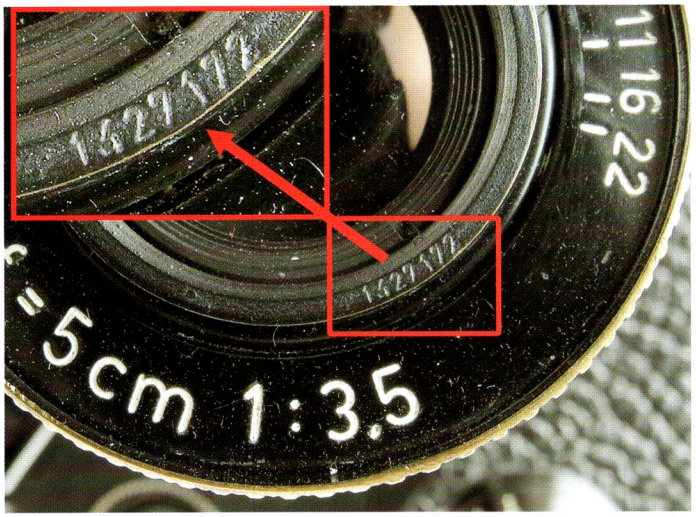
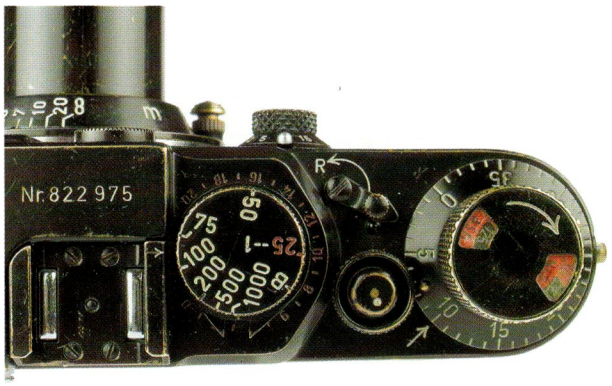
Classic CAMERA

29 | FEBRUARY





BLACK FINISH LEICA IIIF

Black was the finish of choice for medium and small-format cameras in the 1920's and first half of the 1930's, but was soon replaced by silver chrome from 1936 on. Leica cameras are no exception to this and even if the fixed lens Leicas were all black painted, the screw mount Leicas began using chrome in the early thirties and from 1937 on virtually all used this finish, apart from some well known exceptions in grey. The Leica screw mounts from the fifties normally have chrome finish on the metal parts not covered in vulcanite. For this reason, modern Leica screw mounts with black finish are noteworthy exceptions and behind each one is a story all its own. One example is this black Leica IIIF built to order in 1952.

The first Leica IIIF cameras produced in limited series with black finish were made on the basis of a special order from the Swedish military which in 1956 ordered 100 black Leicas with black finish lenses and features for use in cold climates. The request was fulfilled, the cameras being equipped according to specifications. The camera shown here is part of this lot.

The serial numbers range from 822901 to 823000 and the lens used is a 50mm f/3.5 Elmar with retractable mount with aperture marking and metric scale in white numbers. Unlike the Leica IIIF cameras manufactured during the same period, the black Leica IIIFs are not equipped with self timer mechanism.

This is the first time a IIIF for the Swedish armed forces has arrived on the Italian market. Gianni Di Benedetto, owner of Foto Ottica Cavour, has long "battled" to find the best pieces available on the Leica international collecting market and place them only and exclusively in Italian collections. The piece shown here can currently be seen at Foto Ottica Cavour, 34/36, Milan. Tel: 02.65.90.680. The suggested price is around 20,000 Euro.

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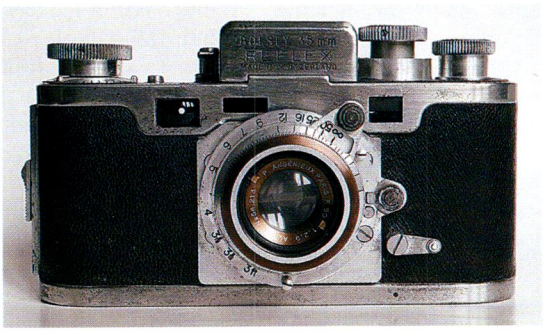
The Canon A series.

Exakta collection: interview with Clement Aguila e Michel Rouah



Quest for the lost Alpa

29

KAMERAS UM DRESDEN HERUM

Gunther Kadlubek / Wolfgang Beier
Lindemanns Verlag
Nadelrstrasse 10, Postfach 10 30 51 D 70026 Stuttgart

The German publishing company of Lindemanns in Stuttgart, which also operates as a mail-order bookstore with an extensive catalog that is updated often, has been involved for some time in the praise-worthy enterprise of bringing to light lesser-known German cameras through the publication of a series of monographs dedicated to them. They are German books written in German by German authors for a German audience, but despite the language barrier, they are interesting works for European and non-European collectors alike. Since Dresden was the cradle of German camera production, the fact that many books have been dedicated to the output of this Saxon capital was only fate. Following the publication of Geschichte der Dresdner Fotoindustrie by Herbert Blumtritt and other books on "Kameras aus Dresden", it was natural that those on the outskirts of Dresden sphere would jockey for their place in the sun. Historian Gunther Kadlubek, known for his Kadlubek Kamera Katalog, and Wolfgang Beier, heir of the house of Beier (remember the Beira from the 1930s?), have together canvassed fifteen or so manufacturers outside the Dresden orbit, along with thirty companies from the German camera capital itself. Although perhaps less-known than ICA, Ihagee, Altissa, Balda, Kochmann and Zeiss Ikon, those companies located to the south of Dresden, in Freital, Rabenau and Tharandt, do bear names of import in the history of the German camera industry. Two of these well-known and important names include brands such as Beier and Welta, for example. Although the roots of the photographic industry in Dresden date back to the 19th century, those on the periphery are just a bit more recent, appearing first in Freital at the turn of the 20th century with the Kolbe and Schulze companies, later to come of age in the 1920s with the founding of the Woldemar Beier company. Output ranged from bellows and plate cameras with such genteel feminine names as Erika, Edith and Lotte manufactured in a range of formats from 9x12cm to 6.5x9cm, moving on to roll film cameras with more esoteric and less romantic names such as Rifax and Beirax, on up to the Beier Klapp cameras, box cameras and unpredictable 6x6cm Beierflex reflex camera of the Thirties.

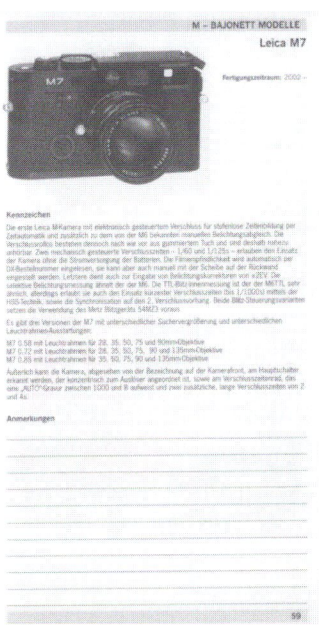
Following the success of the Leica, the Beier company adapted to the trends of the day with the 35mm Beira evolved from the original 3x4cm format Beika. Then, as we all know, the post-war period and nationalization of industry in what was known as East Germany brought about a certain rationalization in production. At Beier, the Beirax and Precisa bellows cameras survived for awhile, but output was subsequently oriented to the low-cost 35mm Beirette of which a very high number were built over a fifty year period up to the dawn of the Nineties.

The history of companies outside of Dresden is not told here through a list of dates and models, but through the unfolding of events, decisions and trends that intertwine into a story that covers a century of activity. Although the Beier company plays a decisive role, those of the companies surrounding it (perhaps not as successful and long-lived) are in no way secondary and are strictly tied to the former. The history of cameras on the outskirts of Dresden is, above all, the history of men. Succeeding Wolfgang Beier was Werner Beier and around them were other leading figures such as Otto Werner and Wilfried Eler and other industrialists such as Karl Pouva, Theodor Weber, Alfred Bruckner and Ferdinand Merkel, as well as shutter manufacturers like Werner, Stein and Binneberg. A full-ranging study of an industrial sector unjustly relegated to the background by more famous names such as Zeiss, Ihagee and Pentacon.

LEICA TASCHENBUCH
Dennis Laney
Lindemanns Verlag

In addition to its activity as publisher of first-run books, Lindemanns also translates and publishes a range of European- and internationally-published books of interest to collectors. Dennis Laney's Leica Pocket Book, published by Hove, updated in 2003 and now in its seventh printing, is being presented by Lindemanns with the same graphic layout, but with the text in German and under the title Leica Taschenbuch. In other words, to obtain an annotated summary of the output of this famous German camera company, German collectors make use of a translated English text. In the world of Leica, this too is possible.

In comparing the seventh edition of Taschenbuch with the previous edition (the sixth edition in English dating from the mid-Nineties), one immediately notes the jump from 160 pages in the older version to 280 in the new one. Naturally, in less than ten years the number of Leica cameras and lenses produced has not doubled, and the Taschenbuch continues to survey only cameras and lenses, ignoring other accessories that are covered in parallel publications. In reality, over the last ten years, the camera models added to those described in the 6th edition and now present in the 7th are the M6 TTL (1998) and Leica M7 (2002) while the only new reflexes are the Leica R8 (1996) and Leica R9 (2002). But, truth to tell, the compact and digital cameras not included in the previous edition have also been included. Among the lenses, those added include the Tri-Elmar, 24mm Elmarit, 28mm f/2 Summicron and some Apo lenses, but the number of new items is, in any case, limited. The sharp increase in pages is due to a different page layout in which each camera and lens has an entire page to itself (and sometimes more than one), thus avoiding crowding different model onto a single page. The list of Leica serial numbers has been updated and arrives at mid-2000 with serial number 2,705,300 for the cameras and 3,882,997 for the lenses. The Leica bibliography of books in English and German has been updated to include the most recent publications, but some of the older titles have been lost by the wayside. This volume, a bit less "pocketable" than the previous edition, comes complete with an alphabetical index of names and abbreviations, from AFOOV to Zeiss Hologon.



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TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO: THE CANON A SERIES

Canon A reflex family

A quarter century can either seem a very short or very long period of time, depending on one's point of view, the historical context or life, or productivecycle it refers to. For a camera or family of cameras and lenses, twenty-five years may also be few or quite a lot, but in most instances, 25 year old cameras are not old enough to be considered interesting to collectors and, despite the fact that they are technologically out of date, they are considered perfectly utilizable cameras capable of creating more than acceptable results. In that limbo between collectable and usable, some cameras from the latter half of the seventies hold above all a historical interest that grows with the passing years in relation to subsequent technological evolution. They bear witness to and remain the milestones along a path that, for better or worse, has brought us to the current state of camera technology.

Series A Canons

On the 35mm reflex market, the second half of the 1970s brought the arrival of a large number of cameras equipped with an electronically controlled focal plane shutter. The success of these cameras marked a point of no return and would condition the entire future development of the sector by opening the way not only to shutter speed priority AE, but also programmed exposure with automatic speed and aperture selection. This small revolution brought a new way of designing and building reflex cameras whose historical significance we can only begin to interpret and evaluate today, more than twenty years later.

Canon A reflex family

Canon AE-1 body only

The Canon company, highly sensitive to picking up signals of change and meeting market trends, developed a new avant garde strategy in the 1970's in the research and development of 35mm reflex cameras. In the first half of the seventies, Canon offered in its catalog a professional modular reflex camera, which was completely mechanical and capable of being motor driven, the well-known Canon F1, plus a lower cost mechanical reflex, the Canon FTb and a partially electronic, partially mechanical medium class camera, the Canon EF. Both of these latter cameras were put into production over the course of 1973, could use the new Canon FD lenses with coupling to the aperture simulator, but neither could be motor driven or offered finder interchangeability as did the Canon F1. Canon engineers were stimulated by the possibilities offered by digital technology and got down to work on a new camera destined to be the first in a new family of cameras. This new camera would be motor driven as a standard feature using small winder accessories and offer new sophisticated electronic functions, dual automatic exposure selection and modular component system that would make possible construction of a wide ranging series.

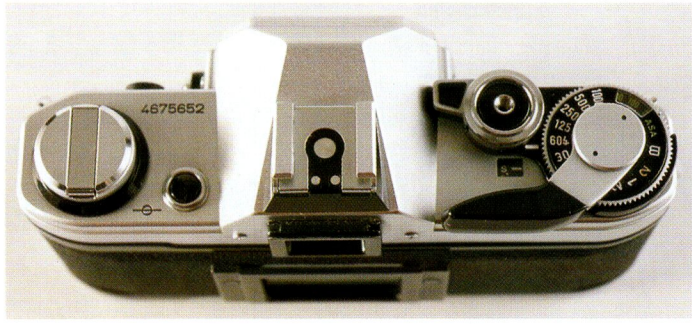
The first fruit of Canon's undertaking in these new production methods was an electronic reflex camera, auspiciously named the Canon AE1. The Canon AE1 was unveiled in 1976 and despite its still very traditional body, it fully reflected the company's new philosophy and production concepts and, to a certain extent, anticipated the manufacturing trends that would become standard in the early eighties. In fact, above and beyond its automatic features and motor driven option, the Canon AE1 made use of plastic materials and component assembly according to highly automatized assembly plans.

Canon AE1

The Canon AE1 frame was made of light

Canon AE1 and Canon AT1 compared

Canon AE1 with winder and standard 50mm f/1.8 lens



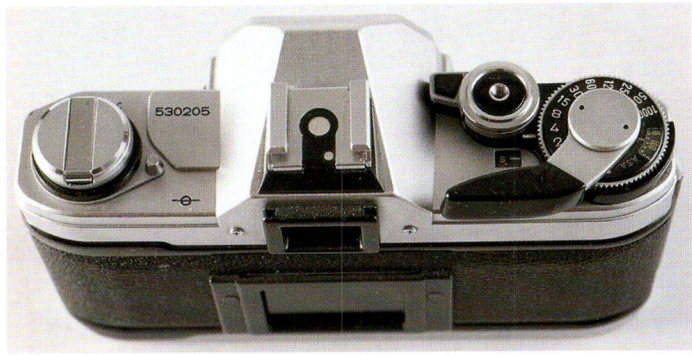
Canon AE1 body only - top plate with controls

weight alloy with base plate in chrome finish brass, but the top plate was made out of metal reinforced plastic with silver or black exterior finish. The horizontal travel focal plane shutter was electronically controlled, the TTL photocell was silicone-type and a microcomputer controlled all camera functions from exposure to shutter speed and automatic switching synch contacts in the finder. The Canon AE1 could come equipped with an electrical film winder called the Power Winder A that was mounted directly on the camera base plate and allowed a shooting speed of up to 2 frames per second. The hinged back could be removed and replaced with a back for data recording, and the camera could also be equipped with a Canon 155A electronic flash with hot shoe that automatically selected a 1/60 shutter speed and could adjust flash intensity on the basis of the distance of the subject and film speed. The camera body was relatively compact and light, weighing 590 grams without batteries which were Eveready 544-type 6 volt mercury oxide housed in a compartment on the front.

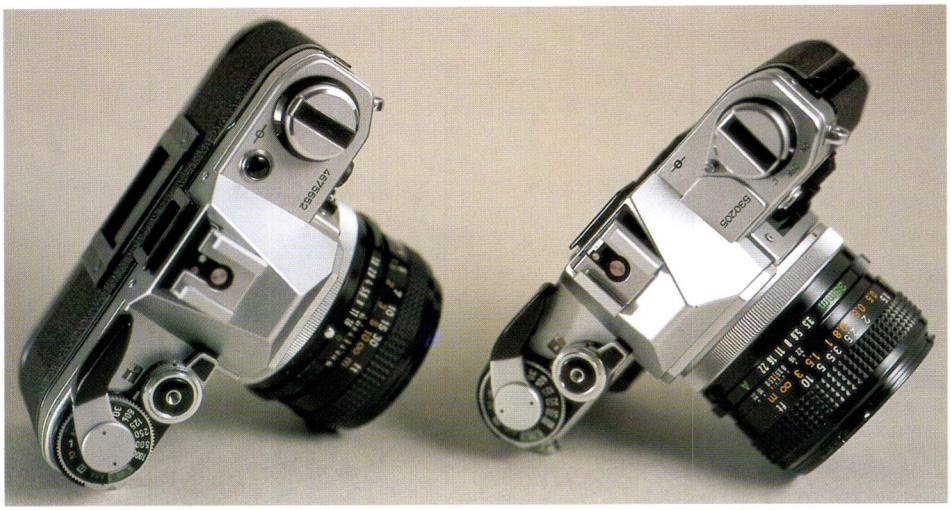
Despite its technical and operational features which were quite sophisticated and avant garde for the day, the Canon AE1 retained a traditional appearance with its main controls housed on the top plate. The long winding lever was located at the right of the top plate and was aligned with the large shutter speed selection dial that ranged from 2 seconds to 1/1000sec plus B setting. The same dial also included the film speed selector (ranging from ISO 25 to 3200) and next to this was an electromagnetic shutter release with cable threading and release lever also used for activating an electronic self timer. On the left of the top plate a large black button located near the pull out rewind crank was used to test battery power and to cancel the self timer control. Located on the camera front were the traditional flash synch socket, manual aperture stop down button, exposure data preview button and backlit shooting button.

The Canon AE1 operated with manual shutter selection and manual or automatic

Canon AT1 - body only



Canon AT1 body only - top plate with controls



Canon AE1 and Canon AT1 compared - top plates

Canon AT1 with adapter ring for 42x1 screw mount lenses

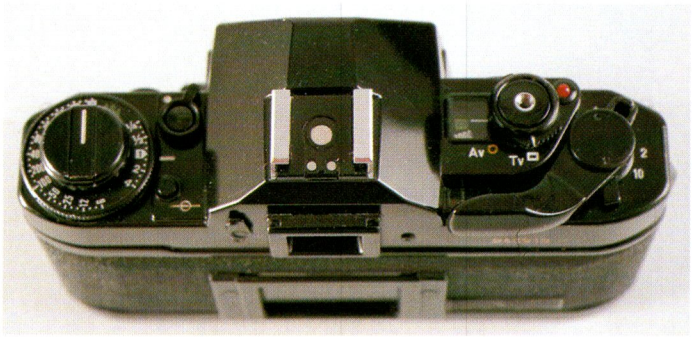
aperture selection with Canon FD lenses. A moving needle in the finder indicated the selected aperture and an LED indicated automatic or manual operation. The non interchangeable fresnel matte screen had a microprism ring at the center and horizontal exposure meter readings. The Canon AE1 was released onto the market at a very reasonable price given its advanced performance capabilities and reliability and a very large number of them were built, thus marking a point of no return and the parting of the waters between the worlds of mechanical and digital reflexes.

Canon AT1

The commercial success of the Canon AE1 pushed the Canon company to create an even more economical camera with the basic features of the Canon AE1, but incorporating fewer options. The new camera was called the Canon AT1 and was unveiled in early 1977. Identical to the Canon AE1 in structure, overall concept and with the same shutter, body, power supply, motor drive and accessories, the differences in the Canon AT1 were that it included a normal CdS photocell similar to that on the Canon FTb and did not have aperture priority AE. Even with Canon FD lenses the aperture had to be set manually using an exposure meter and with the aid of meter needles in the finder, similar to those of the Canon FTb. In fact, starting in 1978, the Canon AT1 replaced the Canon FTb in product catalogs given that it offered the same performance options, but with

Canon A1 with standard 50mm f/1.8 lens

Canon A1 body only



Canon A1 body only - top plate with controls

Canon A1 with winder and 85mm f/1.2 lens

electronic shutter control.

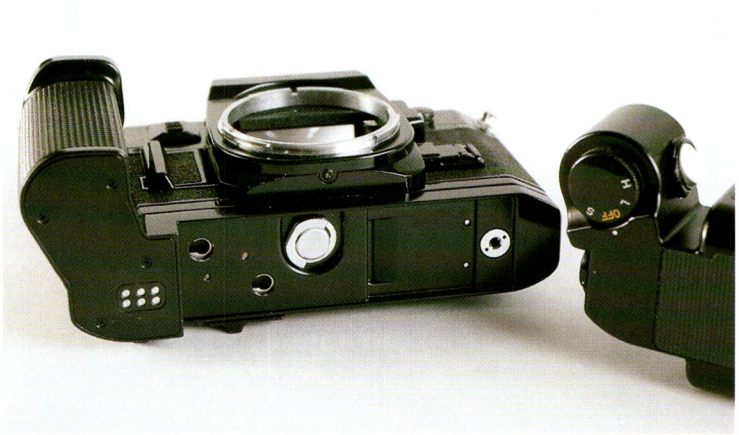
The controls on the top plate of the Canon AT1 were identical to those on the Canon AE1 except for the battery check button which was replaced by a more traditional switch aligned with the pull out rewind crank. The button for displaying exposure meter data and backlit shooting correction were taken off the front, while the button for manual aperture closure remained. Like the Canon AE1, the Canon AT1 could use the Power Winder A electric motor, the Data Back A and the Canon 155A dedicated flash, as well as all the lenses and accessories in the Canon system. The Canon AT1, digitally controlled, but without AE and offered only in silver finish was less of a commercial success than its older sibling and it was removed from the catalog in 1981 after just four years.

