

Using Gitzo Tripods Underwater



Introduction

I have used Gitzo tripods for almost thirty years. I also use Manfrotto tripods, but tend to use Manfrotto tripod heads, on Gitzo tripods (both can be obtained from Bogen Imaging).

FLAAR tests tripods in extreme conditions, especially in tropical Central America. For the last three years we have been evaluating Gitzo and Manfrotto tripods out on ethnobotanical expeditions in remote areas. During August 2008 it was possible to test the tripods in the roughest environment I can imagine, “underwater” out in crocodile infested mangrove swamps. These swamps occupy several hundred square miles parallel to the Pacific Ocean (which is about 100 meters away). The water we were in was primarily fresh water but has a natural component of saltwater as well, since the ocean is very close.

Ethnobotany is the study of plants of use to indigenous groups, in this case to the Maya of Guatemala. The plants we are currently interested in include cacao, incense (resins from trees), tropical fruits, nuts such as cashew, and the sacred waterlily. Much of my PhD dissertation twenty years ago was on the iconography of waterlily plants in Maya murals, stone carvings, and paintings on ceramics. Today in 2008 I go out into the jungle to find the waterlily plants and try to understand which features of the plants were selected by the Maya priests for their religious portraits, and why.

In early August we found an area of waterlilies and a few weeks later it was possible to return here with a larger crew of five people with a full studio full of equipment:

48 megapixel large-format BetterLight scanning back system

22 megapixel medium format Phase One P25+ 1-shot system

Nikon D80, Nikon D100, and Nikon D300 for 35mm digital. We have a Canon EOS 5D in reserve but did not need it.

We had separate tripods for each camera system. For the medium format Hasselblad I prefer a tall tripod that is carbon fiber to reduce weight, especially since last year alone I carried this tripod on over 400,000 kilometers of airplane flights around the world: Dubai, Istanbul, Novosibirsk, Seoul, Shanghai, Milan, Berlin, and other locations.

For the BetterLight camera I prefer a carbon fiber Gitzo, the largest one they make. But for photographing out in a river I felt it would be better to take an old-fashioned heavy-metal model. This is a tripod I have had for several decades. The heavy weight helps in the river.

For the Nikon cameras we had a variety of Gitzo and Manfrotto tripods and various sizes and shapes of tripod heads.

The following photo essay shows the three largest Gitzo tripods in use out in the river and adjacent swamps in Guatemala.



Monterricco was the starting point of all our field trips. This picturesque town is set between the swamps and the Pacific Ocean.



Most transportation in this area is by water





In order to have more mobility, we chartered two boats. The boats do not use motors in order not to fill our nostrils with foul gasoline smell, and to cut down on noise and vibrations



FLAAR has two botanists full-time on staff. Here is Mirtha Cano.



Several photographers work full-time on FLAAR Projects, here is Jaime Leonardo



To get to the areas with the highest concentration of waterlilies we first went through the mangrove swamps.



Once we found the area where we wished to spend several hours photographing, each camera was set up. Here is the heavy-metal Gitzo being set up for holding a 4x5 Cambo for using with the BetterLight Pano/WideView system.



Here is another tall Gitzo tripod, G1348. It is my all-time favorite tripod because of it's height, yet light weight.

Notice I have the model with no center-column; if you are a professional photographer, it is best NOT to have a center-column, to avoid wobble. It is primarily amateur tripods that have a center-column. When you raise such a column, it tends to wobble



Since Nicholas uses the medium format and 35mm cameras for more mobility, he tends to use a slightly smaller tripod than the one for the 4x5" camera. But since the water can get rather deep, we do need a tripod a few inches taller than most models.



Notice that none of these tripods have a center post. A center post is the weakest part of any tripod. A center post is an invitation for wobble. To be assured of a solid platform for your camera it is recommended to place your tripod head directly on top of the tripod: with no center post.



These swamps are invested with crocodiles and caimans, indeed the government crocodile nursery is in the nearby town. So far none of the staff have been gobbled up by crocodiles, nor bitten by tropical water snakes.



Nicholas uses a Nikon D300 because it's more mobile, the lenses are auto-focusing, and everything about the camera is easier to use.



Phase One P25+ Photos



But for exhibit photos, you get noticeably better quality with a medium format digital camera. Downside is that an elderly Hasselblad has no auto-focus and almost everything is manual. But the PhaseOne P25+ digital back is recent technology, indeed this is the “plus” version.



