



A Homage to Eugene O. Goldbeck and Josef Sudek

Jaroslav Poncar
iPanoramas
Terminus of panoramic photography

Panorama Photography

The word "panorama" which everyone is familiar with and uses a lot, is not that old and it was not in photography when it was first used. It was an Irishman who even patented the word in the 1780s. The panorama goes back to the Irishman Robert Barker (1739-1806). On 19 June 1787, he applied for a patent in Edinburgh, in which "panorama" was described as "an entire view of any country or situation, as it appears to an observer turning quite round". It is remarkable that this is the first time an art object has been patented as a technical invention. He originally registered it under the name "la nature à coup d'oeil" (nature at a glance), but later changed the name to "panorama" (from the Greek *pan*, all, and *horama*, view) (partly due to market considerations). Barker had made his first attempt at a view of Edinburgh in 1787 and then, in 1791, had first shown "London from the Roof of the Albion Mills" in London using his now patented methods, then in 1792 had a rotunda with a diameter of 30 metres executed, in which he showed the depiction of the Russian fleet at Spithead.

In order to paint a 360-degree panoramic view, the artists had to create a series of pictures from one point of view, which were then put together to form a picture. The invention of photography by Daguerre in 1839 inspired the German-born painter Frédéric von Mertens, who lived in Paris, to make use of the new medium of the daguerreotype. As early as 1844, he patented a camera called the Mégascope. A clockwork mechanism rotated the lens and exposed a cylindrically curved copper plate at a rotation of around 150 degrees. This invention is considered the first panoramic camera. The flexible films that emerged at the end of the 1880s made it possible to revive Mertens' invention and panoramic cameras and Eastman's Cirkut cameras became popular in landscape and group photography. A Panoram IV from 1904 was used by Josef Sudek in the 1950s. The camera uses 10 cm wide roll film and at a viewing angle of 120 degrees produces 30 x 10 cm panoramas, the contact prints are large enough for exhibitions and, as you can see from Sudek's book "Praha panoramatická", also for book publications. When I began to take a greater interest in the Himalayas and Karakoram in 1975 after the Indus expedition and studied the expedition reports from the beginning of the 20th century, I came across panoramas taken with Eastman panoramic cameras. It was clear to me: I absolutely had to take a

panoramic camera with me on my next trip to the Himalayas! It happened, but it wasn't a Panoram IV, but a Soviet(!!) small-format FT-2 panoramic camera. I had one with me on the next trip to Ladakh in the summer of 1976. The panoramas exceeded my expectations and I became a passionate panorama photographer.

It is a strange coincidence that the beginning of my new passion coincided with the death of Josef Sudek in September 1976. His book "Praha panoramatická" and the Panoram IV with which he took the panoramas came into my possession in the same year. Finally, I also own one of Sudek's panoramas. At the time, it was completely unthinkable that I would travel to Prague and buy any originals of Sudek's panoramas or other of his photographs. Even making phone calls to Czechoslovakia at that time was incredibly difficult as all conversations with my parents, if they could be made at all after hours of waiting, were overheard. Now I have a panorama from Sudek! Here is the story: The painter Václav Adolf Šrůtek lived in Litoměřice, and he and his wife, also a painter, were friends with Sudek. I went to dance lessons with their daughter Ivanka, who was a year younger than me. The parents knew about my photo activities and told me several times when they met me that they would arrange a meeting with Sudek when he came to visit them. Unfortunately, it never happened. In 1981, "68 Publishers" in Toronto published Jaroslav Seifert's "Všecky krásy světa" (All the Beauty in the World) and one story described Šrůteks' garden and that it was photographed by Sudek. I ordered a copy for Šrůteks and Věra, my sister, smuggled it to Litoměřice, where all books in Czech were confiscated at the border at the time. The Šrůteks were so pleased with the gift that they donated to me a panorama by Sudek, which he had taken near Litoměřice.

I have already explained how the word "panorama" came about, but I think it would be appropriate to make a few comments on the terminology of panoramic photography. After more than fifteen years of my activities with the FT-2, I decided to write a book about panoramic photography. I don't remember exactly when I started to offer a seminar on panoramic photography, but it was probably in the winter semester of 90/91, as I used Joachim Bonnemaison's book "Panoramas, Collection Bonnemaison", published in 1989, as a basis. It was published in the summer of 1989 on the occasion of the *20th Rencontres Internationales de la Photographie d'Arles*.