Canon A1

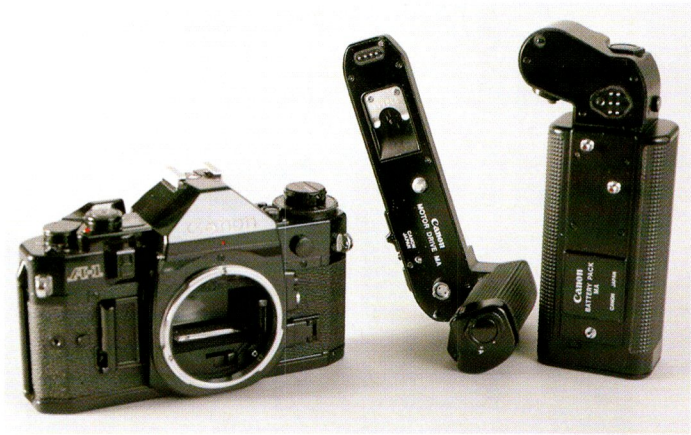
In April 1978 the Canon A family was enlarged with the presentation of the most sophisticated and highly evolved electronic camera of its day, the Canon A1. Like the Canon F1, the Canon A1 was produced in a black finish only and presented itself as a professional level camera. Although it did not have interchangeable finders, the focusing screens could be interchanged and it had a fast motor drive given that either the smaller Power Winder A or more powerful Motor Drive MA could be mounted to permit shooting speeds of up to 5 fps. The Canon A1 body was different from that of the Canon AE1 and Canon AT1 and utilized a different system of controls for setting its various functions. The electronics of the Canon A1 were highly refined and allowed manual exposure control, aperture priority AE, shutter priority AE, preset aperture priority AE or automatic program AE. The Canon A1 also offered Speedlite AE and AE with aperture closed

Canon A1 body only with motor

Canon A1 body only with motor

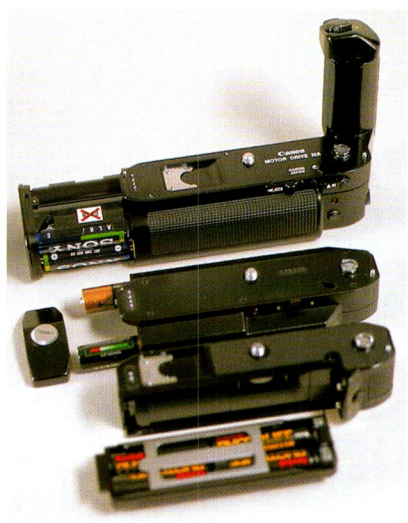


Canon A1 with motor



Canon A1 with motor

Canon A1 and motors



Motors for the Canon A family

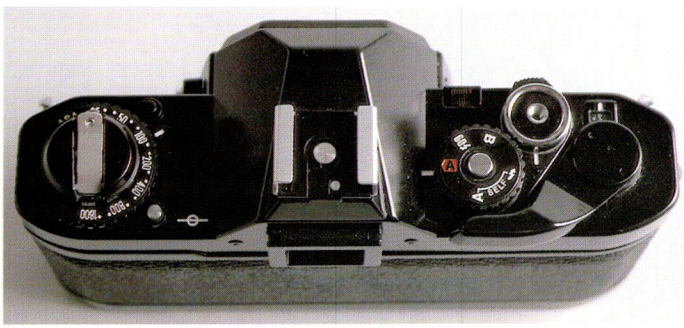
for depth of field control.

The Canon A1 was also unique in appearance compared with the other Canon A family reflexes thanks to its body that was more similar to that of the Canon F1, more complex control layout on the top plate and small, flat, pull out crank on the front. Its winding lever, similar to that of the Canon F1, was not aligned with the speed selection dial, but rather the main switch that also served to activate the electronic self timer. A second dial aligned with the large, threaded, electromagnetic shutter release button could be set to TV for manual shutter setting or AV for manual aperture setting. Selecting position P and aperture A allowed for dual programmed exposure. Aligned with the rewind crank were two film speed scales between ISO 6 and 12800 and exposure compensation range of +3 and -3. Other buttons controlled battery status, exposure meter data display in the finder and exposure lock.

Like the other Canon A family reflexes, the Canon A1 utilized a horizontal travel focal plane shutter with speeds of between 1/2 and 1/1000sec, flash with hot shoe, a button for pre closing of the aperture and a hinged, removable back that could be replaced with a Data Back A for recording data. Again, like the other

Canon AV1 - body only in black finish with winder

Canon AV1 body only in black finish



Canon A1 and motors

Canon AV1 - detail

Canon AV1 with FD series lenses and autofocus lens

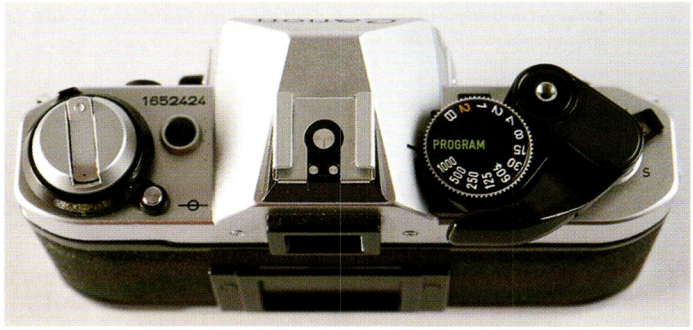
Canon A family reflexes, to supply power to its electronic circuitry the Canon A1 used a 6 volt mercury oxide battery housed in the front. The Motor Drive MA could either be powered using a Battery Pack MA with twelve AA batteries or cadmium nickel rechargeable battery pack. The motor could be activated from a distance using a remote control and could be utilized on H position for sequence shooting at speeds up to 5 fps, on position L for speeds up to 3.5 fps or position S for single frame shooting with automatic film advance after each shot. The Canon A1 finder included data for shutter speed, aperture setting and function setting on a display below the image screen. The red diodes varied in intensity on the basis of the luminosity of the scene framed and could be switched off to save battery consumption. Weighing 620 grams and just slightly taller than the Canon AE1 and Canon AT1, the Canon A1 was the top of the A family line, a serious challenge to the supremacy of the mechanical Canon F1, at least until the presentation in 1981 of the new Canon F1 equipped with a new electronic shutter and a number of automatic functions.

Canon AV1

In May 1979 the Canon series A reflexes were joined by a new automatic digital control camera called the Canon AV1 that simplified operation to the maximum. The Canon AV1 still utilized the body similar to that of the Canon AE1 and Canon AT1, still had an electronic shutter with speeds up to 1/1000sec, still used the same 6 volt mercury oxide battery and still mounted the same winders and dedicated flash, but it was lighter and more compact, weighing just 490 grams and lacking any sort of manual shutter or aperture selection controls. Next to a traditional winding lever similar to that on the old Canon FTb and threaded

Canon AE1 Program and Canon A1 compared

Canon AE1 Program - body only



Canon AE1 Program - body only - top plate with controls

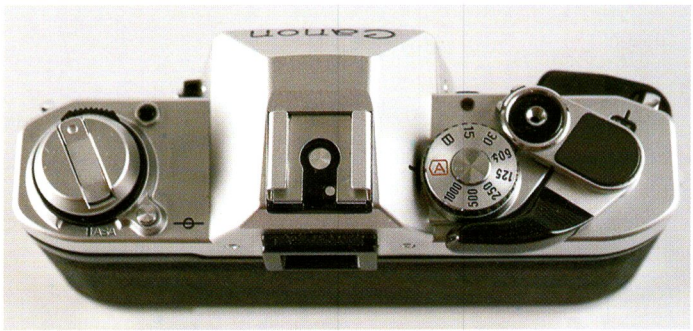
electromagnetic shutter release button, the Canon AV1 had a single, large, simplified dial with B setting, "A" position for aperture-priority AE and "A/self" position to activate the electronic self timer, plus "60" for manual synch with the electronic flash. Film speed could be set between ISO 25 and 1600 using a dial aligned with the pull-out film rewind crank and a button on the front allowed exposure correction under conditions of strong backlighting. In the finder, a traditional needle indicated on the meter the shutter speed selected automatically by the exposure meter. With the Canon AV1, the Canon company offered on the market its first completely AE reflex and first digital-control reflex with completely automatic shutter speed. In a certain sense, this was in contradiction to Canon's initial decision to offer only reflex cameras with aperture priority AE, like the Canon EF and Canon AE1. The Canon AV1 was manufactured with silver or black finish and remained in the product catalog through 1984.

Canon AE1 Program

After five years of successful existence, the Canon AE1 was replaced in March 1981 by a camera with the same name but with modified body and enhanced performance features. The new camera was called the Canon AE1 Program, the name itself offering a hint that its features were derived from the experience gleaned with the Canon A1 model. Reinforcing this impression was some of the detailing on the body and controls, such as the removable flat crank added to the front, the main switch aligned with the winding lever and the large shutter speed dial located next to the winding lever and threaded electromagnetic shutter release button. The shutter on the Canon AE1 Program was the same electronic controlled horizontal travel one used on

Canon AL1 body only in silver finish

Canon AL1 body only in black finish



Canon AL1 body only in silver finish - top plate with controls

Canon AL1 body only in black finish - top plate with controls

the old Canon AE1 and Canon A1, with speeds ranging from 1/2 to 1/1000sec plus B setting. In addition to manual speed selection, the same dial could be used to select the Program setting for automatic speed/aperture setting. Shooting data, speed or aperture and selected functions were displayed on the right of the finder using LEDs.

Up-close, the Canon AE1 Program betrayed other similarities with the Canon A1, such as interchangeability of focusing screens, option of mounting the Motor Drive MA, Power Winder A or new Power Winder A2. As on the Canon A1, the buttons on the front were used to lock the exposure memory and activate the finder display.

The Canon AE1 Program was just slightly lighter than the old Canon AE1 and was offered in either silver or black finish. The Canon AE1 Program could utilize the same Data Back and dedicated flash as the Canon AE1 and included the electronic self timer, manual depth of field button and button to check the charge level of the 6 volt mercury oxide battery. The Canon AE1 Program was first produced alongside, and later replaced, the Canon AE1 and remained in the catalog for a long time, until the birth of the Canon EOS system.

Canon AL1

In March 1982 the last in the Canon A reflex family was presented. It had an automatic electronic focus assist system, horizontal travel focal plane shutter and automatic speed selection from 1/2 to 1/1000sec, as well as manual speed selection between 1/15 and 1/1000sec plus B setting. Compared with the Canon AV1 (which it resembled in terms of body, weight and structure), the Canon AL1 differed for its power supply of two 1.5 volt AAA batteries housed in a contoured hand grip compartment on the front and, above all, for its focusing screen without microprism or exposure meter. The in focus indication was given by three diodes located on the bottom under the image screen: a green one in the middle to indicate exact in focus, a red arrow shaped one on the right to indicate that the focusing ring should be turned to the left, and another red arrow shaped diode on the left to indicate that the focusing ring should be turned to the right. Together with its contemporary Pentax MEF (also unveiled in Spring 1982), the Canon AL1 was the first 35mm reflex equipped with a electronic focus assist system based on analysis of image contrast. A plate attached to the left of the front of the camera with the marking "QF" for Quick Focus, provided an unequivocal message of the Canon AL1's primary feature, being as it was a camera which, compared with the Canon

Canon AL1 comparison of silver and black finish

Canon AE1, Canon A1 and Canon AE1 Program compared

Canon AE1 and Canon AL1 compared with adapter ring for 42x1 screw mount and Exakta lenses

A1 and the new Canon F1, was quite modest and void of any other points of interest. But despite this, the Canon AL1 was produced with silver and black finish and was inserted into the Canon A system utilizing the Power Winders and dedicated flash, as well as the entire range of Canon FD lenses and micro and macro photography accessories. The Canon AL1 remained in the catalog through 1985.

A Premature End

With the presentation in 1984 of the new Canon T70 cameras with built in motor, the production philosophy of the Canon company seemed aimed in a direction diametrically opposed to that of the A series reflexes. The built in electric motor, simplified controls, cleaner and more linear design, all black finish and completely automatic exposure would seem to announce the victory of a new trend, further emphasized by the subsequent release of the Canon T70 and Canon T80 with automatic focusing. The Canon T family reflexes culminated in the semi professional Canon T90 released in 1986, and it proved even shorter lived and less prolific than the A series.

In Spring 1985, Minolta, one of its

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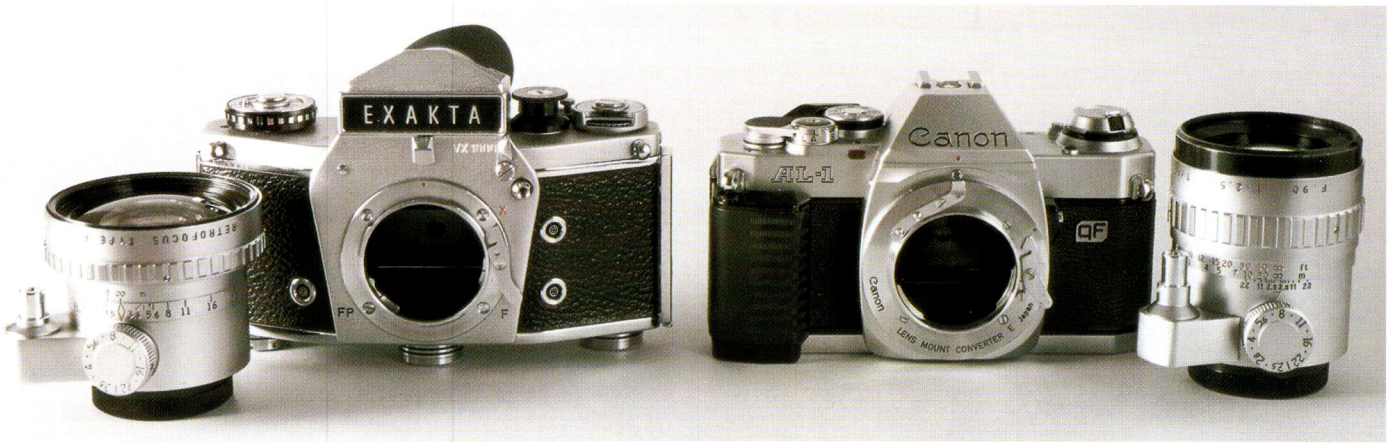
Canon AL1 with adapter ring and Angenieux Retrofocus lens for Exakta



Canon AL1 and Exakta with Angenieux lenses

CANON A REFLEX

	Year	Speed	Winder	Exposure	PhCell	Battery	Weight	Finish
AE1	1976	2s-1000	A	M SP	Silicon	PX28 – 6v	590 g	slv/blk
AT1	1977	2s-1000	A	M	CdS	PX28 – 6v	590 g	silver
A1	1978	30s-1000	A A2 MA	M SP AP PR	Silicon	PX28 – 6v	620 g	black
AV1	1979	2s-1000	A A2	AP	Silicon	PX28 – 6v	490 g	slv/blk
AE1p	1981	2s-1000	A A2 MA	M SP PR	Silicon	PX28 – 6v	575 g	slv/blk
AL1	1982	2s-1000	A A2	M AP	Silicon	2 AAA – 3v	490 g	slv/blk

Japanese competitors, presented the fully autofocus reflex Minolta 7000 equipped with a new series of autofocus lenses. The Canon company was quick in developing its own strategy and in Spring 1987 released the first reflex cameras in its EOS family, fully motorized and automatic and equipped with a new mount for Canon EF lenses whose autofocus mechanism was based on circular motors built in to each lens. The arrival on the market of the Canon EOS cameras opened a new era for the Canon company and, in one fell swoop, completely wiped out its previous products, the entire Canon A family and even the entire Canon T family, together with the FL and FD lens family. Of the pre EOS products, only a few pieces remained in the catalog for a brief period of time while the metamorphosis was completed. The old Canon mechanical and A family electronic reflexes, although still highly efficient and backed by a proven record, became technologically out dated and, in a single blow, were relegated to the past in that twilight zone of equipment that is not yet a collectors item, but is also no longer marketable as a current commodity or even really as second hand.

Highly esteemed in its day, pushed aside prematurely by the Canon T series motor driven reflexes and rendered out of date by the Canon EOS, the Canon A series, the innovative Canon AE1, the sophisticated Canon A1, the versatile Canon AE1 Program and the less significant Canon AT1, AV1 and AL1, remained suspended in a sort of limbo. In the company of other cameras manufactured during the seventies and eighties, the Canon A marked an era and today might even deserve recognition in the historical reconstruction of the development of reflex camera technology.

Danilo Cecchi
Norberto Tubi

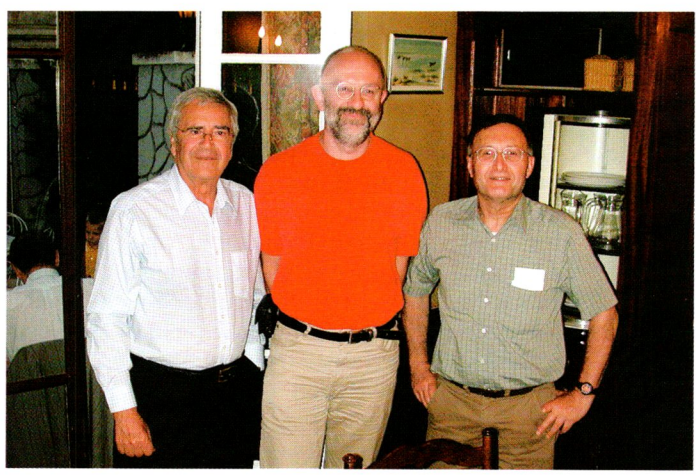
Interview with:

CLEMENT AGUILA AND MICHEL ROUAH: EXAKTA COLLECTION

The publication of the new book by Clément Aguila and Michel Rouah on Exakta cameras is an event that has given us the opportunity to renew our acquaintanceship with the authors and, in particular, Aguila, who is an avid habitué of Italian fairs thanks to the close proximity of his home to our country. The authors are well-known to collectors for their 1987 book *Exakta Cameras 1933-1978*, published by Hove Foto Books. We immediately took advantage of this new revised and expanded version of the book (for the moment available only in French but soon to be released also in English) to get to know its authors better and learn something about their lives, their interest in cameras and their approach to collecting.

Let me begin by asking "Who are Clément Aguila and Michel Rouah?" What do you do in life other than collecting Exakta cameras, how did you get to know each other and how was this team-effort book born?

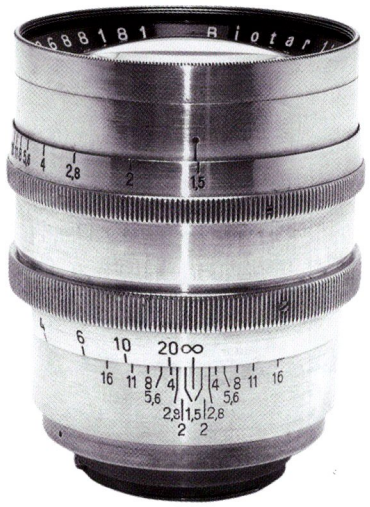
Aguila: I'm a retired x-ray technician. Twenty-five years ago, looking for Exakta in the *Photo Revue* classifieds, I saw that someone named Michel Rouah was doing the same thing. I called him up, we set a date and I went to Paris to meet him. We continued to see each other at fairs and we kept in touch. We have become great friends, exchanged all types of information and kept each other up to date on events and vendor addresses. Each of us has been able to add to his own and the other's collections depending on the financial resources available. In 1985 at the Deuil La Barre fair, our common friend Jean Paul Francesch who had just published his *History of Minolta Cameras from 1929 to 1985*, convinced us to publish a book about Exakta. That was the day the fateful decision was made.



Klaus Rademaker in Biévres flanked by Clément Aguila (to his right) and Michel Rouah (to his left)

Rouah: I have been retired from my job as optical engineer for a couple of years. Following six years working in Switzerland, I came to Paris to work with a company who specialized in infrared optics. For the last twelve years I have worked regularly with *Cyclope* magazine, in particular articles on single lens reflexes, all of which I have a passion for. I have also done research and published articles on the history of TTL exposure meters, the history of lenses with built in exposure meters and the story of the ring flash. In the early eighties, I was looking for documentation on the Exakta brand and was leafing through the classifieds to buy some cameras. It was through these ads that I came into contact with Clément who was looking through the same ads in search of the same brand. We hit it off, later began pooling our knowledge and in the end decided to write a book on this topic together. This initial relationship soon gave birth to a long friendship. In less than two years we collected all the documentation, Clément created all the black and white pictures in 13x18 or 18x24 format, I took responsibility for the drafts, all written by hand and of which I still have the originals. We had to hire a typist to get the manuscript typed. Then, using photocopies, scissors and glue, we created the final page layout. In 1985 we signed a contract with the English publishers, Hove Foto Books, the manuscript was translated into English and was published in 1987. Five thousand copies have been printed in all and

The five Angenieux lenses with Exakta mount from the black finish automatic aperture series. From left to right: 35mm f/2.5, 180mm f/4.5, 28mm f/3.5, 90mm f/2.5 and 24mm f/3.5.



Carl Zeiss Jena 75mm f/1.5 Biotar lens with manual aperture mounted on an Exakta

Hove is currently reprinting the same book (1987, 1989, 2003).

Exakta is an interesting and important name in camera history, especially that of 24x35 reflexes. But why this brand only, what is its appeal?

Aguila: In the years 1955-60, a reflex was the impossible dream of all photography buffs. With its Exakta, Ihagee invented the modern reflex camera. The first reflex using roll film was the Exakta VP in 1933. It was the first camera with a shutter that operated at speeds between 12sec and 1/1000sec in 1933. We would have to wait for 1972 for anything similar. In 1934 it was the first camera with a rapid wind on and film advance lever. This system would be used by other manufacturers only ten years later and by Leica twenty years later in 1954 on the Leica M3. In 1935 the Exakta VP was the first camera to offer a flash synchronized to the shutter. The Vacublitz system made it possible to shoot up to 1/1000sec. Later, with the Kine Exakta in 1936, the first real reflex on 35mm perforated film, Ihagee institutionalized the practical use of photography in all forms of macro, micro, botanic, astronomy, etc., with direct viewing on the ground glass. To understand what a breakthrough this represented, try to do macro photography with the Leica or Foca. In 1950, the Varex and its universal finder system opened up a new era in photography. Every collector must have at least one Vest Pocket, Kine and Exakta Varex, all milestones in camera history.

