

Additional info about the APO-LANTHAR

The history of the APO-LANTHAR begins with the HELIAR invented by Hans Harting in 1900. Despite its simple optical configuration of five elements in three groups, the HELIAR was a lens with superb depictive performance. As an example of the HELIAR optical formula still being valid in the present day, it is used in the currently available HELIAR Vintage Line 50mm F3.5, a lens known for its superb depictive performance.

Furthermore, a HELIAR is recorded as being the lens used to take imperial portraits of Emperor Showa, and it is said the HELIAR lens was extremely highly regarded for its beautiful depictive performance and even treated as a family treasure by portrait photography businesses during the Showa period.

Moving forward about half a century from the birth of the HELIAR to 1954, Albrecht Wilhelm Tronnier developed a lens using the same five-elements-three-groups configuration as the HELIAR utilizing new glass types to achieve performance that exceeded the HELIAR. That lens was the APO-LANTHAR. The APO in APO-LANTHAR indicates an apochromatic optical design. The main characteristic of such a lens is that longitudinal chromatic aberrations caused by the different wavelengths (frequencies) of the three primary colors (RGB) of light are reduced to practically zero to achieve high-level color reproduction. Color film slowly gained popularity after its release in 1935, and one reason why the APO-LANTHAR was developed was to address a growing need to capture light more faithfully than possible with monochrome film.

The first camera to be fitted with an APO-LANTHAR lens was the 6 x 9 roll film rangefinder camera representative of post-war Voigtlander, the Bessa II. There were three different lens variations of this camera: APO-LANTHAR 4.5/100, COLOR-HELIAR 3.5/105, and COLOR-SKOPAR 3.5/105. The APO-LANTHAR 4.5/100 variation has red, green, and blue (RGB) rings indicating the apochromatic optical design engraved around the front of the lens barrel to differentiate it from the other versions as a special lens. Due to the rarity and high performance of the Bessa II fitted with APO-LANTHAR lens, this camera has become a legendary camera traded on the used market at high prices and the envy of camera collectors.

As homage to the RGB colors that differentiate the APO-LANTHAR from other lenses beginning with the BESSA II, the MACRO APO-LANTHAR 65mm F2 Aspherical also features three colored dashes indicating the RGB colors at the front edge of the lens barrel.