 that utilized the large finder of the Leica M2, the automatic film counter of the Leica M3, the standard self-timer and small angled rewind lever together with a new film catch system.

With the Leica M5 in 1971, an attempt was made to change direction. The built-in

photocell in the Leica M5 became the pretext for a complete redesign of the camera, changing even its body and profile. No time was lost in returning to the Leica M4, modifying it to allow it to be motor-driven, equipping it with a hot shoe and eliminating the self-timer. The Leica M4-2 was released in 1976 and in 1981 was replaced by the Leica M4-P, aesthetically and structurally identical but with an even larger finder capable of taking in the field of a 28mm lens. In 1984, a built-in photocell was again offered while retaining the shape and design of the M4 and the resulting camera was baptized the Leica M6.

From 1984 to the present day, the Leica M6 has been modified a number of times. The Leica M6 TTL was created with direct interception of reflected light from the flash. The standard 0.72 magnification ratio of the finder is reduced in some models to 0.85 and enlarged in others up to 0.58 to offer a full range of possibilities. Starting in 1975, a series of commemorative cameras was released, technically identical to standard series cameras, but dedicated to a specific event with unique markings and numbering, as well as special finishes such as gold- or platinum-plating and lined with variously-colored, damask-finish leather. The value of the camera rose much above its actual utilitarian value and the occasions for

churning out commemorative Leica M6 cameras in limited series flourished during the Nineties. But, below the gold or platinum finish, there remained the soul of the Leica M with its unmistakable shape and unique personality. From this ancestry was born the Leica Black Paint Millennium in the year 2000, a Leica M6 with top plate and winding lever shaped like those on the Leica M3, but with all the controls and exposure meter of the Leica M6. Just proof that "*plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*".

Danilo Cecchi

A word of thanks to all our friends who kindly made their cameras available for the illustrations in this issue. Special thanks to Romolo Ansaldo, Paolo Ascenzi, Pierpaolo Cancarini, Luigi Crescenzi, Emanuele De Simone, Gianni Di Benedetto, Alfonso Giannone, Michele Iacuzzo, Domenico Zucco.

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LEICA M LITERATURE

The literature about Leica cameras in general is vast and extremely varied, covering virtually every aspect of Leitz production and accompanying the life of these cameras, their lenses and accessories from the 1930s onward. The written output about Leica is the result of the need to integrate the scanty technical documentation published by Leitz in the form of instruction booklets and advertising brochures, and its purpose is to provide information about the technical and operating features of the cameras to maximize shooting results.

The 1930s and the early 1950s were the years in which the 24x36mm format still had to prove itself against the larger formats and those enthusiasts convinced of Leica quality were not sparing in their advice and information and gladly passed on their personal experience and knowledge.

The first *Leica Guide* was published in May 1942 in English by Focal Press, a sort of literary instruction booklet. This was followed by a series of subsequent editions, right up to the Sixties, first covering the screw Leica and then, exclusively, the Leica M's.

The historical and collecting-oriented books were to arrive later in the mid-1970s. In 1975, together with Hove Foto Books, Gianni Rogliatti published the book *Leica, the first Fifty Years* that traced the history of Leica cameras and lenses, and it was soon translated into Italian, French and German. The book covers all Leica output and the screw mount Leicas, at that time out-of-production for fifteen years, took up 40 pages out of 130, while the Leica M's (the M5 was already in production) were given only 15 pages. In his second book, *Leica, the first Sixty Years*, published in 1985, the section dedicated to the screw

mount Leicas was increased to around 50 pages, while the Leica M's, now including the M5, were covered in thirty or so.

Other authors writing about Leica cameras, including James Lager, Paul Henry Van Hasbroeck and Dennis Laney, also believed Leica history and collecting should include its entire output. In 1980, Dennis Laney published the first *Leica Pocket Book* with Hove Foto Books, later continuing to update and expand it in subsequent editions, and in 1984 he published the first *Leica Accessory Guide*, also to be followed by revised editions. But his most comprehensive work is unquestionably the treasure-trove *Leica Collectors Guide*.

From 1975 to 1979, James Lager published his 3-volume *Leica Illustrated Guide* with Morgan & Morgan and in 1983 Paul Henry Van Hasbroeck published, with Sotheby, his classic *The Leica, a History illustrating every model and accessory*, later translated into a number of languages, including Italian.

In 1992, Ghester Sartorius published, in Italian and on his own initiative, the *Carta di Identità della Leica*. In 1996, Patrice Hervé Pont published the booklet entitled *Leica Saga* in French through the Foto Saga publishing house.

The years passed, but the historical/collecting tracts on Leica did not go out of fashion and each author continued to revise, expand and enrich his work. In 1996, Sartorius published a completely new edition of *Carta di identità della Leica* with Reflex publishers, and followed it up two years later with *Carta di identità degli obiettivi Leica*. The English edition of Sartorius' book was issued in 1999 under the title *Identifying Leica Cameras*. More than 50 pages out of 150 are dedicated to Leica M cameras. In 1995, Rogliatti published with Hove a

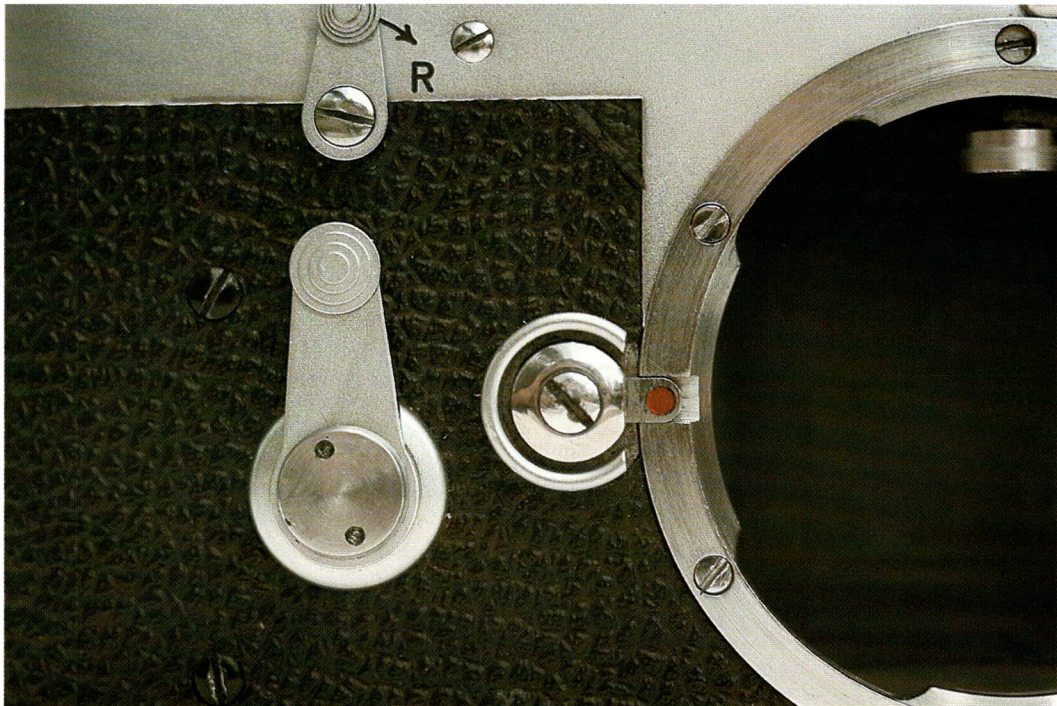
book entitled *Leica, the first 70 years*, dedicating three chapters of 20 pages overall to the Leica M's. James Lager's monumental trilogy, *Leica An Illustrated History* published between 1993 and 1998 has over 90, richly-illustrated pages dedicated to the Leica M.

Works dedicated exclusively to the Leica M are rarer and often approach the argument from a purely technical standpoint. Two of these are the books *Leica M* by Gunther Osterloh and *Leica M6 to M1 Rangefinder Practice* by Andrew Matheson, the latter published by Hove in 1986 with subsequent enlarged editions up until the one issued in 2000.

There are also the books by Nakamura, *All About Leica M-Type Cameras* and *The Whole Story of Leica M4 and M6*, with special mention for Van Hasbroeck's invaluable *Rare and Unusual M series Cameras and Accessories* published in 1978. The English publishing house, Hove, bases much of its output on Leica-related publications and has dedicated Eastland's *Leica M Compendium* to the Leica M family.

Of course most of these works are published in English, and among the books mentioned, only Osterloh's has been published in Italian by Vallardi with the title *Alta scuola di fotografia – Leica M*. Non English-speakers should get a copy of the all-Italian booklet *Guida Pratica alla Leica M6* by Maurizio Capobussi published in 1990 by Editrice Progresso, or the Italian-language publications dedicated to the Leica M by Gino Ferzetti entitled *Conoscere le Leica*, and those written and published by Filippo Giunta. But as long as the Leica M remains a topic of current interest, fully alive and evolving, adding the phrase "The End" will remain impossible.

LEICA M3



Beyond the screw mount Leica

No one knows exactly what the impetus was behind the decision of the Leitz company in the early Fifties to design a new camera, totally different from the screw mount Leica that it was its destiny to replace. The Leica screw mount had been preceded by 60,000 fixed lens Leica cameras manufactured between 1925 and 1930, and in the 1930s and 1950s, over 735,000 Leica screw mounts were produced. Their market success had brought Leitz international fame and significant profits. The latter were reinvested, providing the possibility for new research as well as significant and constant improvement in the company's output. Highpoints were reached in 1940 with the Leica IIIc, and once again in 1950 with the Leica IIIf, so it cannot be said that the release of a new Leica in 1954 was the result of stagnating sales. Perhaps Leitz decided to change course out of the generally-held belief that the Leitz patents had lapsed with the defeat of the German army. Perhaps the screw mount Leica was

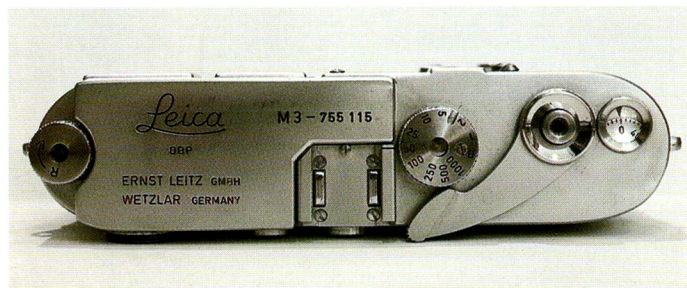
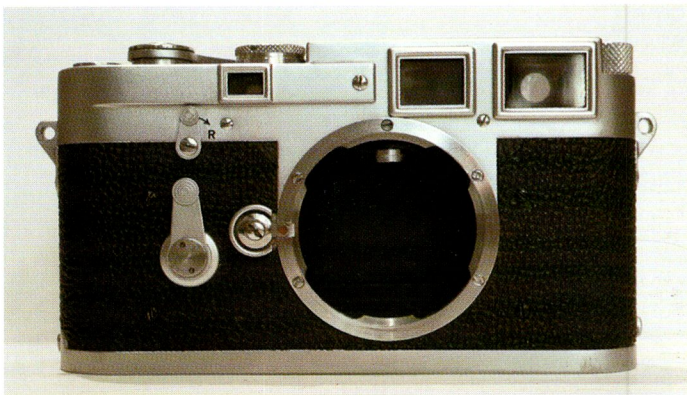
abandoned because of the proliferation of British, American and Japanese (not to mention French, Italian and Russian) copies in the post-war period. Or, perhaps once the immediate post-war economic emergency had been weathered, Leitz felt the need to refurbish its image and upgrade its production. Whatever the reason, the fact remains that while production continued on the Leica IIIf and Leica IIIg, a new Leica with innovative features and sophisticated performance levels made its appearance on the market.

Leica M: its origins

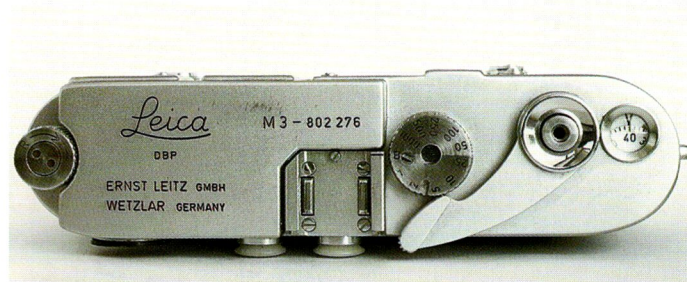
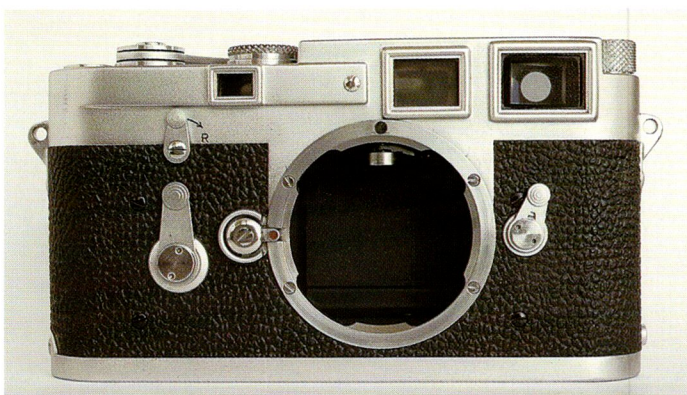
In the early 1950s, Leitz began work on a Leica prototype with coupled rangefinder and the project was developed on the basis of specific technical instructions. The new camera was to have a large finder with multiple framelines with parallax correction and coupled rangefinder, a rapid-wind lever, standard built-in self-timer, self resetting film counter and a single shutter speed dial. It also had to be equipped with an exposure meter coupled

to the shutter speed dial and have a new bayonet mount for fast lens changing. Traditional bottom film loading was to be kept, however. Between 1952 and 1953 a number of working prototypes of the new camera were produced and a variety of technical and design approaches were tried on them. No solution seems to have been taken for granted. Various types of winding levers and film counters were tested until the definitive solution was found.

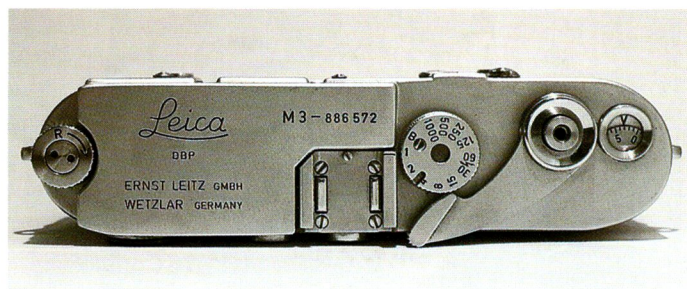
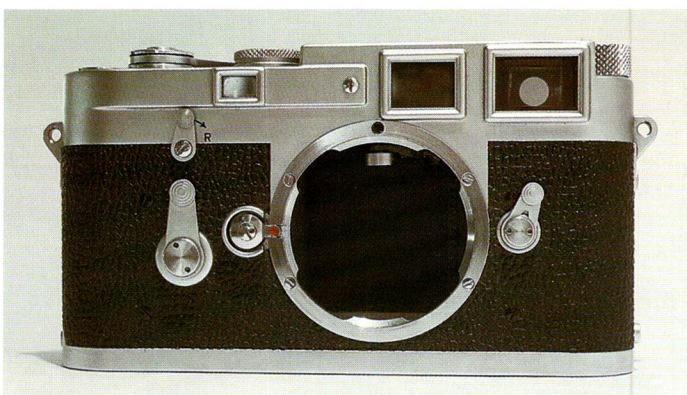
Mass production began finally in 1954 with camera number 700,000. This new camera was born to replace the screw mount Leica, but it incorporated a number of uncertainties and some throwbacks to the past. The first model was destined to be improved through a continuous series of small touch-ups and modifications made during the first three years of the camera's life that provide some variations of interest to collectors. However, some holdovers from the past characterized the project. Camera loading continued to be from the bottom as in the old screw mount models, even if it was facilitated by the presence



Leica M3 no. 755115, type 1, without viewfinder frame selector, with contoured lugs and non-linear shutter speed scale.



Leica M3 no. 802276, type 2, with viewfinder frame selector, contoured lugs, non-linear shutter speed scale.



Leica M3 no. 886572, type 3, with viewfinder frame selector, contoured lugs, linear shutter speed scale.

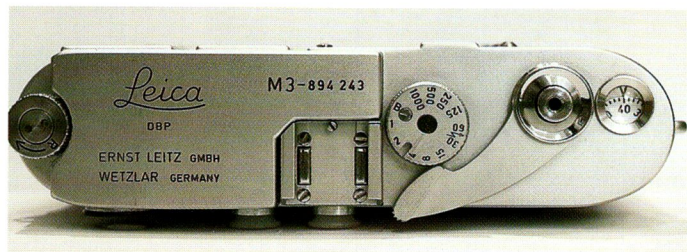
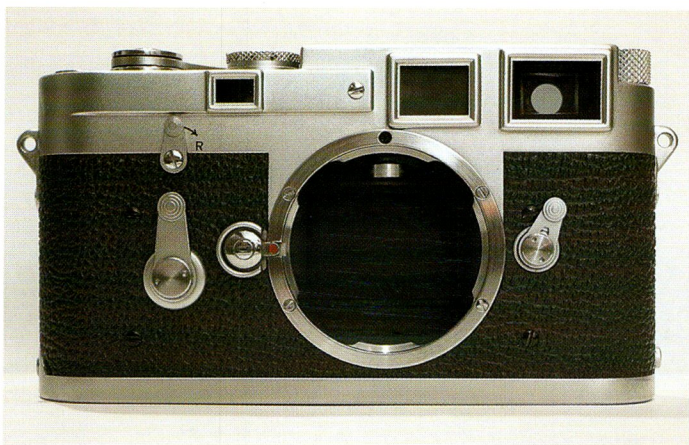
of a backdoor. No built-in exposure meter was planned, nor was a rewind lever — more convenient than the normal ridged knob. Its horizontal-run shutter also remained the traditional cloth focal plane type. Even the name of the first model was based on previous production. The letter “M” used to identify the new model indicated the availability of an external exposure meter (M) coupling. But the first model was baptized the “M3” because

screw mount Leicas had reached the Roman numeral “III”. In fact, the screw mount Leicas contemporary with the Leica M3 are the Leica IIIf, followed by the Leica IIIg. It was for this reason that the first bayonet mount Leica was called the M3.

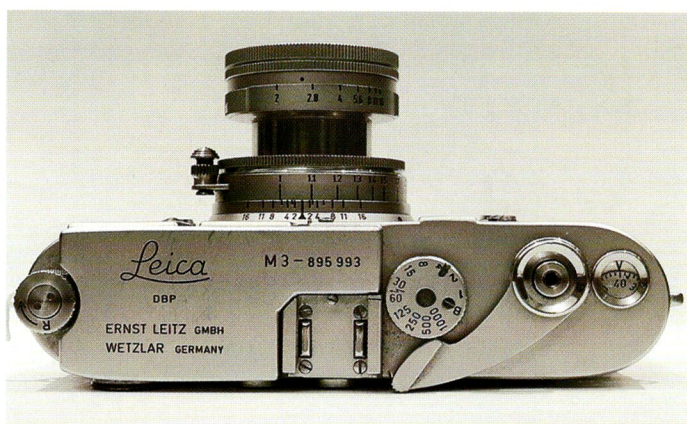
Leica M3: design and functions

The Leica M3 has a taller and longer body than the screw mount Leicas and its front

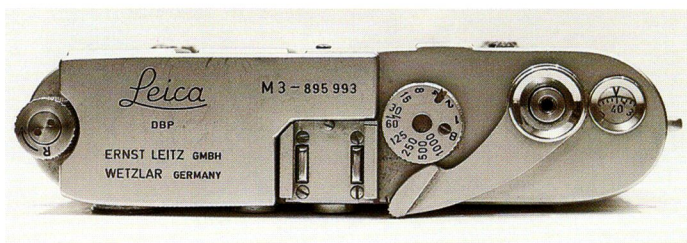
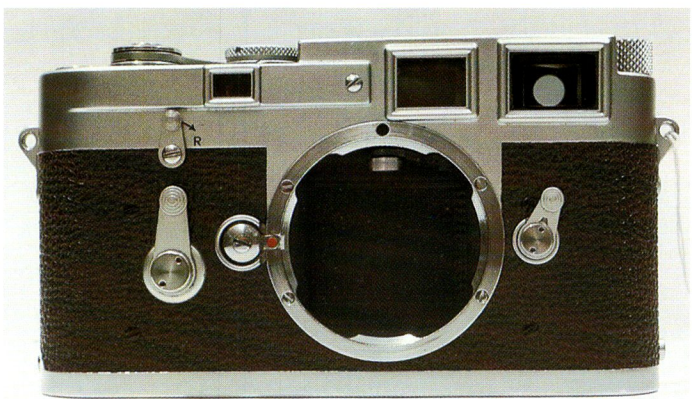
is linear with three windows. The smallest is that of the rangefinder and is located to the right of the lens. The medium-sized window (also the most heavyset) is used for frame illumination and is found to the left of the lens, while the elongated, rectangular window of the finder is on the far left of the camera near the rewind lever. The rangefinder base length is longer, almost double that of the screw mount Leicas. The finder is large with 0.91



Leica M3 no. 894243, type 3, with viewfinder frame selector, contoured lugs, linear shutter speed scale.