Rouah: I discovered the Exakta and its system at the 1958 Paris Salon of Cinema and Photography. I was 18 and still a student. I must say I had had my first camera at thirteen. The Exakta fascinated me for the possibilities it offered, which, at the time, seemed unlimited. I bought my first Exakta, a Varex IIa in 1962 in Switzerland where I was working for a company specialized in optical instruments for the watch industry. I used this camera to take numerous black and white and also Kodachrome color photos, given that I specialized in macro photography of insects. The city where I worked was located in the Jura area of Switzerland and I lived on the edges of a forest where I regularly encountered animals of all sorts and where the flora still grew wild and insects abounded. I took photos on an amateur basis only. I was a member of a local German-speaking (I should say Swiss-deutsch) photography club and I had difficulty communicating, but our love of photography united us. Many club members had Exakta cameras, but others also used the Edixa Reflex or Alpa cameras. I began using the Exakta in France in the early Seventies for professional reasons. I was working in a research lab in Paris specialized in infrared optics. We used a Varex 1000 for all types of applications, for example on microscopes or for reproductions, but also to illustrate our research reports. Unfortunately, this camera did not have an exposure meter and we soon replaced it with a Topcon. But this is another story not worth talking about here.

Ihagee officially terminated production of the 35mm Exakta around 1973 but in reality in 1970 with the Vx 1000. When and how did your collecting interest in Exakta cameras come about?

Aguila: I have always been a photography enthusiast. After high school I worked in a camera store and this gave me the chance to satisfy my interest to the full. I would take two or three rolls a week. Later, during military service, I was assigned to the radiology department of a hospital where I was also very involved with photography. It was during the military that I decided to work in radiology. In my work I have always used my knowledge to improve daily life, taking pictures, archiving, macro-photography, publishing, conferences, etc. In 1964 I was finally able to afford a used Exakta Varex IIb and then, little by little, accessories and lenses for it. Once, when the shutter locked up and I remained without a camera for almost a month I felt lost, so I decided to buy a second body, then a third. That's how I got the idea to collect. With time I found I wanted new lenses and accessories, I had caught "collecting-itis".

Rouah: In 1980 in the store window of a photographer in Rue Claude Bernard in Paris I saw and discovered for the first time an Exakta VP 4.5x6cm. I had kept my Exakta Varex IIa from 1962, but this Exakta VP became the first real camera

in my collection. Following that, everything just began to happen so quickly, the want ads, my meeting with Clément, and so on.

Are there two separate collections, one belonging to Clément Aguila and one to Michel Rouah, or is it just one collection? Or is it a "virtual" collection?

Aguila: Each of us has his own collection. Mine is a bit more complete than Michel's in terms of camera bodies. I have more than 350, but I have started to sell duplicate and triplicate pieces and even some very choice ones. In addition to camera bodies, Michel has a very lovely collection of lenses. There is no virtual collection. You could say that 95-98% of the equipment that appears in our book actually belongs to us. Anytime a piece is not one of ours, we cite the collector's name.

Rouah: There are two collections. A Clément Aguila collection and a Michel Rouah collection. The first book reflected our two collections that compensated each other. Today each of our collections is more extensive, but there are still some cameras, accessories or lenses that are found in only one of the two collections.

In your opinion, what is the most interesting camera in the overall Exakta family? What is the most interesting Exakta 35mm? Perhaps the Kine Exakta with its round magnifier?

Aguila: Unquestionably the most lovely and most successful is the old Exakta Varex IIa, version 3 from 1958. The Kine with its round magnifier should be a part of any major collection. Unfortunately, at the time, many users changed the round magnifier for a rectangular one that provided greater field coverage. This explains the rarity and prices of this model.

Rouah: Of the entire Exakta family, I think the most interesting is the Exakta 66 of 1953. The most interesting 35mm is the Varex IIa version 1 or 2. Its mechanics and design are perfect and all the modifications it subsequently underwent did nothing but make it more ungainly and reduce its reliability.

What is the most interesting lens with Exakta bayonet mount?

Aguila: Difficult to say. Among normal lenses it would be the 58mm f/2 Biotar and the 50mm f/2 Pancolar. But I think that the 40mm f/2.8 Macro Kilar and 55mm f/1.9 Macro Quinon are exceptional multi use standard lenses.

Stereo accessory for Exakta made by Jena, complete with prism finder mounted on an Exakta

Rouah: So many different lenses can be mounted on Exaktas that I have never really had any special preference, either in terms of focal length or brand. Between 1962 and 1972 I took a lot of photos using different lenses, for example the 50mm f/2.8 Tessar, 30mm f/3.5 Meyer Lydith and the 35mm and 20mm Flektogons. I have also created personal adapters for use with lenses from other sources with long focal lengths.

Exakta never made lenses, but the entire lens industry built lenses for Exaktas, for the 4.5x6, 6x6 and, above all 35mm cameras. What conclusion can we draw from this?

Aguila and Rouah: Exakta is a brand of camera manufactured by the Ihagee company. Right from its start, in 1912, the company built cameras but jobbed out the lenses to specialists such as Carl Zeiss and Meyer. The marketing strategy for the first Exakta in 1933 did not change this policy because Ihagee was not and never had been a lens manufacturer. The lenses marked Ihagee Anast. Exaktar were built by Meyer and bear Meyer serial numbers.

Among the wide-angles available for Exakta cameras, which are more interesting, Angenieux or Jena lenses?

Aguila and Rouah: We make no distinction between these two manufacturers because just as Angenieux created the 35mm f/2.5 Retrofocus in 1950, in 1963 Zeiss created the 20mm f/4 Flektogon, the first reflex wide-angle with a 93° angle of field.

And among telephotos, are Kilfitt or Jena lenses more interesting?

Aguila and Rouah: Kilfitt telephoto lenses are more interesting because they are much easier to handle in the 300mm to 60mm focal ranges.

What is the most original Exakta accessory?

Aguila and Rouah: Unquestionably the 1957 Ihagee exposure meter, the first with behind the lens metering. Another first from Ihagee.

There are a number of Exakta Clubs around the world. What do you think of these? Are you members of any club?

Aguila: I am a founder and honorary president of the Exakta Ihagee Club de France and a member of the Exakta Circle.

Rouah: I, personally, am a member of the English Exakta Circle and president of the EICF (Exakta Ihagee Club de France) since 1996. Clément was its president from 1987 to 1996.

Have you ever been able to make use of data or information supplied directly from Ihagee or Pentacon?

Aguila and Rouah: Never. Despite the numerous questions forwarded by Clément, Ihagee only ever responded once by sending a brochure for the Vx 1000 without any sort of explanation. Maybe they can't read French.

Have you ever had any kind of relationship with the Polytechnic Museum in Dresden? They have a lovely collection of Exakta cameras, but your collections are probably much more complete.

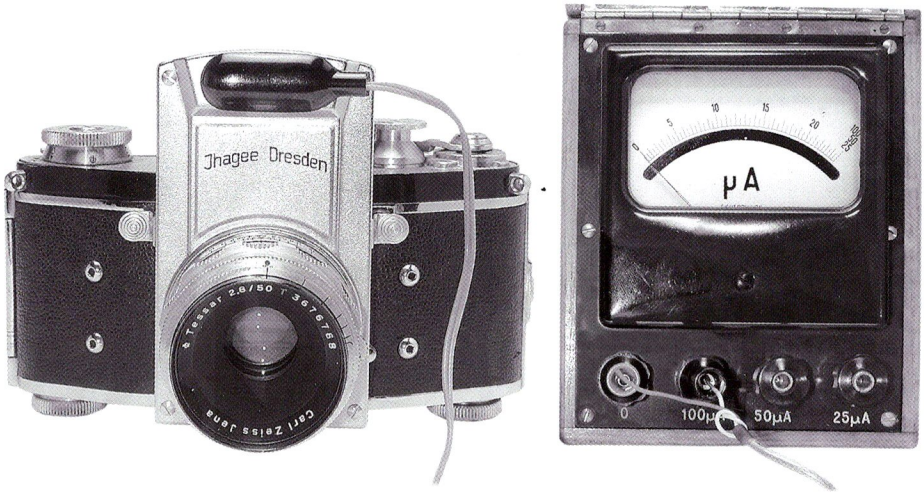
Aguila and Rouah: The museum possesses above all prototypes and pre war Exakta pieces. Our friend Klaus Rademaker has sent us photos of some of these pieces. Our VP collections are certainly more complete.

Other authors, German, American and even Japanese, have dealt with Exakta cameras. Are you in touch with or do you collaborate with any of these authors to round out your writing efforts?

Aguila: We know many foreign collectors,Germans, Americans, English, Belgian, Spanish, Dutch, Italian and Swedish. At some time, each of them has offered us their knowledge and information. Among Exakta collectors there is absolutely no sense of jealousy regarding sharing information.

Rouah: The publication of our first book brought us into contact with many foreign collectors who had also written about Exakta cameras. Their knowledge was extremely useful to us and it would be impossible to cite them all here, but a list is included in the introductory pages of *Exakta Collection*. The most important collaborative relationship has been that with Klaus Rademaker who freely made available to us a priceless wealth of information, especially numerous photographs and tech sheets of little known lenses. The Swedish collector Harald Brochmann also supplied us with numerous historical documents on the origins of the Ihagee company.

Do you know Richard Hummel's book,* Spiegelreflexkameras aus Dresden*? It includes a classification of all Exakta and Exa models with production figures for each model. Do you agree with his classification and numbers? Have you ever been in touch with Hummel?



50mm f/1.9 Schneider Xenon lens with built in exposure meter for automatic aperture selection

Aguila: When we wrote our first book in 1984-85, we were absolutely unaware of Richard Hummel. We learned of his existence in 1991 from our great friend and Exakta expert Harald Brochmann. We sent him the photos of the Exakta VP for his book. For our production figures, we established the number of cameras of each type or model on the basis of our collections, those of our friends and the many numbers collected at trade fairs. In the end, we have come very close to the figures supplied by Hummel whose book reassured us in terms of our hypotheses on camera marketing dates. In our new book we have taken into account the number of cameras built as indicated by Hummel in order to set our rarity index.

Have you had any relationship with Klaus Wichmann, another German author whom I find extremely conscientious?

Aguila and Rouah: No, we have never been acquainted with Klaus Wichmann. Among German entusiasts, it was Klaus Rademaker, a fine collector and expert as well as great friend, who helped us immensely and supplied us with much information and many lens photos.

What does it mean, today, to collect cameras which went out of production thirty years ago? Is it just nostalgia for things of the past, or is it something more?

Aguila: It is the love of fine mechanics: Contax, Contarex, Exakta, Leica,

Rectaflex, Rollei etc.

Rouah: Certainly there is an element of nostalgia for the past in the activity of every collector, but also the need to discover everything concerning a camera one has always loved. I believe that manufactured creations deserve as much attention as artistic creations. The men and women who are involved in making them put as much love into them as a painter does in his canvas. Having worked in this environment for almost forty years, I'm absolutely convinced of this.

Is it possible to use Exakta cameras today with confidence and without any problems?

Aguila: For those who know how to use a photocell there are no problems. I use them rarely, but I handle them quite often.

Rouah: Once having given them a preliminary check over, some cameras are still perfectly utilizable and remain trustworthy. I think it's better to avoid cameras dating prior to 1950, even if I know people who continue to use their 1935 Exakta VP. Personally, every so often I use a 1953 Exakta 66 for black and white photos and a number of different Exakta Varex IIa cameras, especially with the Stereo accessory. This accessory is also one of my favorites.

Which camera in your collection is your favorite that you would never part with?

Aguila: Alas, one day we will have to part with all our cameras, even the ones dearest to us. My favorites? A black Exakta Real and a one of kind Exakta Junior 35mm.

Rouah: Again, my 1953 6x6.

There are Japanese reflexes with Exakta bayonet mount, a Mamiya from the 1950s with no descendents and an entire Topcon family. How should Exakta collectors regard these cameras and their lenses?

Aguila and Rouah: These Japanese cameras are particularly interesting. They demonstrate the influence the Exakta had on creations for that period. Topcon even bettered its teacher thanks to aperture control transmission and the successful changeover to TTL metering. For real enthusiasts, these cameras and their lenses are collectors items. Michel collects them.

50mm f/1.9 ISCO lens with built in exposure meter for automatic aperture selection

ISCO exposure meter to be mounted on ISCO-MAT lenses for automatic aperture selection

What is your view of the screw mount Exa? Is it just a hybrid, or what?

Aguila and Rouah: These hybrid cameras are a 100% Pentacon creation.

How would you classify the 35mm Exakta built in Japan following the closing of the Ihagee factories? Or what about the Schneider Exakta 66?

Aguila and Rouah: Just as in the first book, we have dedicated an entire chapter to the "non Dresden" cameras.

Is the difference between your "old" 1987 book and the new one finished two years ago just a question of quantity of data, an expanded number of variants, images and lenses, or have you taken a different approach to Exakta output?

Aguila and Rouah: With the cameras, we have covered a greater number of variants for all three formats and all the illustrations are new. For the lenses, we have covered forty Vest Pocket lenses, of which there are photos of twenty-three. There are fifty-six lenses for the 6x6, seven of which with photographs. We have included 955 different lenses for the Kine Exakta and the Varex, 463 of which include technical specifications and 342 with photographs. In terms of accessories, there are 130 accessories for the 24x36mm Exakta with marketing dates. We have also included the description and photographs for all accessories for the 4x6.5cm and 6x6cm formats. We have also included a diagram of the original system. After many years of use and much changing of hands, rarely do cameras retain their original kit. The lens or finder on a camera body no long corresponds to the same manufacturing era. The diagram of the original system makes it possible to reconstruct the camera body, finder and lens as they were originally.

Have you ever thought of producing an "Exakta Pocket Book" for collectors who make the rounds of fairs?

Aguila and Rouah: We've been thinking about it for the last ten years, and now that the "big book" has been published, we can dedicate time to this project.

In recent years the world of information and collecting have changed and there are many sites dedicated to this brand name on the Net. Have you ever thought about creating an Exakta website under the names of Aguila and Rouah?

Aguila and Rouah: We will do it when Michel decides to use the Net, which will be soon. We've already talked about it.

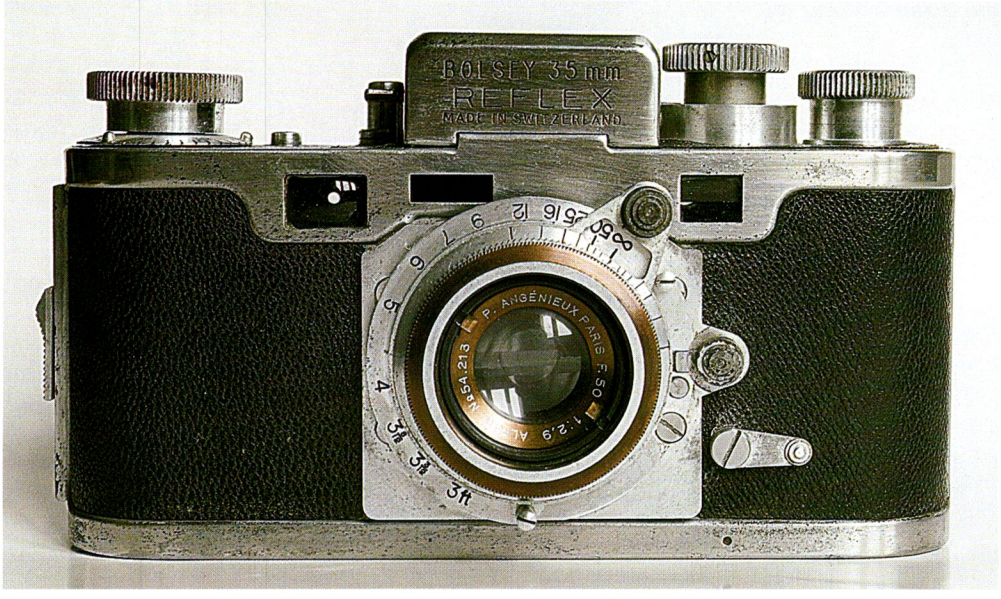
Following the publication of your book, what still remains for you to discover about Exakta?

Aguila: There is always some model with some slight variation to warm a researcher's heart.

Rouah: In the area I'm particularly interested in, that of lenses, I think there are still many brands to be discovered. In addition to the original Ihagee output, there are still many accessories to be discovered.

Interview by Danilo Cecchi

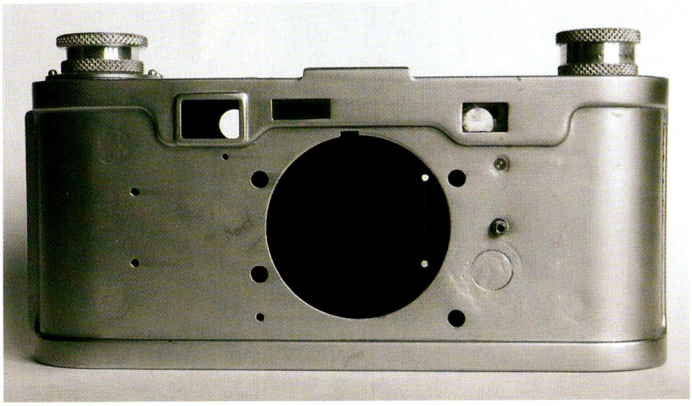
QUEST FOR THE LOST ALPA



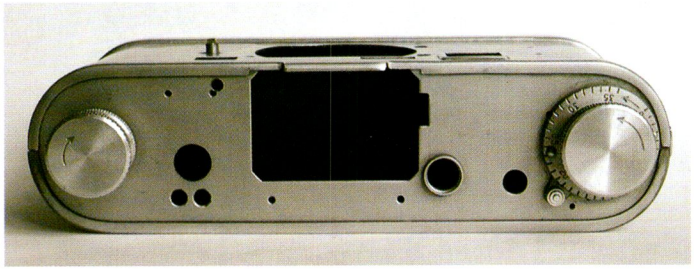
Even the small, tranquil world of cameras can sometimes become the theater of commercial and economic conflict, not to mention national and ideological differences. For example, the 1950's and 1960's often saw direct and bitter confrontation between the products of the German and Japanese photographic industry, the most heated phase of this conflict being that between German and Japanese 35mm reflexes. On the one hand were the Contarex and Leicaflex with their superb lens kits, considered the vanguard of German output, and on the other were Nikon, Canon, Minolta and Pentax with their own ample lens kits, likewise seen as the cutting-edge of Japanese production. The attention of photographers and enthusiasts has long been fixed on these few names. And, in fact, they are names that continue to this day to mark the best in photographic output and constitute the lion's share of reflex collecting. Almost all other 35mm German or Japanese reflexes, such as the Edixa or Topcon, or even the East German Praktica 35mm reflex and 35mm Russian reflexes like the Zenit, played an essentially secondary, back-seat role in this period. The handful of other little-known European reflexes (the Italian Rectaflex, the English Wrayflex or the French Focaflex) enjoyed their brief moments in the sun without, however, having much impact on the international market and only acquiring a certain collecting interest a number of years after they had gone out of production. The introduction of electronics into camera production and the change in construction methods used on the 35mm reflex marked the end of the conflict between German and Japanese camera manufacturers and the beginning of a sort of truce that lasted up to the rise of digital and other new photographic technologies.

The Swiss alternative

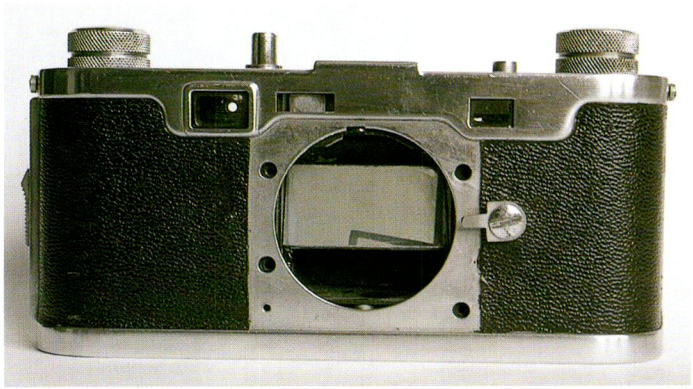
During World War II, there appeared in neutral Switzerland a new 35mm reflex camera which, after some hemming and hawing was baptized the Alpa. The Alpa was born in a period when the German Kine Exakta reflex was already famous, and preceded by a few years the Contax



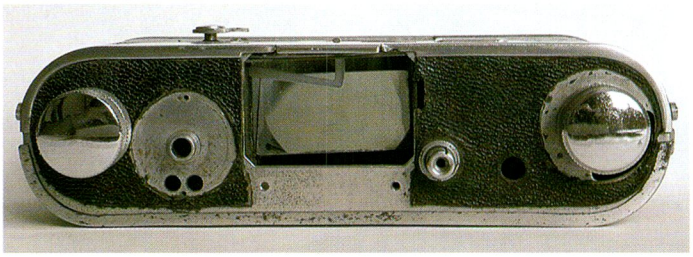
Alpa Reflex frame without mechanics and controls - from front



Alpa Reflex frame without mechanics and controls - from top plate



Incomplete Alpa Reflex, without controls and finder hood - from front



Incomplete Alpa Reflex , without controls and finder hood - from top plate

S, Praktica and Edixa, as well as the entire gamut of Japanese reflexes. The Alpa camera was destined to remain in production for many, many years, undergoing continuous modifications and updates. Starting in the Fifties the name would become familiar in the decades to come and would survive through the late 1980's.

