

GigaPan compared with Novoflex Pano Head



Part II

Hasselblad+Novoflex Panorama = Q PRO system

About six month ago, we went to Monterrico during July 2010, before the Agatha Tropical Storm on July 2010. We were looking at the mangrove swamps to make some photographs about the sacred waterlilys and ecosystem, which is very rich during this season. The river was very grown and we could see all the waterlilys floating on the surface.

The waterlilies tend to flourish where there is lots of sun, so out in the open. But they also can grow under the mangrove trees.

To reach the open areas, the lake-like areas, you go from the village of Monterrico in a canoe or comparable boat through the thick mangrove swamps for about 30 minutes. Both on the way out, and on the way back, we did some photography with the Novoflex panorama head system (on a Gitzo tripod).

Sofia and Nicholas also took some photographs with a 15mm ultra-wide angle Nikon lens on a Nikon D100 (we did not yet have the Canon EOS-1Ds Mark III and its 14mm super wide angle lens that we got in early 2011 from Parrot Digigraphic).



Mangrove roots of Monterrico July 2010 by Nicholas Hellmuth using a Novoflex pano head.



Mangrove waterlily pad of Monterrico July 2010 by Nicholas Hellmuth using a Novoflex pano head

In July 2010 we did not yet have the GigaPan Epic Pro, so we returned to the Monterrico area during Christmas time. This year two things had happened: the heavy rains in 2010 had flooded the entire area severely, and there were almost no waterlilies blooming. So we concentrated on photographing other parts of the eco-system.

But one day we did find five waterlily flowers, so Nicholas photographed these while Sofia and Jennifer took the GigaPan deeper into the mangrove swamps.

The purpose of this report is to show what the GigaPan Epic Pro can do, and compare it with the Hasselblad and Novoflex pano head system (there is already separate report on that, but we bring this material back again to compare it with the GigaPan.

In the future we will try to use the GigaPan and the Hasselblad+Novoflex in exactly the same location.

Gigapan Epic Pro Sofía Monzón and Jennifer Lara



Mangrove swamps of Monterrico by Sofia Monzón and Jennifer Lara using the Gigapan Epic Pro system + Nikon D300 with a 24-85 mm

The last December, we decided to come back to the Mangrove Swamps of Monterrico and do the same kind of shots that we made on July 2010, but with the only difference than now we had the GigaPan Epic Pro with us.

The experience that we both have acquired using this new system has been amazing. It has been really exciting for us to enter to the mud of the swamps and have to confront all kind of photographic potential in there. Since you're within the mud, you can feel fish (and other creatures you don't want to know what species they are) nibbling on your legs and it is really hard to walk also.

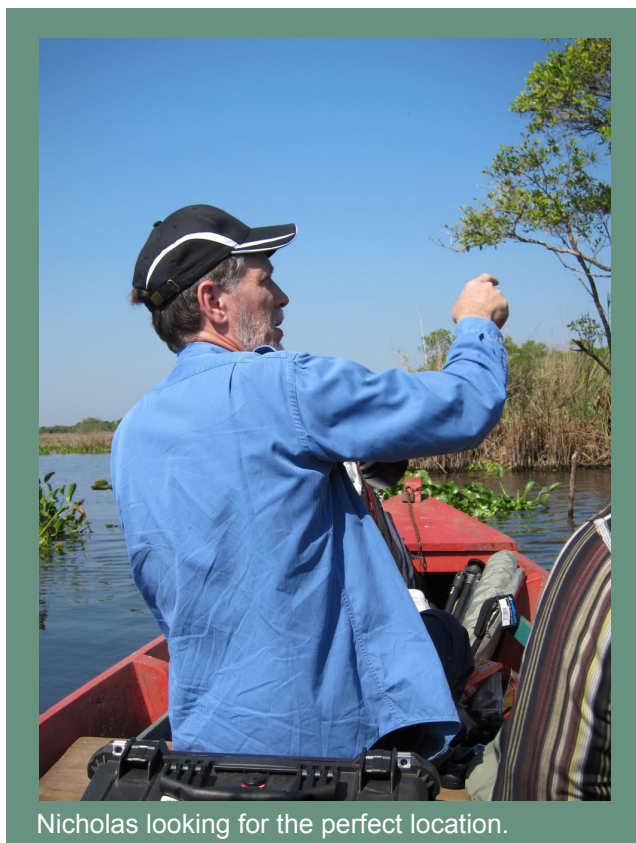
The first thing we did when we arrived at the river, was rent a boat. We were looking for the right location to photograph so we could stay standing while up and stay for a while taking the picture. It wasn't the best season to do it because of the weather, wich was very sunny and there were a lot of mosquitoes biting you everywhere. Anyway, we enjoyed every part of our work and accomplishment, even if we had to survive a very difficult ecosystem.