Leica M3 no. 895993, type 3, with viewfinder frame selector, contoured lugs, linear shutter speed scale. Summicron f/2 lens with collapsible mount.



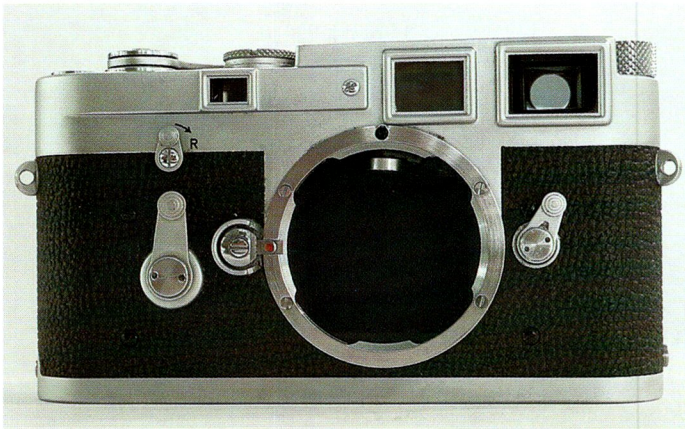
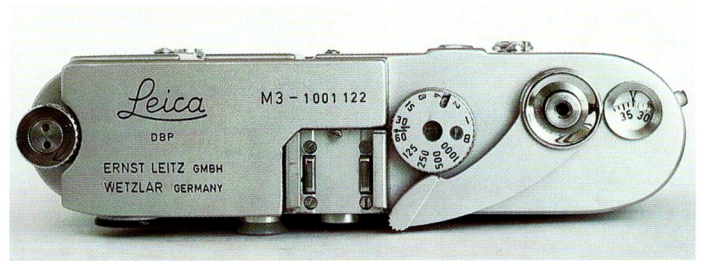
magnification and shows the framelines for the fields for 50mm, 90mm and 135mm lenses. The top plate is flat and laid-out on two levels, one slightly higher than the other. On the lower level are the round film counter window, the winding lever with coaxial threaded shutter release button and the single shutter speed dial. The dial is marked from 1 to 1000

according to the old, non-linear, scale of 1, 2, 5, 10, 25, 50, 100, 250, 500, 1000 with synch at 1/50 and B setting. The button has a deep groove for mechanical connection to the exposure meter. On the upper level of the top plate are the flash socket (recessed and held in place by 4 screws) and the markings Leica DBP – Ernst Leitz GmbH Wetzlar – Germany,

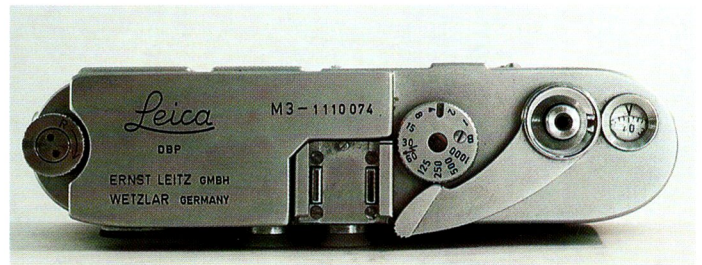
together with the serial number of the camera preceded by the initials M3. At the far left in a specially-shaped indentation is the extractable rewind knob. On the right of the camera front are the lens release button, the self-timer lever and the film release rewind lever. The X and M synch sockets are located on the back of the camera near the eyepiece. The metal



Leica M3 n. 1001122 type 3, with viewfinder frame selector, round lugs, linear shutter speed scale.



Leica M3 n. 1110074 type 3, with viewfinder frame selector, round lugs, linear shutter speed scale.



parts which are not vulcanite covered are in chrome.

Models and versions

The first M3's produced are characterized by the lack of the viewfinder frame selector lever on the front, the glass film pressure plate and the two-stroke wind lever. The first cameras produced have a number of details that were later modified: there are only four screws fastening the bayonet ring instead of the later five; the film counter reference is white on the original cameras, later changed to black; the rewind knob reference mark is originally linear in shape, later becoming pointed; other non-essential details were also changed, such as the shape of the lug rings. In 1955, after over fifty thousand Leica M3 cameras had been produced, a

lever to select and preview the finder framelines was added on the front left under the finder window. In 1957, after the manufacture of another 30,000 Leica M3s, the international linear shutter speed scale (1, 2, 4, 8, 15, 30, 60, 125, 250, 500, 1000) was adopted and the 1/50 flash synch was marked with a lightning bolt. Further modifications were made on the Leica M3 with the international scale, of which over 143,000 were produced up to 1968. The glass pressure plate was replaced by a metal one, the lug rings changed shape from elongated to round and the marking on the rewind knob was changed from two red dots to one and, finally in 1958, starting with serial number 915,251, the shutter reset and film wind lever was changed from two- to one-stroke. While all the other details are

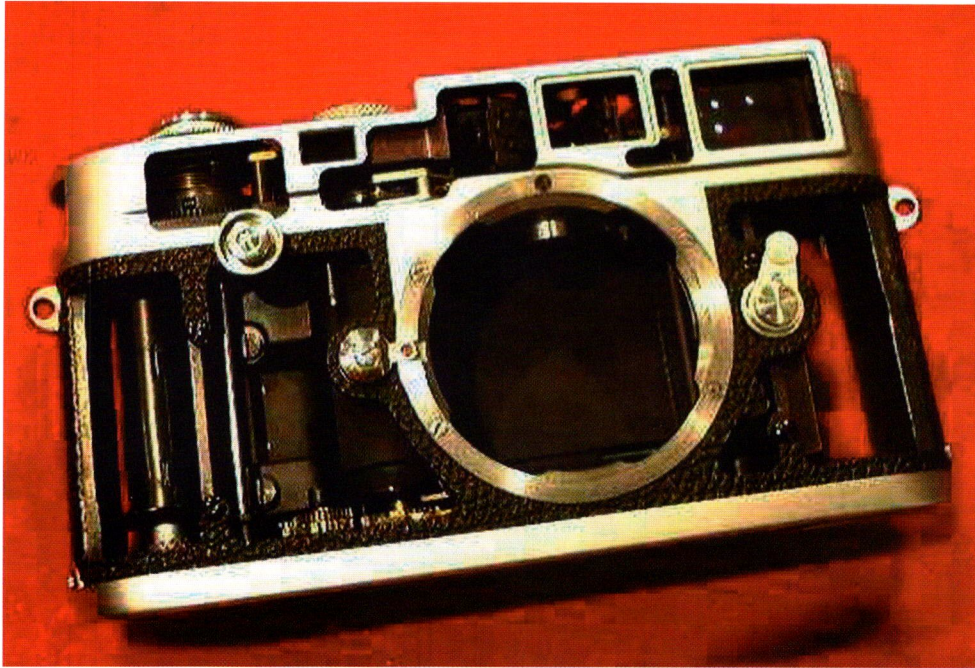
considered secondary, the difference between the two-stroke and one-stroke Leica M3s is considered fundamental for collecting purposes.

Special finishing

The Leica M3, the first Leica with bayonet mount, is still considered today to be one of the most highly regarded Leicas and no camera collector or historian can ignore the important role it played in Leica rangefinder development as the founding member of a new generation of cameras. The majority of Leica M3s were produced in Wetzlar with chrome finish, but nearly 7,000 Leica M3s manufactured in Canada and at least 3,000 type-3 Leica M3s were finished in black and are today much sought-after by collectors. Production of the Leica M3 was definitively stopped in 1968 with serial number 1206999, but production had effectively ceased in 1966. The last Leica M3s to be built in 1968 were for the German army and were finished in olive drab. Just over one hundred of these military Leica M3s were produced and are so rare that counterfeit copies are produced of them (as is also the case with the black Leica M3s).

LEICA M3	YEAR	SERIAL NUMBERS	LEVER	SPEED
Type 1	1954-1955	700000-785800	2-stroke	Non-linear
Type 2	1955-1956	785801-854000	2-stroke	Non-linear
Type 3	1957-1958	854001-915250	2-stroke	Linear
Type 4	1958-1966	915251-1206999	1-stroke	Linear

LEICA M2



Leica M2 cut-away (Photo credit: Luigi Crescenzi)

Little sister of the Leica M3

In its early years of existence, the Leica M3 enjoyed significant popular and sales success, so the Leitz company decided to couple it with an almost-identical model with just a few slight changes and, above all, a lower price tag. The policy of offering similar cameras at slightly different prices was part of the Leitz marketing philosophy during the 1950s and 1960s, in turn a continuation of the policy adopted in the 1930s with the Leica III, Leica II and Leica Standard. At a time in which competition still existed from the rangefinder and single reflex cameras on the one hand, and financial rivalry between German and Japanese companies on the other, the Leica marque found itself surrounded on two fronts and required the help of some kind of marketing boost. But offering a camera such as the Leica at a lower price had to be justified by giving up some performance feature. What was required was a strategy similar to that already used with the Leica screw mounts in which the IIIc and IIIf models were paired with the IIc and IIf

models without slow shutter speeds and the Ic and If models without finder and rangefinder. On the new bayonet Leica, the entire range of shutter speeds and rangefinder focusing were maintained, and only some secondary features such as the self-timer, self resetting film counter and a few other minor details were eliminated. To distinguish the new camera from the M3 model and indicate a slightly lower classification, the initials "M2" were adopted.

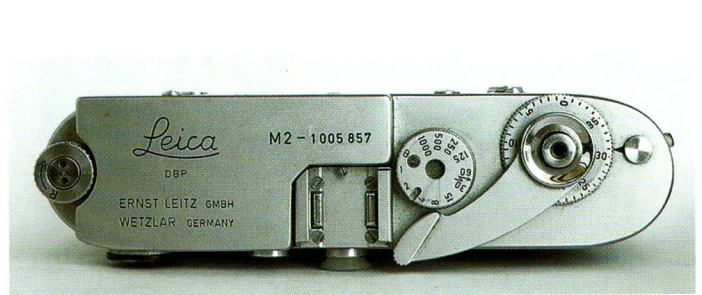
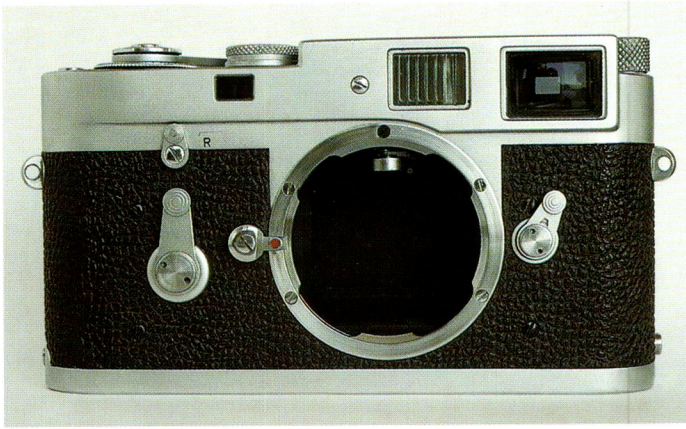
Between the Leica M3 and Leica M2

Production of the Leica M2 began in 1957 starting with serial number 926001 after having been preceded by a limited number of Leica cameras derived from the M3 model but modified to better answer the special needs of some photojournalists. Four hundred and fifty-five of these special Leica MP cameras were produced over the years 1956 and 1957, a third of them with black finish and two-thirds with chrome finish. They represent an anomaly in Leica

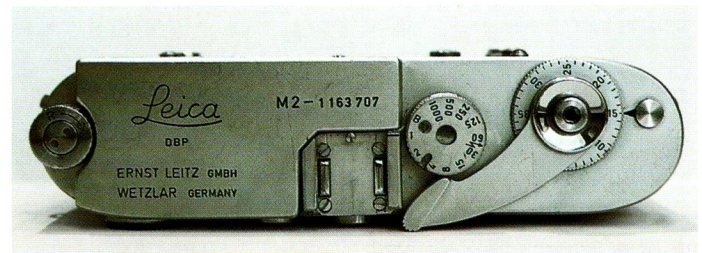
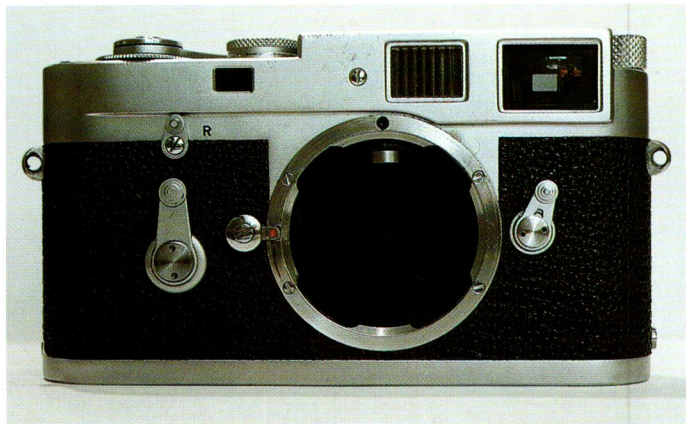
production and have on their base plate a Leicavit MP rapidwinder lever similar to that utilized on the screw mount Leica. The simultaneous presence of the rapidwinder lever on the top plate and winding lever on the base may be justified by the still relative slowness of the main two-stroke lever, but it does represent a contradiction and perhaps an homage to a generation of photographers used to the Leicavit and not all that convinced by the top plate lever. The Leica MP is based on the M3 body from which it preserved the standard finder for the 50mm, 90mm and 135mm lenses and the two-stroke wind lever. The Leica MP, not equipped with automatic film counter or self-timer lever, was only built to-order and the numbering on the top plate is different from the series standard. For all these reasons, the Leica MP represents a unique chapter in Leica history.

Simple yet complex

Like the Leica MP, the Leica M2 does not have a self-timer mechanism or automatic



Leica M2 no. 1005857, type 3, with self-timer and film release rewind lever. Summicron f/2 with collapsible mount.

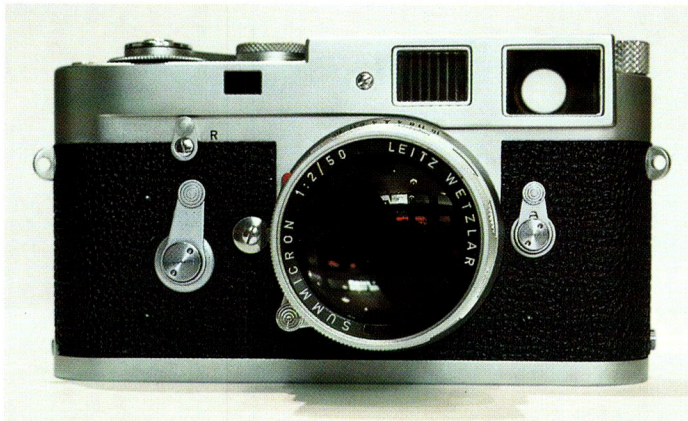


Leica M2 no. 1163707, type 3, with self-timer and film release rewind lever.

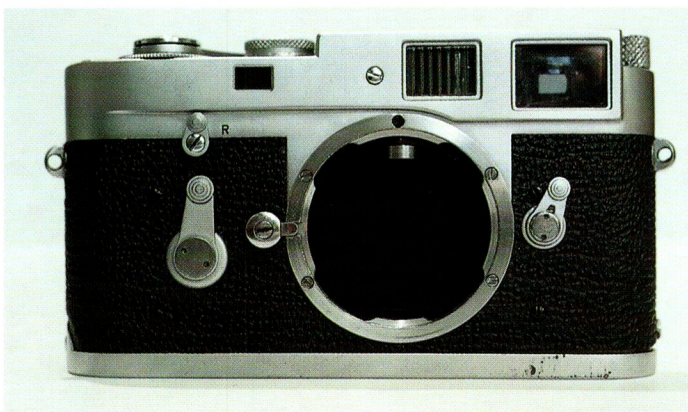
film counter, but it does have a one-stroke wind lever and new finder with 0.72 magnification that incorporates framelines for 35mm, 50mm and 90mm lenses — those most commonly used by photojournalists. On the front of the camera, the film release lever has been replaced by a small chrome button and the front itself has been simplified with the elimination of the raised borders around the viewfinder, rangefinder and frameline illumination windows. The result is a more sober and even more elegant front on the Leica M2 than on the

M3. On the top plate, the large marked film counter disk surrounds the outside of the shutter release button and wind lever. Because of its larger finder, the Leica M2 was considered the wide-angle version of the Leica M3 and over 83,000 of them were produced up until 1968, less than 200 of which have a black finish. Over its lifetime, the Leica M2 underwent a few small changes. The first was the replacement of the film release knob with a lever similar to that on the Leica M3. The second was the use of fresnel cover on the frameline illumination window

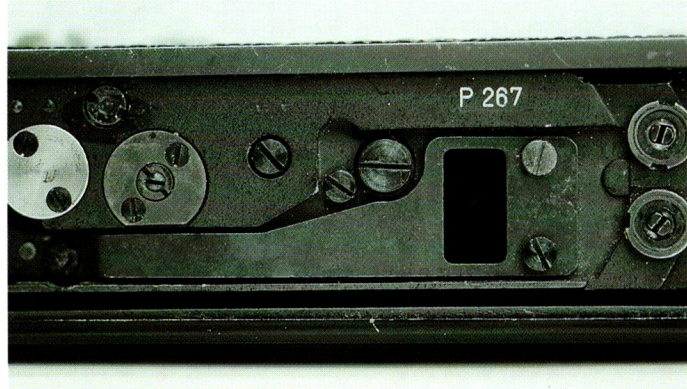
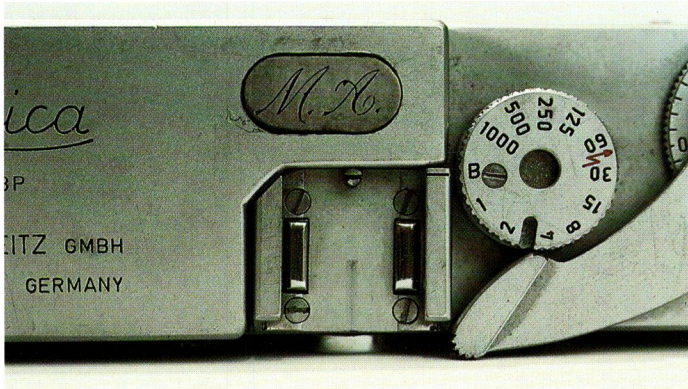
instead of smooth glass. Some Leica M2s came with a self-timer, an accessory not considered very professional, but evidently requested by a number of photographers. The self-timer was added as early as 1958 starting with camera no. 949101, but it was not always present on all successive output. The Leica M2 with self-timer is sometimes identified in catalogues as the Leica M2S as opposed to the Leica M2 without self-timer, identified as the Leica M2X, but neither of these IDs is reflected on the initials etched on the top plate.