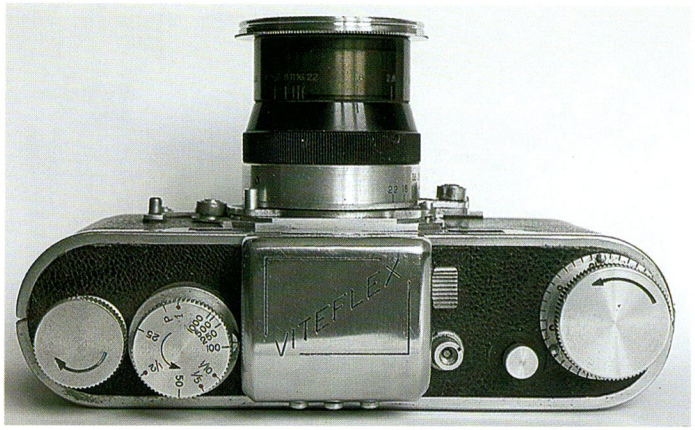
The Alpa had sturdy mechanics and a lens range of the highest quality supplied by Europe's best lens manufacturers. Only a limited number were produced and its history is quite complex and controversial. Despite the quality of its lenses and mechanics, Alpa reflex cameras never really represented a viable commercial alternative to the more well-known and successful German and Japanese reflexes, but they did carry a certain weight and importance in the history of the development of the 35mm reflex.

Today, more than a decade after it went out of production, the Alpa 35mm reflex is becoming ever-better known and appreciated by discerning, curious and demanding camera collectors.

Homeless in an island of neutrality

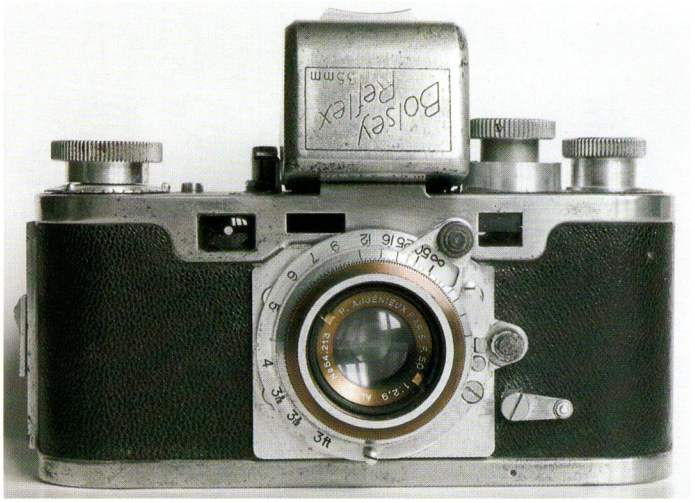
The history of the Alpa 35mm reflex begins in the mountain covered heart of Europe in the midst of the second world war. While an intensely hard and pitiless conflict was raging throughout the rest of Europe that would catylize industrial output in countries on both sides around the war effort, neutral Switzerland was still able to concentrate on other things. An ingenious Russian born mechanical engineer named Jacques Bogopolski (later known as Bolski and the Americanized Bolsey) moved to Switzerland in the early twenties where he looked to make his fortune, patenting a number of his inventions. Especially designed for film and photography, during the twenties and thirties he created the 16mm Bolex movie camera which was later mass produced by the Paillard company. Bolski also designed a 35mm camera with a focal plane shutter, interchangeable lenses and double reflex and normal finder with coupled rangefinder. Bolski's camera represented a sort of synthesis between the Leica and Exacta and was called the Bolca (BOL-ski CA-mera). A prototype of it was built in 1939. Before leaving Switzlerand for the United States, Bolski

Alpa Reflex called the Viteflex with standard Angenieux 50mm f/1.8 lens - from front

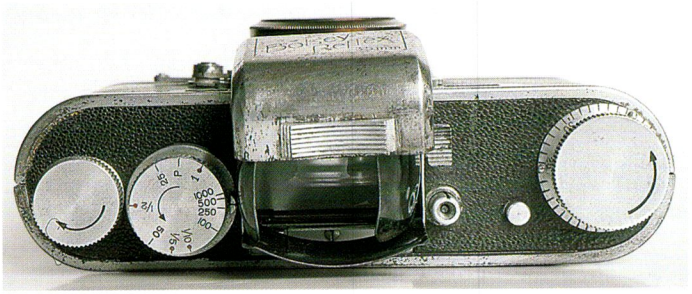


Alpa Reflex called the Viteflex with standard Angenieux lens - from top plate

Hoods with Viteflex and Bolsey Reflex markings



Bolsey Reflex with standard Angenieux 50mm f/2.9 lens - from front with finder open



Bolsey Reflex with standard Angenieux lens - from top plate with finder open

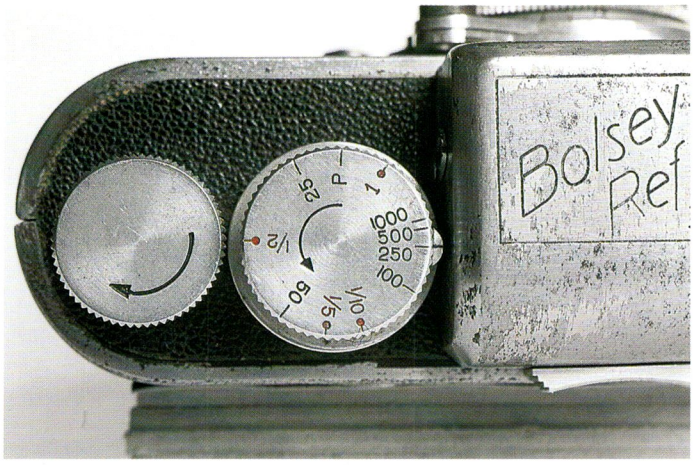
Bolsey Reflex with standard Angenieux lens - from top plate with finder open

signed a contract with the Pignons company for the mass production and marketing of his camera.

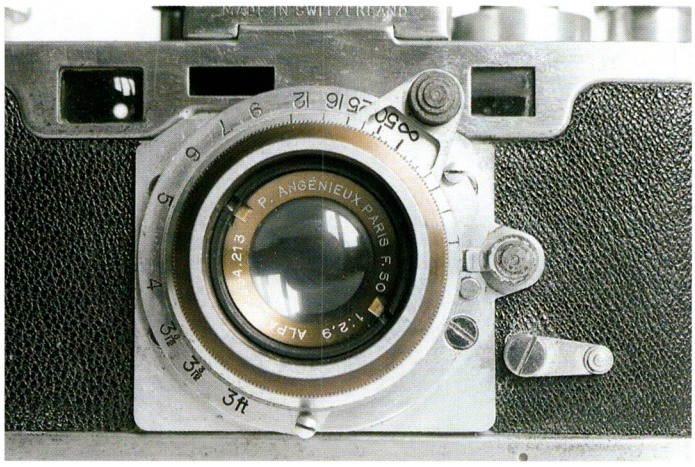
The Pignons company was founded in Ballaigues in Switzerland's Jura Mountains as a family run business specialized in the manufacture of mechanical parts for the area's watch companies. During a period of severe economic recession, Bolski convinced the Bourgeois family to undertake this new activity in the photography sector. It was the early forties and bringing the project of a new camera to fruition required some time. Twenty or so of the Bolski cameras were completed in 1940 as test cameras and these first models were given such imaginative names as Viteflex and Teleflex.

Bolski's camera underwent a number of other minor modifications and took on its definitive form in 1942. Production for the general market began with serial number 11,001 and approximately 600 were made. Given that it first saw the light nestled in Alpine valleys, Alpa was chosen as its final name.

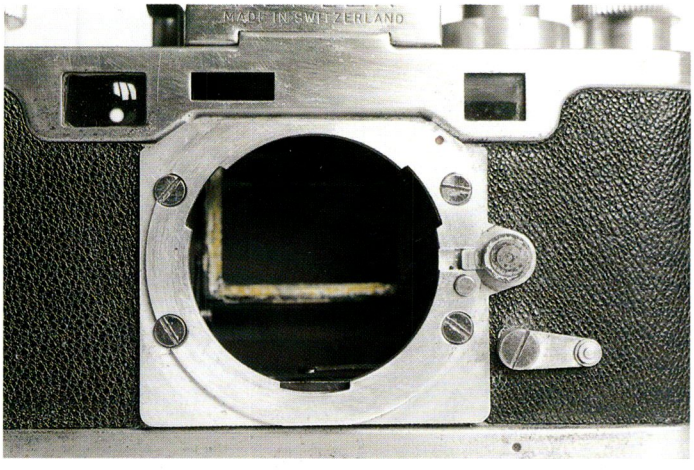
The first mass produced Alpa cameras were officially unveiled at the Basel Fair in 1944. According to the agreement drawn up with Bolski, a certain number of the cameras still bore the Bolca name and were destined for the US market as



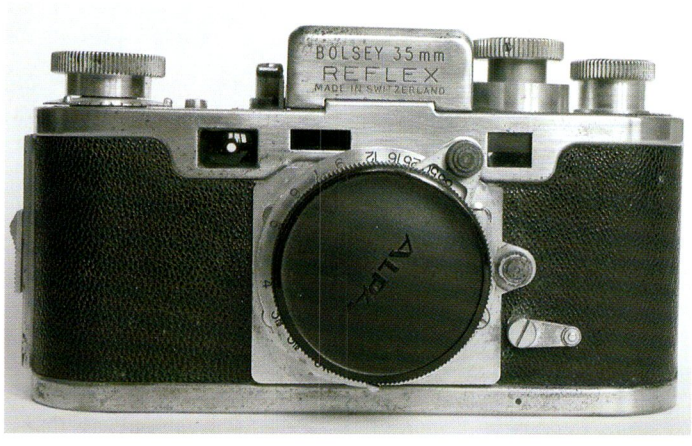
Bolsey Reflex - close-up of top plate showing shutter setting dial



Bolsey Reflex - close-up of front with Angenieux 50mm f/2.9 lens mounted



Bolsey Reflex - close-up of front with lens changing catch



Bolsey Reflex camera

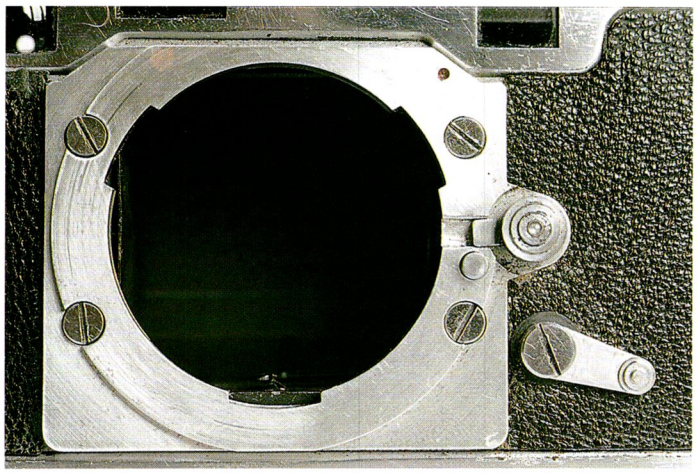
Alpa Standard without reflex finder - from front with Alpar Angenieux 50mm f/2.9 lens

Alpa Standard without reflex finder - from top plate

stipulated by its designer himself.

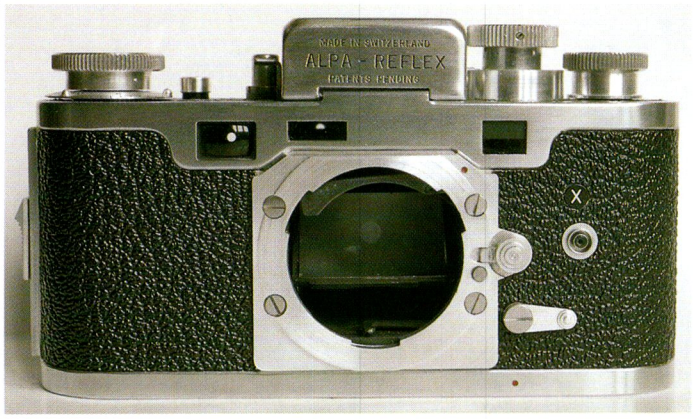
Alpa Reflex and Alpa Standard

The Alpa Reflex was a sturdy camera, like many other 35mm cameras it was longer than it was tall and, despite the presence of the reflex mirror, had a particularly slim body. The Alpa body had Leica style rounded edges, while the characteristic protruding of the mirror box on the front was virtually nil. A sturdy, virtually square metal plate occupied the center of the front. It was fastened using four screws that were visible and housed the large bayonet mount with the locking catch on the left. The bottom and top plates were emphasized by the presence of wide metal bands. The upper band was contoured to incorporate the large window of the lens finder and the rectangular rangefinder windows, while the lower band was completely linear and uniform. The back opened to the side with the hinge on the left. All controls were located on the top plate that was completely flat, except for the protruding

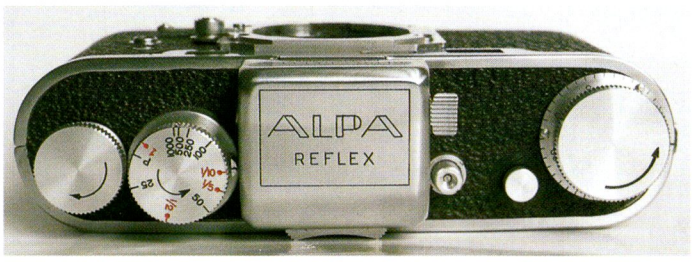


Alpa Standard without reflex finder - from lens panel catch without mirror

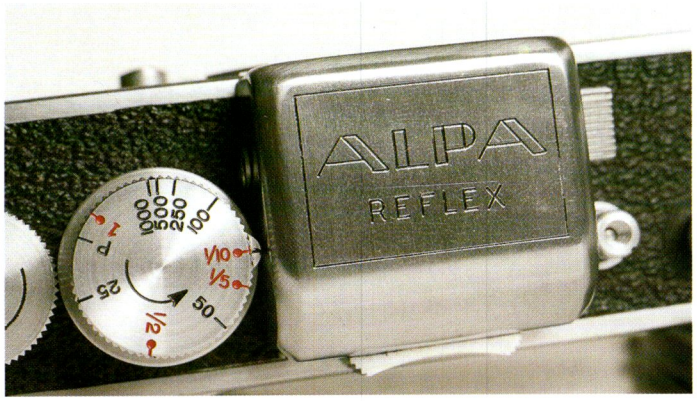
Alpa Reflex with Xenon 50mm f/1.9 lens - from front with finder closed



Alpa Reflex with Xenon 50mm f/1.9 lens - from front with finder closed



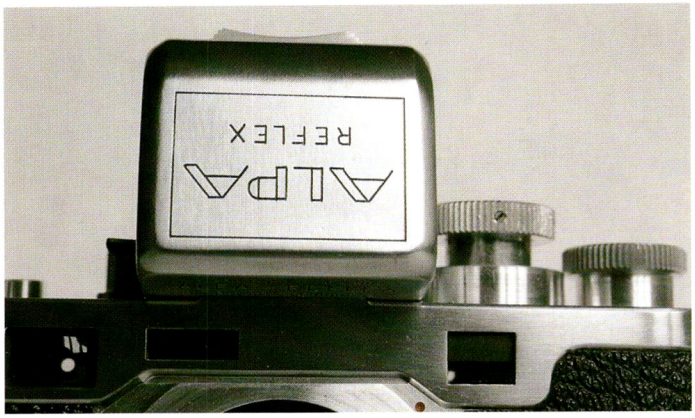
Alpa Reflex - from top plate



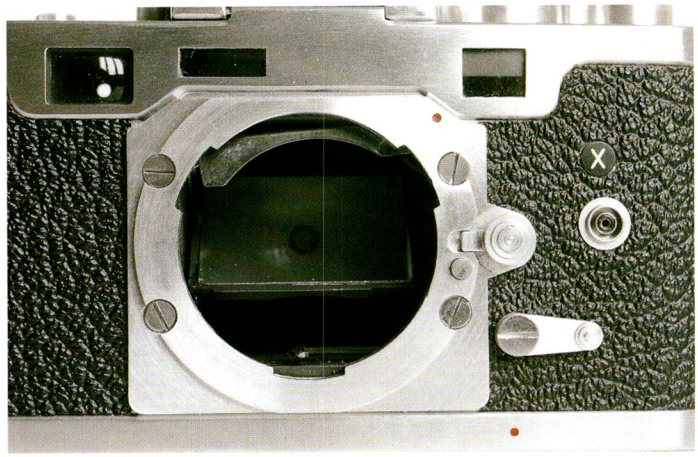
Alpa Reflex - close-up of top plate with speed setting dial

Alpa Reflex without lens - from front with finder open

hood of the reflex finder and, like the front and back, was leather lined. The film advance and rewind controls were two large knurled knobs and the mushroom shaped speed selector was large and solid and was located at the center of a large, thick metal disk. The external frame counter disk was aligned with the film advance button and the shutter release button was located next to the same button, but set towards the back, as on the Leica. Shutter speeds ranged from 1 second to 1/1000sec, but selecting low speeds required the lowering of the lever located on the lower-left of the front. In the Alpa Reflex, a direct reflex mirror with flip up protective hood bearing the

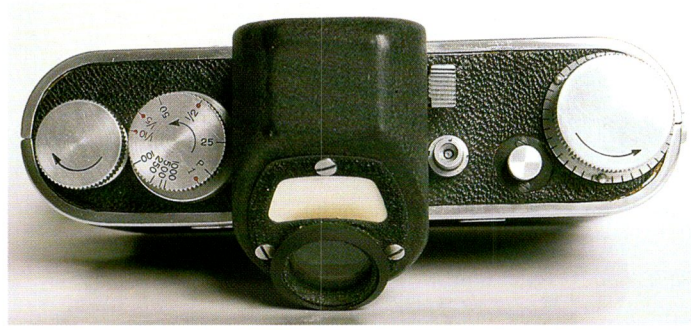


Alpa Reflex - close-up of front with finder open

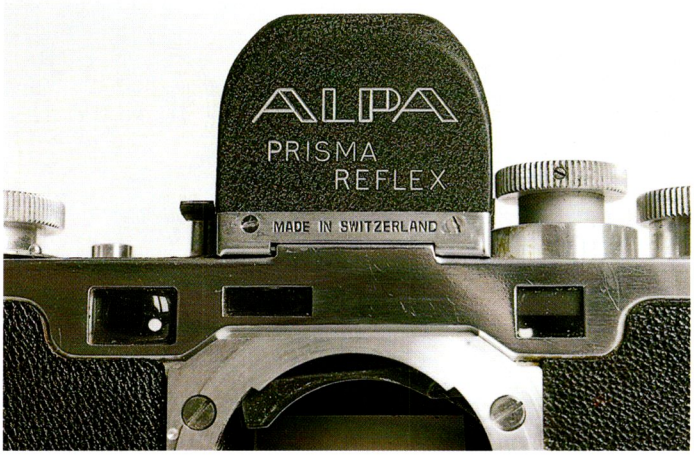


Alpa Reflex - close-up of front with lens changing catch

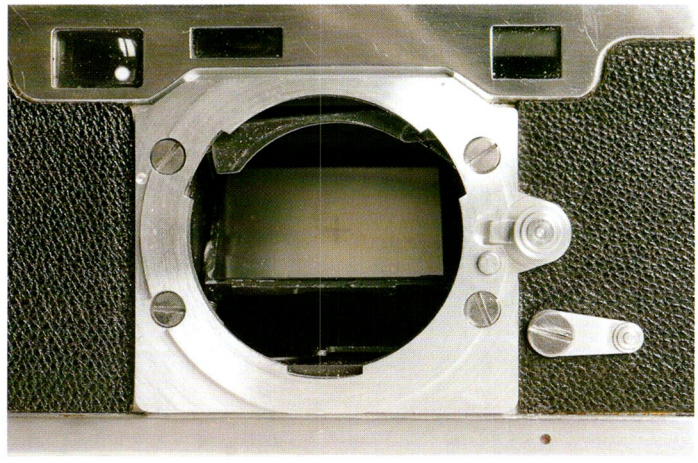
Alpa Prisma Reflex without lens - from front



Alpa Prisma Reflex without lens - from top plate with finder eyepiece at 45° angle



Alpa Prisma Reflex without lens - from front - detail

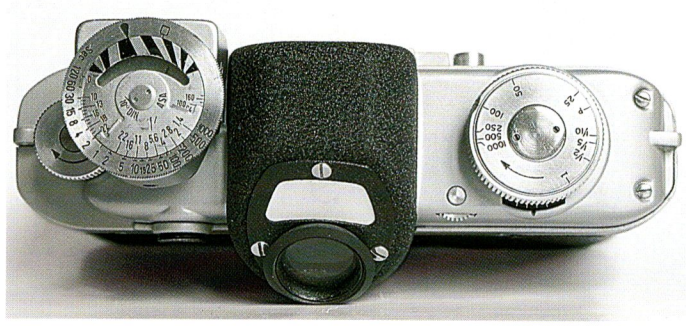


Alpa Prisma Reflex without lens - close-up of lens panel catch

inscription ALPA REFLEX occupied the center of the top plate and protruded upwards from it.

