Frits Zernike Encyclopedia Article

Frits Zernike

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Frits Zernike

1888-1966

Dutch physicist whose development of the phase-contrast method, which had a profound impact on high-performance optical microscopy, earned him the 1953 Nobel Prize in Physics. Ironically, in spite of a promising university career, Zernicke's invention of the phase-contrast microscope was virtually ignored until the Nazi invasion of the Netherlands. Seizing on the principle, Germany manufactured the first such devices. After the war, they moved into production world-wide, proving a boon to science and medicine.