In the catalogue of his collection, he introduces a terminology of panoramic photography that he used for his magnificent collection. He called a "*vue de panorama*" an elongated section of a conventional photograph with an aspect ratio of 2:1 or more. He called a "*panorama*" a series of photos that were put together edge to edge. Such panoramas were common until the invention of flexible film by Eastman in the 1880s, which made the construction of panoramic and circuit cameras possible. According to Bonnemaison, these cameras deliver images that he calls "*panoramique*". These are also all the panoramas that I take, and despite Bonnemaison, I simply call them "panoramas". There were also panorama photos in his collection with an angle of 360 degrees and he calls them "*panoptique*"

Thanks to my friend Gerald Rocher, I bought "Panoramas, Collection Bonnemaison" in Paris and got to know the author. He was working on very spectacular panoramic photos of "panoptiques", as he called panoramas of 360 and more degrees, at the time: Choreography for five female bodies. With a Roundshot 35 from the Swiss company Seitz Phototechnik, which allowed a single shot to be taken over the entire length of the film, i.e. a shooting format of 24 x 1600 mm! While the camera rotated very slowly, it scanned the naked female bodies on a circle in a specific configuration. Once they had been scanned, they moved behind the camera into a new configuration. And they did this until the film was finished. The company Seitz Phototechnik built a slit-scan enlarger for Bonnemaison, with which he was able to enlarge the images onto 30 cm wide paper. I saw the result in a photo gallery in Paris. There was a single photo in the exhibition that started at the entrance and ended at the exit, about 20 metres long! Little did I know that five years later I would be taking group shots in Angkor with a Super Roundshot, in which each person is depicted several times.

After 40 years with the FT-2, I was by no means the person who had been seriously involved in panoramic photography for the longest time. Eugene O. Goldbeck (1892-1986), a Texan, had been doing panoramic photography much longer, but not with a Soviet camera, but with the Cirkut 10. He made a living from large group shots, the largest he had taken was one of 21,765 people, the entire crew of a US air base in Kentucky, with all the aircraft and ammunition. The end of his photographic activities came with age. Like me, Goldbeck began taking photographs at the age of ten. At that time,

Kodak was still in its nappies, so to speak. When I exposed the last Kodak Ektachrome in Rome, Kodak had not been around for almost ten years. But there is still a connection to Goldbeck.

Panorama photography with rotating lenses, or as in his case with a rotating camera, I prefer to call "slit-scan photography", inevitably creates images with an unpleasant flaw: anamorphosis. Certain rules must be observed so that it is not distracting. What do I mean by that? If an elongated building with horizontal straight lines were photographed frontally from the centre, these lines would be "zeppelin-like". However, this is not how we see the building, even if the eye creates the same image on the retina when we turn our head. The visual centre in the brain corrects it because we know that the lines are not curved but straight. It gets even worse when you tilt the camera. The horizon becomes curved, convex when tilted downwards and concave when tilted upwards. Goldbeck invented a wedge plate for his Cirkut 10, which allowed him to take his group shots from above without disturbing the curved horizon. With the FT-2 this was not possible under any circumstances, I always had to keep the camera level and I always had to "hide" the anamorphosis somehow.

Eugen O. Goldbeck was unbeatable in his field for three quarters of the 20th century. When I started with panoramic photography in 1976, I knew nothing about his existence or the existence of the Cirkut camera. Josef Sudek was the great inspiration for me. He gave me the idea of looking for a panoramic camera that I could take with me to the Western Himalayas in the summer of 1976. Unlike me, panorama photography was a late discovery for Sudek. He was already in his early sixties when a friend gave him an old Panoram IV from Kodak. Shortly after the invention of roll film, Eastman had revived panoramic photography, which had been invented in 1844 by the German Frederic Martens. Martens was a panorama painter, and he had constructed a camera for the photography just invented by Daguerre, with a rotating lens and a cylindrically shaped sensitised copper sheet that was exposed through a slit. He was then able to paint his panoramas from the resulting photographs with a viewing angle of around 120 degrees. The introduction of glass plates into photography signalled the end of panoramic photography based on the slit-scan method. Until roll film came along, panoramas were made by stringing together individual shots, as is now done

digitally and called "stitching".