Leica M2 no. 13019A; demonstration model with Summicron f/2 rigid lens, non-operational.



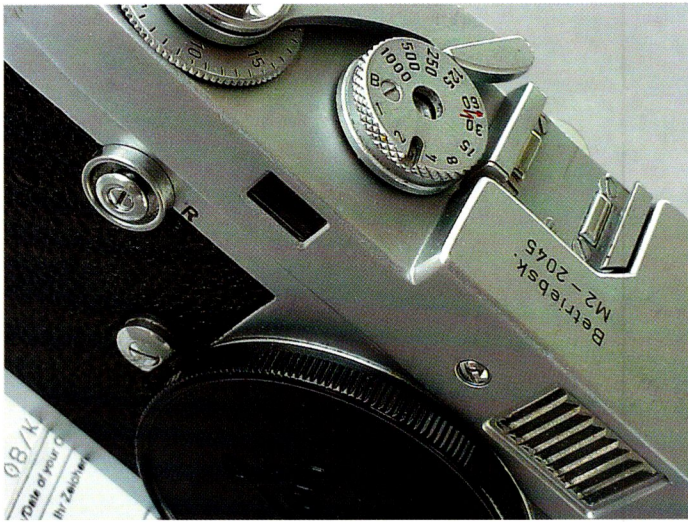
Leica M2 without serial number with silver plate initialed M.A.; internal number P267 would suggest an MP model.



Special Leica M2 cameras

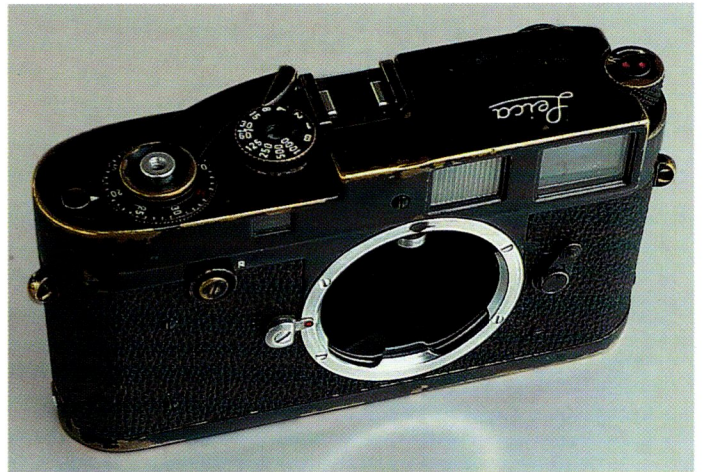
The Leica M2 is not just the simplified version of the Leica M3, it is also the model on which serious testing was done for the electric film advance motor. In 1959, fifteen units of the Leica MP2 (derived from the Leica M2) with electric motor attachment were made. Although the experiment of the Leica MP2 was never mass-produced or marketed, it seems that a certain number of Leica M2s (it would seem less than 300) were modified so that an electric motor could be attached, and these are identified with the initials "M2M". In addition, the same Leicavit

	YEAR	SERIAL NUMBERS	
Leica MP	1957-1958	MP12-MP402	Leicavit 50-90-135
Leica M2	1957	926001-	Knob 35-50-90
Leica M2	1958		Lever 35-50-90
Leica M2	1958-1968	949101-1165000	Self-timer M2S
Leica M2R	1969-1970	1248201-1250200	Sprocket M4
Leica MP2	1958	935501-935512	Leitz motor
Leica MP2	1959	952001-952015	Leitz motor



Leica M2 Betriebsk no. 2045.

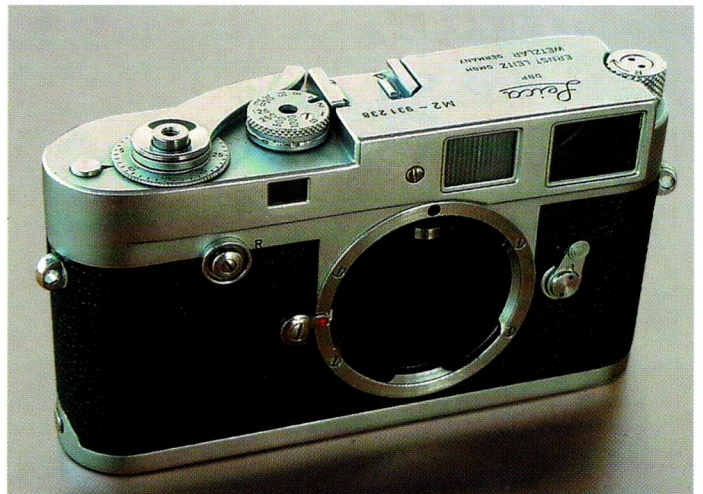
Shown on this page are a number of M2 variants without self-timer.
(Photo credit: Luigi Crescenzi)



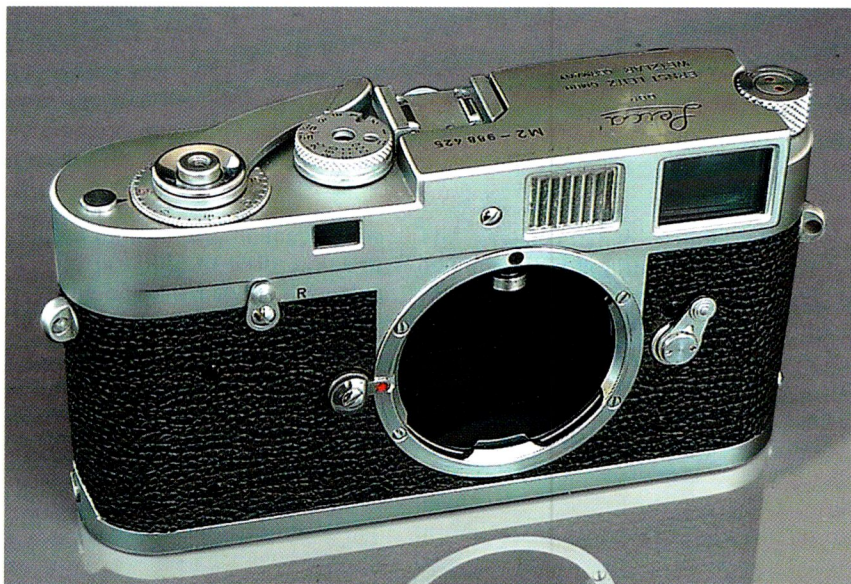
Leica M2 black, type 1 with knob.



Leica M2 with Leicavit.



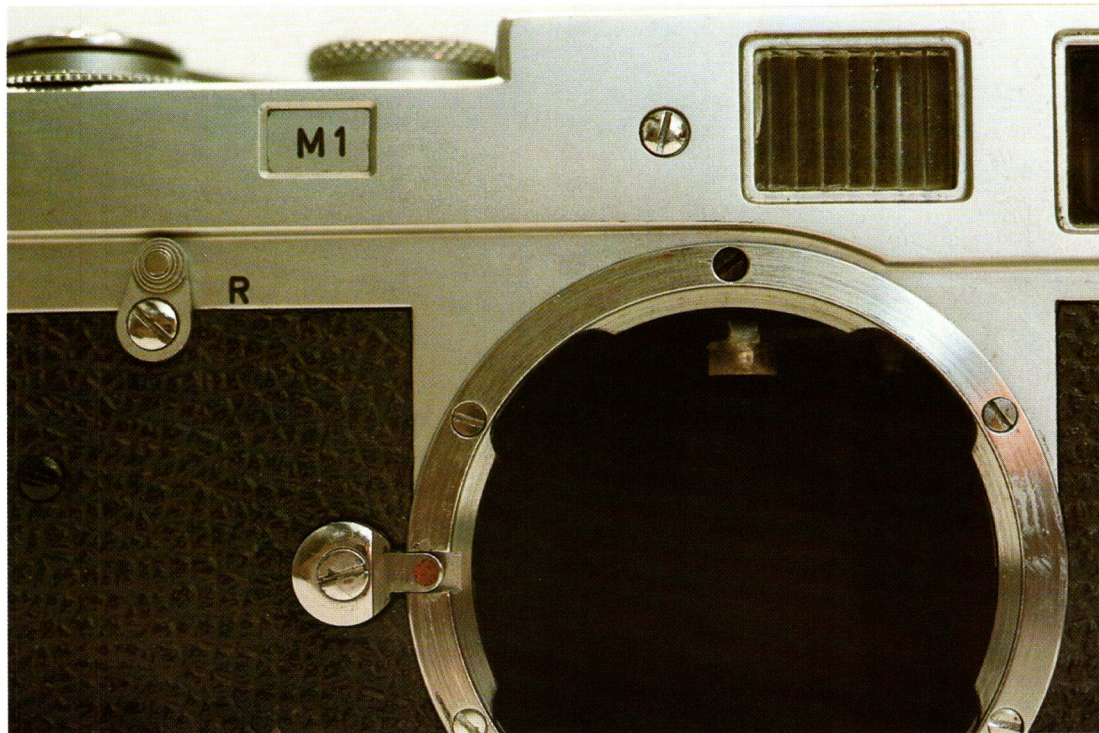
Leica M2 chrome, type 1 with knob.



Leica M2 with lever.

accessory used on the Leica MP can also be mounted on the base plate of the standard Leica M2. A further modification made in the Leica M2 following a military order was the replacement of the film loading system with that used in the 1967 Leica M4. About two thousand Leica M2 cameras with this modification and marked Leica M2R were released on the market between 1969 and 1970, but the experiment was never followed up because of the simultaneous production of the Leica M4.

LEICA M1



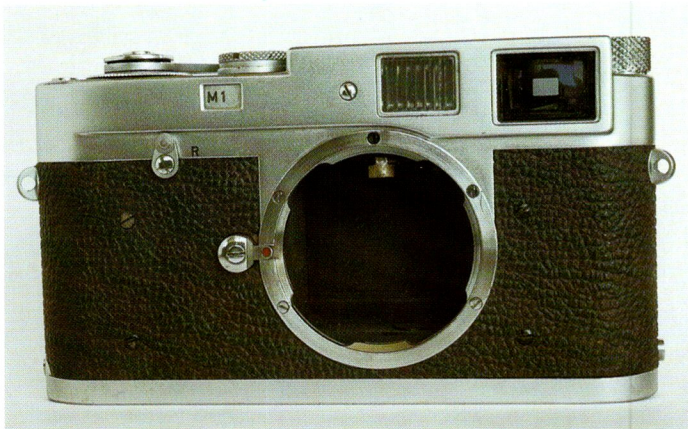
Rangefinder as an option

In 1959, production began on an even more simplified version of the Leica M3 and Leica M2. This simplified camera used the Leica M2 body from which the rangefinder was eliminated, but which maintained the normal finder and entire range of shutter speeds. It was named the Leica M1 and a very restricted number (less than 10,000) was produced for specialist applications up until 1964. Despite the removal of the rangefinder from the body, the Leica M1 retains the frameline illumination window on its front. The 90mm frameline has been eliminated, as has the finder selecting lever. The two fixed framelines for the 35mm and 50mm lenses remain, however. The

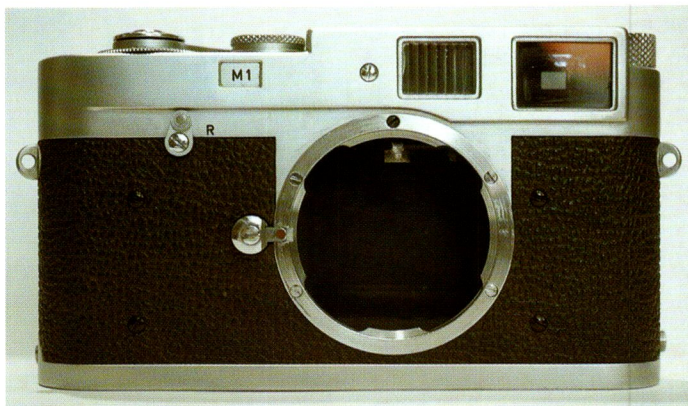
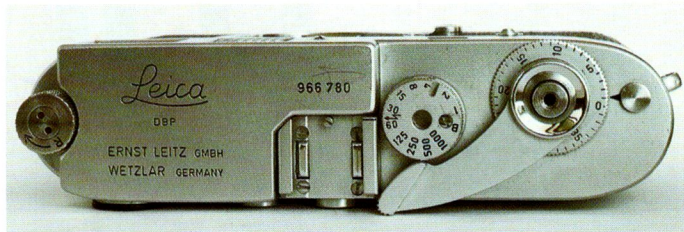
Leica M1 was only produced in the version without self-timer. Derived from the Leica M2, the Leica M1's body is identical to that of the M2 and the Leicavit can be mounted in place of the base plate. For the rewind film release, some Leica M1s utilize the chrome knob typical of the early Leica M2s, while other M1s utilize the lever taken from the Leica M3 and late Leica

M2s. Because only a limited number of these cameras was manufactured, and on the basis of special requirements, Leica M1 cameras may include structural or finishing modifications that are difficult to catalogue. Some Leica M1s have no viewfinder at all, some do not have the vulcanite finish and in others the bright-frame finder is different from the standard

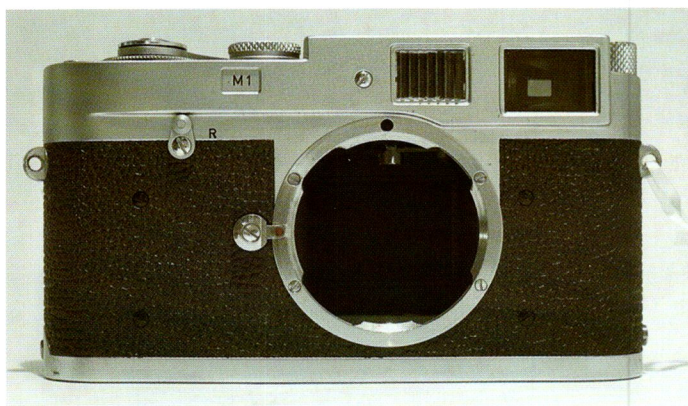
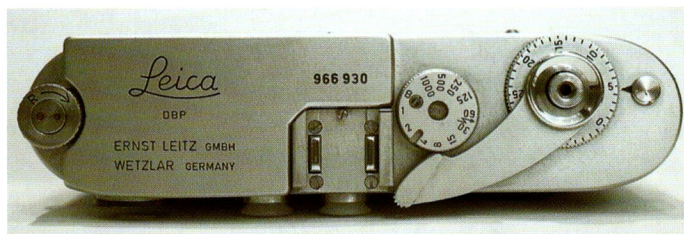
	YEAR	SERIAL NUMBERS	FINDER FRAMELINE
Leica M1	1959-1964	950001 – 1102900	35-50, no rangefinder



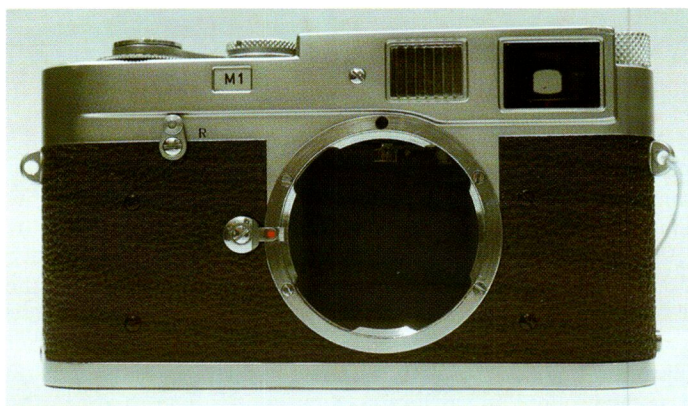
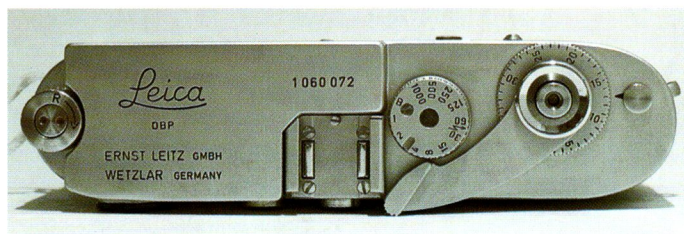
Leica M1 no. 966780; model similar to the M2 but without rangefinder, self-timer or finder selecting lever and with framelines for 35mm and 50mm. The "M1" designation appears on the front of the camera, not before the serial number.



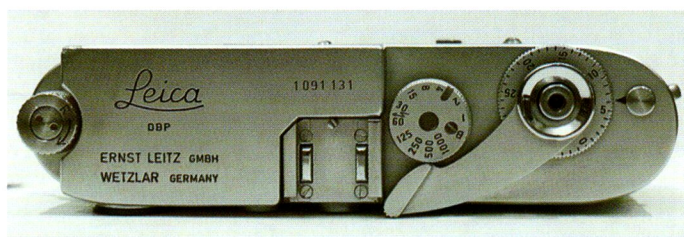
Leica M1 n. 966930.



Leica M1 n. 1060072.



Leica M1 n. 1091131.

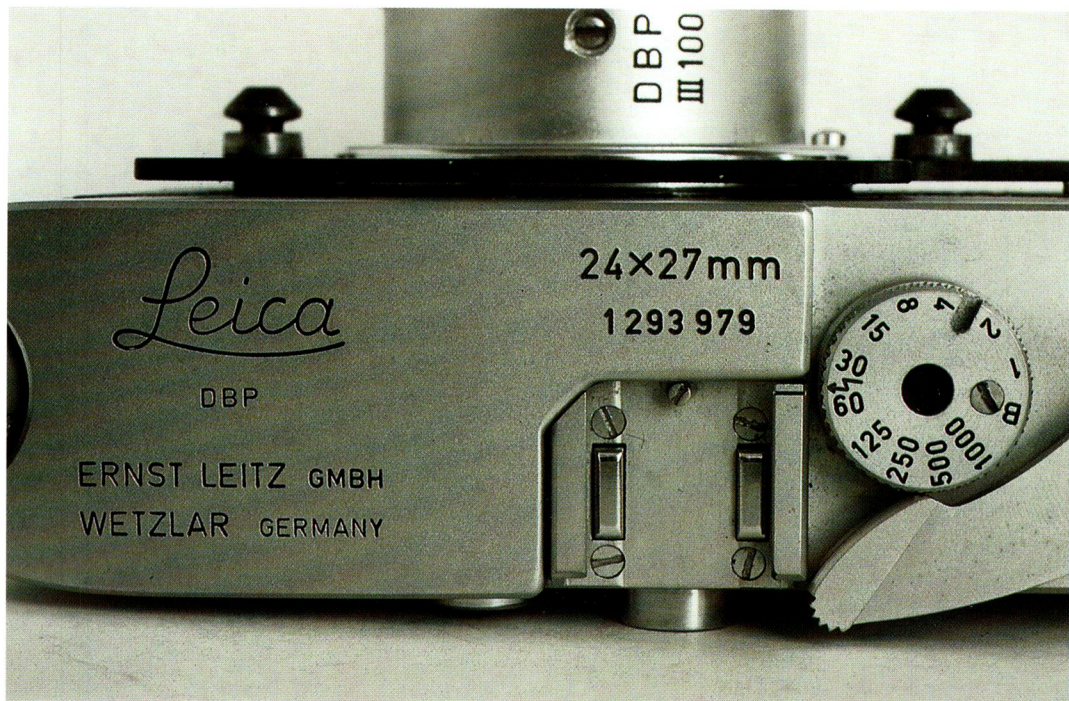


version, or altogether absent. Since it is structurally identical to the Leica M2, the Leica M1 may be converted into the former model through the addition of the rangefinder, but it would seem that this was only rarely done. In practice, the Leica

M1 was used for action shots with estimated focusing at infinity or the hyperfocal distance. The Leica M1 presents no limitations when used with long telephoto lenses and reflex attachments, such as the Visoflex. Another typical use

of the Leica M1 is coupled with scientific equipment such as microscopes, telescopes, oscilloscopes and the like. Leica M1 production began with serial number 950001 and ended in 1964 with camera no. 1102900.