After a while observing the place, we found the perfect location to set our equipment and start shooting. We had special shoes and old clothes because of the mud, so we jumped down the boat and had all the equipment with us.

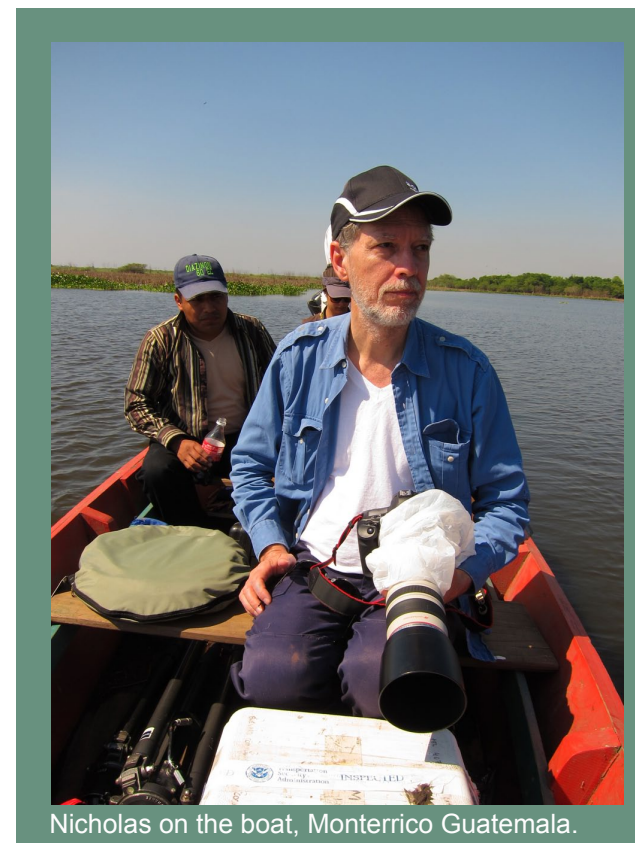
To accomplish this panorama picture using the GigaPan Epic Pro we spent approximately 15 minutes mounting the equipment on the tripod and other 15 minutes to make the whole panorama. We took 312 photos to do the complete view of the mangrove swamps, using a Nikon D300 with an 18/80mm zoom lens.

A new issue of concern this time was the harsh shadows that come from the sun that passes right through the mangroves. And we wanted to make a nearly 360-degree panorama, so it was impossible to find an angle where the light was more favorable all the way across the image.

The only way to improve the dark and over exposed parts of the resulting picture was doing it with Photoshop post production after it stitches in the software belonging to GigaPan System.



Nicholas looking for the perfect location.



Nicholas on the boat, Monterrico Guatemala.



Nicholas stuck on the mud Monterrico Guatemala 2010.



Nicholas on the boat, Monterrico Guatemala 2010.



Sofía Monzón, Nicholas Hellmuth and Jennifer Lara within mangrove swamps of Monterrico Guatemala. Nicholas holding a Canon Mark-III with a 100-800mm telephoto lens. Gigapan Epic Pro System set on a tripod within the mud.

This process can be very time consuming and tedious. Plus you not want to lose the resolution of the photograph, the size of the picture makes it necessary to have a computer powerful enough to handle a file of these dimensions.