From the very start of their production, there was extreme willingness to make custom structural modifications on the basis of customer request. Bolski's project was adapted to the needs of the market, and alongside the double finder Alpa Reflex, the Alpa Standard equipped with rangefinder only without the reflex finder, was also produced. In turn, the Alpa Standard was built in a version with the entire range of shutter speeds from one second to 1/1000sec, as well as a simplified version without the slow speeds. In the Alpa Standard, a small metal plate on the top plate permanently

Alpa 5 without lens - from front - with new body, optical finder moved to the left, shutter release button on the front, pentaprism finder still has 45° eyepiece and a small exposure meter accessory is mounted on the shoe

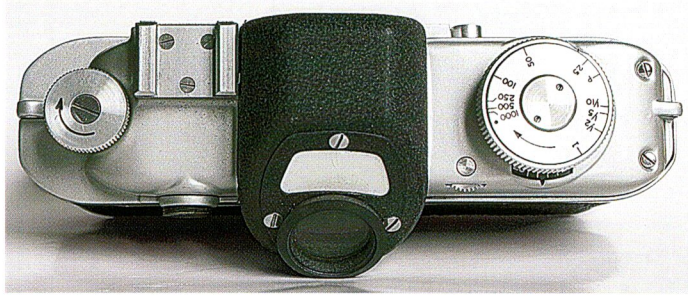


Alpa 5 without lens - from top plate

Alpa 5 without lens - from top plate - note the dial for the three optical finder framer for 50, 90 and 135mm focal lengths

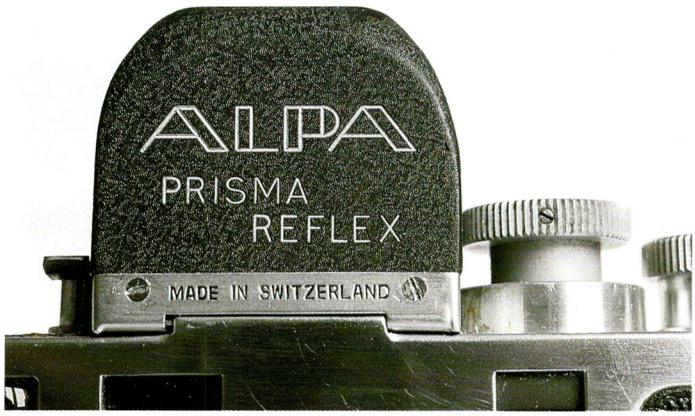
Alpa 7 without lens - from front - optical finder completed with a vertical base rangefinder

Alpa 6 without lens - from front - identical to the Alpa 5 except for the exposure meter on the reflex finder focusing window and with self-timer

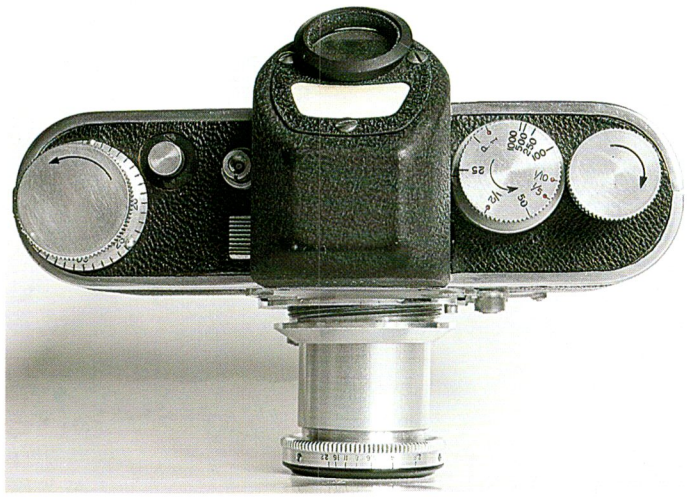


Alpa 6 without lens - from top plate

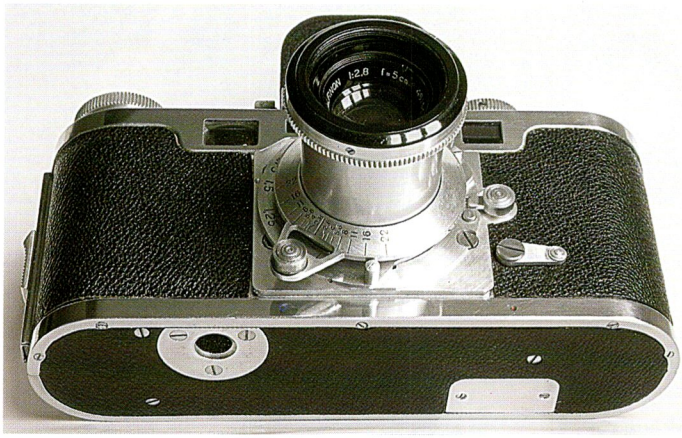
of new aspects, both in terms of appearance and engineering. The design of the new camera was overseen by André Cornut and it was based on a sturdy body in light weight metal alloy, characteristic of the new model. The new Alpa camera body was slightly taller and heavier than that of the Alpa Reflex, with a front plate that protruded a bit more, a new rapid bayonet mount with the catch on the left side. Next to the reflex finder was a large normal viewfinder positioned on the left, instead of the right side of the front. Coupled with the optical finder was a vertical based, instead of horizontal based rangefinder. The rangefinder window was positioned at the bottom, near the base plate, and over the optical finder was the flash shoe. Between the window of the optical finder and the lens catch was a coaxial synch socket comprised of a socket that stuck out from the side of the lens panel. The shutter release button was positioned on



Alpa Prisma Reflex - close-up of finder hood



Alpa Prisma Reflex with lens - from top plate



Alpa Prisma Reflex with lens - from base plate

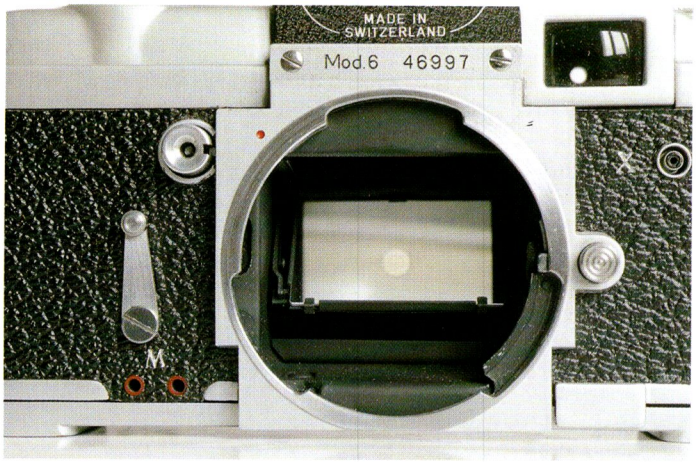
Alpa Prisma Reflex with Old Delft Alfinon 50mm f/2.8 lens - from front

covered the finder hole, rendered sightless by the absence of the mirror, ground glass and hood.

Between 1944 and 1945 approx. 700 cameras with serial numbers starting at 120,001 were manufactured, including a hundred or so Alpa Standards. Output continued with minor modifications during 1946 and 1947 with serial numbers ranging between 13,001 and 15,020. Production was commenced on a new batch in 1947 with serial number 20,001, rising to serial number 25,132 in 1951. In 1949 the Alpa Reflex began to utilize a synch socket that was mounted as standard equipment starting in 1951. Again in 1949, alongside the Alpa Reflex with waist level finder, production began on the Alpa Prisma Reflex which utilized the same body as the Alpa Reflex but with a permanent pentaprism finder on the top plate. The pentaprism hood had a black finish and took the place of the collapsible finder cover. The use of the pentaprism for viewing the image directly in the finder was not new and had been used in 1948-49 by the Contax S and Rectaflex, but Alpa made original use of the concept. The eyepiece angled at 45° offered viewing from a point of view that was still raised and with the camera not yet at eye level. Production of the Alpa Reflex and Alpa Prisma Reflex alternated on a fairly even basis between 1949 and 1951. Also part of the same production cycle was the Alpa Standard without reflex finder of which only a few were built up until 1951. Production of the Alpa Reflex and Alpa Prisma Reflex was halted in 1951 with just under 8,000 cameras having been made over eight years.

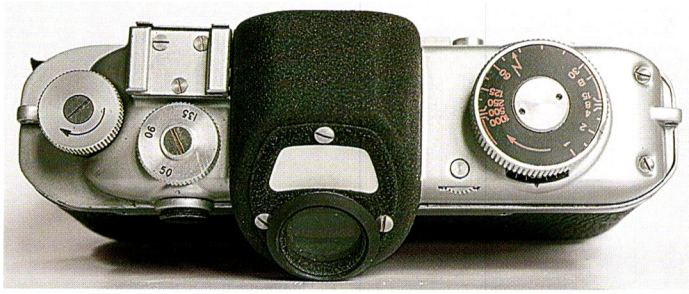
Alpa Alnea

In 1952 Bolski's project was abandoned by the Pignons company which then began production on a new type of camera. The new Alpa was developed from the experience accumulated over ten years of work and offered a number

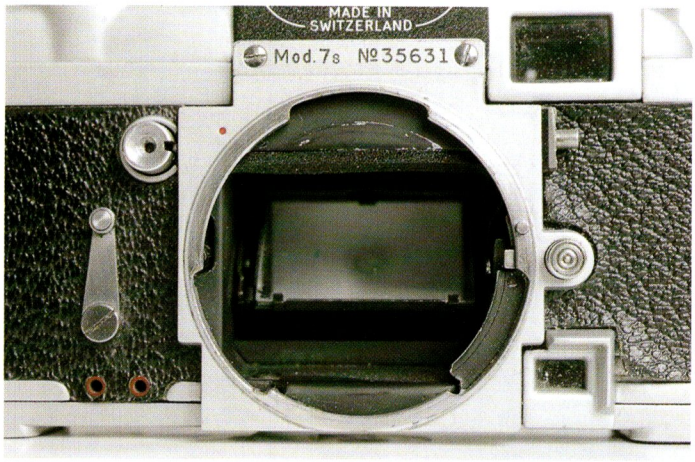


Alpa 6 without lens - from front - close-up of lens changing catch

Alpa 7s without lens - from front - identical to the Alpa 7 complete with vertical base rangefinder and with exposure meter on the reflex finder focusing window; also marketed as the Alpa 8

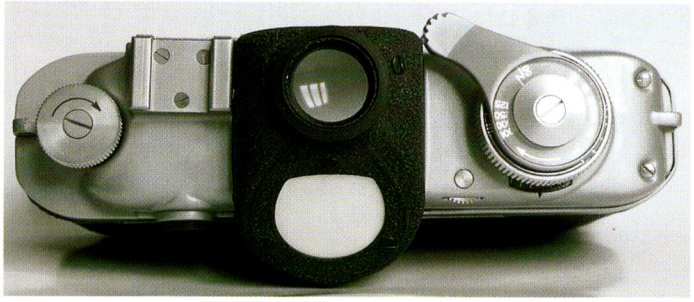


Alpa 7s without lens - from top plate

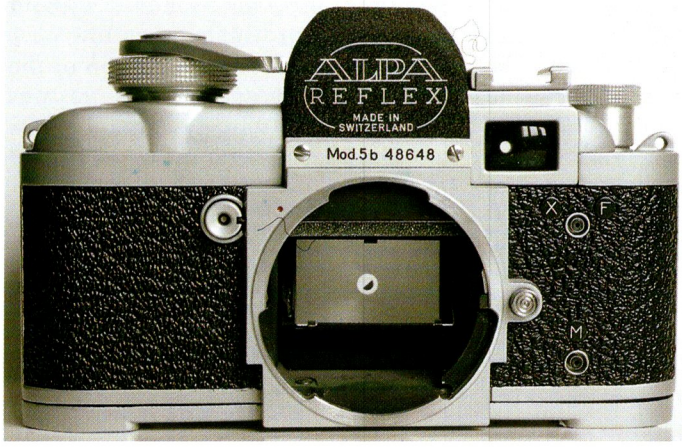


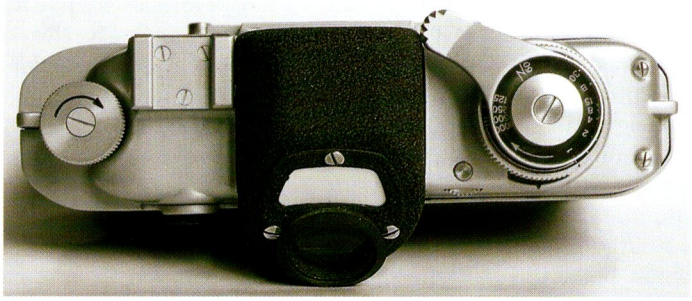
Alpa 7s without lens - from front - close-up of lens changing catch

Alpa 4b without lens - from front - identical to the Alpa 4 but with instant mirror return, rapid wind lever and self-timer



Alpa 4b without lens - from top plate - note the rigid waist level finder on the top of the hood





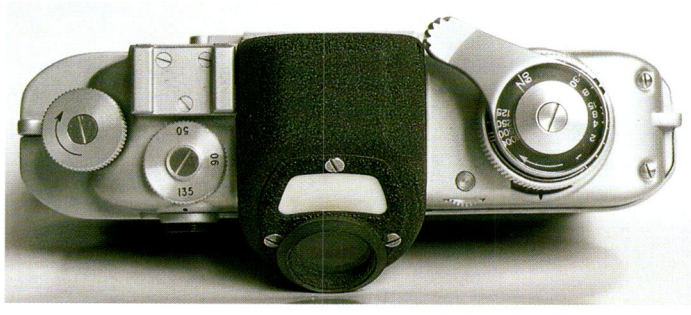
Alpa 5b without lens - from top plate

Alpa 5b without lens - from front - identical to the Alpa 5 but with instant mirror return and rapid wind lever

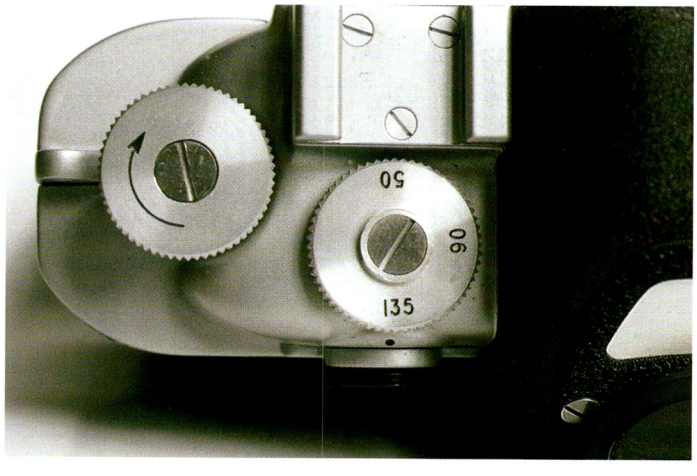
Alpa 6b without lens - from front - identical to the Alpa 6 but with instant mirror return and rapid wind lever

Alpa 6b without lens - from top plate

Alpa 8b without lens - from front - identical to the Alpa 7s and Alpa 8 but with instant mirror return and rapid wind lever



Alpa 8b without lens - from front



Alpa 8b - close-up of top plate with dial for 50, 90 and 135mm frames in the optical finder

the front as on the Exakta, but on the right side, to make it possible to use lenses with a pre-set diaphragm. Some models had a long self timer lever near the shutter release button and under the lever was a second bi-polar synch socket. The film advance and rewinding controls were on the top plate. The speed selector was aligned with the shutter wind on knob that also served to advance the film. The top plate of the new Alpa, no longer flat like the one on the Alpa Reflex, was uniquely contoured with a slight upwards curve and had eyelets for the strap. A plate at the base of the finder gave the model and serial number, which started from 30,000. Above the lens panel, the black hood of the reflex finder was inscribed "ALPA ALNEA" and, in smaller lettering, "MADE IN SWITZERLAND". The word "Alnea" derived from the modification of the English "All near" and the intent was to stress the use of fast macro lenses with close-up focusing used as standard lenses. Given that Alpa cameras were reflexes with interchangeable lenses, the "Alnea" nomenclature proved not that relevant when utilized with lenses without close-up focusing. In fact, after a few years, the inscription returned to the old Alpa Reflex marking.

The Alpa Alnea was manufactured in a number of different models, each with its own number. The Alpa 4 was the simplest model which used a direct reflex finder with viewing from above through a stationary hood and the optical finder did not have a coupled rangefinder. The Alpa 5 had a pentaprism reflex finder with 45° angle viewing, but still did not include a rangefinder. The most sophisticated model, the Alpa 7, included a pentaprism finder, optical finder with coupled rangefinder, self timer and finder frames that could be set to 50mm, 90mm and 135mm focal lengths.

To accompany the Alpa 4 and Alpa 5 without self timer, the Alpa 4a and Alpa 5a with self timer lever on the front panel were also put into production. In 1956, production began of the Alpa 6, identical to the Alpa 5 but including self timer

Alpa 6c without lens with black finish - from front - new body with flat top plate, new pentaprism hood with horizontal eyepiece, no optical mirror and with built-in selenium photocell

Alpa 6c without lens with black finish - from top plate

Alpa 6c without lens with black finish - from back with serial number

and exposure meter with a split image rangefinder at the center of the reflex finder focusing screen. The same type of screen was also used on the Alpa 7 which was renamed the Alpa 7s or Alpa 8.

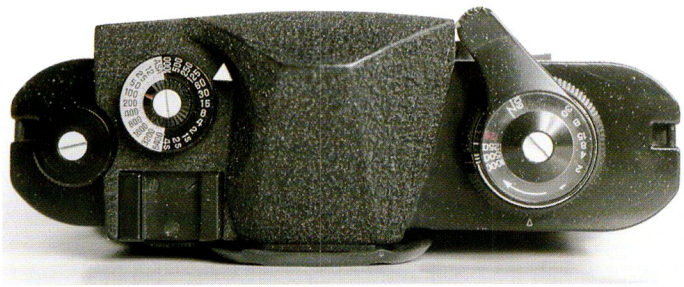
Towards the end of the Fifties, the Alpas began to be equipped with a rapid winding lever mounted on the film advance knob but, strangely enough, turned towards the front of the camera so that it could be activated by rotating in a clockwise direction.

In 1959, the Alpas were modified to include instant mirror return and came standard with a short rapid film advance lever. The synch contacts were also modified and replacing the socket sticking out of the lens panel was a coaxial socket located on the upper left of the front. The shutter speed scale, ranging from one second to 1/1000sec was arranged in linear progression and the flash synch speed was increased to 1/60sec. The Alpas with these modifications were baptized the Alpa 4b, Alpa 5b, Alpa 6b, Alpa 7b and Alpa 8b, but, with the exception of the Alpa 6b, only a limited number of each was produced, in some cases under 100. A very small number of Alpa 4b, 5b, 6b and 8b cameras were produced with black finish instead of the traditional chrome. The total number of Alpa Alnea and Alpa Reflex cameras manufactured in just over eight years between 1952 and 1960 was approximately 12,000. The serial numbers of the Alpa Alnea and Alpa Reflex in these series fall between 30,000 and 42,600, but it is not unusual to find higher serial numbers that do not correspond to the normal chronological progression. Nor is it unusual to find a model transformed into the next higher model, for example an Alpa 4 into an Alpa 5 or an Alpa 5 into an Alpa 7, and so on.

The new Alpas

In 1960 Alpa bodies were modified once again, but without changing the serial number progression. In fact, production of the new Alpas was interspersed with that of previous models. In the new Alpas, the normal viewfinder was completely eliminated and the top plate became flat once again, while the pentaprism eyepiece was positioned at eye level and no longer angled at 45°. The film advance lever became standard equipment and control layout remained virtually unchanged. These changes did not mean that the original touches that

Alpa 9d without lens with black finish - from front - similar to Alpa 6c but with CdS TTL exposure meter



Alpa 9d without lens with black finish - from top plate

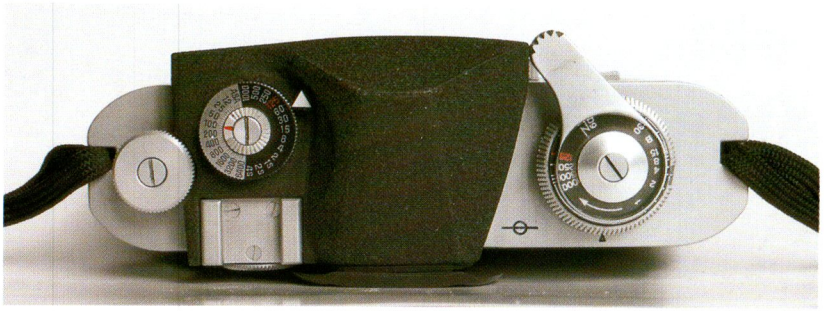
Alpa 9d without lens with chrome finish - from front - similar to Alpa 6c but with CdS TTL exposure meter

had characterized the 1950s Alpas had to be foregone, but it did mark the start of more regular, constant and voluminous output.

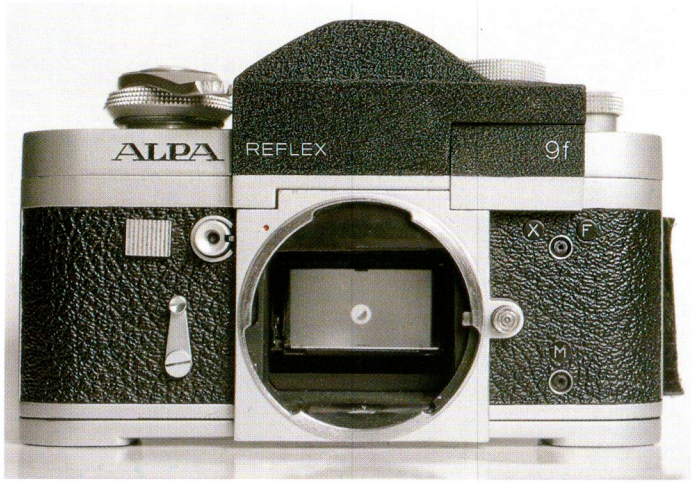
The first camera of the new generation was called the Alpa 6c and its black hooded pentaprism boasted a unique, asymmetrical shape and a non coupled selenium photocell on the front supplied by Metrawatt of Nuremberg. The camera serial number was also moved from the front to be etched on the back under the finder eyepiece together with the model name. The Alpa 6c represented an attempt by Pignons to compete with German reflex cameras and over a five year period over three thousand of these cameras were produced while production also continued on previous models for a number of years, but in extremely limited number. The distinguishing characteristics of the Alpa 6c were the shape of the pentaprism hood, the photocell on its front, the Alpa name etched on the body instead of the pentaprism hood and a film counter setting wheel near the finder. On the left side of the pentaprism and above the photocell was a disk used to manually set the film speed and recommended shutter speed and the exposure meter needle was visible from above inside a round window. Between the exposure meter dial and the eyepiece was the flash shoe and, to the side of the shoe, was a pull out film rewind knob. The base plate, lens panel and film advance lever aligned with the speed dial all remain unchanged, while the manual frame counter on early cameras was later replaced by a frame counter that automatically reset to zero. Serial numbers for the Alpa 6c begin with 42,600 and continue up, virtually without interruption, to 46,500, but some of the later built Alpa 6c cameras were given higher serial number and some also had a black finish.