LEICA MD



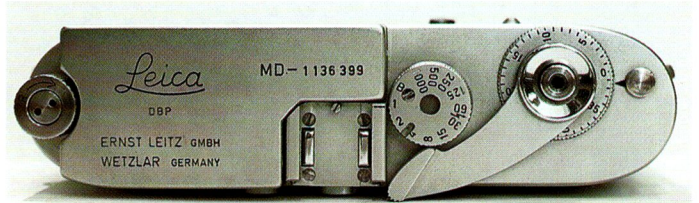
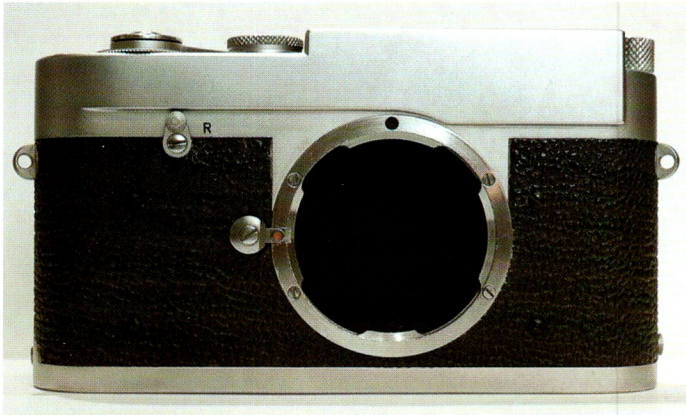
Leica Post no. 1293979, 24x27mm format derived from Leica MDa; with 35mm f/2.8 Summaron lens.

Leica cameras without viewfinder

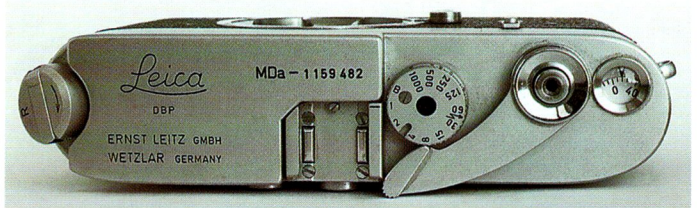
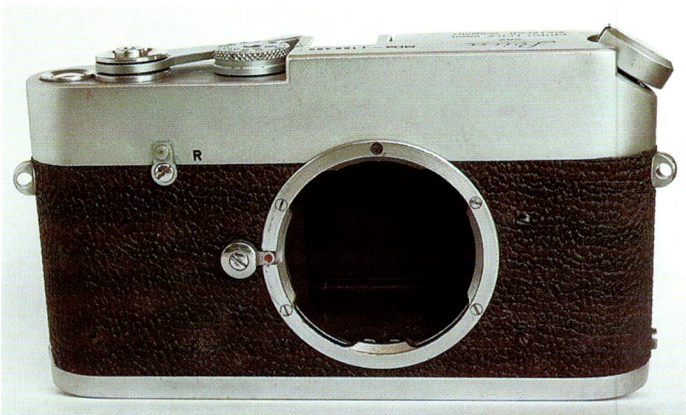
If the success of the Leica family is tied to the precision of its rangefinder system, it would seem almost blasphemous to speak of those Leica cameras without rangefinder, such as the Leica M1, or those without any viewfinder at all. But Leica was not successful only for its shooting system. For many specialist applications, such as micro- or scientific photography, a viewfinder is not only useless, but in some cases actually a hindrance. For this reason, starting with the Leica Ic, the Leitz company always offered in its catalogue, alongside its screw mount Leicas with viewfinder and rangefinder, at least one simplified screw mount Leica model

without these devices. When production of the Leica Ig ceased, this particular sector remained vacant and the only simplified bayonet mount Leica available was the Leica M1. In 1964, starting with serial number 1102501, manufacture began of a variant of the Leica M1 without any type of viewfinder and christened the MD, which was to replace the Leica M1 both in catalogues and on the production line. The Leica MD was not suitable for normal shooting and was used together with the Visoflex reflex housing or technical and scientific instruments (such as microscopes) equipped with their own eyepiece. Used for specialized shooting applications, thanks to a slight

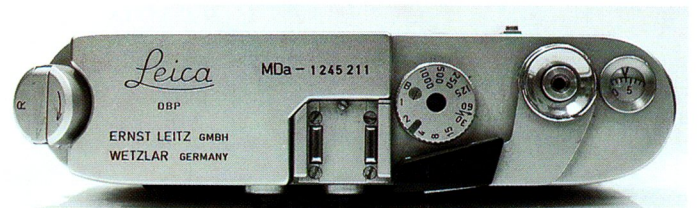
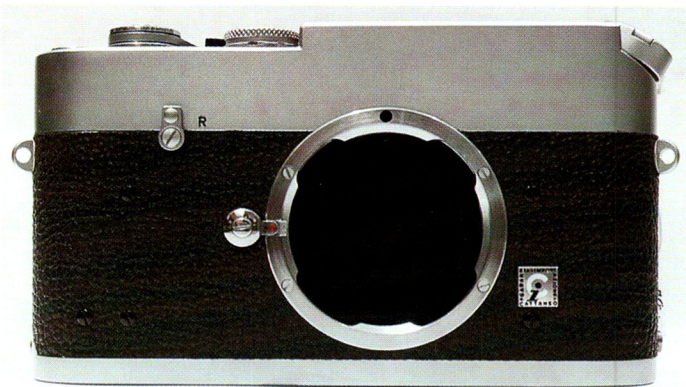
modification, the Leica MD permitted the registration of shooting information or other identifying data right on the negative. To create the space for this information that, today, is easy to have thanks to data backs, the base plate of the Leica MD was modified to include a special, light-proof slit in which a four millimeter-wide strip was inserted on which to engrave the data to appear on the film. This strip reduced the available format area from 24x36mm to 23x32mm. The Leica MD was manufactured in parallel with the Leica M2, and over 3,000 were produced up to the serial number 1160820. In the years that followed, a similar model accompanied the Leica M4



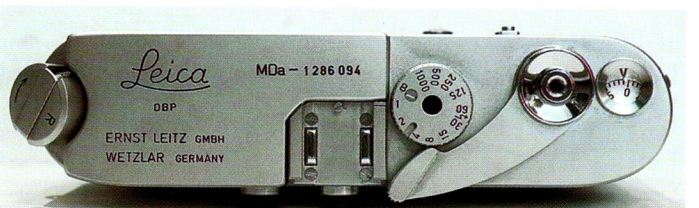
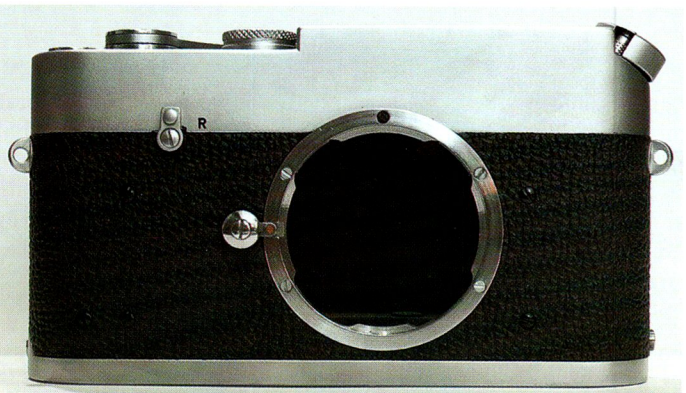
Leica MD no. 1136399 without viewfinder.



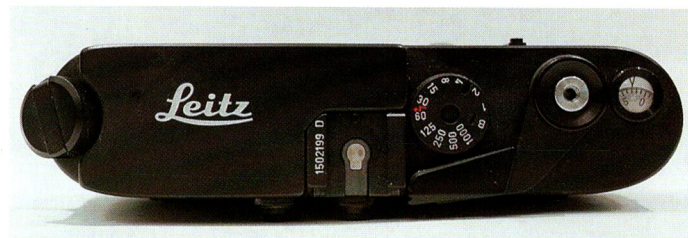
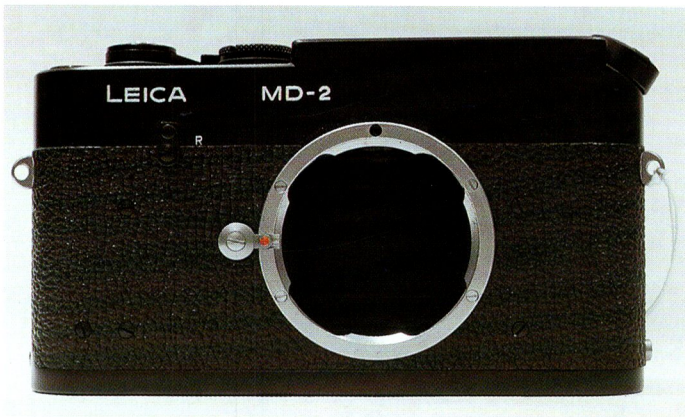
Leica MDa no. 1159482 without viewfinder.



Leica MDa no. 1245211 without viewfinder.



Leica MDa no. 1286094.



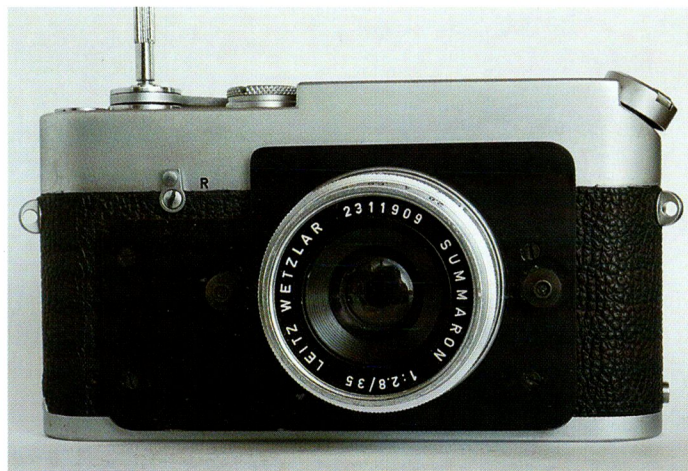
Leica MD2 no. 152199 D with black finish.



Leica MD2 no. 1529601 with black finish.



Leica Post no. 1293979, 24x27mm format derived from Leica MDa; with 35mm f/2.8 Summaron lens.



and Leica M4-2 models, known as the Leica MDa and MD2 with their own special features.

Leica Post

One of the Leica MD variants with its own special application that has piqued collector interest because of its modifications and the extremely limited number of units produced, is the Leica Post. Created on the request of the German

Postal Service and later imitated by the postal authorities of other countries, the Leica Post utilizes only the 1/50 flash synch shutter speed and has a fixed-focus lens, normally a 35mm f/3.5 or f/2.8 Summaron, but sometimes also a 35mm f/2 Summicron. Designed for series photographing of telephone meters, the Leica Post has a metal plate on its front to be connected to a sort of metal funnel that rests on the front of the meter to be

photographed. Some Leica Post cameras have the standard 24x36mm format, but others use a reduced format of 24x27mm to save film. The Leica Post was a variant of the Leica MD, but other versions derived from the later Leica MDa and even the MD2 also exist.

Leica MDa

With the start of Leica M4 production in 1966, the Leica MD was replaced by the

A rarity: Leica MDa with self-timer

The Leica MDa was specially produced for technical/scientific and nature applications in conjunction with reflex viewing systems.

Equipping the Leica MDa with self-timer was part of the option offered by Leitz at the end of the 1960s to transform the Leica MDa into the Leica M4. The Leica MDa no. 1,159,237, manufactured before the Leica M4 cameras, has the self-timer and M2/M3-type fastening screw.

In addition, the presence of the film load lever with black plastic swivel end indicates that this camera was not designed to be used with Leitz reproduction systems, such as the contemporary Reprovit IIa. In fact, for this application, the camera had to be equipped with the M2/M3-type all-metal load lever.

Paolo Ascenzi



Leica MDa with automatic film counter and extractable angled film rewind lever. Some cameras have the film load lever of the Leica M2, while others utilize the new film load lever from the Leica M4. Like the Leica MD, the Leica MDa has no viewfinder and includes the slit on the base plate to record shooting data. Production began with the serial number 1159001 (lower than the first Leica M4 serial number of 1175001) and more than 14,000 Leica MDa cameras were

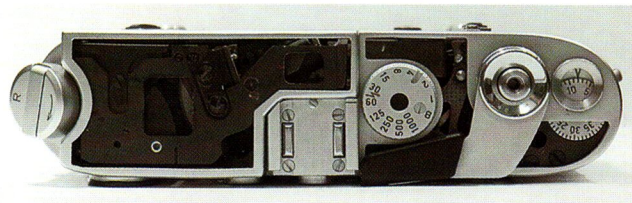
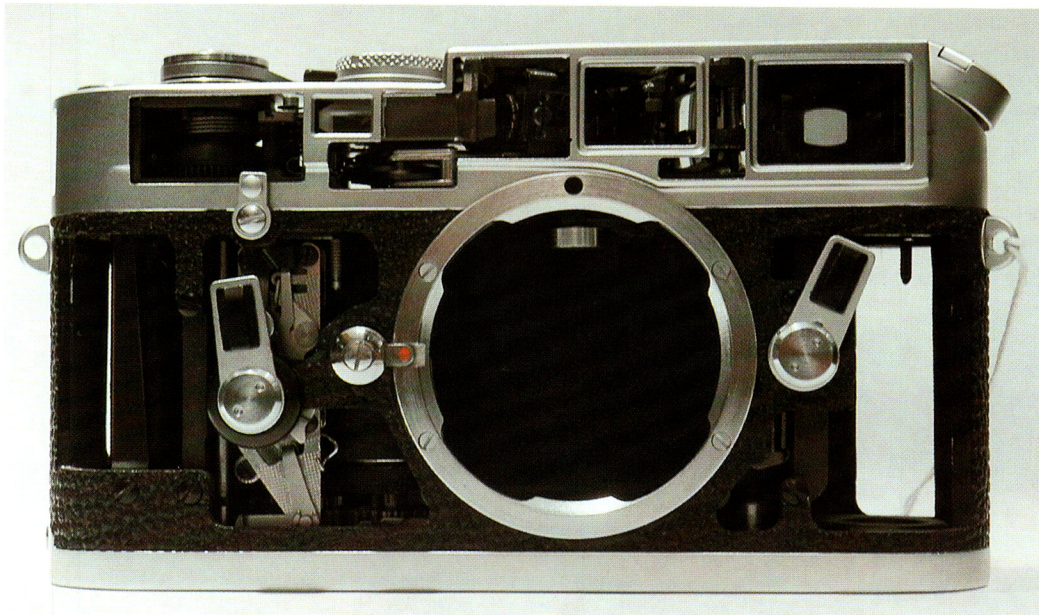
manufactured until 1976, up to serial number 1412550. Produced only with chrome finish, a small number of units with the possibility of attaching a motor drive were also created. These cameras were custom-built for Carl Zeiss to be used together with medical equipment for photographing the back of the eye. In addition to the inscription, the motor driven Leica MDa or Leica MDa Mot can be identified by its black-finished controls.

Leica MD2

When the Leica M4 was replaced by the Leica M4-2 and Leica M4-P, the Leica MDa was also replaced by a new model known as the Leica MD2 for which production began in 1980 with serial number 1545301. The Leica MD2 offers the same performance features as the Leica MDa, including the same film counter, rewind lever and modified base plate for data registration. Compared with the Leica MD and MDa, the Leica MD2 is completely finished in black chrome and less than 2000 units were produced until 1986, up to serial number 1704800. The Leica MD2 marked the end of Leica production for specialist and scientific applications. The new Leica Camera company which took over from the Leitz family in 1998 preferred to concentrate production exclusively on the Leica M6 and its operational and commemorative variants.

	YEAR	SERIAL NUMBERS	
Leica MD	1964-1966	1102501-1160820	No viewfinder
Leica MDa	1966-1976	1159001-1412550	No viewfinder
Leica MD2	1980-1986	1545301-1704800	No viewfinder Hot shoe

LEICA M4



Leica M4 cut-away demo model.

Overview

The simultaneous presence on the market of the Leica M3 with finder framelines for 50mm, 90mm and 135mm lenses, and the Leica M2 with framelines for 35mm, 50mm and 90mm lenses could not help but cause some problems. Leica users were called upon to make an often definitive choice and Leitz itself was forced to equip the lenses with 35mm and 135mm lenses for cameras without corresponding framelines with complex optical accessories to be superimposed over the finder for correct framing. For this reason, in the mid-Sixties, design began of a new Leica that would be a synthesis of the two existing cameras and could replace them both. In the middle of the 1960s, 35mm rangefinder cameras with interchangeable lenses passed through a period of deep crisis because of the commercial success of 35mm reflex cameras. Unlike rangefinder cameras, in reflex cameras no limitation was placed on the focal length of the interchangeable lenses or the minimum focusing distance, nor did they require additional finders that were costly and sometimes complicated by the need for parallax adjustment. Leitz itself had followed this new trend, beginning production on the Leicaflex 35mm reflex in 1964. The Leicaflex had a number of technical solutions very different from those utilized on the rangefinder Leica, such as its hinged back, built-in exposure meter,

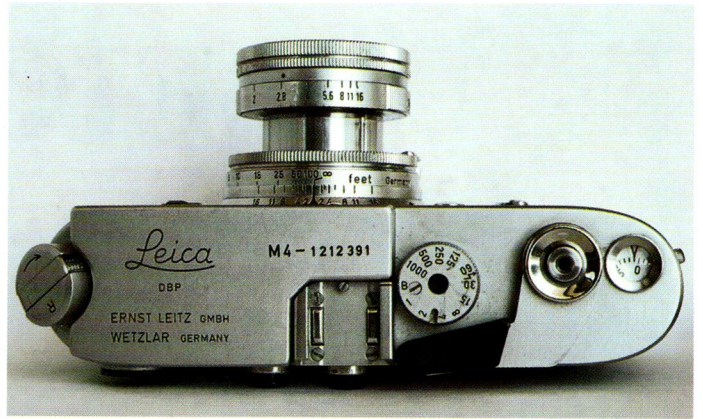
extractable rewind lever and 1/1000 sec. setting. But, despite the positive experience of the Leicaflex, the camera destined to replace the Leica M3 and Leica M2 did not incorporate any of these innovations—except for the rewind lever—and continued with the traditional options found on the early Leica rangefinders.

Tradition without renewal

The new Leica was released in 1967 under the designation “M4”. Like the Leica M3 and Leica M2, the Leica M4 has an elongated-shape body with rounded corners, removable base plate for bottom loading, speed setting dial that can be attached to the Leicameter, rangefinder with central window for frameline illumination and self-timer, film release and frameline selecting levers on the front, as well as the accessory clip attached to the top plate using four screws. Very

similar in appearance to the Leica Ms that had preceded it, the Leica M4 has a number of structural features that differentiate it from the Leica M3 and Leica M2. The film load lever is shaped at a sharper angle and its free end is covered in plastic. The self-timer and frameline levers have a new design and just a few other cosmetic details set the M4 apart from the earlier cameras. The self resetting film counter is identical to that on the Leica M3 and the clean front without raised corners on the windows is just like that on the Leica M2. On its top plate, the Leica M4 also has an angled extractable lever for film rewinding. The operational differences of the Leica M4 are its multi-focal length finder with 0.72x magnification and framelines for 35mm, 50mm, 90mm and 135mm lenses. Inside the camera body, a new type of film take-up sprocket is used with rapid film catch. However, the Leica M4 does not have any of the innovative features found on the Leicaflex. The Leica M4 does not have a built-in exposure meter, hinged back, any speed setting above 1/1000 sec. or new control layout.

	YEAR	SERIAL NUMBERS	
Leica M4	1967-1971	1175001-1286700	35-50-90-135
Leica M4	1974-1975	1380001-1443170	35-50-90-135 black
Leica M4M	1968-1972		NY motor



Leica M4 no. 1212391 with chrome finish; body only or with Summicron f/2 retractable mount lens.



Leica M4 no. 1266576 with black finish; body only or with Summicron f/2 black lens and black Leicameter.