We noticed a problem in handling objects that are closer to the camera, because the focus is placed about the midpoint of the depth of focus, objects that fall outside of the focus range in some parts of the scene can become unsightly and thus affect the outcome of the picture.

In this photograph coordinating overlay was very difficult to deal with that because in the swamps the water is moving around, so there are many branches and leaves that are out of control. And in spite of these difficulties, the resulting picture is quite acceptable in my opinion, considering that we've never done shots in this location and with this photography equipment.

Comments by Nicholas

In the future we would prefer to use a dedicated 100mm lens for the 35mm DSLR mounted in the GigaPan frame. Best might be a Zeiss.

The advantage of the GigaPan is that it can shoot down to your feet and up above you. A normal click-stop tripod head pano head can shoot just to left and right, but not up and down.

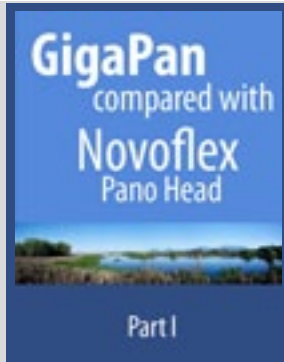
If you need only to photograph right and left, the Hasselblad on the Novoflex is perfect. Better than any 35mm digital SLR. But if you are in a tight enclosed space, and especially if you wish to photograph above you, then you need the GigaPan.

So it is not an either-or situation. You need both. The GigaPan is essential for some situations. But a medium format camera gives crisper results for a regular pano. Yes, you can also use a medium format camera on the GigaPan frame (Jim Trotter has done this even with an earlier generation GigaPan. But the GigaPan models are designed and manufactured primarily for 35mm DSLR systems. The other models of GigaPan are made for point-and-shoot compact digital cameras.

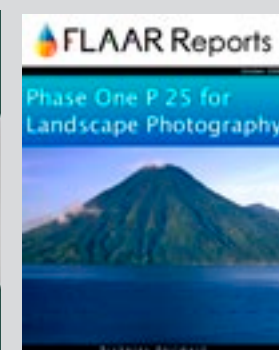
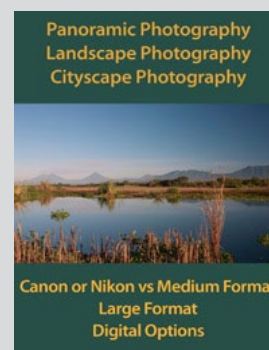
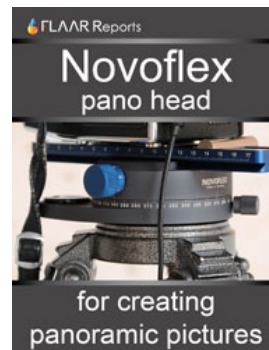
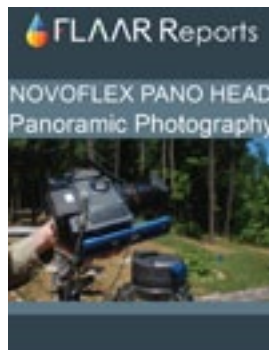
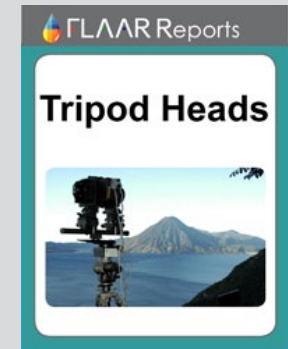
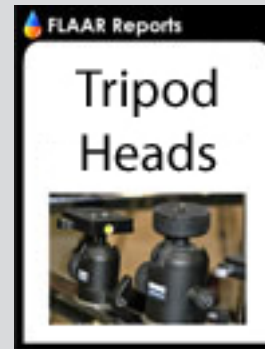


Sofía Monzón and Jennifer Lara setting the GigaPan System Pro within the mud, Monterrico Guatemala 2010.

