

What's in my Camera Bag

— A Tutorial by George Themelis



For the Tutorial this month I would like to give you a tour of my camera bag and show you the equipment that I carried in a recent trip and how I used them.

Last Great Film Vacation

My last big film vacation was in the summer of 2009. We went with my family to Orlando, FL. For this vacation I carried a large camera bag loaded with film stereo equipment. I had with me: Two RBT cameras (S1, X3), two regular SLR cameras (Pentax ZX-M) for single and twin camera hyperstereos, three pairs of Pentax lenses (20mm, 40mm, 100mm - these can be used with the X3 and the ZX-Ms), a heavy twin camera bar, a compact tripod, two flash units, cables, batteries, and plenty of film. It was a heavy camera bag but I carried it with me without complaining, took lots of pictures and did very well in the Cleveland and Detroit stereo competitions the following year.

New Orleans 2010

In October 2009 I bought the Fuji W1

and in February 2010 we went (with my wife) to New Orleans (NO) to run the local marathon. For that trip I only carried the Fuji. I took hundreds of stereo pictures with the Fuji, had a great time and was pleased with the results. Some of the types of pictures I took include: 1) Hyperstereos from the airplane, 2) Hypostereos at the Insectarium, 3) Pictures before, during, and after the race, 4) Pictures of the city during the day and night.

It was refreshing to travel with only one stereo camera in my pocket. But that did not last long. I soon discovered the wired Panasonic cameras, the Macrobox, and various attachments for the Fuji. My photo camera bag started getting bigger and bigger.

New Orleans 2011

We went back to NO in 2011. This time I carried the following equipment:

- **Fuji W3** camera with ALA attachment and fisheye lenses.
- **Twin Panasonic TZ10** cameras, wired for stereo.

- **Macrobox** with another pair of Panasonic cameras.
- **Panasonic GF1** camera with 40mm and 28mm lenses.
- Flash, cables, memory cards, batteries.

I will now describe why I carry these cameras, how I use them, and show you typical results.

Fuji W3

The Fuji is a fine general-use stereo camera, perhaps the most compact, abuse-resistant and user-friendly stereo camera at my disposal. But it has three limitations: 1) The stereo base (spacing of lenses) is fixed and rather larger (75mm) 2) The wide angle lens setting is only 35mm, not wide enough for my taste, 3) Images tend to have a lot of noise, especially at higher ISO (sensitivity) values. For these reasons, I prefer to use the wired Panasonic cameras for general 3d photography. I do however use the Fuji when I run because

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Fig. 1. I love to run with the Fuji in my hands. This picture was taken during the New Orleans Marathon. We are at about mile 12, ready to pass under an interesting contraption put in place just for this race. I lifted the camera, turned it on, and pressed the shutter button, with one hand, while running and without slowing down. To better support the camera, I am using the strap shown here (right).



Fig. 2. A pair of fisheye lenses in the Fuji and ALA, allows me to take interesting pictures. For this one I flushed the camera on a shop window to take a picture of the display. I was only a couple of inches from the near object. I have taken similar pictures in the Chicago and NO Aquarium.



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it is the easiest and most robust camera to use for this purpose (see Fig. 1—Note: The 2D picture of Liz and myself at the top of page 4 was also taken with the W3 by a friend at the start of the NO race.)

Fuji & ALA

As I described in previous Tutorials, the Fuji camera has become a lot more versatile with the various attachments that

are now available by Cyclopital3d. My favorite attachment is the Auxiliary Lens Attachment (ALA) and I enjoy using a pair of fisheye lenses with it. This is a specialty tool that I use with the appropriate subjects (Fig. 2).

Wired Panasonic TZ10

These cameras (reviewed in Stereogram 15.2) have now become my general-use 3d camera. They are compact, easy to use, offer variable stereo base (with mini-

mum separation of 60mm), wide angle (25mm at the widest range) and the quality of the pictures is quite good (Fig. 3). During the NO trip, I also used the cameras for hyperstereos by taking them off their bar.

Macrobox

This is a specialty device allowing me to take macro stereo pictures. One

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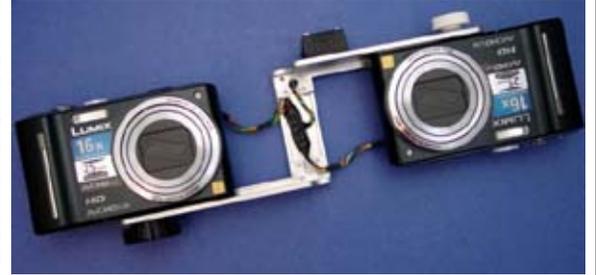


Fig. 3. The wired (by Co Ekeren, www.ekeren3d.com) Panasonic TZ10 camera rig has become my standard stereo camera. Sitting at the custom Z-bar (one camera is upside down) the lenses can get as close as 60mm and separated as long as 135mm (more if taken off the bar). In the examples here I used a wider spacing for a stronger stereo effect. The trolley car was a nice subject to photograph (especially with the upcoming "Transportation" assignment in Detroit.) The Mardi Gras statue is about twice as large as a human. I also used the camera out of the bar for even wider stereo base.



Fig. 4. I used the Macrobox (also by Ekeren, two wired Panasonic cameras with a mirror box attachment, plus an optional flash—See Stereogram 15.3) to take close ups and macro pictures at the Insectarium (top) and Aquarium (bottom). Because of the bulk (mainly) I consider this a specialty tool and I will take it with me only if there is a strong possibility for macro subjects. Having been to New Orleans in 2010, and having visited these two fine museums, I knew that I had to come back with the Macrobox to take pictures like these.