From triumph to defeat

More traditional than innovative, the Leica M4 was unveiled in 1967 as the antithesis of German and Japanese reflex cameras, and even that of the Leicaflex itself. In presenting a new rangefinder camera designed following in the footsteps of the Leica tradition, the Leitz company wanted to demonstrate its unshakable faith in a photographic system that not only did it not consider out-dated, but which still offered much latent potential regarding mechanical precision, virtually vibration-free shooting, operational speed and superb optical quality. Mass production of the Leica M4 began with serial number 1175001 and continued until 1971 when

it was halted with serial number 1286700. Production began again (not without some hesitation) between 1974 and 1975 starting with serial number 1380001 and was stopped definitively with number 1443170. Almost 59,000 Leica M4s were built in all. In addition to the traditional chrome finish, during the early period, something under 5000 black enamel finish Leica M4s were also produced. Then, following persistent requests from many photographers, Leica M4 production was resumed in 1974 and the last Leica M4s were manufactured with a new, black chrome finish. The last of the Leica M4 models was built in Wetzlar and in Canada for a total of less than 6,000 units that also

have a black collar around the shutter release button. Like the Leica M2, a variant of the Leica M4 was produced to accept electrical motors. These models are marked "M4M" or "M4-MOT", and just over 900 of them were built.

In 1975, the Leitz company entered a period of major crisis that forced it to suspend production of its rangefinder cameras and concentrate exclusively on the manufacture of electronic shutter reflex cameras. At the time, this decision appeared definitive, but in 1977, production of rangefinder cameras was resumed unexpectedly. The new model on which Leitz based its marketing strategy was nothing other than a simple variant of the Leica M4.

LEICA M5



Prototype of the Leica M5 with external selenium photocell photographed in Solms (Photo credit: Luigi Crescenzi).



So revolutionary, yet so misunderstood

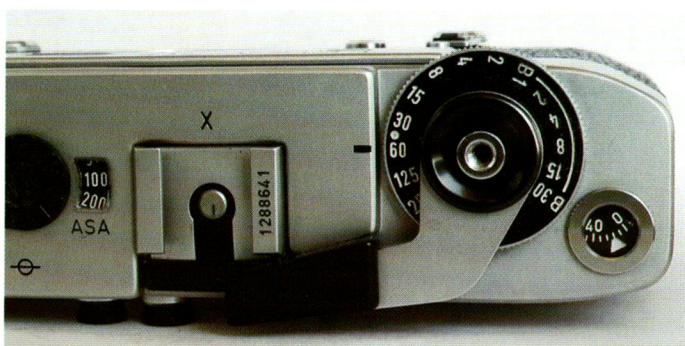
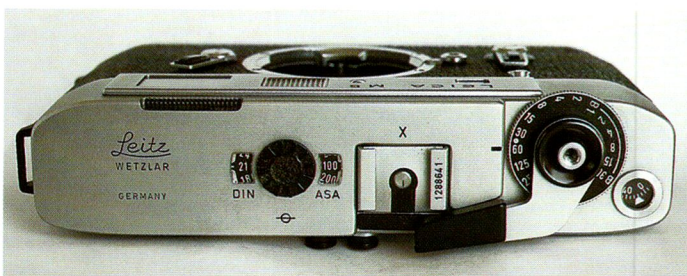
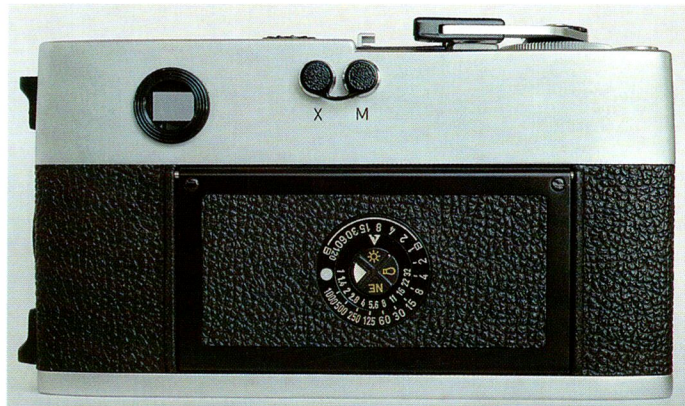
In 1971, the Leitz company began production of a new camera in the Leica M series that represents an exception in the gamma of traditional rangefinder Leicas. The new camera was born four years after the Leica M4 and, for reasons of continuity, was called the Leica M5. However, despite the fact it was touted as just the first in a new generation, it was unable to take-hold or generate any direct descendants. The main feature of the Leica M5 that sharply distinguished it from all previously-manufactured cameras, was the through-the-lens (TTL) photocell built into the camera. Seventeen years following the birth of the Leica M3, Leitz designers abandoned the concept of a Leicameter

attached to the speed setting dial, and four years after the creation of the Leicaflex TTL discovered the importance of exposure readings from the focal plane on rangefinder cameras. Nonetheless, the experience gained with the Leicaflex did not prevent the designers of the Leica M5 from committing a number of conceptual errors. In fact, the photocell was mounted on a small mobile arm that inserted itself between the focal plane and the rear element of the lens to carry out the light reading with the aperture closed at the working setting. The actual aperture

closing was not a major problem in normal finder cameras, but the shifting of the mobile arm before the opening of the shutter meant an increased number of moving parts inside the camera. This mechanical arm also caused incompatibility problems between the Leica M5 and some of the traditional-layout wide angle lenses and when the rear element was very recessed.

A non-traditional Leica

Apart from the presence of the TTL photocell, the Leica M5 was a completely different camera from the other Leica Ms, both in terms of technical and design features. Its shape, size, control layout and structural details belie an absolutely original and innovative design approach.



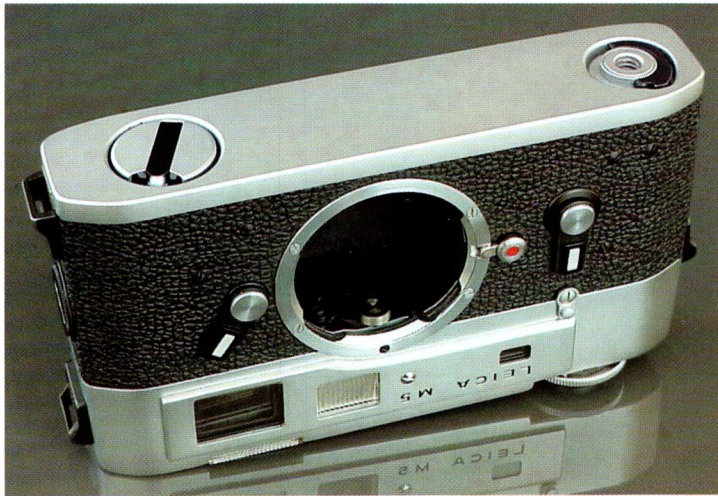
Leica M5 no. 1288641 with chrome finish, type 1 with two strap lugs on the same side; on the top plate, the film speed dial and hot shoe; the serial number is engraved on the flash shoe.



The Leica M5 body is taller and longer than that of the Leica M4 and other Leicas. Its sides are contoured differently—flat, no longer rounded at the ends and more curved on the front than the back. With these features, the Leica M5 body is more similar to that of the Leicaflex than the Leica M4. Its front is also completely different, flatter and less differentiated. The small tier on the top plate that separates the finder area from the controls is less pronounced (almost nonexistent, in fact) than on the other Leicas. The three finder, rangefinder and frameline illumination windows are enclosed within a barely-raised rectangle that is located

almost in the center of the front. For those used to having the finder all the way to the left on the Leica M4 and other Leica Ms, this was a major change. Despite its position, the Leica M5 finder is exactly the same as that on the Leica M4 with 0.72x magnification and built-in framelines for 35, 50, 90 and 135mm lenses. The controls on the Leica M5 are completely different from all previous models, however. The speed selection dial offers settings ranging from a half second to 1/1000th, with the full second cancelled. Settings for a second up to 30 seconds are located on the dial under the letter B and serve only for light readings and are not

connected to the shutter. The dial itself is much larger than on the other Leicas and is positioned around the shutter release button and the base of the film load lever. Despite this, the shutter has no special features, the flash synch is positioned between 30 and 60 positions and corresponds to 1/50. The film speed dial (6 to 3200 ASA) is also located on the top plate, together with a narrow slit through which the meter needle can be seen in the finder. As part of its original approach, the Leica M5 also has an extractable rewind lever on the base plate instead of the top plate, and for the first time on a rangefinder Leica, there is a hot shoe for the flash. The



Leica M5, chrome finish; base plate with extractable lever (Photo credit: Luigi Crescenzi).



Leica M5, chrome finish with original box and instruction booklet (Photo credit: Luigi Crescenzi).

serial number, starting with 1287001 is engraved on one of the two wings of the flash shoe. Even the Leica M5's strap lugs are shaped differently and placed on the short side on the left to allow the camera to be carried vertically. Only once production had begun was a third lug added on the right side to allow the camera to be carried in the traditional horizontal position. On the front and in their normal position are the three classic levers for the self-timer, film release and frameline selection. The film counter is a traditional self resetting type and can be viewed through a round window similar to that on the Leica M4 but shifted towards the rear of the top plate. Aside from its unique shape and the rewind lever, the Leica M5 base plate is also traditional in the way it opens and for bottom film loading. The new shape of the base plate makes it impossible, however, to adapt the Leica M5 to the Leica M4 motor, nor is any other type of motor drive available. Power to the exposure meter circuit in the Leica M5 is provided by a PX 625 battery

housed within a compartment on the left side of the camera. The Leica M5 does not have the classic engraved Leica name on the top plate, but Leica plus the M5 designation do appear on the front in all capital letters. The top plate has the name Leitz in cursive letters followed by Wetzlar and Germany written in all caps. Preceded by fifty-or-so units of the pre- or Zero series, less than 34,000 Leica M5 cameras were manufactured from 1971 to 1975, and about two-thirds of these are black finished. Only just over 10,000 were produced with chrome finish. The serial numbers range from 1287001 to 1384000.

A limited success

Heavier, longer and more expensive than the Leica M4, the Leica M5 did not enjoy the same commercial success among Leica enthusiasts that the previous Leicas had. Destined to be pulled from production after just four years, no variants were produced of the Leica M5, nor did it undergo any modifications of note. The idea of a TTL photocell inside a rangefinder camera,

while interesting, was not developed as fully as it should have been. After having created the Leica M5, the Wetzlar designers began work on a more compact rangefinder camera. Manufacture of the small Leica CL began in 1973 in collaboration with the Japanese firm of Minolta, but the TTL system with the photocell on a movable arm was repeated without any innovations. The concept of readings made using a fixed photocell off the light reflected from the surface of the curtain was still something Wetzlar engineers had yet to explore.

The Leica M5 was taken out of production in 1975 and the simultaneous halting of the Leica M5 and Leica M4 left a vacuum in Leica rangefinder output. This vacuum was not filled until 1977 with the return of the modified Leica M4, but the Leica M5 was never put back into production. Ten years following the disappearance of the Leica M5, a new Leica with built-in TTL exposure meter was released, but completely different from the Leica M5. The body of the new Leica TTL was very similar in style to that of the old Leica M4. For reasons of cruel fate, the Leica M6—the true off-spring of the Leica M5—was rewarded with the success that had been denied its forebear, but only because it utilized the external housing of the older, more traditional model.

	YEAR	SERIAL NUMBERS		
Leica M5	1971-1975	1287001-1384000	TTL CdS	35 50 90 135

LEICA M4-2 AND LEICA M4-P



Special version of the Leica M4-P for half frame. (Photo credit: Luigi Crescenzi).

The return

The suspension of the production of the Leica M4 and M5 cameras in 1975 seemed to mark the end of the Leica M era after just over 20 years. It seemed that Leitz had given up definitively a type of camera for which the market was too restricted and almost completely eclipsed by the commercial triumph of the 35mm single reflex. But only two years later, after repeated requests from the world of professional photographers, the rules of the market changed and Leitz decided to take up production of the Leica Ms once again. To re-launch the rangefinder Leica, Leitz did not choose the good-looking but ill-fated Leica M5, or even the small Leica CL which was not liked by camera purists. Nor did Leitz decide to expend superfluous energy in designing a completely new model for which the future was uncertain. Instead, the choice was made to follow a relatively safe road and, bearing in mind the successful return of the Leica M4 after the 1971-1974 hiatus in its production, it was decided to resurrect the 1967 Leica M4 model—10 years old but still much-

esteemed and sought-after. The new Leica M4 was unveiled at the 1976 Photokina and production began in 1977 with serial number 1468001. The new Leica M4 was not identical to the old model, and to identify it, the camera was christened the Leica M4-2.

Tradition and continuity

Given the fact that professionals who use the Leica have very specific requirements, Leitz decided to make only a few changes in the M4 to enhance its functionality. The body of the new Leica M4-2 is the same as the Leica M4. The top plate is on two levels, the corners are all perfectly rounded, the rewind lever is still at an angle and the base plate can still be removed for bottom loading. Aesthetically very similar to the Leica M4, the only difference in the Leica M4-2 is the striking absence of the self-timer lever from the front and presence of the hot shoe on the accessory clip. The shutter and viewfinder are the same as on the Leica M4 and the selectable finder framelines are also the same as those of the Leica M4 for the

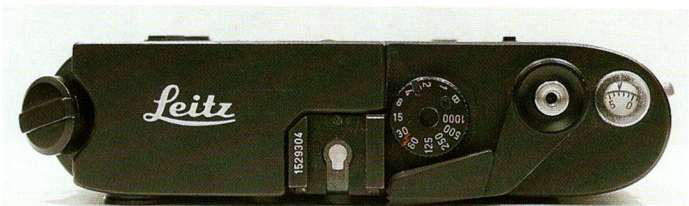
fields framed by the four 35mm, 50mm, 90mm and 135mm lenses. The most obvious changes involve the camera finish which is almost exclusively in black chrome with white engraved lettering on the top plate and front. In fact, it is the new Leica M4-2 logo that differentiates the camera at first glance. The Leica name in cursive lettering no longer appears on the top plate where it has been replaced by the name Leitz Wetzlar, or just Leitz, while the Leica name followed by M4-2 are engraved in capital letters on the front. On the front of some Leica M4-2 cameras there is also a small red circle with the Leitz name in white. This disk also appears on future models.

The era of the motor

The most important difference between the Leica M4 and Leica M4-2 (even if less evident) is the possibility to connect with a drive motor as a series standard. In fact, one of the most attractive accessories of the Leica M4-2 is the Leica Winder M4-2 that is mounted on the base plate of the camera. With the Leica M4-2, the



Leica M4-2 no. 1469656 with black finish without self-timer. The logo is on the front and the serial number is on the flash hot shoe.



Leica M4-2 no. 1529304 with black finish.



motorization of Leica rangefinder cameras finally became a standard feature and no longer a special option for just a handful of cameras that had been modified or custom-made in small batches. Power was supplied to the Leica M4-2 motor by four standard batteries or four nickel-cadmium batteries, and the motor permitted single or sequence shooting at a speed of up to 2 frames per second. The Leica M4-2 was manufactured until 1980, with a total output of less than

16,000 cameras, almost all with black finish and almost all produced in the Leitz plant in Canada. The last serial number utilized on the Leica M4-2 is 1533350. With the Leica M4-2, Leitz discovered the existence of a market parallel to the purely photographic and professional one and decided to enter it without a second thought. In 1979, on the occasion of the 100-year anniversary of the birth of Oskar Barnack, one thousand special edition Leica M4-2 cameras were produced in

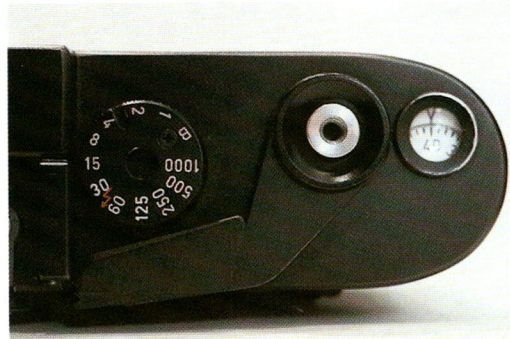
gold-plating and lizard skin covering, equipped with a 50mm F/1.4 Summilux lens, also gold-plated. These cameras marked the beginning of the age of commemorative cameras that Leitz and Leica would issue with ever-increasing frequency.

M4-P for professionals

The 1980 Photokina show saw the presentation of the Leica M4-P camera, destined to replace the Leica M4-2.



Leica M4-2 no. 1530296 with black finish.



Chrome finish Leica M4-P nos. 1620407 and 1643579. The 1643579 is a late, rare variant with the "M6 windows" dating from the M6 era using the top of the M6 itself! Both black- and chrome-finish versions exist, but only a few hundred in all. (Photo credit: Luigi Crescenzi).

Visually identical to the Leica M4-2, the Leica M4-P viewfinder was modified to include not only the four framelines for the 35mm, 50mm, 90mm and 135mm lenses, but also frames for the 28mm wide angle lens and new Summilux 75mm f/1.4. The framelines were paired so that two appeared at-a-time in the viewfinder: that

of the 28mm appeared with the 90mm, the 50mm with the slightly-better 75mm and the 35mm with the even-less-visible 135mm. With this change in the viewfinder, the Leica M4-P continued to utilize the same lenses and accessories as the Leica M4-2, including the Leica Winder M4-2. As on the Leica M4-2, the

Leica M4-P was identified with the name engraved in capital letters on the front, and was manufactured almost exclusively in Canada and only for the professional market. Starting with serial number 1543351, over 23,000 were produced, almost all in black chrome. Only 500 were made with a chrome finish. Despite the appearance of the Leica M6 in 1984, the Leica M4-P remained in production for some time. The final batch of 1000 cameras was produced over the course of 1986 and the last one bears the serial number 1692950.

	YEAR	SERIAL NUMBERS				
Leica M4-2	1977-1980	1468001-1533350	winder	35	50	90 135
Leica M4-P	1980-1986	1543351-1692950	winder	28	35	50 75 90 135

LEICA M6



Traditional outside, new inside

At the 1984 Photokina show and after an almost ten year standstill, the Leitz company presented a Leica M camera that was truly new and innovative while following in the footsteps of the technological and aesthetic tradition of the Leica M3 and M4. For the sake of continuity the new camera, christened the Leica M6, retains the by-now universally known and accepted design of the Leica M4 as seen in the latest model, the M4-P. The dimensions, shape and controls of the Leica M6 have remained exactly the same as those on the M4-P, and use has also been made of the same viewfinder with the same framelines, the same shutter, the same speed settings and virtually the same M4-2 and M4-P winders. The new feature offered by the Leica M6 is the inability to mount the external Leicameter and the presence of a built-in

exposure meter and light reading from behind the lens. Unlike the one used in the Leica M5, the photocell here is silicon and is not mounted on a mobile arm, but rather stationary and located outside the shooting field directly from behind the lens. In fact, the Leica M6 photocell selectively reads the reflected light from a small, 12mm diam. white disk located in the middle of the dark curtain. In the lower part of the viewfinder, two unobtrusive, triangular LEDs indicate under- or over-exposure and light up simultaneously when the exposure is correct. Because the light reading is always made with the aperture closed to the working value, the exposure meter is connected only to the speed setting dial. The manual dial for setting film speed (6 to 6400 ISO) is on the back of the camera in the center of the removable door and is connected electronically to the machine body. Power

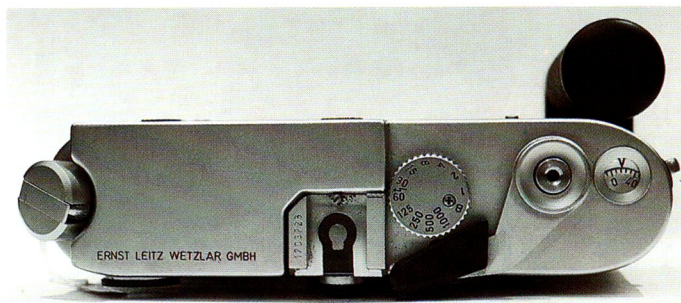
is supplied to the circuit by a 3 volt lithium battery or two 1.5 volt silver oxide batteries. The battery compartment is on the front in the position occupied by the self-timer on other cameras, and is protected by a large round cover. The name LEICA M6 is engraved on the front to the right of the rangefinder window and the Leitz logo, later replaced by the Leica logo, is engraved on a red disk located on the front to the left of the rangefinder window. Nothing is engraved on the top plate, and only in cameras built before 1988 does the name ERNST LEITZ WETZLAR GMBH appear. Leica M6 production began with serial number 1657251 and was destined to replace all other Leica rangefinders of the M family. The Leica M6 is manufactured in the traditional black and chrome finishes and numerous modifications and variations have been made on it, although its general



Leica M6 no. 1660185, type 1, marked Leitz with black finish; front, top plate and detail of curtain with disk for selective reading of reflected light.