Alpa TTL

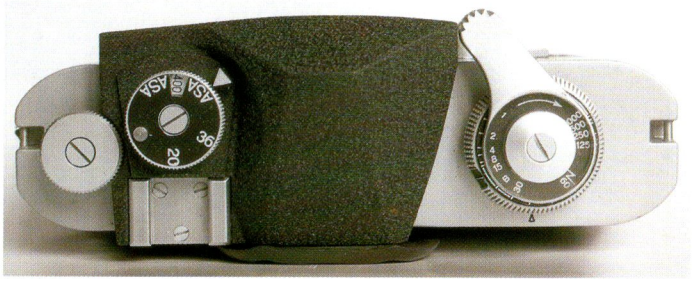
The success of the Alpa 6c with selenium exposure meter was interrupted in 1964 with the unveiling of the new model, Alpa 9d, which was quite similar in appearance to the Alpa 6c, but sported a TTL exposure meter. Following the release of the Japanese reflexes, the Topcon RE Super and Asahi Pentax Spotmatic, the Swiss Ballaigues factory lost no time in adapting to this trend and the new TTL model was presented virtually before any from German and many Japanese companies. The major



Alpa 9d without lens with chrome finish - from top plate



Alpa 9f without lens with chrome finish - from front - identical to Alpa 9d but without built-in exposure meter

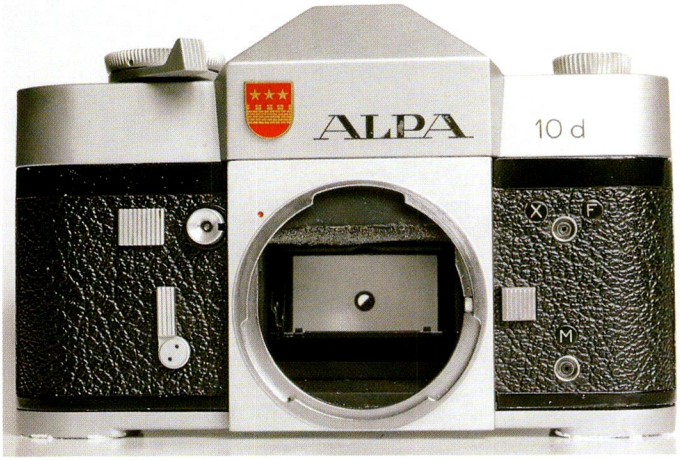


Alpa 9f without lens with chrome finish - from top plate

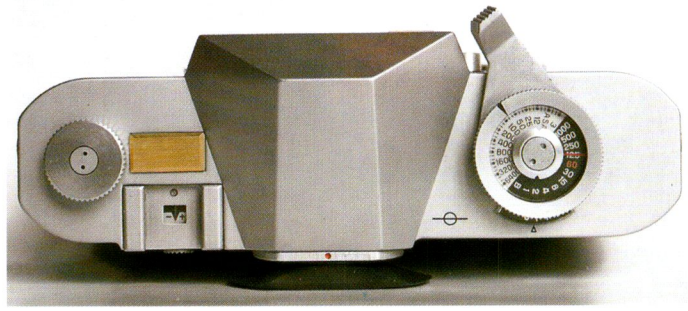
difference between the Alpa 9d and Alpa 6c lay in the absence of the selenium photocell from the pentaprism hood. Despite this, the asymmetric shape of the pentaprism remained unchanged and the marking "9d" appeared instead of the photocell, while the film setting dial, exposure meter needle window and shutter speed ring remained. The two CdS photocells were located on the pentaprism hood and read the intensity of the light on the ground glass, while a third photocell measured the incident light entering from the eyepiece as exposure compensation. Light was measured with the diaphragm closed to the actual working value and this made it possible to utilize all Alpa mount lenses without requiring modifications for mechanical coupling with the diaphragm simulator. On the production line, the Alpa 9d replaced the non TTL Alpa 6c model of which only a very few were built after 1964. Production of the Alpa 9d began with serial number 46,230 and continued without interruption up to 1968, with the insertion of some cameras from previous series up to serial number 52,399. Manufactured in both chrome and black paint finish with leather covering in a range of colors, the Alpa 9d is the Alpa Reflex camera of which the greatest number were made. Alongside the Alpa 9d, a modest number of Alpa 9f cameras were also produced. Twin of the Alpa 9d, the 9f did not have a built in exposure meter.

Alpa 10 and Alpa 11

In 1968, starting with serial number 52,501, production began on a new type of Alpa camera which was called the Alpa 10d. Major changes were made in its appearance, but in terms of its mechanics and functions, the approach was still quite conservative. Destined to replace the Alpa 9d and Alpa 10d, the design of the film advance lever was new but still facing the front and still aligned with the speed dial and film speed indicator. The design of the front, lens panel and self timer lever on the Alpa 10d were all new. But, the biggest change was in the unique design of the top plate



Alpa 10d with chrome finish without lens - from front - new linear design body and new controls except for lens catch and shutter release button on front that remained unchanged



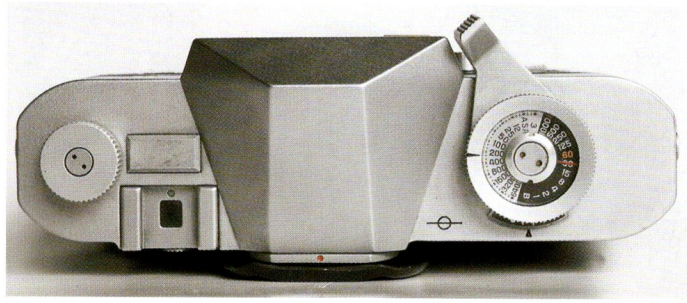
Alpa 10d with chrome finish without lens - from top plate

Alpa 10s with black finish without lens - from front - identical to Alpa 10d but without self-timer and with simplified exposure meter

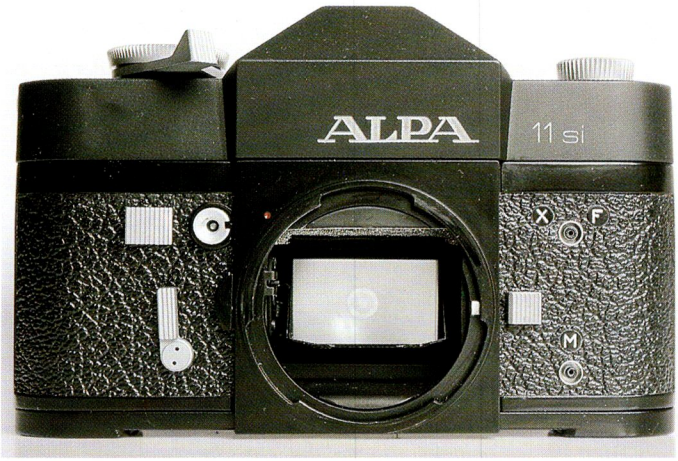
Alpa 10s with black finish without lens - from top plate

and pentaprism hood which attached at the front on the lens panel and was short and wide in chrome or black finish like the rest of the top plate. The Alpa 10d retained the TTL exposure meter with three CdS photocells with reading with the diaphragm closed, but the exposure meter needle was visible in the finder and the exposure meter window was no longer housed on the top plate. With these technical and aesthetic changes, the Alpa 10d had a neater, cleaner line compared with previous models, but this new design made it appear even more angular and heavy. The Alpa 10d was produced with chrome or black finish up through the mid seventies and a good number of them were made, ranking it behind only the Alpa 9d and Alpa 6c. Like the Alpa 9d, the Alpa 10d was also paired with the Alpa 10f model without exposure meter and of which only a few dozen were made. Also produced alongside the Alpa 10d was the Alpa 10s, a simplified version without self timer and third photocell and of which less than 100 were built. In that era, the average output of Alpa cameras was approximately two hundred per month. In 1971, using the same body as the Alpa 10d, the Alpa 11e was created which, in place of the exposure meter's moving needle, had two luminous diodes shaped like an arrow that indicated over and under exposure and, when the exposure was correct, both went out. In 1972 the Alpa 11e was flanked by the Alpa 11el that still used arrow shaped luminous diodes, but which both remained lit when the exposure was correct. The Alpa 11el also included mechanical improvements and had a larger mirror. With the Alpa 11, black became the most common finish, both in mass produced cameras and those with limited runs. As in the past, alongside the Alpa 11e and 11el, some simplified models were also produced, such as the Alpa 11f without exposure meter and the Alpa 11s with simplified exposure meter circuit and without self timer. The Alpa 11e and 11el were manufactured through the mid seventies with barely a thousand of each model produced and in 1976 both were

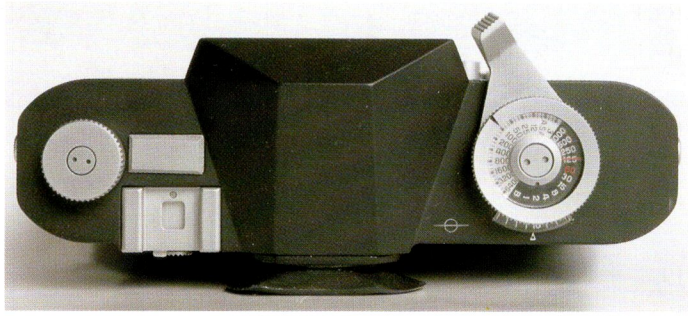
Alpa 11e with chrome finish without lens - from front - identical to Alpa 10d but with luminous diodes in finder



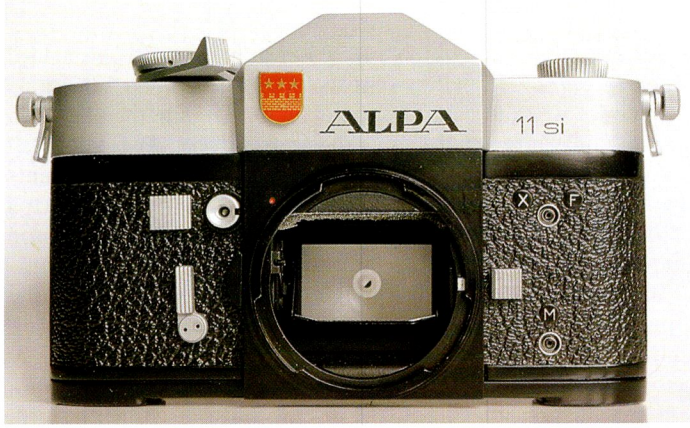
Alpa 11e with chrome finish without lens - from top plate



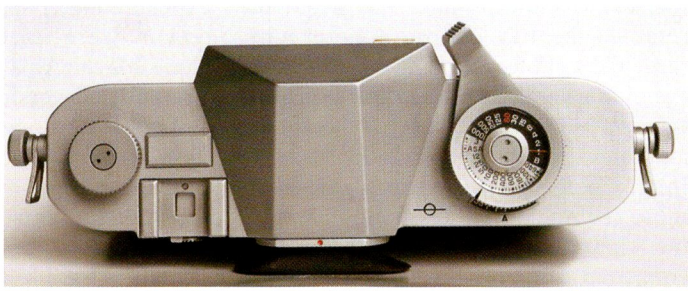
Alpa 11si with black finish without lens - from front - identical to previous models but with silicone photocell



Alpa 11si with black finish without lens - from top plate



Alpa 11si with chrome finish without lens - from front - identical to previous models but with silicone photocell; the Alpa 11si was the last 35mm Alpa Reflex manufactured in Ballaigues by the Pignons company that would halt production in 1989 after 50 years of activity in the photographic sector



Alpa 11si with chrome finish without lens - from top plate

ALPA CHRONOLOGY

1944	BOLCA	Waist-level	Rangefinder		
1944	ALPA REFLEX	Waist-level	Rangefinder		
1944	ALPA STANDARD	Non reflex	Rangefinder		
1949	ALPA PRISMA REFLEX	Prisma 45°	Rangefinder		
1952	ALPA 4	Waist-level			
1952	ALPA 5	45° prism			
1952	ALPA 7	45° prism	Rangefinder	Self-timer	
1955	ALPA 4a	45° prism		Self-timer	
1955	ALPA 5a	45° prism		Self-timer	
1956	ALPA 6	45° prism		Self-timer	Exposure meter
1958	ALPA 8 / ALPA 7s	45° prism	Rangefinder	Self-timer	Exposure meter
1959	ALPA 4b	Waist-level			Instant return mirror
1959	ALPA 5b	45° prism			Instant return mirror
1959	ALPA 6b	45° prism			Instant return mirror
1959	ALPA 7b	45° prism	Rangefinder		Instant return mirror
1959	ALPA 8b	45° prism	Rangefinder		Instant return mirror
1960	ALPA 6c	Eye-level prism	Selenium exposure meter		
1964	ALPA 9d	Eye-level prism	CdS TTL		
1967	ALPA 9f	Eye-level prism	Non TTL		
1968	ALPA 10d	Eye-level prism	CdS TTL		
1969	ALPA 10f	Eye-level prism	Non TTL		
1972	ALPA 10s	Eye-level prism	CdS TTL		
1971	ALPA 11e	Eye-level prism	CdS TTL	Diodes	
1972	ALPA 11el	Eye-level prism	CdS TTL	Diodes	
1974	ALPA 11f	Eye-level prism	Non TTL		
1974	ALPA 11s	Eye-level prism	CdS TTL	Diodes	
1976	ALPA 11si	Eye-level prism	Silicone TTL	Diodes	

replaced by the new model Alpa 11si. With its body the same as previous models, the Alpa 11si utilized silicon photocells instead of the traditional CdS cells and had three colored diodes (red, green and yellow) in the finder. Production of the Alpa 11si began with serial number 60,009 and continued for over ten years up to serial number 64,150 at fairly low production rates, being produced alternately with a number of special models.

An era draws to a close

During the 1980's, production of the Alpa 35mm reflex slowed dramatically, dropping from a hundred or so cameras a year to just a few dozen and often production amounted to no more than the assembly of four or five cameras a month. It was a time of serious market demand and the Pignons company was not able to meet the challenge, even creating a number of custom built, limited edition models or one of a kind pieces. While the photography market braced itself for the arrival of electronic reflex cameras that were mass produced using new production and assembly technologies, the Alpa mechanical reflex, still essentially hand crafted using old style traditional techniques, failed to be competitive in that limited niche of the market that had assured the existence of this brand for over forty years. At the end of 1989, production of the Pignons single reflex 35mm ended forever. The Pignons company declared bankruptcy on August 14, 1990 and its productive activity was suspended in wait of further developments.

Danilo Cecchi
Massimo Bertacchi
(Part One)

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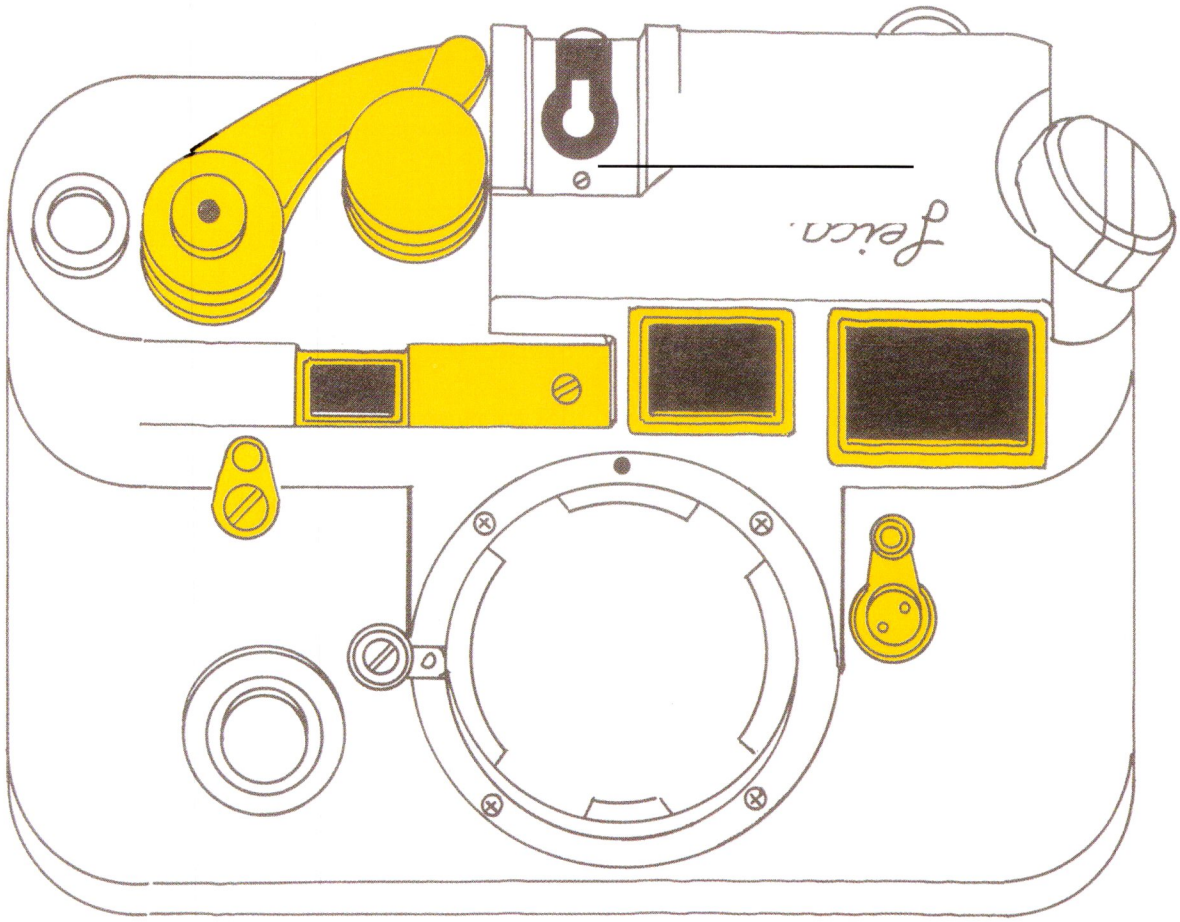
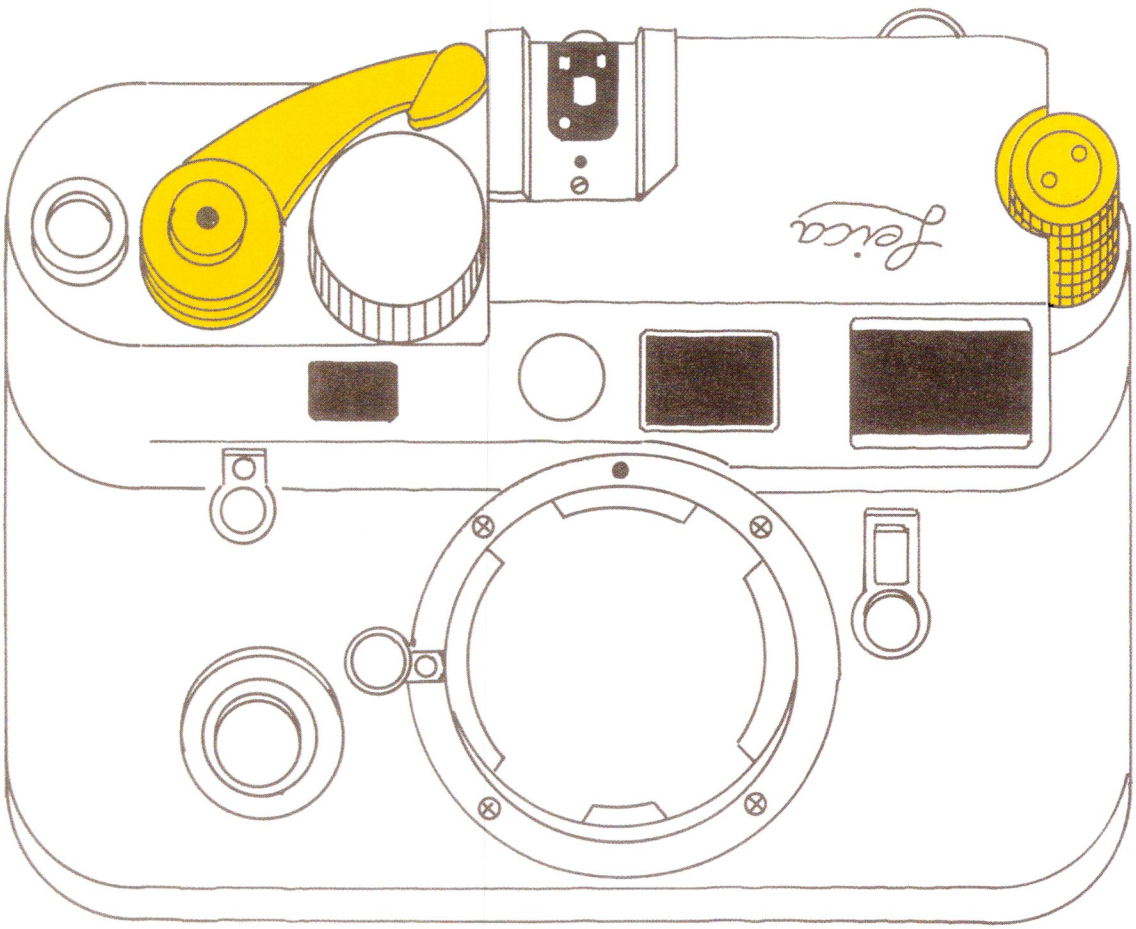
Leica M6J Anno 1994



LEICA M6J

In 1994, to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Leica M, a limited number of 1640 cameras (40 for each year of existence of the Leica M) was produced, called the Leica M6J. The Leica M6J had special serial numbers and were equipped with a retractable mount 50mm f/2 Elmar lens. The Leica M6J used as its base the body and mechanics of the 1984 Leica M6, but took its controls layout and design of the front and top plate from the Leica M3 without, however, giving up the TTL exposure meter or hot shoe. The Leica M6J was produced with silver chrome finish and was equipped with a 0.85 finder with frames for 35, 50, 90 and 135mm focal lengths.