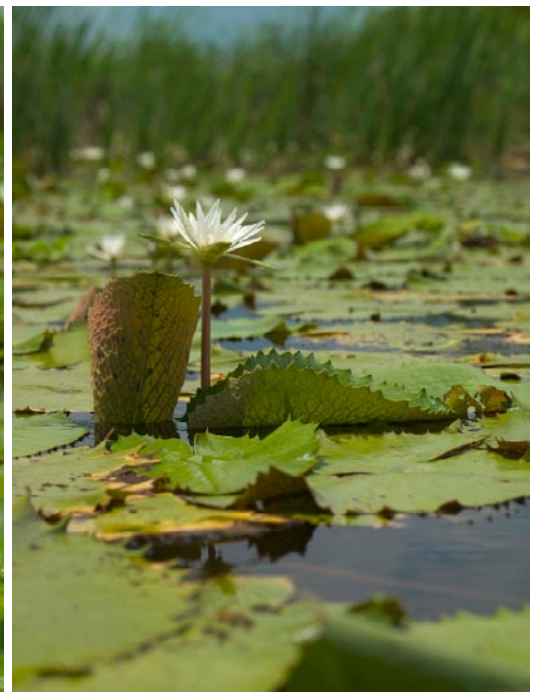
Because of the extreme heat caused by the tropical sun in August, it is a good idea to use a white cloth on top of your camera. Digital sensors are sensitive to heat. Actually it is impressive how well the PhaseOne works under these tropical conditions.



Sample Photos Nikon D300



Sample Photos Nikon D300



Sample Photos Phase One P25+



Sample Photos Phase One P25+



Sample Photos Phase One P25+



Sample Photo Nikon D300

FLAAR has many evaluations and reviews of Gitzo and Manfrotto tripods and tripod heads. You can see all these tripods at PhotoPlus (New York), at PMA, and every two years at Photokina trade show in Cologne. Or more easily you can see them on www.BogenImaging.com , or at your local photo dealer.

Appendix A

Using Gitzo Tripod to Photograph sacred Frangipani flowers

The hotel where we stayed in Monterico happened to have a flor de Mayo bush. This is the same flower that is so common in Thailand and Hawaii. It is actually native to Guatemala and Mexico.

If I was stuck with a lesser tripod it would not have been possible to get high enough up to get the angle of view that was best. Of course experience has taught us this over the decades, which is why I select specific models of Gitzo tripods. Here I am using a short ladder, since this fits best in the vehicle. For some other types of photography I use a Gitzo tripod that can be raised 14-feet. This requires a ladder of corresponding height.



For memory in the 22-megapixel digital camera we use a 16 GB card. For memory in our various Nikon and Canon digital cameras we use an 8 GB, 4 GB, and 2 GB card from Hoodman. You can read these cards very fast with the special Hoodman card reader.

Copyright 2008 FLAAR



Hoodman UDMA Card Reader

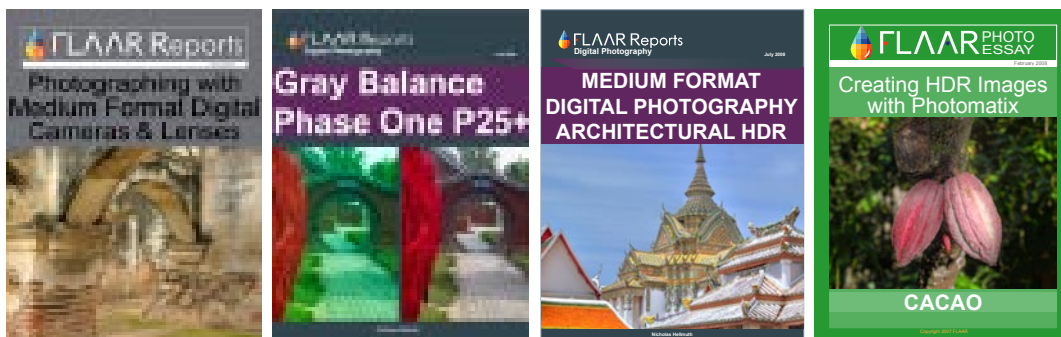


Hoodman Compact Flash Cards.

