

Creo Leaf Valeo 22

Part I:

Photographing Nature as Fine Art for Giclee
with Medium Format Digital Cameras

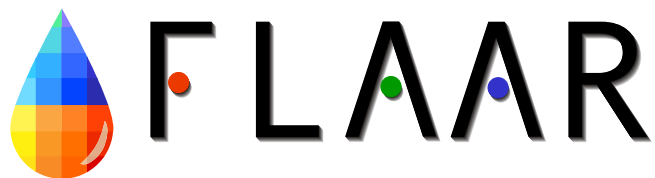


FLAAR Reports

Medium Format Digital Camera Initiative



Mamiya 645 AFD, Mamiya 120mm macro f 4 lens, Leaf Valeo 22,
Manfrotto 490 ball head on a Manfrotto carbon fiber tripod at work in Guatemala



Introduction

If you photograph nature as a profession, or as an avocation, consider the benefits of medium format digital nature photography.

You get 22 true megapixels of close to noise-free photographs because of the low ISO, 25. You should be using a tripod anyway.

We have gone to ISO 100 when photographing butterflies hand held; its tough to use a tripod when the insects fly away so quickly. Photographing insects close-up with a macro lens is the one time I might think of shooting without a tripod.

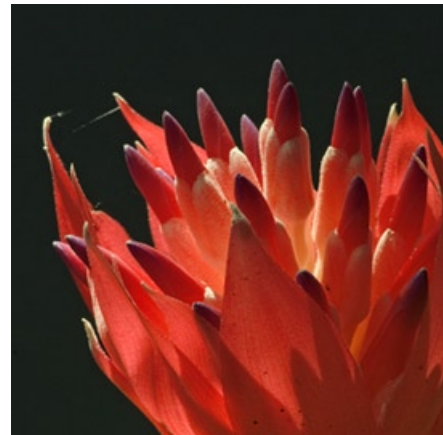
If you would like to learn digital photography, especially of plants, leaves, flowers, and insects, you will enjoy Nicholas Hellmuth's course on digital photography. Whether you photograph birds, or your pet dog, landscapes or panoramics, this course will teach you how to improve your photography.

We use 35mm digital cameras, zoom-lens point and shoot, medium format (seen here), and large-format tri-linear cameras to do nature photography. We show you the pros and cons of each kind of camera.



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Front cover photograph: Leaf Valeo 22, Mamiya 645 AFD, ISO 100, manual focus Mamiya macro lens, probably wide open (f 4).

Butterflies

Butterfly wings with pale yellow circles around black. This butterfly was only an hour old; it had just emerged from its cocoon. So it was hanging on for dear life. It had not yet even opened its wings to fly. Within a few hours the colors will darken, and this will fly away as a Blue Morpho, one of the largest and most beautiful butterflies of tropical Central America. But you can't see the blue until the insect opens its wings.



Photo by Nicholas Hellmuth, www.FLAAR.org, using a Mamiya macro lens, Mamiya 645 AFD, Creo Leaf Valeo 22.

To capture this level of detail I used a tripod, the largest Gitzo carbon fiber model (G1548GT) with a Gitzo off-center ball head (G1575 M, the best tripod head I have used in over 40 years of photography). You can see these tripods and heads on www.BogenImaging.com.

Unfortunately the JPEGed file is so scrunched by compression of the Adobe PDF format, that virtually none of the original wing detail is visible. But in the Leaf RAW file and the resulting 61 MB TIF this medium format back has recorded the original surface texture of the wing in a manner beyond stunning. You have to see the original to realize what this Leaf is capable of. The quality is awesome.



Black butterfly with red markings. He was injured, and so was not moving much. I put the camera on the ground; this was too low for any tripod. Rather than focusing on the insect, I focused and then moved the camera back and forth by millimeters to get the plane of focus that I wanted.