Sudek was immediately enthusiastic about the panoramas. He called them "jaternice" ("liver sausage" in Czech). How he managed to handle the camera with just one arm - he had lost his right arm in Italy during the First World War - remains a mystery to me. He roamed through Prague and the surrounding area with his Panoram IV, and later through northern Bohemia or north-east Moravia. His book "Praha panoramatická" was published in 1959. The Panoram IV took pictures in 30x10 cm format and that was enough for Sudek to make contacts. A few years earlier he had decided not to make any more enlargements anyway, because the quality of the contact print could not be bettered. I already knew Sudek's book at the time it was published. It was unaffordable for our family, and besides, landscape photography wasn't really on my programme yet. I earned my first money by taking photos of christenings in neighbouring villages. I also photographed school classes that came to the area around Leitmeritz every September to pick hops. After leaving school, I didn't pursue a career as a photographer. I studied physics. I didn't touch a camera until the end of my studies in spring 1968 at the RWTH in Aachen. It was only during my doctorate, fortunately in Aachen and not in Prague, that the old passion awoke in me. Perhaps it also helped a little that there was a fantastic darkroom in the 2nd Institute of Physics, which I could never have dreamed of in previous years. And the second passion was travelling, which was now possible almost without limits in the West. So after graduating, I set off on a year-long trip to Africa and Asia with Miroslav Volf and Hans-Gerhard Rumpf. It only lasted nine months, but during this trip I worked as a freelance photographer for the German Press Agency. I am convinced that it was thanks to this that I became a professor in the Department of Photographic Engineering at Cologne University of Applied Sciences shortly after this trip. Equipped with a good salary and plenty of holidays, I was able to indulge in two passions that can both be summed up in one name: travel photography.

The Himalayas seem to be my *karma*. Even though my attention was focussed on other parts of South and Southeast Asia, it was mainly the Himalayas and Tibet where my photo projects took me. Right at the beginning, in the spring of 1976, when I was preparing my fourth trip to Ladakh, which had only been open to foreigners since 1974, I was determined to take a panoramic camera with me. Naturally, I had a Panoram IV in mind because I didn't know of any

others. I hadn't seen a panoramic camera in person until then, when I asked my colleague Fritz Dohle, a photochemist in the department who collected cameras, about one. Yes, he had one in his collection and he would bring it along. A few days later, he put a metal object in my hand and said, "Here it is". I asked: "What?" "You wanted a panoramic camera," he replied. I still wanted that. "But you're holding one in your hand!" He then explained to me how it works. However, it had one major disadvantage, said Fritz Dohle. Today's 35-millimetre film cartridges don't fit in it, I have to rewind the unexposed film into a cartridge and then, if I want to expose another one, take the exposed one out again. There are film change bags for this. I should try them out and if it works, "take it with you to Ladakh or wherever you are travelling in the summer". That same afternoon, I exposed a test film of the Rodenkirchen motorway bridge, which I developed immediately afterwards in the cellar. The first exposed panorama was sharp from left to right. So in addition to an FT-2, I also had a change bag in my next piece of luggage. Because I was planning to expose more than one film...



At the same time as I was looking for a panoramic camera, my father had started looking for Sudek's book "Praha panoramatická" from 1959. It was desperately hard to find. As a last attempt, he wrote to Sudek himself asking if he could help him find a copy for his son, who was living in Germany. The answer came on the back of a photo. Translated it reads