Leica M6 Millennium **Anno 2000**

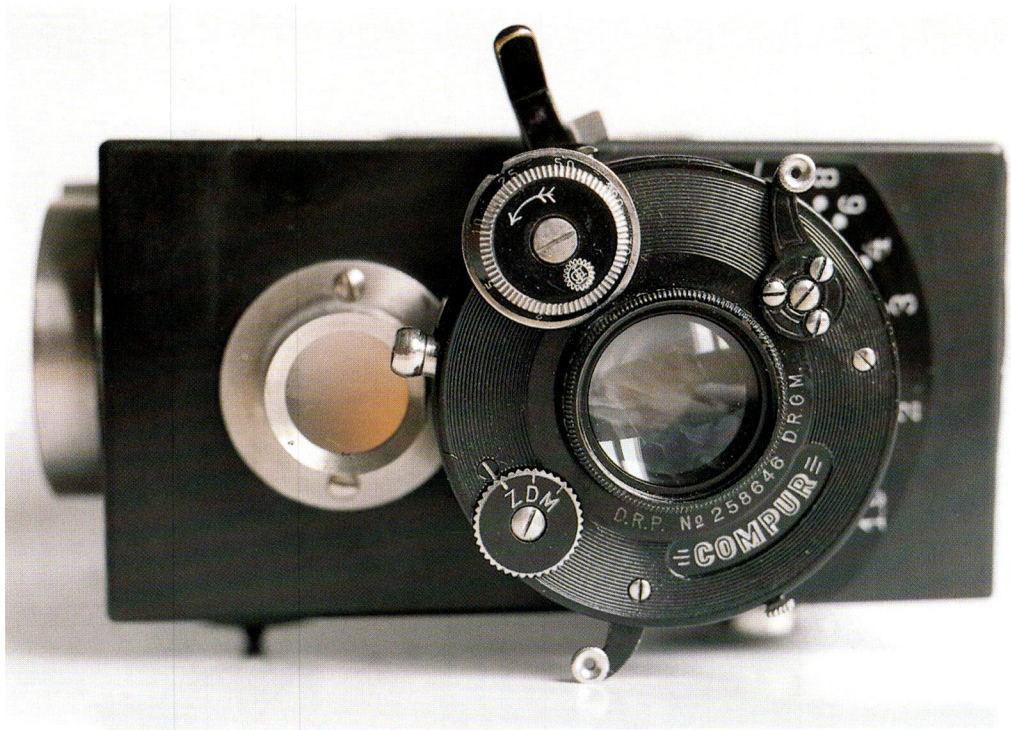


LEICA M6 MILLENNIUM 2000

The first two thousand Leica M6 cameras built in January 2000 with serial numbers between 2,500,001 and 2,502,000, were produced with a special body and finish. The Leica M6 Millennium 2000 used as its base the Leica M6 TTL body and mechanics, retaining the 0.72 finder, built-in exposure meter, flash TTL cell, hot shoe and shutter speed dial. The other controls on the front and top plate, including the pull out film rewind knob, were styled like those on the Leica M3. The Leica M6 Millennium 2000 had a black finish and the standard lens was a retractable mount 50mm f/2.8 Elmar with black finish.

ROTHSCHLOSS:

An unknown 35mm reflex



Rothschloss: front view

By the end of the 1920's the use of 35mm film for still photography was no longer a novelty. A number of camera companies on both sides of the Atlantic had already offered, with greater or lesser success, 35mm cameras with 18x24mm format and Leitz had already met with success putting into production Barnack's 24x36mm camera, calling it the Leica.

Nor was the reflex mirror finder a novelty. It had been used successfully on the twin lens Rolleiflex and on a number of large format cameras. However, the pairing of 35mm film and reflex mirror finder was still a thing of the future.

Camera history has taught us that the world would have to wait for the years 1935 or 1936 to see the birth of a couple of 35mm reflex cameras, one from the banks of the Neva and the other from the banks of the Elba. What camera history never told us is that a rudimentary German 35mm reflex had appeared that pre-dated both its compatriot Kine Exakta and the Soviet Sport.

In Berlin in the late 1920' s, two unknown entrepreneurs named Rothgiesser and Schlossmann, about whose lives absolutely nothing is known, but who must have possessed a good dose of imagination and courage as well as a certain mechanical ingenuity, decided to embark upon an enterprise that for that period must have seemed a bit mad. They decided to build a new 35mm camera completely different from the successful Leica. It was the same period in which mechanical engineer Heidecke and businessman Franke also got together to create the Rolleiflex, and it was a period in which anything seemed possible in the German camera industry.

We do not know if Rothgiesser was the mechanical mind and Schlossman the business man or vice versa, but what we do know is that from their collaboration a small 18x24mm camera using 35mm film was created drawing its name from the combination of the two partners: Rothschloss. This little camera offered features that, for its day, were absolutely new and innovative, perhaps even too much so. As a result it did not meet with the least commercial success and was removed not only from the market, but even from collective memory.

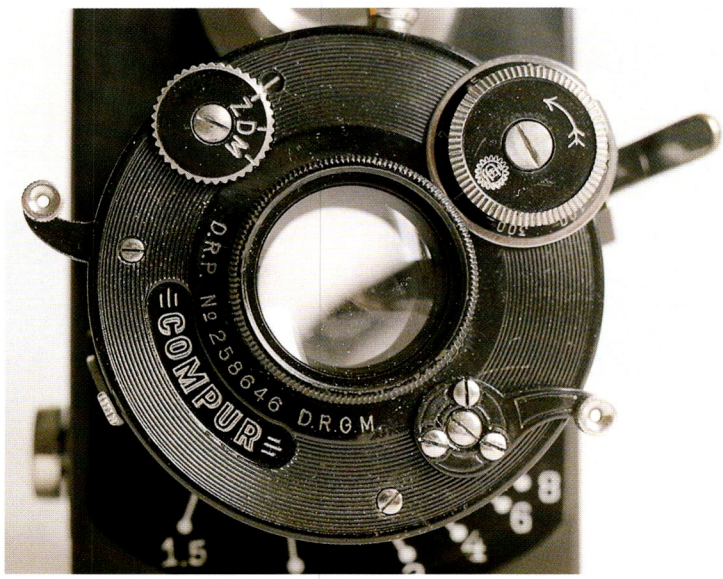
In search of the Rothschloss

As far as we know no camera history book cites the Rothschloss, either among the 35mm cameras of the 20's and 30's, or among twin lens or single lens reflexes. It can be found on the Net, but only in the site of corsopolaris.net/supercameras among both 18x24mm and 35mm cameras and we have included a photograph here. However, the Rothschloss does not appear in the most famous camera collecting guides, including the Blue Book and McKeown. Only Gunther Kadlubek's concise guide dedicates a phrase or two to this singular camera and its two creators, but without offering a photo of the object described.

From Kadlubek's brief description, it can be deduced that the Rothschloss was a small format 18x24mm camera dated 1930 and was equipped with a 50mm f/3 lens and 1/300sec Compur shutter, that it was housed in a vertical box similar to that of a twin lens reflex, in that the lens was mounted on a tube and was connected to a finder with a round magnifier. The price suggested for this apparently modest camera was 2500 marks or 1275 dollars (or Euro). And this apparent discrepancy should generate within attentive collectors

Rothschloss: front and right side

Rothschloss: front and left side with frame counter



Rothschloss: lens and shutter

a certain curiosity and interest. Unexpectedly, an Austrian auction house included a Rothschloss in its catalog without offering any explanation of its special features and the curiosity of collectors began to take shape.

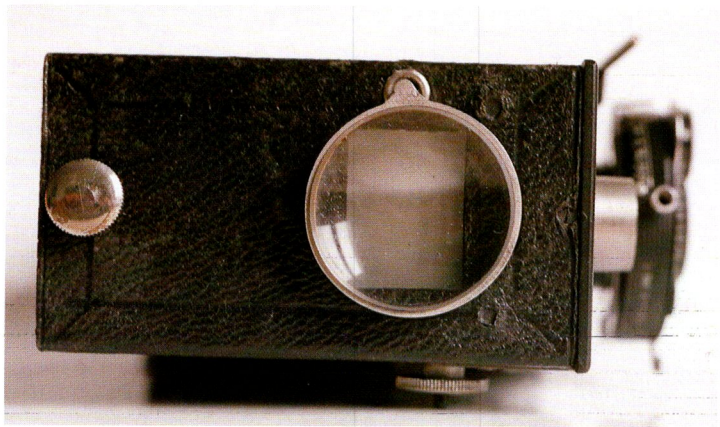
A close-up of the Rothschloss

The Rothschloss is a very square camera, a sharp cornered parallelepiped almost as long as it is tall with a narrow, vertically oriented front like that of the cine cameras of its day. On the bottom of its front is a typical, if anonymous, lens of that period on whose outer edge is engraved: "Anastigmat Rothschloss 1:3 F=5cm". The lens (probably an f/3.5) is mounted on a dial set type Compur shutter with a speed of 1 to 1/300sec, plus the exposure settings and two typical dials for speed selection as well as the typical lever for cocking the shutter spring.

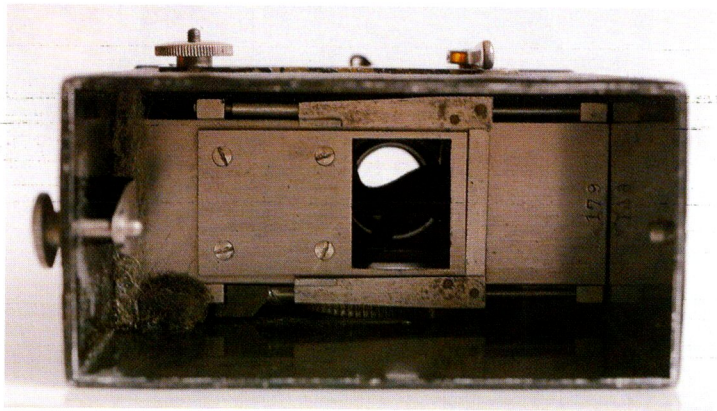
The shutter/lens unit visibly protrudes from the camera front and forms its most noticeable aspect. The lens can be focused between a meter and infinity using a long lever on the left side of the camera where there is also a highly visible frame counter. The film advance lever is located on the opposite side. The shutter release lever is found on the shutter mount itself. Above the taking lens is a finder lens apparently lacking any focusing mechanism and on the top plate is a large round magnifier lens for viewing the framed image.

A less assiduous observer might stop here, declaring to have discovered the first small format twin lens reflex, almost ten years before the Zeiss Ikon Contaflex. But this is not all this camera has to offer. The back of the Rothschloss can be removed and on the inside is the 18x24mm format window and the film cartridge housing with vertical film travel incorporated into the removable back itself. In this period, the use of safety cartridges for 35mm film, such as the Leica Spule or more recent Contax Spule were not common and Kodak had not yet launched its universal 35mm DLC (Daylight Loading Cartridge). As a result, each manufacturer that utilized 35mm film not protected by black paper had to come up with its own light proof reloadable cartridges. The cine format and presence of the cartridge alone made the Rothschloss an innovative camera, but this was not all.

On the right side of the camera is a strange vertical cursor located above the film advance lever. When the cursor is moved, the entire mirror/finder unit lowers so that

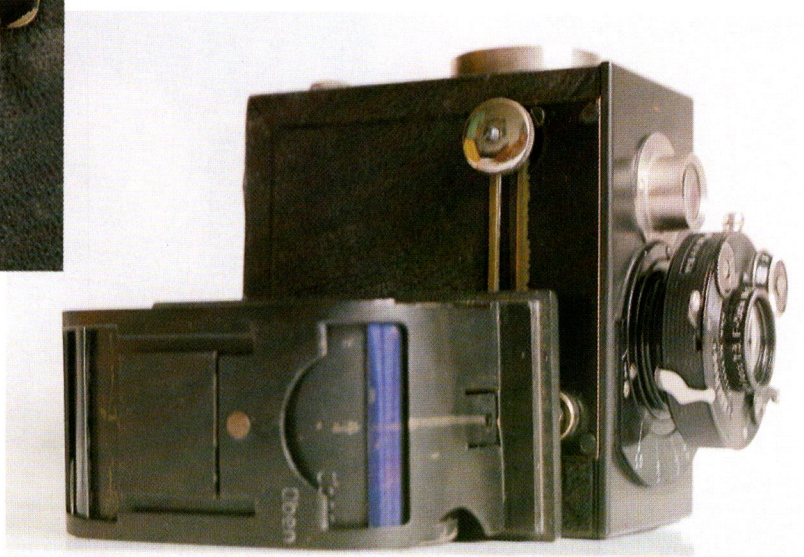


Rothschloss: top plate with round finder window



Rothschloss: back open with 18x24mm window and serial number

Rothschloss: close up of right side



Rothschloss with film cartridge

it no longer sits behind the finder lens, but rather between the taking lens and the film plane. Opening the shutter on the T setting made precise framing and focusing possible directly through the taking lens and without danger of exposing the film. Despite its square shape, non iterchangeable lens and complexity of use, the Rothschloss could be considered the precursor of the modern 35mm reflex. However, on closer inspection, the Rothschloss is not a single lens reflex in the strict sense of the term with a hinged moving mirror. Nor is it a camera with a periscope finder like that of the Periflex. And it is not even a traditional type twin lens reflex with control of the focusing finder through the taking lens.

The Rothschloss is none of these and, at the same time, a bit of each of them. It is an original and only apparently modest camera. One that is terribly interesting and terribly ahead of its time. Definitely too ahead. Without adequate financial backing and born in a climate hostile to ideas that were too innovative on the eve of major social, epoch making upheavals, the Rothschloss discreetly bowed from the scene, taking with it its innovative features.

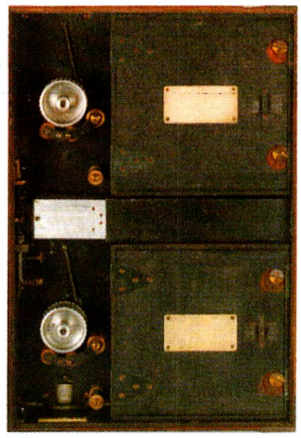
We do not know the fates of Rothgiesser and Schlossman in Hitler's Germany. We do not know if they continued their industrial endeavors in the thirties and after the war in other, non photographic sectors or in other countries outside of Germany. Nor, today, do we know of any other camera that bears their names, either in pair or separately.

All we do know is that engraved within this camera is a number, 179, that probably indicates the number of cameras produced to that date. In theory, therefore, there could be a couple of hundred Rothschloss cameras around, but probably their number is much less. For those not content with rare but well known cameras, this could be good news.

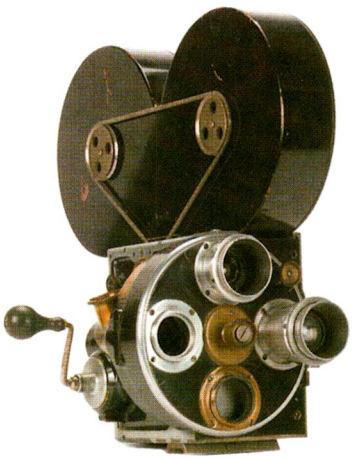
Danilo Cecchi
and Massimo Bertacchi

Christie's

35mm Moy cinematographic camera
Estimated price £ 1600/1800
Auction price: £ 2232



35mm Moy cinematographic camera
Estimated price £ 600/800
Auction price: £ 1292



Bell & Howell 35mm cinematographic camera
Estimated price £ 6000/8000
Auction price: £ 10575

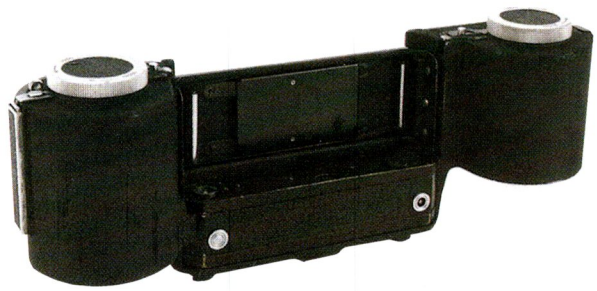
Electric Gyroscope cinematographic camera
Estimated price £ 10000/15000
Auction price: £ 9400

Cinema

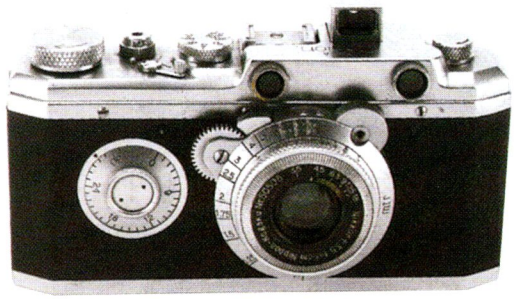
The allure of old, crank-operated 35mm wood cine cameras cannot be equated perhaps with that of leather-lined bellows cameras with brass detailing and sliding back of the same period. But collecting tastes are changing and these square mechanical objects, so unassuming to the layman's eye, have begun to give rise to curiosity, interest and even desire. For mahogany 35mm cine cameras of English manufacture from the turn of the century, it was easy to find estimated values that started at £1000 (approx. €1425) to reach £2000 (approx. €2850) with top prices even higher, up to £3000 (almost €4300) for a Prestwich model. An English piece in wood with one of the first electrical motors, an Electric Gyroscope Kinematograph Camera with Goerz Hypar lens, hit £9400 (approx. €13,500), while a more modern-looking Bell & Howell with rotating turret and a good number of lenses went for over £10,000 (nearly €15,000). More modern cine cameras built of metal in the Twenties, Thirties and Forties decidedly offered lesser monetary appeal, but there was an interesting 35mm spring cine camera by Newman and Sinclair with body in aluminum alloy that went for between approx. £800 (€1150) and £1175 (€1700), reaching a top price of near £1300 (€1850). A 16mm Arriflex with Angenieux Zoom lens went for £1175 compared with the £100 paid on average for the 16mm Beaulieu and Bolex H16.

35mm still cameras

London auctions continue to register



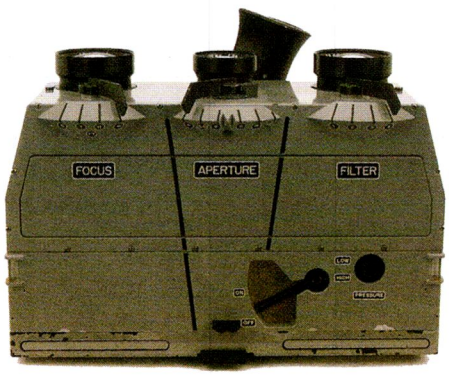
Nikon S 250 Motor Drive
Estimated price £ 16000/22000
Auction price: £ 18800

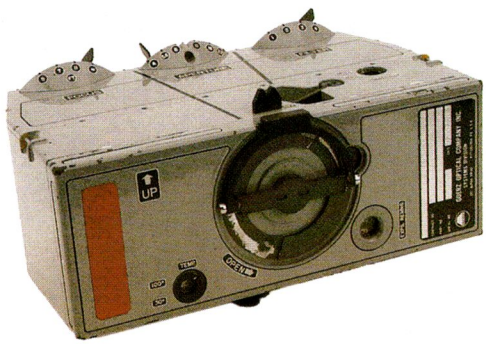


Canon Hansa camera
Condition: 3D
Estimated price £ 7500/9000
Auction price: £ 5875

Reid III camera
Condition: 4C
Estimated price £ 600/800
Auction price: £ 998

Witness camera un-numbered
Condition: 4C
Estimated price £ 1200/1800
Auction price: £ 1645





Lunar geological exploration camera
Estimated price £ 5500/6500
Auction price: £ 6462

frenetic highs and lows in the 35mm still camera sector. While a chrome Nikon S with f/2 lens went for just over £400 (less than €500), a Nikon S2 with f/1.4 lens in excellent condition and original documents hit the £1300 mark (€1850) and a Nikon S250 electric motor developed for the Nikon SP went for £18,800 (nearly €27,000) while an almost-identical Nikon F250 motor starting from a base price ten times lower remained unsold. A Hansa Canon with Nikkor f/3.5 lens was sold for £5875 (€8400) and a Canon IV SB with two lenses, 50mm f/1.5 and 85mm f/1.9, reached £650 (€900). A Japanese Leica copy with Honor brand name and f/1.9 lens went for £940 (€1350), while a Spotmatic Motor Drive just topped £300 (€430). The English Reid cameras built as exact imitations of screw mount Leicas reached £900 in the version without rangefinder and £1000 for the one with, while the more original Periflex wavered between £90 and £150, arriving at close to £180 just for a piece from the first series of which 200 were ever made. Among the English cameras, a rangefinder Witness with f/1.9 lens went for £1650 (€2350), while a Wrayflex with mirror finder oscillated between £270 for a model Ia and £528 for a model II, both in not that good 4B condition. An Italian Sonne IV with Elionar f/3.5 in fair 4B condition went for over £450 (over €650), while a much more original GaMi 16 stopped at £280. Totally original from every aspect was a 35mm camera built to NASA specifications for geological surveys on the lunar surface and which cost around one million dollars, was put

up for sale and went for less than £6500 (€9250).