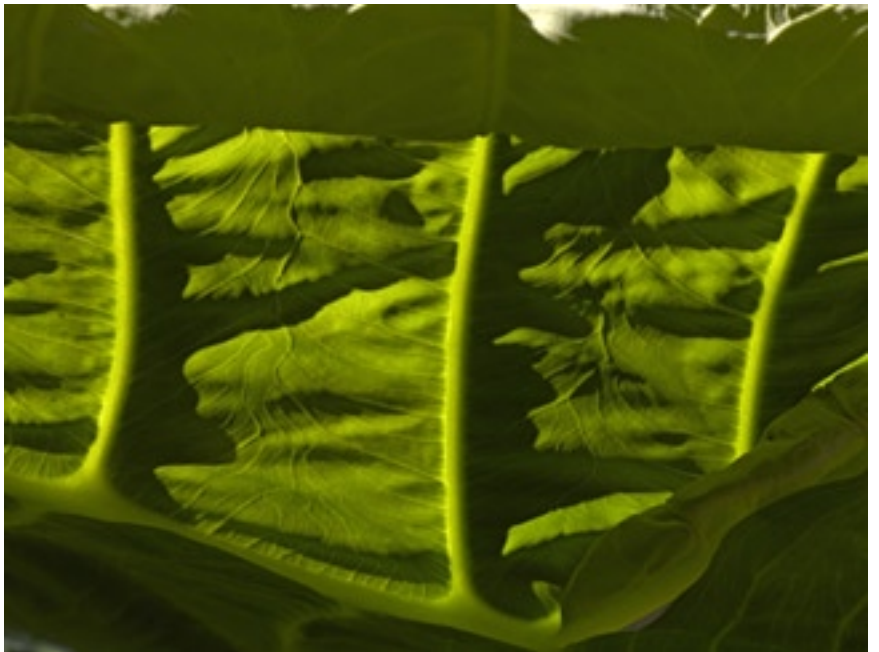


Two white-spotted butterflies joined in a mating episode. These butterflies, I assume a male and a female, stayed locked in this position the entire half-hour that I took their photograph. I took one series hand-held. Then when I noticed they were in a tight embrace and not keen to fly away, I got a tripod for better focus. The compression and USM has caused the quality to be frazzled, but the original 61-megabyte file is stupendous.

Leaves

Two backlit leaf photos. The straw is from the edge of a roof. The giant leafed plant is so large that its leaves reach up to the roof. I focused on the straw. It had just rained, though that is not evident. My interest was capturing the results of backlighting.

The closeup of the leaf here was tough to take; I had to get the tripod down as low as it would go, and then aim the camera up at the backlit underside of this giant leaf. By keeping the camera parallel to the left (as much as possible considering the form of the leaf), I was able to capture plenty of surface detail.



Flowers

Backlit bromeliad. The focus and detail are so good that you can even see the spider web at the back left. I prefer a full depth of field when photographing flowers. Yes, of course I want the background out of focus, but I want every stamen, every pistil to be sharp. The backlighting is what makes the difference with this flower. I also like the slight angle to the left. About 400 of this species of bromeliad grow happily outside my office in Guatemala. They bloom during July.



Photo by Nicholas Hellmuth, www.FLAAR.org, using a Mamiya macro lens, Mamiya 645 AFD, Creo Leaf Valeo 22.

Orchids





Photo by Nicholas Hellmuth, www.FLAAR.org, using a Mamiya macro lens, Mamiya 645 AFD, Creo Leaf Valeo 22.



Photos by Nicholas Hellmuth, www.FLAAR.org, using a Mamiya macro lens, Mamiya 645 AFD, Creo Leaf Valeo 22.

Contact information

If you wish general information about Mamiya cameras, you can find more on www.mamiya.com.

Leaf offers several other products, such as the 17Wi, Leaf Valeo 6, Leaf Valeo 11. So if you wish general information about Leaf Valeo digital backs, especially about the newer Leaf Aptus back, the general contact information is:

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