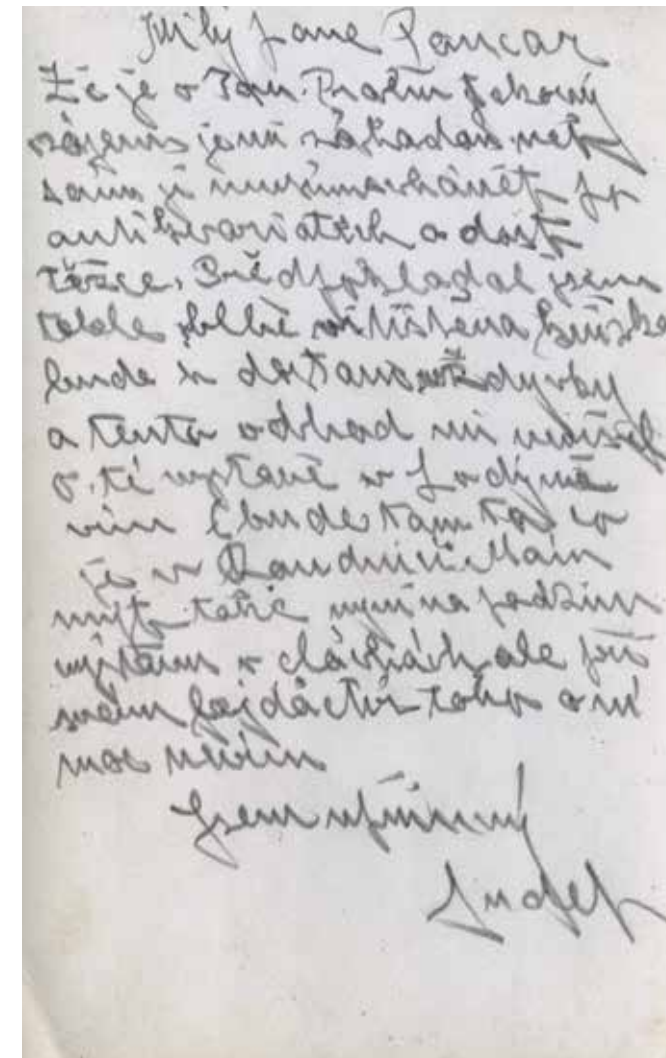
"Dear Mr Poncar,
I find it puzzling that there is so much interest in the Prague book. I have to look for it myself in second-hand bookshops and it's very tedious. I assumed that such an idiotically printed book would always be available to buy, but that assessment didn't work out. The exhibition in London will be the same as in Roudnice. I'm also supposed to have an exhibition in Aachen in the autumn, but I don't know much about it because I'm so sloppy.

Sincerely

Sudek"

I received the photo with Sudek's message, shown here in its original size, from my father shortly before I left for Ladakh. Sudek died the same year on 15 September 1976, which was also the time when I brought back the first panoramic photos from Ladakh. Mr Gabriel, a friend of Sudek's who initially looked after the estate, found the letter from my father. He asked him if he was still interested in the book. There is now the personal copy of the late "Mistr Sudek". My father immediately travelled to Prague and bought the book. When I found out, I was delighted. But would Panoram IV be available now also? Yes, it still existed. And so I am the heir to the book and the camera with which it was photographed.

With a few good panoramas from the 1976 summer trip, the annoyance with the FT-2 began, which ultimately lasted a whole forty years. It was not only annoying to change the films under harsh conditions (e.g. on a 5000 metre high pass). There were also unpredictable lighting conditions. As a precaution, I took three



exposures of promising subjects. As I only had 8 exposures per film, I had to take plenty of film material with me, which made my luggage bulkier than it already was. I gave up medium format photography in favour of panorama photography.

The FT-2 only has an aperture of 5 and three speeds: 1/100, 1/200 and 1/400, which is by no means a wide range. You can extend it a little by varying the film speed. In the light conditions in Ladakh, I had to use Panatomic X for black

and white and Kodachrome 25. Both were taken out of production by Kodak a few years later. Fortunately, I had started shooting documentary films with Wolfgang Kohl in 1977. He had to use gelatine filters in neutral grey with his film camera. So I also cut discs from the expensive filters and stuck them in front of the swinging lens with tape.

Gerd Walter went on several trips with our group. To Alchi, Yemen and Mustang. He also became a fan of the FT-2, to which he contributed an improvement. He was a board member at Kodak in Stuttgart. He was annoyed



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that the expensive Kodak filters were damaged very quickly. In the company's precision engineering workshop, he had a master craftsman make suitable holders. I call them "Walter filter holders". The other problem was the occasional oblique incidence of light in the centre of the picture. Frank Hattich, a participant in my seminar on slit-scan and panorama photography, was also infected by the FT-2 bug. After his studies, he worked at Agfa in the "Application" department. He was so annoyed by the incidence of light that he was determined to find out what the problem was. And he found it: the underside of the camera, where the time adjustment blades are located, had to be covered with self-adhesive aluminium foil. Since then, the problem has been solved.