Leica M6 no. 1706726, type 1, marked Leitz with chrome finish; motor body only.



appearance and design have remained unchanged. The first non-structural change was the addition of two rubber guards above the strap lugs to protect the camera from scratches and rubbing of the strap. The second non-structural change, the result of the Leitz family sale of the company in 1988, was the replacement of the Leitz logo with the Leica one and the removal of the ERNST LEITZ WETZLAR GMBH inscription from the top plate.

Evolution of the Leica M6

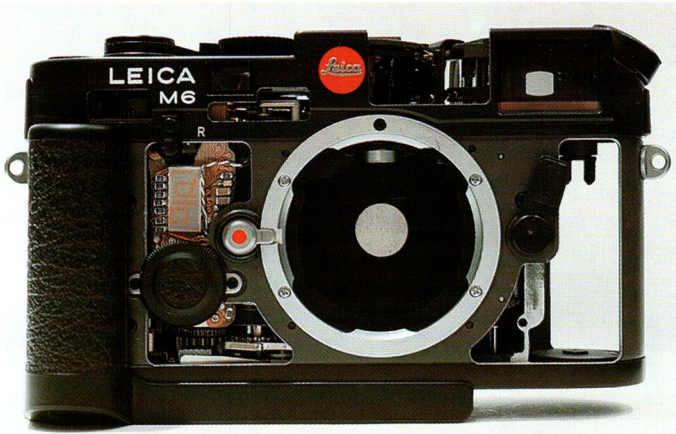
In 1992, a deluxe model of the Leica M6 was released with titanium finish and ostrich skin covering, but without any type of commemorative inscription or special marking. With the titanium Leica M6, a number of lenses were supplied with the same finish, including the Summilux 50mm f/1.4, Summilux 35mm f/1.4 ASPH and

Elmarit 90mm f/2.8. The titanium Leica M6 and its lenses remained in the catalogue until 1998. Aside from the different finish, the titanium Leica M6 did not offer any technical modifications in the shutter, exposure meter or viewfinder. Like the one in the Leica M4, the viewfinder of the Leica M6 has a magnification of 0.72x to permit the framelines of 35mm and 28mm wide angle lenses to be included. This viewfinder provides a much-reduced view of the subject, something not appreciated by those who use primarily 50mm or larger lenses. Instead of offering a new camera model or "eyeglass" type additional lenses to solve this problem, in 1997 Leica released the Leica M6 0.85 model with modified viewfinder offering almost the same framing as the M3 and includes the same framelines as the normal-production Leica M6 with the exception of the 28mm field

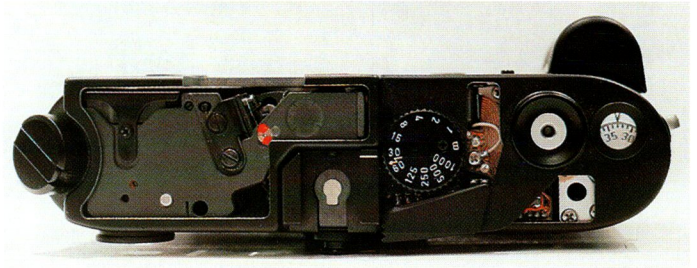
frame. The Leica M6 0.85 can be identified from the number 0.85 engraved on the bottom of the viewfinder, and was manufactured only in black and for a limited period of time. With the new viewfinder, the effective rangefinder base length is a couple of millimeters longer (49.9 to 51.9mm). A new M6 winder was also produced for the Leica M6, smaller in size and equipped with a front grip. The new winder, called the Leica Motor M, also connects perfectly to the older Leica M4-2 and M4-P cameras. Power is supplied to the very compact and silent Leica Motor M from two 3 volt 123A lithium batteries and it provides a shooting speed of 1.5 or 3 fps. The Leica M6 was produced up until 1998 in a total of 125,000 units.

Leica M6 TTL

In 1998, starting with the serial number



Leica M6 cut-away demo model showing internal workings of camera.



Leica M6, black, marked Leica and not Leitz; body only with 35mm f/2 Summicron lens.

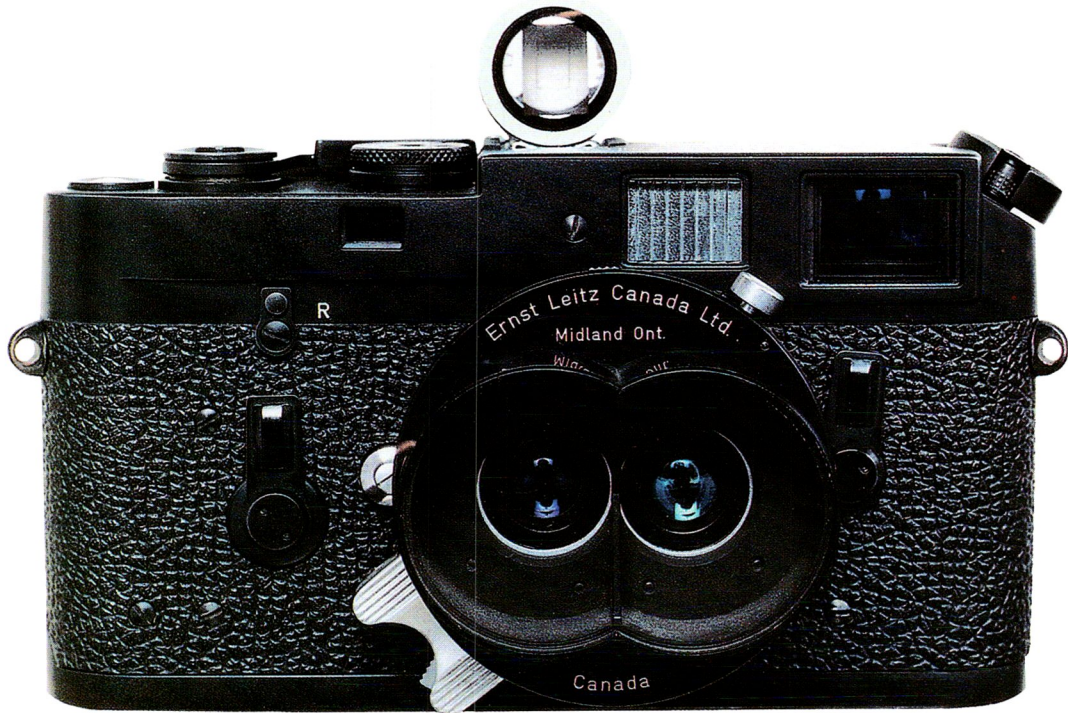
2,466,101, production began of the Leica M6 TTL that replaced the standard model Leica M6 and included a photocell for dedicated flash TTL. The body of the Leica M6 is slightly taller than the older Leica M6 and includes a third LED in the viewfinder showing flash status. Four

versions of the M6 TTL were offered, with 0.72x magnification and black or chrome finish, and with 0.85x viewfinder, at first only in black finish, but later also in chrome. To distinguish the Leica M6 TTL from previous versions, the initials TTL followed by a small lightning bolt were engraved on

the flash shoe. An OFF position was also added to the shutter speed dial to close the exposure meter circuit and prevent it being activated by mistake. In 2000, a new version of the Leica M6 TTL was released with a new viewfinder marked 0.58 in reference to its 0.58x magnification, and an effective rangefinder base length of 40.17mm. This new, especially large and bright viewfinder includes framelines for 28mm/90mm and 50mm/75mm lens pairs, as well as a single frame for the 35mm, while eliminating the frame for the 135mm telephoto. The Leica M6 TTL 0.58 is also manufactured in black or chrome finish and brings the number of standard-production Leica M6 models to six. Leica Camera sales strategy does not make any price differentiation in the various Leica M6 TTL models, and the reason behind the various viewfinder options is only to better meet the range of photographer requirements.

CODE		COLOR	YEAR	COMMENTS
10404	Leica M6	black	1984	28 35 50 75 90 135
10414	Leica M6	chrome	1984	28 35 50 75 90 135
10412	Leica M6	titanium	1992	28 35 50 75 90 135
10413	Leica M6 0.85	black	1997	35 50 75 90 135
10434	Leica M6 TTL 0.72	chrome	1998	28 35 50 75 90 135
10433	Leica M6 TTL 0.72	black	1998	28 35 50 75 90 135
10466	Leica M6 TTL 0.85	chrome	1998	35 50 75 90 135
10436	Leica M6 TTL 0.85	black	1998	35 50 75 90 135
10442	Leica M6 TTL 0.72	black	2000	Millennium
10475	Leica M6 TTL 0.58	black	2000	28 35 50 75 90
10474	Leica M6 TTL 0.58	chrome	2000	28 35 50 75 90

LEICA MILITARY CAMERAS



Leica M4 KE-7A from 1972, equipped with (uncommon) 3.3cm f/3.5 Stemar stereoscopic lens of much earlier construction and corresponding auxiliary finder.

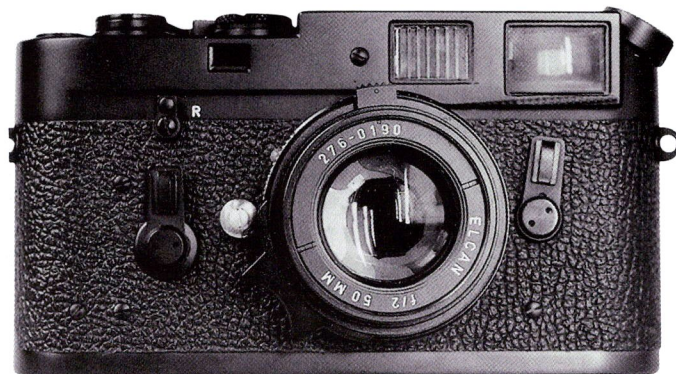
Without doubt, much of the allure of screw mount Leicas is connected to the military models with custom finishes, and the bayonet M series Leicas are no exception. Built during the Cold War or during periods of relative peace characterized by small and not-so-small local conflicts, the Leica military cameras with their limited runs and exotic exteriors have generated much appeal among collectors, but they also often include technical and structural variations that hold a certain interest. The first bayonet mount Leica M, the well-known Leica M3, was built for the

German army in 1957 in a total of 100 units with both the paint and vulcanite covering in olive green. Some of these cameras bear the inscription "Bundeswehregimentum" [Property of the Federal Army] on their back. In 1960, the German air force was supplied with twenty Leica M2 cameras with both the paint and vulcanite covering in a special grey-blue color. A second lot was supplied to the German army in the early '60s, but this time they were Leica M1 cameras without rangefinder and with modified viewfinder for 50mm and 135mm lenses. Once again

the paint and covering of the Leica M1 military cameras were in olive green. Approximately 200 cameras were involved, some of which maintained the normal framelines of the standard Leica M1 for 35mm and 50mm lenses. In the second half of the 1960s, a third lot was supplied, once again olive green-colored Leica M3s, but in a limited number of approximately 40 units. In 1970, another lot of about thirty Leica M4s with olive green paint and covering was supplied to the Germany army. But the German army was not alone in using the bayonet mount Leica. The US



Leica KE-7A with simplified 4-element Elcan lens.



army was also taken by this camera and it signed a series of contracts that, instead of concentrating on the finish color, specified quite stringent technical

specifications. In 1968, a number of Leica M2s designated KS15 and modified to use the new film take-up sprockets standard on the Leica M4 were built. The

cameras not delivered were released onto the civilian market with the initials Leica M2R. In 1972, in fulfillment of a new contract and bearing the designation KE-7A, just over five hundred black-finish Leica M4s were manufactured in Canada. Although technically unchanged from the standard Leica M4, the KE-7A were constructed with additional attention to the dust and moisture seals and were equipped with 4-element 50mm f/2 Elcan lenses. Again, the KE-7A series Leica M4s produced in excess of the number requested by the army were placed on the civilian market.

	YEAR	NO. UNITS	COLOR	SERVICE BRANCH
Leica M3	1957	100	Olive green	Bundeswehr
Leica M3	1966-1968	42	Olive green	Bundeswehr
Leica M2	1960	20	Grey	Bundeswehr
Leica M1	1960-1964	208	Olive green	Bundeswehr
Leica M4	1970	31	Olive green	Bundeswehr
M2 KS-15	1968	?	Chrome	US Army
M4 KE-7A	1972	505	Black	US Army

COMMEMORATIVE LEICAS



Leica M6 Colombiana bearing the logo of the Columbus celebrations. The example in the photo, no. 1,907,101, is the first of the sub-numbering (supplementary serial no. 1-01) that identifies the special cameras part of this limited series.

Between 1954 and 1975, the Leitz company produced over 400,000 Leica M cameras, if the Leica M3, M2, M4 and M5 models as well as the special M1, MD and MP models are added together. Up until 1975, Leica cameras were manufactured with the sole purpose of being utilized for taking photographs, perhaps making changes in their equipment or structure for special shooting conditions, or marking them in a particular way for individual customers such as state or public bodies and organizations. In 1975, for the 50th anniversary of the presentation of the first Leica camera, Leitz decided to label their cameras with a small commemorative logo. On the fronts of the Leicaflex SL2, Leica CL, Leica M5 and Leica M4 cameras in production at the time, the inscription LEICA 50 JAHRE with the number 50 crowned by two laurel branches was added. This small logo was engraved on the pentaprism of the 1750 Leicaflex SL and the front of the 1750 Leica M4 and

1750 Leica M5, as well as the front of 3500 Leica CLs. It seems that for the Leica M4, the demand was even greater than the supply, and the commemorative logo was added to other Leica M4 cameras. This was the period in which, following market demand, manufacture of the Leica M4 had resumed after having been suspended in 1971. At Leitz it was understood that the market value of a Leica could rise simply through the addition of a small logo, a small engraving or special finish. Customers seemed to go along with the game, especially collectors who, in buying a commemorative Leica, saw the opportunity to enhance their collection while making a small financial investment.

In 1979, following the Leica 50 Jahre or Leica Anniversary, a second batch of commemorative Leicas was produced. The occasion was offered by the 100th anniversary of the birth of Oskar Barnack, and one thousand Leica M4-2 cameras with the signature of Oskar Barnack and

the date 1879-1979 engraved on the back were released on the market. Special ID numbers were also engraved on the top plate. Instead of the normal chrome or black finish, the "Barnack" cameras offered 24-kt gold plating with special lizard skin covering. The metal parts of the standard lens, a 50mm f/1.4 Summilux, were also gold-plated. In addition to the thousand Leica M4-2 Golds, one thousand Leica R3 Gold cameras were also produced and dedicated (perhaps with less justification) to Barnack. If there is a thread of logic that connects the designer of the Leica to the Leica M's, there is absolutely nothing that could link him to the reflex, and even less to the electronic reflexes.

The year 1983 saw the continuation of the in-house celebrations, and on the occasion of the 70th birthday of the 1913 prototype, 2500 Leica M4-Ps with chrome instead of the standard black finish were released. The engraving on the back of these special cameras reads "Leica 1913-1983"



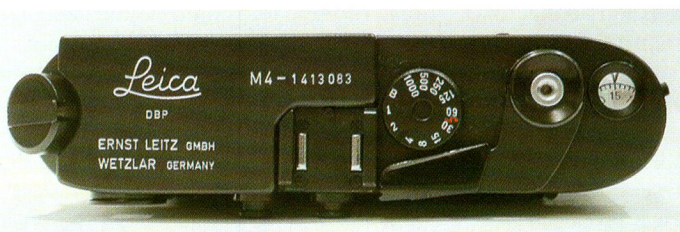
Leica M4-3 no. 1527375, gold finish from 1979 for 100th anniversary of Barnack's birth; body only or with Summilux f/1.4 lens; front, top plate and detail.



Leica M4 Jubilee (50 years) with Hologon Zeiss 15mm f/8 and finder.



Leica M4 no. 1413083, black finish from 1975 with Leica 50 year Jubilee; front and top plate.





Leica M5 anniversary edition no. 1376644.



Leica M5 anniversary edition no. 1362778.



Leica M5 anniversary edition no. 1362778.



Leica M5 anniversary edition no. 1362778.



Leica M3 no. 873000, gold-plated by Leitz. This unique piece was given in 1957 to Mons. Tiranty, Leitz dealer in France and friend of the Leitz family. The camera was sold at auction in 1983.



Leica M3 no. 1,000,001 first given to reporter Alfred Eisenstaedt and later gold-plated, but without any special commemorative marking.



Leica M6 no. 2500978 from 2000 in special "Black Millennium" finish similar to that of the M3.



Leica M6 no. 2501472 from 2000 in special "Black Millennium" finish similar to that of the M3.

followed by an alpha-numeric code derived from one of the letters making up the word LEICA and a number between 1 and 500.

In 1989, the dust was brushed off the birth date of the Ur-Leica and 1250 Leica M6 cameras with deluxe lizard skin covering were released on the market. This time, the metal detailing was platinum-plated, including the standard 50mm f/1.4 Summilux lens. Engraved on the top plate of these platinum Leicas was a large rectangle with the inscription "150 Jahre Photographie" and "75 Jahre Leica Photographie" with, in the middle, a stylized 35mm frame complete with double sprocket holes on the edges and

the year 1989 in the center. Again in this case, a special serial number was used to identify the series.

As we all know, birthdays never cease, and so it was decided in 1994 to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the birth of the Leica M3 in a special way. To avoid repeating the gold and platinum finishes used previously in 1979 and 1989, and lacking any even more precious metals, a limited edition of just 1640 pieces of the Leica M6 was produced with a special body. Thus was born the M6J ("J" standing for Jubiläum). The body of the Leica M6J was very similar to that of the Leica M3, while its workings and exposure meter were those of the Leica

M6. Compared with the original Leica M3, the Leica M6J does not have a self-timer, but the presence of the battery compartment cover, the angled rewind lever, the hot shoe on the flash clip, as well as other details, belie its origins. There is no inscription on the front of the Leica M6J, and "M6J" followed by a complicated ID number that includes one of the years between 1954 and 1994 plus a number between 1 and 40, only appears on the top plate.

In 1998, for the 90th birthday of Henri Cartier Bresson, Leica produced a single, platinum-plated Leica M6, housed in a case created by-hand by Louis Vuitton and sealed with a reproduction of Cartier



Leica M6 Ein Stück.



Leica M6 Royal-Foto, Austria.



Leica M6 Royal-Foto, Austria, detail (photos on this page by Luigi Crescenzi).

Bresson's own signature. The camera was put up for auction and the proceeds donated to charity.

In 1999, the 150 years of activity of the Wetzlar Optical Institute were commemorated with a special edition of 150 Leica M6 cameras. The first two

thousand Leica M6's manufactured in the year 2000 were named the Black Paint Millennium Edition and were fitted out in a way similar to the Leica M6J in order to resemble the Leica M3, but unlike the Leica M6J they were finished in black with serial numbers from 2500000 to 2502000.