Learn more in our:

FLAAR LEARNING UNITS

Creating High Dynamic Range images step by step



[Click here to order these reports](#)

Learn more in our:

<p>An Exhibit of Giclee Prints of Guatemala by photographer Nicholas Hellmuth</p>  <p></p>	<p>Essential Equipment for Successful Portrait Photography</p>  <p></p>	<p>Portrait Photography with Medium Format Digital Camera Backs</p>  <p></p>	<p>Photojournalism with Medium Format Digital Camera Backs</p>  <p></p>	<p>FLAAR Medium Format Digital Camera Initiative</p>  <p></p>
<p>Architecture Photography with Medium Format Digital Camera Backs</p>  <p></p>	<p>Landscape Photography with Medium Format Digital Camera Backs</p>  <p></p>	<p>Evaluation of Creo Leaf Vaiso 22 Medium Format Digital Camera</p>  <p></p>	<p>Nature Photography with Medium Format Digital Camera Backs</p>  <p></p>	<p>Fine Art Photography with Medium Format Digital Camera Backs</p>  <p></p>
<p>Resolutions for Inkjet Printing</p> 	<p>Printers for Museum-Quality Prints</p> 	<p>Creo EverSmart Supreme Scanner</p> 	<p>Printers for Commercial Photography</p> 	<p>HP DesignJet 130</p> 
<p>Which Printer, Which Software for B&W Photos?</p> 	<p>Photo-Realistic Quality on Diverse Media</p> 	<p>Image Quality Analysis: HP 130 and Epson</p> 	<p>Continuous Tone RGB Printers</p> 	<p>Continuous Tone RGB vs. CMYK Inkjet</p> 
<p>Workflow in Digital Photography</p> 	<p>HP DesignJet 30</p> 	<p>Scanning 35mm Slides and Negatives</p> 	<p>Scanning Medium Format Transparencies</p> 	<p>Printing your Photographs on Silk</p> 

[To learn more click here](#)



[To learn more click here](#)



Phase One P 30
Medium Format
Architectural
Photography



Phase One P 30
Medium Format
Fine Art
Photography



Phase One P 30
Digital Back out in
location in
Central America

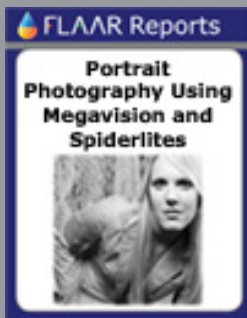
FLAAR Reports
**Evaluating the
Hasselblad H1
Abandoned Factory
& Rust**



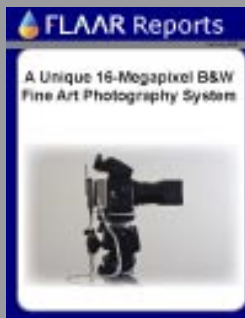
FLAAR Reports
**Evaluating the
Hasselblad H1
Barns and
Abandoned Houses**



FLAAR Reports
**Using a Leaf Valeo
+
Mamiya 645 AFD
for Fine Art Giclee
Photography**



FLAAR Reports
**Portrait
Photography Using
Megavision and
Spiderlites**



FLAAR Reports
**A Unique 16-Megapixel B&W
Fine Art Photography System**

FLAAR Course
**Kodak Pro Back
Plus Medium Format
Digital Back (for
Hasselblad or Mamiya)**



FLAAR Course
**Sample Results of
Architectural
Photography with
the Imacon Ixpress 528C**



[To learn more click here](#)

Your finished inkjet prints look so much better if the input is from a high quality camera.

If you prefer to buy a medium format digital back (and not just rent one), then we suggest you contact Capture Integration,
toll free 877 217-9870,
Atlanta office 404 522-7662,
Atlanta fax 404 522-7929
Miami telephone 305 534-5701,
Miami fax 305 534-1425
E-mail: info@CaptureIntegration.com

Capture Integration handles all aspects of medium format digital photography: portraits and everything.

But if you are especially interested in architectural photography, they have the special architectural camera bodies that can handle any brand of medium format digital back.

Plus, Capture Integration is one of the only companies in the US that can handle medium format Infrared photography with a digital back at full resolution.



If you wish to try out a Phase One medium format digital camera, you can rent one from Global Imaging Inc. They rent across the USA. Contact info is:

Greg Lamb, glamb@globalimaginginc.com
(Colorado office)

2011 Cherry Street, Suite 116
Louisville, CO 80027

Tel: 303.673.9773

Toll Free: 800.787.9801

Fax: 303.673.9923

info@globalimaginginc.com

We at FLAAR know the people of Global Imaging Inc for many years. They also handle wide-format inkjet printers: VUTEk, EFI Rastek, Mimaki, HP, Canon, Epson, etc., IMAGEPRINT, COLORPROOF XF, ONYX RIP software, and Zund XY flatbed cutters.