Hans-Peter Anderer has solved another problem: the film cartridges. He is a tinkerer and hobbyist, more interested in the technology than in panoramic photography itself. He had set his mind on building a panoramic camera similar to the Panoram IV with an electric motor. After graduating in 1996, when I had already had twenty years of trouble with the FT-2, he found a job at the Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft. The computer-controlled machines in the workshop produced copies of the Russian cartridges from solid brass.

After I had successfully used the FT-2 in Ladakh, I was looking for a subject nearby. I now had Sudek's personal copy of "Praha panoramatická" as a "textbook" and so Paris was an obvious choice for me as a "hommage à Josef Sudek". During the summer semesters there were several long weekends (Easter, 1 May, 17 June, Ascension Day, Whitsun and Corpus Christi) that were sacrificed for this. It was a very different kind of panoramic photography with the FT-2 than with the Panoram IV that Sudek used, but Paris was also a different city from Prague. Besides the wide spaces along the Seine, there are narrow intimate places. I initially decided in favour of the theme "Paris sur Seine". After a few years, I got in touch with Jean-Claude Lemagny, who was head of the photography department at the Bibliothèque National de France at the time. He added a small selection of my works to the collection, not just panoramas. He asked me in amazement why I was limiting myself to Paris along the Seine, as the city had so much more to offer. And he was right.

After five years, I felt I already had a presentable series of panoramas. Until then, I hadn't given any thought to how they should be published, as



The first presentable panorama taken on the way to Padum in 1976.

I thought it shouldn't be a problem because they were out of the ordinary. But I was wrong! When I presented a selection to Ernst Brücher, the founder of DuMont Buchverlag, he was very impressed. "Unfortunately, they are not publishable. The book wouldn't fit on the Ikea shelves." He told me to go ahead. And to show me that he really liked my Ladakh panoramas, he included three panoramas in the month of August in the 1982 DuMont art calendar. 6 years later, until the first Tibet book ("Tibet - Tor zum Himmel", VGS Cologne, 1988), it was the only publication of my panoramas. After that I had to wait until 1996 for the first purely "panoramic" book.

Roger Goepper was also of the opinion that the panoramas were more like wall art. I slowly realised the problem. I was shooting with a 35mm camera that even fits in my trouser pocket, but I needed a large-format enlarger for processing in the darkroom. A print on 30x40 photographic paper resulted in an image only 9 cm high. I could make two exposures on one sheet myself, but most specialised labs refused to do the same and charged double the price. In the beginning I exposed the panoramas with the film perforation so that I didn't have to keep explaining that it wasn't a cropped enlargement. I don't know how long I only produced 9x36 cm panoramas. In the late 70s and early 80s, some of them were sold at the Photographers' Gallery in London in this size and with the perforation printed out.

It was only in the 90s that the situation changed. For the 50th anniversary of India's independence, Timeless Books in Delhi wanted to publish my India panoramas. It became a long story and the deadline was far from being met. In the meantime, the Loire book was published as my first panorama book. Edition Quadrat in Mannheim published "New York Vertical" by Horst Hamann in 1996: 23x49 cm! The book had its premiere at Photokina in Cologne, and that's how I got in touch with the publisher Bernhard Wipfler.

My India book didn't make much of an impression on him, at 23x42 cm it seemed rather puny. We exchanged business cards.

The success of "New York Vertical" was gigantic, despite the price and the format ("doesn't fit on the Ikea shelves", Ernst Brücher). Bernhard Wipfler remembered seeing my panoramas in a dummy and rang to see how far the project had progressed. Too late, it would be printed in Milan in a few weeks. "And do you have another subject?" "Tibet." In the years that followed, I had the opportunity - the publisher changed the name to Edition Panorama - to publish the my photographs I had collected over the decades. Bernhard, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you from the bottom of my heart! In the photo, Bernhard is standing with me in front of the panorama from Sri Lanka in the exhibition 'Panoramas 1976–2016' at the Kunstraub Gallery in Cologne in 2022.