Made-to-order Leicas

Not content with having begun to celebrate important in-house dates, Leitz also accepted to commemorate some events that had absolutely nothing to do with the company, following their 1972 initiative to place the Olympic logo on 1200 Leicaflex in honor of the Munich games. In 1982, this was repeated on a more modest scale when a triangular logo was included on 200 Leica M4-P cameras to commemorate a Canadian expedition to Mount Everest. Following the passage of ownership from the Leitz family to Leica Camera, the new management showed itself to be particularly amenable to celebratory initiatives, both company-related and those suggested by friends, customers, dealers and even individuals totally outside the photographic milieu. With just a few exceptions, this mania

	YEAR	N° UNITS	FINISH	LENS
Leica M4 50 Jahre	1975	1750	Black	
Leica M5 50 Jahre	1975	1750	Black or chrome	
Leica CL 50 Jahre	1975	3500	Black	
Leica M4-2 1879-1979	1979	1000	Gold	50mm f/1.4
Leica M4P 1913-1983	1983	2500	Silver chrome	
Leica M6 75 th Leica	1989	1250	Platinum	50mm f/1.4
Leica M6J 40 th Leica M3	1994	1640	Silver chrome	50mm f/2.8
Leica M6 150 Jahre	1999	150	Platinum	
Leica M6 Millennium	2000	2000	Black	50mm f/2.8



Two custom Leica M6s produced by Solms. The first, dedicated to Ghester Sartorius, is part of a small series of cameras made for members of the Leica Photography Group. The second, with titanium finish, is the recognition awarded to the owner of Leicatime.



Leica M6 LHSA from 1993, dedicated to the 25th anniversary of the Leica Historical Society of America.

virtually ignored the Leica reflex and centered almost exclusively on the last-remaining rangefinder Leica in production, the Leica M6. Starting in 1987, this camera found itself specially engraved and finished to commemorate a wide range of events, but always in very small lots numbering a minimum of a few dozen units and a maximum of a few hundred. Among these were 100 Leica M6Gs in 1987 for the Zürich Leica Center, 40 Leica LHSA's in 1988, 125 Leica M6s for its Japanese dealer, 200 Leica M6 Colombos, 268 Leica M6 Roosters for the Schmidt Group, 101 Leica M6 Royal Foto for Austria and 150 Leica M6 LHSA's dated 1993 for the 25th anniversary of the Association. Over the course of 1994, 100 silver Leica M6s were dedicated to Foto Ganz of Zürich as well as 350 Leica M6 Golds to the Sultan of Brunei, 100 silver Leica M6s to the centennial of the Royal Photographic Society and over 500 Leica M6 Traveller Sets with special finish. In

1995, 150 silver-finish Leica M6s with blue leather were dedicated to the 20th anniversary of the Leica Historical Society, 700 Leica M6s Golds for Thailand, 300 silver Leica M6s for the Chinese Year of the Dragon, 200 silver Leica M6s for the marriage of the Prince of Denmark and an additional 250 platinum Leica M6s to commemorate the 25th year of the reign of the Sultan of Brunei. In 1996, the demo Leica M6s given to potential customers to try and which then entered the normal sales circuit were produced, and the same year also saw the production of 200 platinum Leica M6's for the centennial of the death of Austrian composer Anton Bruckner, as well as 150 Leica M6s for the 125th anniversary of the Schmidt Group, yet another 150 platinum Leica M6s for the Sultan of Brunei, as well as the over 996 specially-packaged Leica M6s Ein Stuck. In 1999, 50 chrome Leica M6s were produced for the 50th anniversary of the Jaguar XK.

Seven hundred gold-plated Leica M6s with special covering and equipped with gold-plated 50mm f/2 Summicron lens, were made-to-order for King Bhumiphol of Thailand on the 50th anniversary of his coronation. The proceeds from the sale of these cameras was to be used for a campaign promoted by the king himself to improve the environment of the city of Bangkok. Even the Leica M6 with serial number 2000000, a personal gift to the king from Leica Camera, was put up for sale as part of this initiative. Birthdays, centennials, jubilees, marriages ... they all seem to lead to the multiplication of commemorative versions of Leica M6 cameras. Many of these cameras were not destined for sale, but were designed to be given to individuals or important guests and, in fact, many reach the collectors market second- or third-hand without ever having been used to take pictures.

LEICA M LENSES



50/2.8 Elmar with collapsible mount, the classic standard lens.



50/1.4 Summilux, chrome, the new standard in fast lenses.

The birth of the Leica M3 also caused a change in lens production at the Leitz company. Although only a small ring adapter was needed to mount the screw lenses on the new bayonet mount cameras, obviously the multi-focal finder coupled with the rangefinder could only function at its best when new bayonet lenses were used.

From the mid-1950s to the present day, the range of lenses available for the Leica M has changed significantly. Starting with an original outfit of bayonet mount versions for the most popular screw lenses of the day, they then proceeded to create new lens systems that were increasingly faster and utilized new developments in optical glass and constantly-evolving schemes. The lens outfit of the year 2000 Leica M6 has little in common, therefore, with that of the Leica M3 from the Fifties. Nearly a half century of new production and sales techniques separate them in often very dramatic ways, despite the fact that each lens remains 100% compatible with all cameras in the Leica M series.

Even just following the broad outlines of this gradual-yet-irreversible transformation can provide an idea of what has changed,

even for a sector that remains securely anchored in tradition.

Standard lenses

The standard lenses offered on the 1954 Leica M3 were the 50/3.5 Elmar and f/2 Summicron with collapsible mount, as well as the rigid mount f/1.5 Summarit. Starting in 1957, the f/2 Summicron was also built with rigid mount, while the f/3.5 Elmar was replaced by the f/2.8 Elmar that remained in production until 1974, only to make an unexpected return in the 1995 catalogue as part of a retro revival.

For its part, the f/2 Summicron has undergone significant changes over time, both structurally and in its appearance. In 1969, it was recomputed and modified from seven to six elements; its structure and mounting were changed once again in 1979 and, finally, starting in 1994, it was manufactured in its new form with built-in hood.

In 1960, the Summarit was replaced by the 50/1.4 Summilux that was offered as the standard lens on some of the commemorative Leicas and was re-offered in 1994 with the new mount with built-in hood.

But the record for the fastest of the standard Leica M lenses goes to the 6-element f/1.2 Noctilux that first appeared in 1966, was replaced ten years later by the 7-element Noctilux f/1 and was also re-offered in 1994 with the new mount with built-in hood.

Wide angle lenses

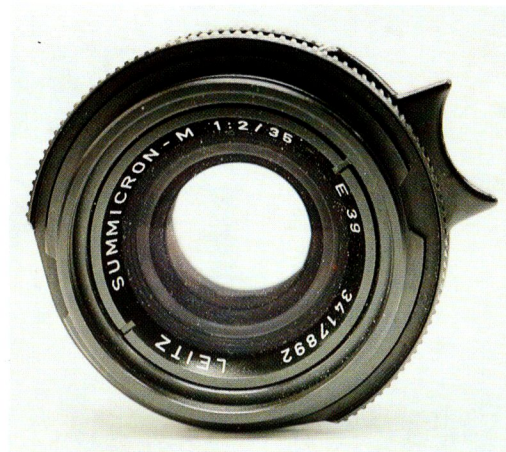
The only wide angle lens available for the Leica M3 in 1954 was the 35/3.5 Summaron coupled with the rangefinder, but to use it, an additional viewfinder was required because the Leica M3 did not display the corresponding frameline for this lens.

At the time, this was not seen as much of a problem, but soon the 35/3.5 Summaron lenses, like the subsequent 1958 f/2.8 Summaron and f/2 Summicron, began to utilize a lens accessory known as "spectacle finder" that was placed over the viewfinder and rangefinder windows. Naturally, this spectacle finder was not required when using 35mm wide angles on the Leica M2 with wide angle viewfinder.

The fastest of the 35mm lenses made its appearance in 1961 with the 7-element



21/3.4 Super Angulon with viewfinder, the classic wide angle.



35/2 Summicron.



35/2.8 Summaron with spectacle finder for Leica M3.



75/1.4 Summilux, black finish.



135/2.8 Elmarit with spectacle finder for Leica M2.



90/4 Elmar collapsible.

f/1.4 Summilux, replaced in 1990 by the 9-element Summilux Aspherical whose lens scheme was modified, in turn, in the 1994 version. While the 35mm f/3.5 and f/2.8 Summarons were removed from production, the continuous modification of the lens schemes did not spare the f/2

Summicron which was first recomputed in 1969 and again in 1979, to be replaced in 1997 by the 35/2 Summicron ASPH. Manufacture of the super wide angle screw mount 21/4 Super Angulon began in 1958, and this lens could also be used on the Leica M3 and M2 with adapter ring. The

Super Angulon of course used an auxiliary viewfinder and was coupled with the rangefinder, but with some limitations. Upped to a speed of f/3.4 in 1963, the Super Angulon was replaced in 1980 by the Elmarit of the same focal length with speed of f/2.8 and then, finally, in 1997



Visoflex III adapter for use with long telephoto and macro lenses on the Leica M.



65/3.5 Elmar, black finish.

by the f/2.8 Elmarit ASPH.

Following a brief flirt with the Carl Zeiss 15mm Hologon, in 1976 the 21mm returned as the shortest focal length that could be used on the Leica M. In 1965, a 28/2.8 Elmarit was inserted between the 21mm and 35mm to be used, with an auxiliary viewfinder, on Leicas older than the M4.

The 28mm frameline appeared as a regular feature in the finders of the Leica M4-P and Leica M6. The 28mm Elmarit did not escape testing and recomputing to arrive at its most-recent lens layout in 1993.

In 1996, the Leica M wide angle system was enhanced with a 24mm in the guise of a f/2.8 Elmarit ASPH, unusable, however, without an auxiliary viewfinder. In 1998, somewhat contradicting its own corporate philosophy, Leica released the multi-focal length f/4 Tri-Elmar ASPH that could be utilized for wide angle shooting at 28mm or 35mm focal lengths, and for standard 50mm focal length shooting.

Telephoto lenses

For the RF coupled telephoto lenses, the original Leica M3 outfit included only the 90/4 Elmar with rigid or collapsible mount and the 135/4.5 Hektor. As early as 1957, the 90/2 Summicron was presented and this lens, together with the corresponding 50mm and 35mm Summicrons, formed a high-quality trio.

In 1959, a light, 5-element 90/2.8 Elmarit was unveiled, and in 1960 a 4-element 135/4 Elmar. For each of the focal lengths from 90mm to 135mm, different solutions with different lens schemes and different maximum speed were developed. To utilize the 135mm lenses on the Leica M2 with wide angle finder, a solution requiring the use of "spectacle finder" similar to that used with the 35mm wide angles on the Leica M3 was offered. The problem of the "spectacle finder" was not to be solved definitively until the M4 multi-focal length viewfinder.

The fast 135/2.8 Elmarit telephoto lens was released in 1963 and in 1964 the 90mm f/4 and f/2.8 Elmar lenses were recomputed and modified. A RF coupled 180/2.8 Tele Elmarit made a fleeting appearance in 1965, but the major news was the RF coupled 75/1.4 Summilux presented in 1980, the frameline for which was included in the Leica M4-P viewfinder.

The lens schemes of the 90mm and 135mm Elmarits and 90mm Summicron were changed once again in 1973 and 1980. In 1998 the 135/4 Tele Elmar was replaced by a 135/3.4 Apo Telyt and in 1999 the 90/2 Summicron was replaced by a 90mm Apo Summicron ASPH of the same speed. The search for lens perfection continues, even if the new lenses have high production costs and only a limited

number are manufactured.

The Visoflex system

Because the real limitations of rangefinder photography are most evident in the demands made by extreme telephotography distances as well in very close-up shooting, up until the 1930s, Leitz offered with its 200mm and 400mm Telyt teles, mirror adapters that transformed the rangefinder Leica into a fairly rudimentary but (at the time) acceptable reflex. The pre-war adapters were perfected in the 1952 Visoflex adapter and with the birth of the Leica M3, it seemed a foregone conclusion that the same adapters with bayonet mount would be made for all Telyt lenses even on the new camera.

With the end of the screw mount Leica, the Visoflex system evolved and the Telyt telephoto lenses were built with bayonet mount for the Visoflex II and Visoflex III adapters. Even after the release of the mirror Leicaflex, production of Leica M Telyt telephotos continued despite apparent logic to the contrary with the 400mm and 560mm Telyt lenses in 1966 and the 280mm Telyt in 1970. Manufacture of these telephoto lenses was only halted in the mid-1980s when it had become perfectly evident that the role of rangefinder cameras was strictly limited and that the success of the reflexes had rendered certain compromise solutions outdated.

INFREQUENTLY ENCOUNTERED



Massive 450cm 1:5.6 ELCAN "apochromat" lens prepared by Ernst Leitz Canada for the U.S. Navy. This is lens number three; probably less than ten were produced.



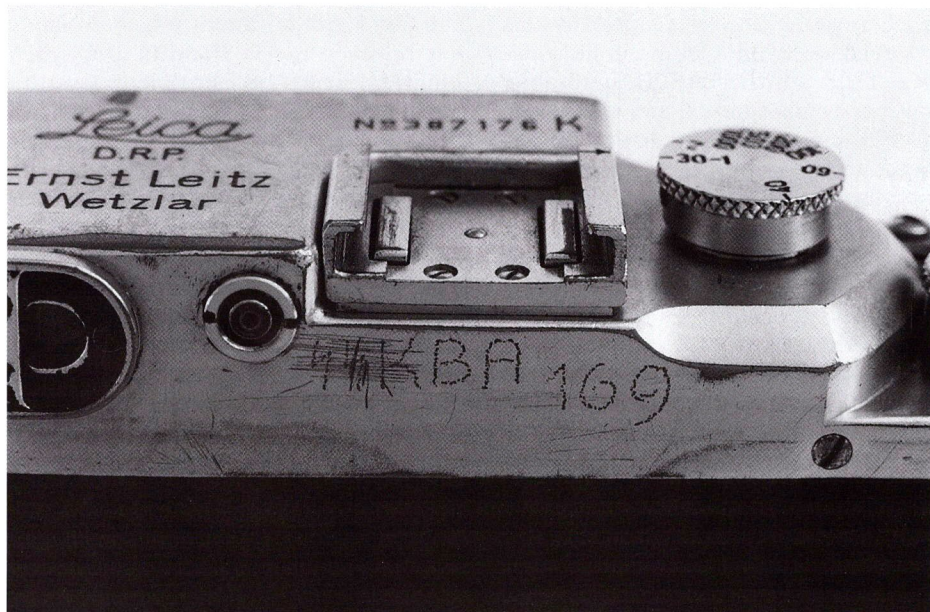
7.5cm 1:1.4 Summarit lens 1546006 with matching hood (circa 1959). This is a prototype Summilux.

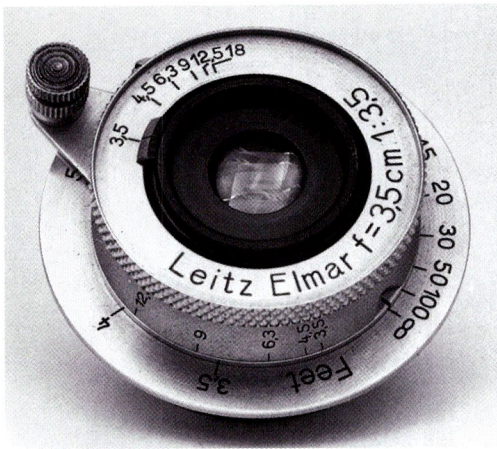
In over thirty years of research on Leica cameras, lenses, and accessories I have had the good fortune to inspect and document many lenses which only infrequently come to the attention of Leica aficionados worldwide.

The photographs illustrate a very few of my favourites. My research investigations continue and if you have an unusual item to share I can be reached via E-Mail.

Jim Lager
jlager@bellatlantic.net

Rear of Leica IIIc 387176K showing partially defaced SSKB engraving. This camera shipped to Berlin 15.9.42.

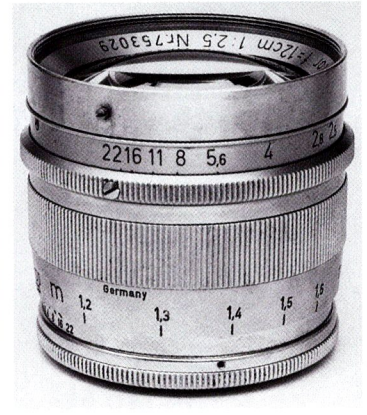




Nickel finish eleven o'clock 3.5 cm 1:3.5 Elmar lens (EKURZ) from early batch 143401-143600. Note the squared off focusing knob.



EKURZ lens 566922 delivered to Berlin in late 1941. Engraved Luftwaffen-Eigentum (German Air Force property).



12cm 1:2.5 Hektor lens 753029 dating from late 1950. There is no entry in the shipping records for this serial number. Predates manufacture of the 12.5cm 1:2.5 Hektor (HIKOO) in 1953.



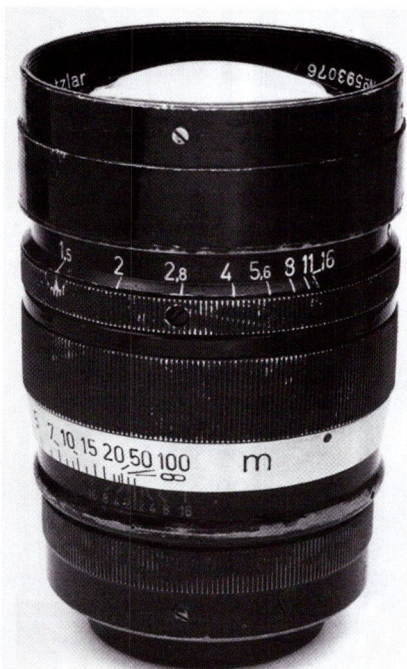
Xenon lens 491276 (circa 1941) with heavy front rim, X-ray application?



Xenon lens 491579 possibly for the Roentgen (x-ray) Leica.



Summar 5cm 1:2 lens 503441 (circa mid-1939). One of the last SUMUS lenses manufactured.



Black finish 8.5cm 1:1.5 Summarex lens (SNOOX) 593076 shipped to Berlin 28.7.43.



7.3cm 1:1.9 Hektor lens (HEGRA) 97157 prepared in December 1931. Now rangefinder coupled, it may have been produced originally uncoupled.



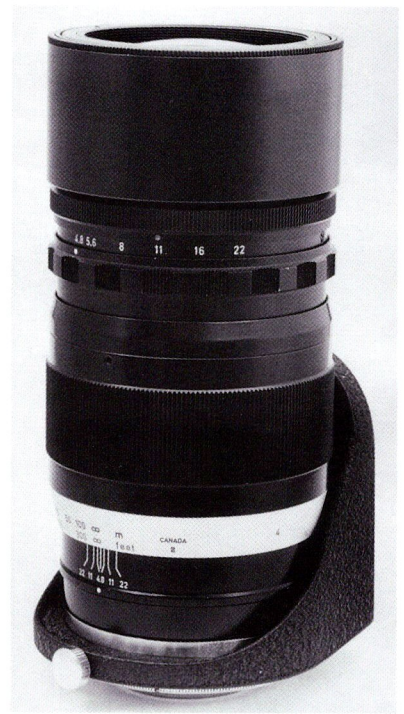
"Fat" 9cm 1:4 Elmar lens (ELANG) 135237 from early batch (135001-135700).



Rear view of 7.3cm 1:1.9 Hektor lens (HEKON) 97191. This uncoupled lens was prepared in December 1931.



Unusual black finish 5cm 1:1.5 Xenon lens 490614 (circa 1942) in non-focusing mount probably prepared for projection use.



280mm 1:4.8 Telyt lens 1850001 manufactured by Ernst Leitz Canada in 1961. Catalogued as 11902, this early version employs a massive focusing mount similar to that used on the four element 400mm 1:5 Telyt.