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Acknowledgements

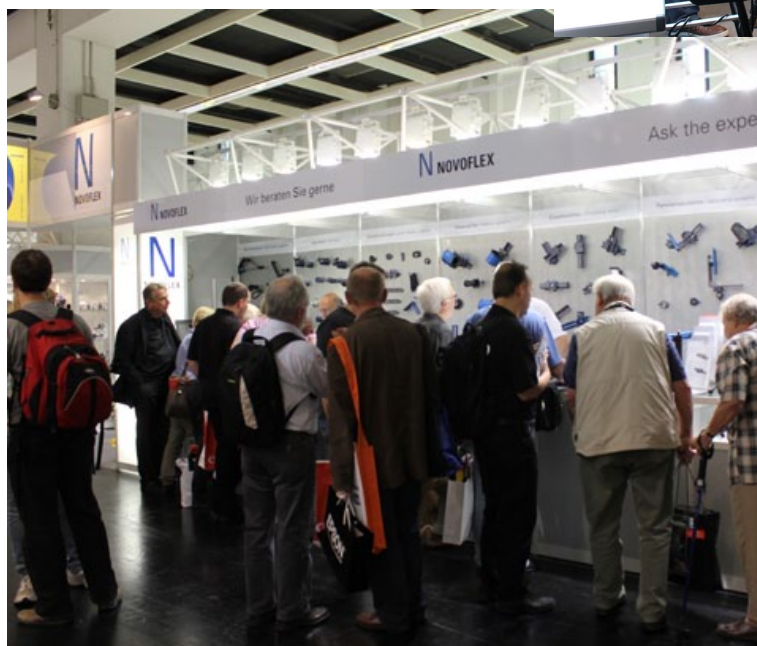
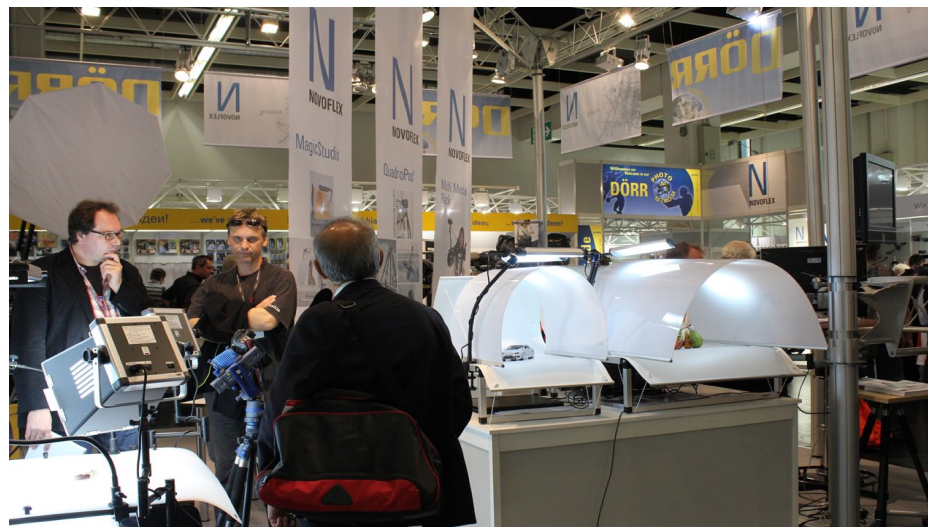
We thank Hoodman for providing the 16 GB memory cards; one for the Hasselblad Phase One, and another for the GigaPan. If you are going to work with GigaPan, or with a newer Phase One (ours is only 21 megapixels; new models are 80 megapixels), then you need a 32 GB card from Hoodman.



We thank Novoflex:

D-87700 Memmingen
Germany
Phone: +49 8331 88888
Fax: +49 8331 47174
mail@novoflex.com

General Manager:
Reinhard Hiesinger



We thank Manfrotto and Gitzo

The tripods and tripod heads we use are from Gitzo and Manfrotto. You can look at these tripods and tripod heads at Photokina and other leading photo expos around the world, or contact them via info@manfrottodistribution.us



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