In the course of 2003, I already had 26 years of panorama photography and five books behind me, but I didn't actually know anything about the camera. Where does the name "FT-2" come from?, "Since when has it been around?" The internet put me on the right track. A case of "find without seeking". Peter Maquis-Kyle, an architect from Australia, sent an email asking if he may use photos from my website of Ladakh for his "Website of the month", on which he presents special places on earth. Why not, was my answer and I immediately forgot about it. In January 2004, Peter Marquis-Kyle sent me a link to his "website of the month". In addition to a photo of Lamayuru, there was a panorama of the Kalachakra in Choglamsar in 1976. Just below it, to my



great surprise, was a photo of an FT-2, accompanied by the following text:

"A photographic diversion: I was surprised to read that Jaroslav Poncar used a Krasnogorsk FT-2 swing-lens camera to make his panoramas. I must have been wrong to think of these as crude and quirky cameras. I would not have chosen to rely on one for an unrepeatable trip in the Himalaya. I owe an apology to Feodor Vasilievich Tokarev, the 'personal friend of Stalin' who designed the camera, and to the workers of the Krasnogorsk Mechanical Plant who built them between 1958 and 1965."

When I "googled" the name of the designer, pages and pages of articles about firearms came up. Only on the second page was it mentioned that Tokarev collected cameras and designed a panoramic camera, the FT-2: Fotoapparat Tokareva 2 = FT 2. So I continued surfing the Internet, and after decades I even read Russian texts again, albeit reluctantly. Then I learnt that Tokarev had driven up to the camera factory in Krasnogorsk one day with a state limousine ZIL 111. He presented the prototype of a panoramic camera and demanded that it go into mass production. As I read, there was horror about an "impossibly badly constructed" camera and it was to be prevented from going into series production. Saying no to a "personal friend of Stalin" was life-threatening in the Soviet Union at the time, so they played for time. Expert opinions were obtained and God knows what was done to prevent mass production of the FT-2. The mills of Soviet communism were probably even slower than the mills of God when, in 1958, five years after the death of Tokarev's "friend" Stalin, series production of the FT-2 finally began. By 1965, 16,664 of them had been produced. Over the years, I have acquired six of them at auctions: as a source of additional film cartridges and also as a source of spare parts. After the spook of communism was over, quite a few FT-2s came onto the market in the West. They were all like new: nobody among the photographers had the nerve to bother with the camera and so they ended up gathering dust in a cupboard somewhere.

Photography with FT-2

I got myself into a lot of trouble with the FT-2, it has to be said. But there was no alternative. It is still the only panoramic camera with 35 mm film and a 50 mm lens, i.e. a normal lens. For some landscape shots, a lens with a longer focal length would even be more favourable. The film does not lie flat in the camera, but is stretched on a cylinder, which must have a constant radius of curvature equal to the focal length of the lens. At aperture 5, sharpness is only available from a distance of approx. 12 metres. You can live with this for landscape photography. The aspect ratio is 4:1, which looks good as a photo, but it doesn't fit into any standard publication. The camera is a genuine product of the Russian understanding of precision mechanics. It is not even light-proof! There was not always, but also not very rarely, an incidence of light. It took years for one of my students, who was also enthusiastic about the FT-2, to find out how to remedy the situation. As a precaution, I took three exposures for good subjects. This was not only expensive, it also meant a lot of luggage. I could fit three subjects on one 35mm film. I had 200 films for my crossing of Tibet in the summer of 1985. It was only through Wolfgang Kohl, with whom I started making documentary films in 1977, that I discovered gelatine filters, which allowed me to increase the aperture from 5 to 11 and thus shoot on Ektachrome 64. But the worst thing was that I had only bought two film cartridges with the camera. For example, I was sitting on the Sirsir La (4,600 m) in Ladakh and first had to rewind the exposed film and then the unexposed film in the change bag. The picture shows me in action in Paris (Photo: Barbara Lutterbeck). As I was very satisfied with the results after the Zanskar trip, I wanted to continue. But I really



Beim Umspulen eines Films in Paris, 1980.
Foto: B. Lutterbeck

needed a second FT-2, one for colour and one for black and white.

In the spring of 1977, I prepared the first film about mud architecture in Yemen. There was an exhibition on Yemeni architecture at the Museum of Mankind in London. The author of the exhibition was Professor Ronald Lewcock in Oxford, whose name I can't remember. I made my way to London and Oxford. In London, I visited countless camera shops that stocked second-hand cameras. But the FT-2 was nowhere to be found. In Oxford, I parked the car in front of a camera shop of all places. Stephanie, who was with me, said I should ask for the FT-2. I said it was no good in London, what would it do here in the country? But she insisted and we went in. The dealer was serving someone and I asked if he had an FT-2. "Yes, I have. Just wait a minute." My heart immediately skipped a beat. A moment later I was holding an FT-2 in my hand! The dealer said "fifty five quid" - that was all the money we had with us! I examined the camera and then said to him that the camera looked as if the owner had tinkered with it. "OK, fifty quid. Take it or leave it." We still had five quid left. Enough for a pizza for lunch.