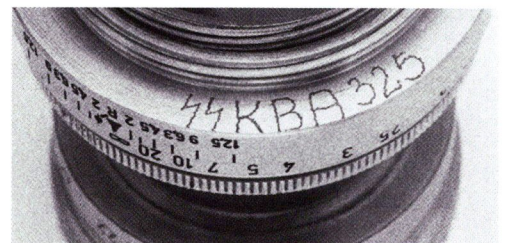
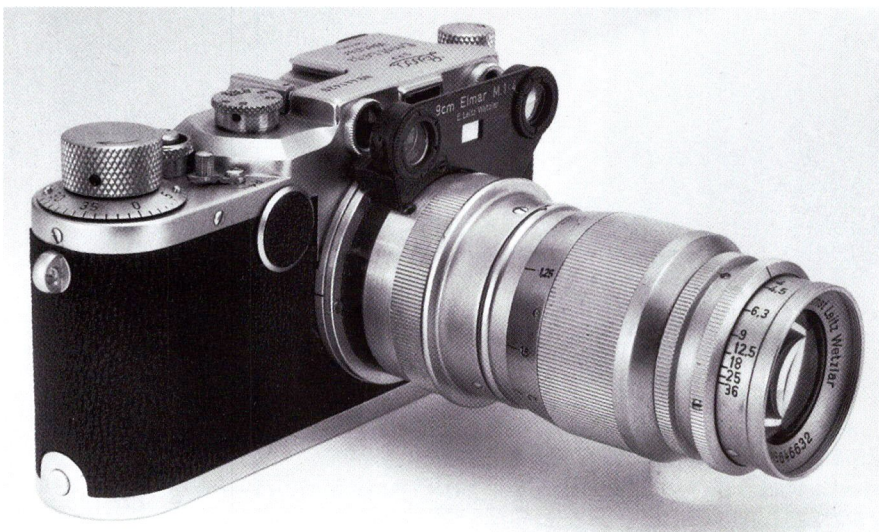
All chrome finish 9cm 1:4 Elmar lens 645961 (1947).



Unusual 9cm 1:4 Elmar lens 1010099 engraved "Eigentum der Ernst Leitz GmbH" meaning Leitz property. This specific lens is not entered in the shipping records associated with normal production lenses.



Engraving on rear flange of lens 593076 suggests use by war correspondent (KB=Kriegsberichter) assigned to the SS.



Rear flange of 5cm 1:2 Summitar lens (SOORE) lens carries similar engraving.

Another all chrome 9cm 1:4 Elmar lens 646632 (1947) in use with OMIFO 1:4 close-up accessory and Leica Ilc.



9cm 1:4 Elmar lens 1010062 (ILNOO) also not entered in the shipping records. Undoubtedly prepared as a test / evaluation lens before commencement of normal production.



13.5cm 1:4.5 Hektor lens (HEFAR) 539329 shipped 19.11.40 to Berlin for Luftwaffe applications. Note Luftwaffen-Eigentum engraving at rear of focusing mount.

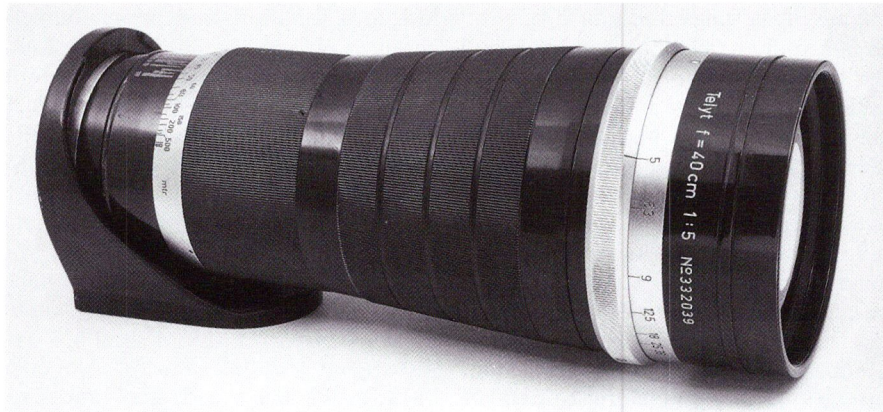


Grey finish HEFAR lens 575831 shipped 8.8.44 to Berlin. Lens head is black finish. Grey paint matches that applied to the grey IIIc and IIIc Leicas.



Black paint finish HEFAR 700670 (circa 1949) with "sharkskin texture" vulcanite at base.

12cm hood for the 12cm lens!



Five element 40cm 1:5 Telyt lens 332039 (TLCOO) shipped 16.6.39 from the earliest group of fifty lenses 332001-332050.



Ernst Leitz Wetzlar photo (circa 1956) showing the four element TLCOO 400mm 1:5 Telyt lens in use with the Leica M3, Visoflex 1, PEGOO magnifier, double cable release, and large ball and socket tripod head (KGOON). This style TLCOO was catalogued 1956-1967.



Very early 5cm 1:1.5 Summarit lens (SOOIA) 491931 shipped to Leitz New York 1.8.49.

COLLECTING AND MARKETS

The value of the Leica M6 and its lenses currently in production is known and the value is objectively high. Leafing through any price guide for new cameras we find that the price for an M6 TTL body is about \$ 2400. For the lenses, we find prices under \$ 950 only for the standard, slower lenses, with over \$ 2400 for lenses such as the 35mm and 75mm Noctilux and Summilux. These prices are high, but still basically in line with those for the best motor drive, multi-program autofocus 35mm reflexes, and even the lens prices are not that different from those for lenses built by the German and Japanese competition with analogous speed and focal lengths. However, the prices are intentionally high and derive from a market philosophy aimed at a select, expert audience.

For second-hand items, no longer in production and either used or collection-quality, there are no official price lists from the company itself. Prices vary significantly on the basis of camera and lens condition, on when, where and under what conditions the transaction takes place and, above all, on the basis of market demand and characteristics.

Defining the characteristics of the Leica M market is a complex task. Although more traditional collecting continues to favor out-of-production screw Leicas more than 40 years old, Leica Ms hold interest for a category of buyers that ranges from Leica-only collectors and more eclectic collectors, to nostalgia-filled, image-purist, neophyte amateur and accomplished expert photographers. The Leica M is still being produced and its history, including its collecting history, becomes longer with each passing year and the arrival of new models, but market demand remains strong.

The explosion of interest in photography-

related collecting in general perhaps artificially inflated the Leica name, but it also brought other names and marques to the fore, thus channeling the investments of some dealers and collectors into other possible points of interest. The high prices reached by Leica have deterred collectors of more modest means while, paradoxically, the record prices attained for some of the rarer and more sought-after Leicas have been beaten by other brand name cameras.

After having stimulated and nourished the fledgling photographic market, the Leica name now finds itself vacillating between drop-offs in interest and sudden reawakenings, moments of exaltation and stagnation while phenomenon such as counterfeiting and even organized swindles have emerged. Despite the disappointment all this has understandably caused among dealers and collectors, the Leica name continues to monopolize almost half of the entire collecting market and Leica products are still a critical presence in the price lists and display windows of specialist shops, in the stands of the most prestigious shows and in the catalogues of the leading auction houses in Europe and across the Atlantic.

Publications

There is even a Hove guide for Leica, updated periodically, that provides average prices for collectible Leicas. For each model, relative prices are given on the basis of camera age and technical and finish variations. For example, a first lot Leica M3 has a quoted value five times higher than a standard-production Leica M3 and holds the same position as a black Leica M3. A chrome MP is worth twenty times more than an M3 or standard series M2, while the prices given for a Leica MP2

are very high and are further doubled if it has a motor.

Without arriving at these extremes, there are also the M4 cameras outfitted for motors or motor driven with prices four or five times higher than standard models. The prices quoted for the M1 and MD are higher than the corresponding Leica M2 and M4, and a black finish Leica M2 or M4 goes for four times more than the chrome Leica M2 or M4. With the Leica M5, this tendency is reversed with chrome finish models valued higher than the black. The same is true for the M4-2 and MP-2 where chrome finish models are quoted much higher than those with black finish. These differences reflect the total production output of each model and type. For the standard Leica M6, second-hand, prices are generally much higher than for the standard Leica M3, M2 and M4 with just slight variations on the basis of color or finish, with the exception of limited run series.

Even the most authoritative guides to collectible cameras, such as that of McKeown and Kadlubek, give prices for collectible Leica Ms, breaking down their quotes in terms of model and finish, but with some discrepancies that may reflect differences between the US and European markets. In this regard, it would be interesting to compare them with estimated prices for Japan, the country which, in recent years, has taken a leading role in the acquisition of many of the Leica Ms in circulation. The publications only marginally involved in second-hand and collectible equipment offer very brief summaries without going into much detail. For the Leica M3, M2, M4-2 and M4-P, the prices given fall between \$ 700 and \$ 950, for the M4 and M5 between \$ 950 and \$ 1400, for the M6 between \$ 1200

and \$ 1400 and between \$ 1400 and \$ 1900 for the titanium-finish M6.

Auctions

Recent and less-recent auctions offer tangible, but often contradictory, data which reveal a shifting scene full of contradictions with actual prices that sometimes reflect anomalous and even paradoxical situations.

We examined the prices obtained at auction over the last two-and-a-half years. Involved were prices actually paid for bodies without lens or for cameras equipped with standard lens and sometimes a Leicameter. Camera condition varied widely and ranged from classification 1A (practically unscathed) to 5C (heavily used and battered, but still operational, or nearly). Remember that the numbers from 1 to 7 indicate the aesthetic appearance which matters much to collectors, while the letters A to D indicate its operating condition. Cameras classified as a 6 or 7 require maintenance, and those marked with the letter D are not operational but may be collectors items. Demo models such as the Atrappe and cut-away are also collectible.

Average prices were calculated for each type of camera, bearing in mind that the minimum and maximum prices for the same type of camera may differ greatly depending on emotional factors and momentary impulse.

M3

The first bayonet mount Leica registered widely varying prices depending on age and physical condition. Normally, these cameras are well-used, in condition 3B or 4B up to 5D, with very few in condition 2B. A first lot camera with 4 screws on the bayonet mount and 35mm lens went for as high as \$ 5200, while type 1 camera bodies with 2-stroke wind lever went for a minimum of \$ 470 for a piece in 5D condition, to a maximum of \$ 1200 for those in condition 5B to 3B. Pieces in condition 2B went for between \$ 1400 and \$ 1900. Cameras with standard lens, depending on camera and lens condition, brought between \$ 950 and \$ 1400, with up to \$ 1900 for those in condition 2B. Those cameras also equipped with a Leicameter brought, on average, \$ 140-190 more. Those with single-stroke wind lever went for similar amounts, from \$ 950 to \$ 1900 for the body only and from \$ 1400 to \$ 2400 for cameras with standard lens. The rare pieces with black finish brought around \$ 6700, and over \$ 3800 even when the black finish was probably recent. The same amount was even paid for a recently gold-plated piece. Military versions with olive green finish went for close to \$ 4700, peaking at \$

6700 for an above-average condition piece.

M2

Even the Leica with wide angle viewfinder and external film counter showed a wide variation in price depending on age and condition, usually not that good. The variation was more contained, between \$ 950 and \$ 1700 for the chrome camera equipped with standard lens. Usually the amount paid for a camera complete with lens was less than that paid for the two pieces separately. The peak for Leica M2s in 2B condition did not exceed \$ 1700. For black paint versions, prices ranged between \$ 3800 and \$ 5700.

M1

There were no substantial variations in the chrome models without rangefinder. The difference between button and lever proved to be insignificant for the price. These cameras were usually well-used, in conditions ranging from 2B to 5D. For the body only, sale prices ranged from a minimum of \$ 350 to a maximum of \$ 950, depending on condition. With standard lens, the price rose from \$ 850 to \$ 1200. The M1 with Visoflex went for close to \$ 950, with Visoflex and standard lens it reached \$ 1200, and with Visoflex and 65mm macro close to \$ 1300.

MD

Chrome cameras without viewfinder did not vary significantly and were generally well-used in conditions ranging from 3B to 3D and rarely 2B, with minimum prices of \$ 380 and maximum of \$ 950 and, on rare occasions, up to \$ 1200 for pieces in 2B condition. The MD2 model with black finish was generally in better condition, ranging from 3B to A1 and went for between \$ 1100 and \$ 1200.

M4

Among the pre-1975 generation Leicas, the most-appreciated remained the M4 found in conditions ranging from 1B to 4C with prices for the body only not falling below \$ 1000 and up to \$ 2100 in condition 1B. With the standard lens, generally the f/2 Summicron, prices ranged from \$ 1400 to over \$ 2600. The body only in black finish models did not go for less than \$ 2100 and even went for over \$ 2850, peaking at \$ 3300 for pieces in top-notch condition. The black model with Leica 50th anniversary logo went for more than the standard models. The KE-7A military version, generally fairly well-used and with Elcan lens, brought between \$ 7100 and \$ 9500, depending on condition.

M4-2

The second version of the black finish M4

was created to satisfy a selected customer base and the conditions of these cameras—generally good or more than good—show how little they were used. The body only for a piece in 1A to 3B condition went for a minimum of \$ 700 up to \$ 1200, peaking at \$ 1400 with standard lens. The gold commemorative version usually appeared with its coupled 50/1.4 Summilux lens and, depending on condition (generally 1B to 3B), went for between \$ 2400 to over \$ 4300.

M4-P

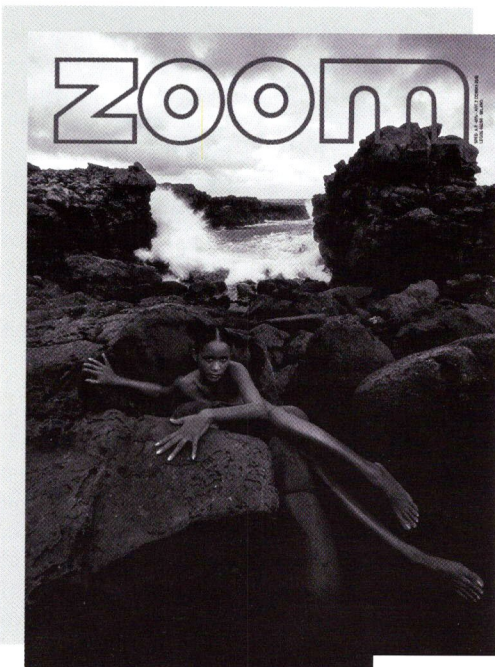
The third version of the black finish M4, notwithstanding the initial “P” that stood for professional, was generally in excellent condition, showing limited or even no use. The body only in conditions 1 to 3B sold for a minimum of \$ 850 to a maximum of \$ 1900. The body only in commemorative chrome finish was in even better condition (1B to 2B) and went for between \$ 1400 and \$ 1700. The chrome body with standard series 50/1.4 Summilux lens brought as much as \$ 2000.

M5

The ill-fated Leica M5 was found used in conditions ranging from 2B to 3D, going for prices (body only) of \$ 1200 minimum to a maximum of \$ 1900, but without significant differences between black or chrome finish or 2 or 3 strap lugs. Under top 1A conditions, the body only brought \$ 2400. The 50 Jahre Anniversary logo raised the price significantly.

M6

The current-production Leica enjoyed a certain popularity among collectors, both the older, non TTL versions with Leitz or Leica logo, as well as the commemorative versions or those virtually designed for collecting purposes. Standard models were generally found in 2B or 3B condition, while the limited series, in order to enjoy maximum interest, had to be in condition 1A. An M6 non-TTL body, black or chrome finish, ranged between \$ 1200 and \$ 1700 and with standard lens reached \$ 2100. The titanium finish model brought up to \$ 250 more. The platinum finish model with 150 year logo and 1.4 Summilux in 1A condition went for between \$ 4300 and \$ 5200. For commemorative models with runs of 100-200 pieces, sales were uneven. Auction activity ranged from nil to extremely high prices, peaking at \$ 5700 or \$ 6200, up to \$ 9500 for the Leica owned by the Sultan of Brunei. Over \$ 5700 was paid for the very recent Leica M6 Black Millennium, of which 2000 were made, a price similar to that paid for the 1954 first batch Leica M3 with 4 screws.



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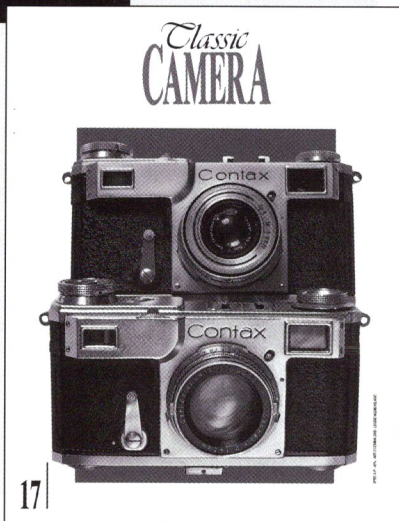
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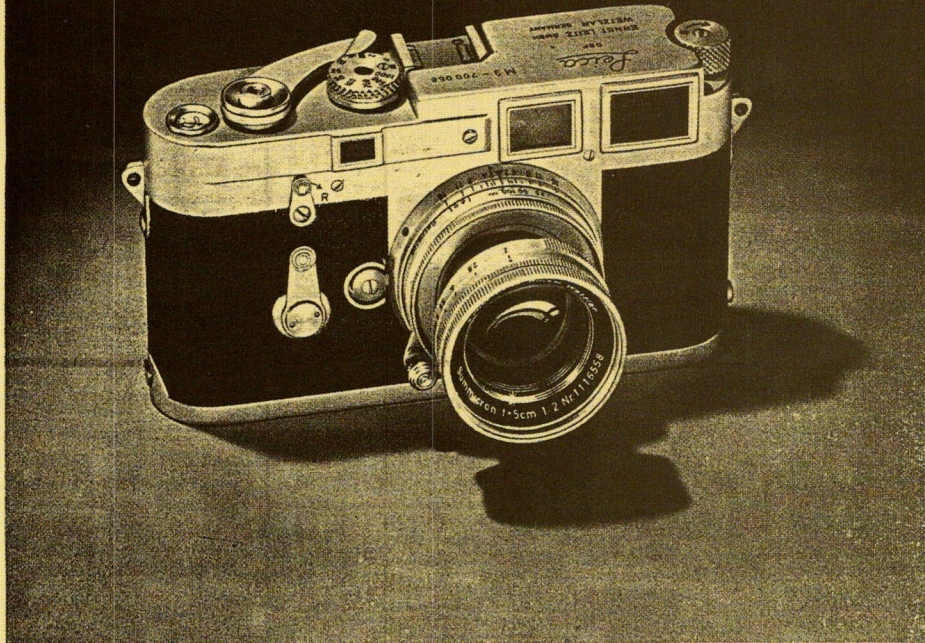
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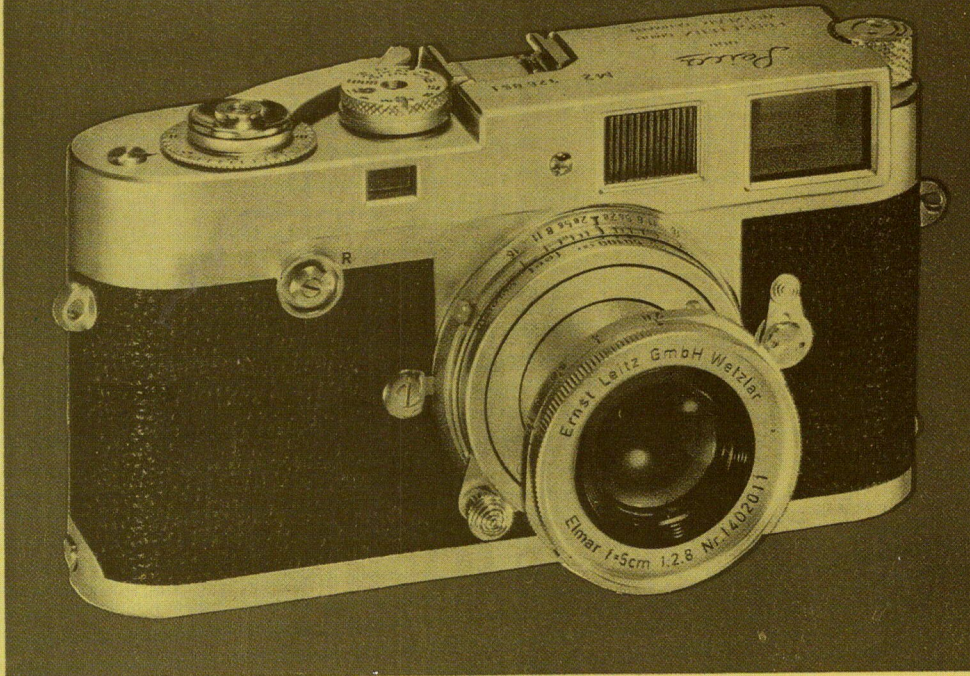
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5

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