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can take such pictures with the Fuji close-up attachment, however this has limitations (fixed stereo base, plus long focal length). The Macrobox is more flexible in terms of the stereo base, and magnification (see Stereogram 15.3). Because it is bulky, I will only take it with me if I know that there will be opportunities for such pictures. This was the case in NO with the Insectarium (museum of Insects) and Aquarium. Fig. 4 shows examples.

Panasonic GF1

I took this camera with me for the only purpose of single camera stereos. I used it in the plane to take hyperstereos from the air and also for various hand-held single camera stereos, including hypo/macro stereos of displays at the Insectarium (Fig. 5). I could have taken the same pictures (as I did in the NO trip last year) using the Fuji and the “advanced 3d mode” but the GF1 offers better quality since it has a larger sensor so I will favor this camera over the Fuji.

What I did not Take

There are two useful items that I did

not take with me: A tripod, and a long twin camera bar. The tripod is mainly useful for long exposures / night photography. Digital cameras are generally easier than film cameras to use under low light and tripods are bulky, so the tripod is usually the first thing to stay back when space and weight is an issue. I did take some pictures at night, supporting the cameras on any available support. Also useful is a monopod that allows me to raise the cameras high for higher perspective photography.

A long twin camera bar is useful for hyperstereos. My long and lightweight twin camera bar would not fit even in my (small) suitcase and it is awkward to carry, so I left it behind. I was able to take long base hyperstereos by supporting the cameras at the ledge of the airport window, or having my wife hold one camera while I was holding the other.

Needless to say, if night photography or long-base hyperstereos or higher perspective pictures are important, then I will take a tripod, long twin camera bar or a high rise monopod. Also, if I can drive and don't have to fly, I will pack these items and leave them in the car in case I need them.

Film vs. Digital

In my 2011 NO trip I was similarly equipped as the trip to Orlando, plus I had the macro box (equivalent perhaps to the RBT macro attachment for the X3 camera that I did not have in Orlando), yet my camera bag was a lot smaller and lighter. This is due to the fact that the digital cameras that I am using are a lot more compact and lightweight, compared to the film cameras. That's one advantage of digital: Everything is smaller and lighter.

Too Much?

Did I really need all that equipment? I admit that I had fun and took a lot of good pictures during my first NO trip where I only carried the Fuji. But in the second trip I took a larger variety and more interesting pictures. I guess it is unavoidable. Once I am introduced to different tools, I will tend to take them with me, just in case I need them. I would hate to miss a terrific photographic opportunity because I did not have the right equipment with me.

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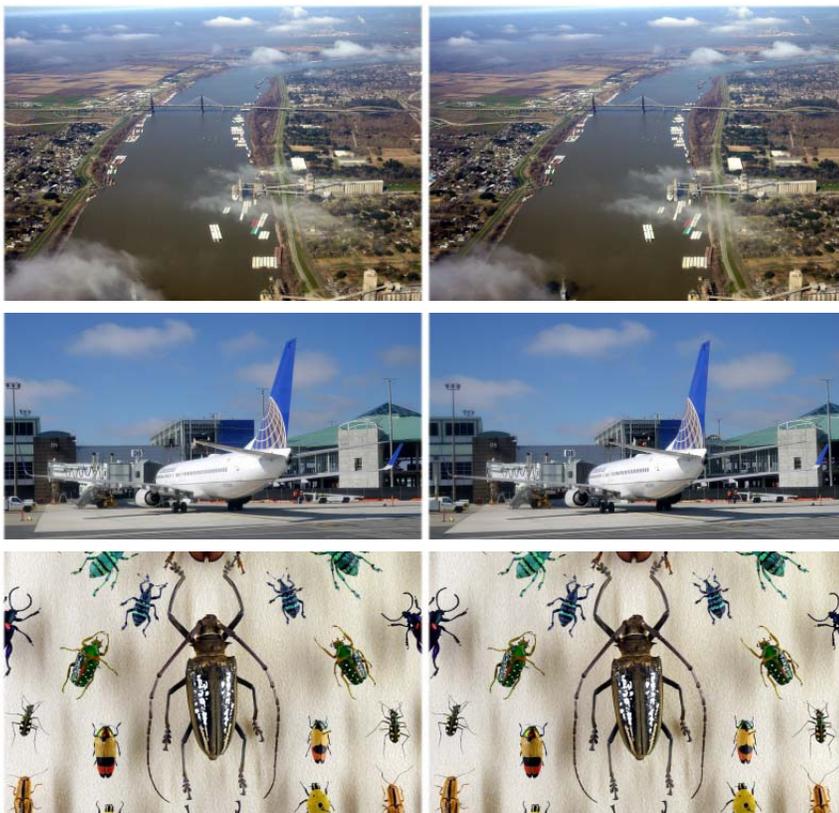


Fig. 5. Examples of hyper and hypo stereos taken with the Panasonic GF1 (a 2D digital camera shown above with the 40mm f1.7 lens) and consecutive exposures. I could have used any camera for these pictures, including the Fuji, which has the extra advantage of a special mode for pictures like these, but I chose the GF1 for better image quality.

Top: Typical hyperstereo from the air, taken during the descent to New Orleans.

Middle: This was taken from the ground, using the movement of the plane in the runway for the stereo base.

Bottom: A display at the NO Insectarium.

Note: Hyper/Hypo stereos is the subject of the workshop in our March meeting so come to learn tips about taking these pictures.