I continued to search for the FT-2 just for the cartridges. Every now and then they turned up at photo auctions. Over the course of time, I found and purchased six. I would like to mention two significant improvements in panoramic photography with the FT-2. Hans-Peter Anderer's thesis was on the construction of an electrically powered panoramic camera for roll film. The thesis also earned him the first "Doktor-Uhl-Preis", the prize awarded by the German Association of the Photographic Industry for outstanding diploma theses in the field of photoengineering. After graduating, he found a job at the Fraunhofer Institute. They had computer-controlled



Mit FT-2 im Golden Temple in Amritsar, 1981 (Photo: Wolfgang Kohl)

milling machines there, so he was able to recreate the Russian cartridges. Now I can rewind ten films in one evening at my leisure. The second improvement was made by Gerd Walter, a former student who made a career for himself and made it to the board of directors at Kodak in Stuttgart. He fell in love

with the FT-2 and was annoyed by the fact that the gelatine filters stuck to the front of the lens with Sellotape quickly became damaged. And they are expensive. So he had a precision mechanic at Kodak invent and install a filter holder, the "Walter filter holder". And finally, an anecdote. After taking the last photograph with the FT-2, I sat down on a bench to enjoy the panorama of Rome (without high-rise buildings and prefabricated blocks!). A couple sat down next to me at the other end. They opened a Rome travel guide. On the back, I could see the text: It was in Czech! So I asked them in Czech if they could take a photo of me with Rome in the background. The man stood up, took my Olympus, clicked the shutter and went back to his wife with the guidebook on the bench. And so ended 40 years with the FT-2. And so ended 40 years with the FT-2.



On the following 10 pages, I present a (very) small selection.





India, Golden Temple in Amritsar, 1989 (Golden Tempel01.psd)



Tibet, Gurla Mandhata, 1987 (Gurla Mandhata.tif)



Tibet, The Source of the Indus, 1987 (Indusquelle.tif)



Tibet, Mount Kailash, 1987 (Kailash North Face.tif)



Darjeeling "Toy Train" 1986 (ind036korr.tif)



India, Gujarat, mustard harvest, 1991 (ind074.tif)



Ladakh, Tiksey Gompa, 1982 (lad001korr.tif)



Leh, Ladakh, 1979 (lad022korr.tif)



Taj Mahal, 1982 (Taj Pano.tif)



Paris, 1991 (Paris-NotreDameRedu.tif)



India, Rajasthan, Udaipur, 1983 (ind157korr.tif)



Paris, 1991 (Paris04.tif)



Nepal, Mustang, Drakmar, 2016 (Mus 2016 - 12.tif)



Burma, Pegu, 2015 (Pegu 04.tif)



Afghanistan, Chil Burj, 2011 (BAM_28k.tif)



Rome, 1991 (Villa Quintilli Pano 07b.tif)



Burma, Moulmein, 2006 (Moulmein07korr.tif)



South Yemen, Seyhut, 2009 (Seyhut09-03b.tif)

...and the vertical panorama of Cologne Cathedral is a must!



Köln, 1983, (Kölner Dom 03.tif)



South Yemen, Shibam, 1992 (jem065.jpg)

Photography with Panoram II und IV

On the right are the only two panoramas I took with Sudek's camera, a Panoram IV from 1904. They show that it still worked well back then. It was not so easy to use it because roll film in 10 centimetre width had not been available for decades. Even Sudek had to have individual sheets cut from large sheet films. Eventually I found an Agfa film just under 13 centimetres wide

that was made for aerial photography. I cut a few sheets, which was very tedious, and went to Marienburg with one sheet in the camera. The motif I found was at the Gerling residence (top right). The castle in Brühl has also proved to be a tried and tested subject for panoramic shots in the surrounding area. I then took the second and last shot with Sudek's Panoram IV in Berühl. There are only contact prints of



the shots, as with Sudek, and they are 30 centimetres long.