Classic, original and medium format cameras

Among the more unusual cameras, one disguised as a book and made at the end of the 1800s by Kruegener sold for over £3000 (€4300) and a metal mini camera by the English maker, Marion, in 3x3cm format went for over £3500 (€5000). Small and very small cameras—so charming and delightful as well as easy to keep in a display case or drawer—still held market interest. Alongside the Minox with estimated values around £100 for mass-produced models, was the Tessina with prices that varied from just over £200 to over £500. Classic medium format cameras, on the other hand, registered a drop in interest with prices that were uneven but generally on a downward trend, from just over £100 for a Hasselblad 500C body, near £650 for a Hasselblad 500CM with 80mm Planar, just over £700 for a Rolleiflex 2.8 GX with 80mm Planar, £470 for a Rolleiflex 2.8 with the same lens and less than £180 for a Mamiya C300 with 180mm tele. A 6x9 Bessa II with 105mm f/3.5 Color Skopar on Synchro Compur just reached £300, a pre-war Prominent with 105mm f/3.5 Heliar went for £235 and a Night Exakta with 80mm f/1.9 Primoplan went for over £300. Among the unusual twin-lenses, a Velta Perfekta did not bring £200, while its near-twin Superfekta just reached £300 and an Zecaflex over £375.

For classic cameras in wood with brass fittings, prices were in line with those of the recent past with the trend slightly upward. Just over £160 was paid for a half-plate Sanderson body, around £200 for a full lens plate Gandolfi, approx. £300 for a 4x5in. Sanderson with 6in. Ross lens on Compur shutter, but less than £130 for a 13x18 Tropica made by Zeiss Ikon and equipped with a double 195mm f/6.8 anastigmatic on Compur shutter. Among the proto-cameras of the mid-1800s, record prices were paid for a drawer-type French stereoscopic camera in walnut with 21x12cm format that hit £3000 (€4285), an 18x24mm French-built mini-camera in wood that went for close to £4500 (€6400) and, finally, for a 8x8cm daguerreotype camera that sold for as high as £17,625 (€25,000).

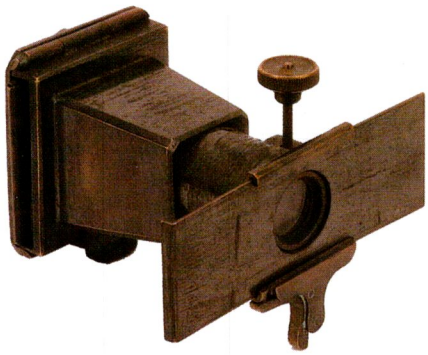
Leica forever

The Leica spell has in no way been affected by the ups-and-downs of the market, especially the rarer and more sought-after cameras, less-common lenses and more original and hard-to-find accessories. Certain excesses seen in the past seem to have ameliorated somewhat and sometimes truly exceptional pieces offered at unattainable prices receive a lukewarm response and it is increasingly rare to find selling prices that exceed the maximum estimated value. A Leica with rim set-type Compur in 4B condition and estimated value of between £2000-3000 stopped at just under £1000. The Leica I with fixed Elmar lens went for between £300 and £400, the Leica II without slow speeds between £150 and £250 and the Leica IIIC and Leica IIIF just slightly higher. The Leica IIIG had the highest price tag that rarely dropped below £400 and there was a Leica IIIG with f/2 Summicron and estimated value of between £500 and £800 that did not reach £600.

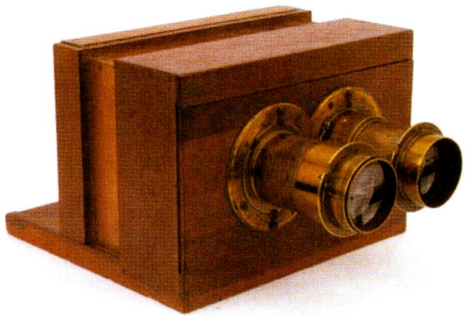
But there were also examples of the opposite trend. A Leica IIIG with f/1.5 Summarit and a wide angle 28mm Hektor reached £1057 (€1500) against a maximum estimated value of £1000, and a Leica IIIG in 3B condition with rigid mount f/2 Summicron and of which one thousand were made with screw mount just reached £1762 (€2500) compared with a maximum estimated price of £800. A curious Leica IIIc with cream color finish and Columbia University markings estimated at between £200 and £300 rose to over £400. A grey Leica IIIcK estimated at between £1200 and £1800 stopped short of £1200. A Leica IIIg without lens but with Leicavit film advance mounted on the base plate sold for over £700 (€1000) compared with a Leica IIIg without lens or Leicavit for which less than £450 (€640) was paid and compared with the Leica IIIg with Leicavit and f/2 Summicron lens that reached £940 (€1350). A Leicavit alone brought more than £750 while a chrome Leicavit MP went for close to £1300. A Leica Reporter 250GG estimated at between £2500 and £4000 stopped at £2350 (€3350).

Among the lenses with screw mount were a 21mm f/4 Super Angulon with finder that from an estimated value of £500 rose to £940 (€1350), while the 21mm f/4 Super Angulon without finder brought between £600 and £650. A 21mm f/4 Super Angulon without finder with M bayonet mount went for just over £400 (€580). A 400mm f/5 Telyt for reflex system created for the 1936 Olympics also sold for £940, while a modern 400mm f/6.8 bayonet Telyt stopped at £330 (€470). An elegant, smooth and captivating Thambar went over the £1500 mark (€2150) and an f/2 Summar with rigid mount and nickel finish of which a few thousand were

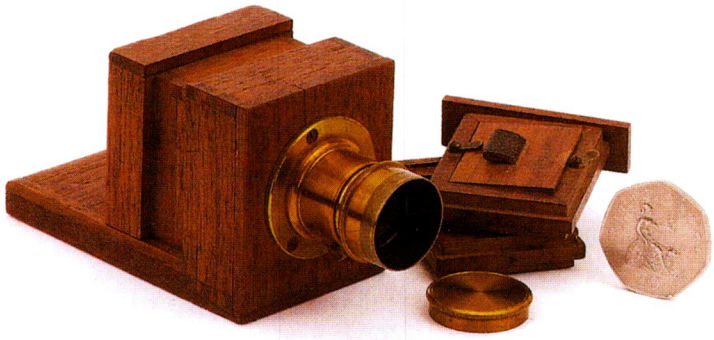
Nikon S2 with Nikkor f/1.4 lens
Condition: 2B
Estimated price £ 1000/1400
Auction price: £ 1292



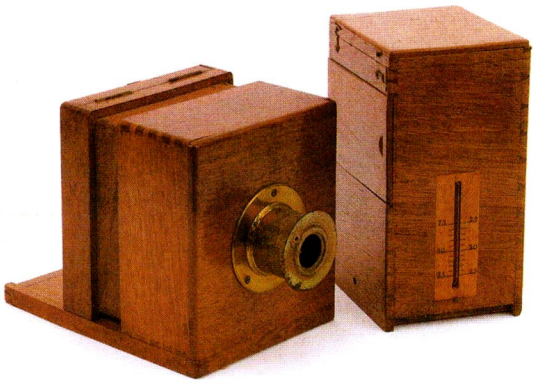
Metal Miniature Camera
Estimated price £ 2000/3000
Auction price: £ 3525



Stereo sliding-box camera, 21x12cm.
Condition: 3/4
Estimated price £ 2000/4000
Auction price: £ 2937



Miniature sliding-box camera
Estimated price £ 4000/5000
Auction price: £ 4465



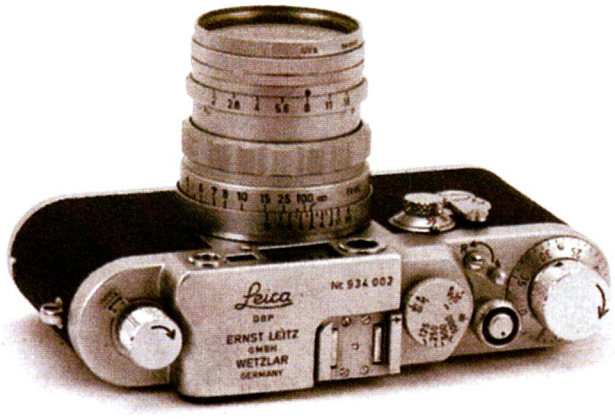
Daguerreian camera outfit dating from circa 1843
Estimated price £ 15000/25000
Auction price: £ 17625

made in the 1930s brought over £800 (€1170).

Among the M bayonet mount lenses, the fast f/1.4 bayonet Summilux started at £300 (€430) to reach £450 (€645). A 7-lens 50mm f/2 Summicron with rigid mount and black finish from the 1960s went from an estimated value of £200-300 to jump to £1645 (€2350), while its contemporary 7-lens chrome-finish 50mm Summicron did not rise above £235 and £305 (€335 and €435). Again among the more modern 50mm f/2 Summicron lenses from the 1980s, there was a discrepancy in prices even with pieces in similar condition, ranging from just over £250 for a black finish lens to almost £450 for one with chrome finish and £940 for a second, apparently identical, again with chrome finish. A 50mm f/1.2 Noctilux with black finish hit £2000 (€2850) while the faster 50mm Noctilux with black finish stopped just over £800 (€1140). The 75mm f/1.4 Summilux ranged between £650 (€930) and £820 (€1170). A 35mm f/1.4 Aspheric Summilux went way over its estimated £600 to £800 value to hit £1300 (€1850).

The M series Leicas, from the M3 of almost fifty years ago to the modern, commemorative Leica M cameras, ranged between prices that were perhaps a bit lower than a few months or years ago, to maximum prices that still today reach levels that are quite high. A Leica M3 in 4C condition with f/3.5 Elmar lens was sold for £235 (€335), the same price as a Leica M3 body in 3D condition. A Leica M3 in 4C condition with f/2 Summicron went for £350 (€500) and a Leica M3 in 3B condition with f/1.5 Summarit reached £587 (€840). A Leica M3 in 4B condition with Leicameter MC and f/1.5 Summarit remained under £300 (€425), but one of its contemporaries, a Leica M3 in 3B condition with Leicameter MR and f/2 Summicron reached £940 (€1340). A Leica M3 body, repainted black and estimated at between £600 and £900, went for over £1400 (€2000). A chrome Leica M2 body in 4B condition was sold for £235 (€335), chrome Leica M2 cameras in the same 4B condition but with f/2.8 Elmar lens ranged between £350 and £470 (€500 and €670<9, while a Leica M2 in better 3B condition with the same f/2.8 Elmar reached £564 (€800). A Leica M4 MOT body with black finish went for £1645 (€2350), a chrome Leica M4-P with 35mm f/1.4 Summilux neared £1300 (€1850) and a black Leica M4 Anniversary reached £940 (€1350). A gold-finish Leica M4-2 Anniversary with coordinated gold 50mm f/1.4 Summilux lens estimated at between £2000 and £3000 stopped just over £1750 (€2500) and a silver-finish Leica M4-P Anniversary with three lenses and two electric winders estimated at between £1500 and £2000 did not exceed £1880 (€2685). A black Leica M4 hit £1000 (€1450) and a black Leica M5 Anniversary body reached £940 (€1350).

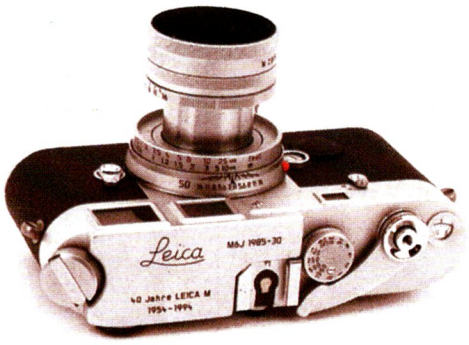
Among modern Leica commemorative cameras created for collectors, all strictly in condition 2B, a Leica M6 75 Jahre Anniversary with f/1.4 Summilux went for £2350 (€3360) and a second Leica M6 Anniversary just over that at £2585 (€3700). A Leica M6 Columbus estimated at between £800 and £1200 rose to £1880 (€2685). A Leica M6 LHSA kit with three dedicated



Leica IIIg with Summicron f/2 lens
Condition: 3B
Estimated price £ 500/800
Auction price: £ 1762

Super Angulon 21mm f/4 lens, screw-fit
Condition: 3
Estimated price £ 300/500
Auction price: £ 940

Leica M6 LHSA outfit
Estimated price £ 1800/2500
Auction price: £ 2585



Leica M6J
Condition: 2B
Estimated price £ 2000/3000
Auction price: £ 2785

Summicron lenses in its wood carrying case hit £2585 (€3700), the same price paid for a nostalgia-laden Leica M6J with its dedicated f/2.8 Elmar. A Leica M1 body with olive green finish and Bundeseigentum marking went for just over this, sold with its companion 135mm f/4.5 tele with the same finish for £3055 (€4350).

On the other side of the Channel

While the pace of camera auctions in London has remained constant with six or seven held annually, on the Continent the number of auctions is less, but the material offered and their prices are extremely interesting. In the Leica field, a number of noteworthy sales were made in Vienna, including a 1925 Leica Elmax sold for €8000, a Leica I Elmar with original leather lining for €9500, a Leica Dial Set Compur for €2500 and a Leica IIIc UNRRA for €4000. A 1945 Leica IIIcK converted in 1951 into a IIIg model, bought and used by Leni Riefenstahl in Africa between 1952 and 1962, re-acquired in 1966 by Theo Kisselbach and offered at €6000, was sold for €8500. A 35mm f/2 screw mount Summicron of which just over 500 were made in the late 1950s sold for €2000, the same price paid for a 35mm f/3.5 Elmar with Luftwaffen Eigentum markings. A rigid, screw mount f/2 Summicron of which just over 1000 were made in the late 1950s went for €1300 and a 90mm f/4 Elmar with Leitz Eigentum marking for €1800.

Among the less-common bayonet Leicas, an olive green German army Leica M3 complete with 50mm f/2 and 135mm f/4.5 lenses, Leicameter and case sold for over €4600. A black Leica M4 body went for more than €3800 and a Leica M2M reached €2600. Among the commemorative Leicas there were the Foto Ganz Leica M6G bodies that sold for €1600 with black finish, €1800 with chrome finish and €1900 with titanium finish. A platinum 150 Years Leica M6 with f/1.4 Summilux sold for €3900, a chrome Royal Wedding Leica M6 with f/2 Summicron for €2200, a gold King of Thailand Leica M6 with gold f/2 Summicron reached €3000 and a Leica M6J with its accompanying 50mm f/2.8 Elmar €3500. A rare underwater case from the US army, complete with Leica MDA and f/2.8 90° Elcan started from an estimated value of €12,000 and finally sold for €14,500.

Outside the world of Leica, but still within the same sphere, a very rare Leica copy built by the Japanese Nicca firm but bearing the Snaider brand for the Australian market, equipped with two German Schneider lenses and estimated at €4600, reached €9300.

Leica M6 Colombo
Condition: 2B
Estimated price £ 800/1200
Auction price: £ 1880

Leica M6 Anniversary
Condition: 2B
Estimated price £ 2000/3000
Auction price: £ 2585

Leica M1 Bundeseigentum
Condition: 3B
Estimated price £ 2000/3000
Auction price: £ 3055

€13,500 was paid for a Canon Hansa dating from the end of the 1930s, while a Canon NS from the same period sold for €7300. A just slightly more recent Canon J went for €6500 and a Canon S from the immediate post-war period for €3200. Among recent-generation Canon rangefinders with f/0.95 lens, a chrome Canon 7S sold for €1350 and a black Canon 7 €2400.

Among those cameras most sought-after by non-Leica collectors, a 1948, 24x32mm Nikon I with f/2 lens sold for €20,500. A 1950 Nikon M with f/1.4 lens went for €8500 and a Nikon M with f/2 lens for €3600. A chrome Nikon S2 with black-finish f/1.4 lens was sold for €1700 while a black Nikon S2 with black f/1.4 lens went for almost twice as much, €3200. A chrome Nikon S3 with f/2 lens sold for €1450 while a black 1964 Olympic Nikon S3 with black-finish f/1.4 lens reached €7100. A Nikon S4 with non-original black finish and f/1.1 external bayonet mount lens brought €4600.

A chrome Nikon SP with f/1.1 lens and Nikon S36 electric motor hit €10,000, but this price was bettered by a chrome Nikon SP in excellent condition with f/1.1 lens and shade that sold for €15,500, the same price paid for a black Nikon SP with f/1.4 lens.

A 35mm Nikon MiniFinder built for the Nikon S2 was sold for €1950 and an exposure meter to be coupled with the Nikon SP complete with accessories reached a price of €800.

Among Nikon reflexes were two black-finish Nikon F cameras sold respectively for €3100 and €3200, a black Nikon Photomic with two lenses sold for €2000 and two Nikon F2 Titan bodies that went, respectively, for €1600 and €2000. Among reflexes with special detailing was an extremely rare black Asahi Pentax AP for which €1800 was paid and a black Minolta SR1 that sold for €2550, while a black Miranda Orion Camera went for €5000. The classic Swiss Alpa continues to gain favor with collectors, especially the rarer models. A standard Alpa with 50mm f/2.9 Angenieux Z2 lens brought €2200, an Alpa Bosley Reflex with 50mm f/1.8 Alitar lens sold for €1200, an Alpa Prisma Reflex with the same lens for €1600 and an Alpa reflex 6b with Kern Micro Switar lens went for €1400.

A late generation Alpa Reflex 11e in perfect condition and with a 50mm f/1.9 Macro Switar sold for €2200. A 1948 Alpa Reflex in excellent condition and with its "wrapping" of instructions in French started from an estimated price of €1900 to finally go for €3400.

Among the rare, but known cameras always to be found in catalogs was a 15mm f/8 Hologon Ultrawide that sold for €2400 and two 35mm pre-war Contaflex twin-lens that went, respectively, for €1100 and €1320. A Gamma Duflex, the first and only Hungarian reflex built in the immediate post-war period, sold for €4200. A rare mirror telephoto Mirotar with a meter focal for Contarex and starting from an estimated price of €14,000, brought a final prices of €24,000, while an identical Konica meter mirror gun did not exceed €1800.

Among tiny, but no less sought-after, cameras, the Minox brand continued its rise with €7500 paid for a Minox A Gold kit comprised of camera, exposure meter and gold-plated chain in leather case.

A rare black-finish Minox A brought €4000 and a modern Minox LX Sterling Silver with double case in metal and wood brought €3600. A Tessina 35 Gold with gold-finish and various accessories brought €1700.

Speaking of gold finishes, a gold-finish Hasselblad 2000 FCM dating from 1985 (100th anniversary of the Hasselblad family) of which 700 were made, went for €2100, while a Hasselblad 503CX Gold Edition from 1991 celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Victor Hasselblad company, was put up for auction at €4200, but remained unsold. Just proving that everything that glitters is not always gold

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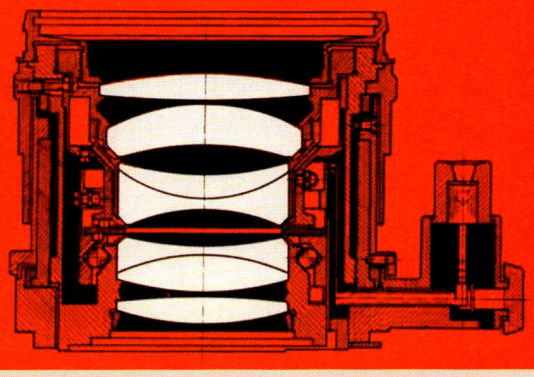

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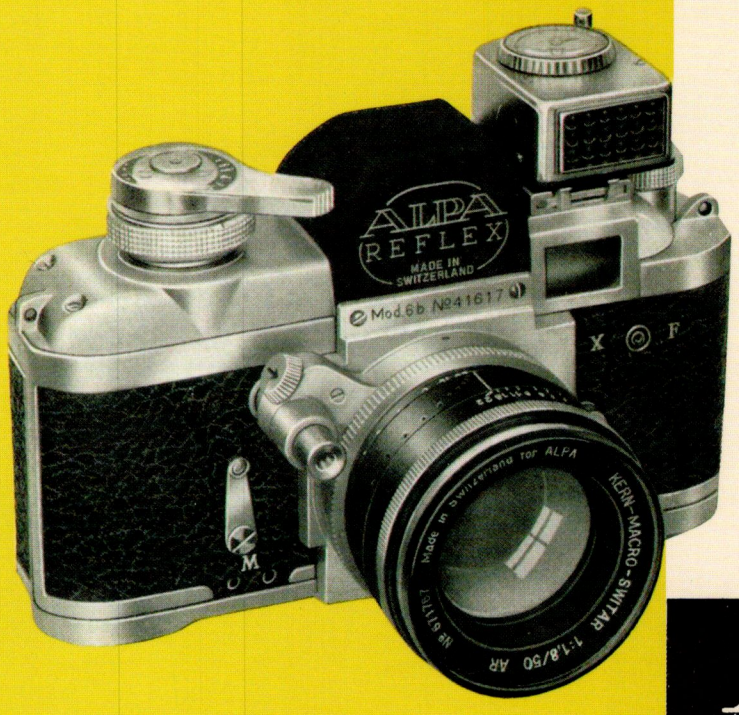

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