When a Panoram II, which looks exactly like the Panoram IV but was built using conventional normal roll film, was offered at an auction at Lempertz during Photokina 1978, I decided to buy it. My first auction! It started with 400 DM. There were about ten hands up. All Japanese! The price went up and the hands went down. As the advertised price approached the DM 1000 mark, my raised arm became heavier and heavier. I wanted to hold out until 1200. That was the price I got after all! I only took a few photos with this camera this autumn. In addition to Cologne Cathedral, I also photographed refinery plants in Wesseling.



Photography with WWW Cyclop

At this point, I would like to tell you the story of the "shoebox camera". I had already resigned myself to the fact that I would be tormented and annoyed with the FT-2 until the end of my panoramic photography days. A panoramic camera with a normal lens and roll film, like the Panoram II, that would be nice. One day a student asked me if I knew of the "WWW Cyclop", which uses an 80 mm lens and roll film, with a motor, long exposure times also possible. It was advertised in a magazine. Long story short, I ordered the camera from somewhere in Illinois for a trifle over \$2,500 and got it not much later. When I unpacked it and saw the plastic that made up the body, I gave it the name "Schukarton (=shoebox) Camera". And to my chagrin, it didn't do it right. There was some kind of electric flash in the middle of every picture. Then the trouble with the exchange, it took time for the new one to arrive. I didn't have time to test it. The departure to Alchi in the summer of 1993 was getting closer and closer. Very shortly before leaving for Ladakh, I exposed a test film from my office on the tenth floor: the skyline of Cologne. The sky a steely blue. I took a close look at the developed film on the light box: The Cologne skyline was perfectly sharp.

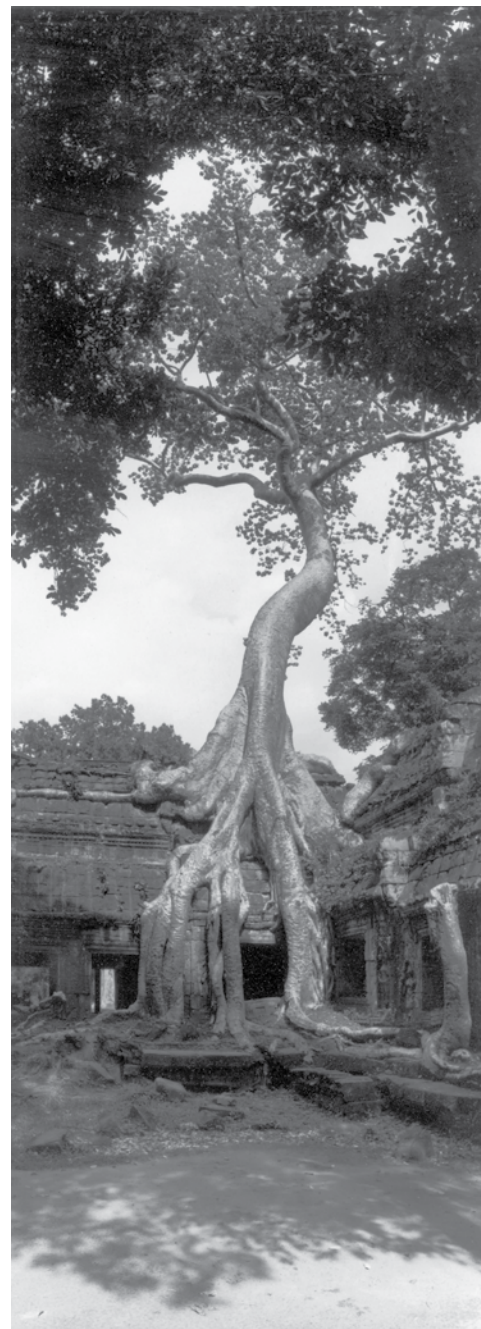
When I looked at the 30 rolls I had exposed in Ladakh on the lightbox at the end of September, all the images in the upper third were out of focus! Has anyone ever seen a blurred shot of a steel blue sky? I could have bitten my arse at how stupid I was. You just have to be able to live with losses...

I gave the camera to a student who was doing his diploma in slit-scan photography and didn't have a job yet, if he could somehow manage the stupid thing? In the end, there was sufficient sharpness across the entire width of the shot at aperture stop 16. On my next trip to Angkor, I took the "shoebox camera" with me and took the first vertical panoramas of the legendary trees, which have no name in German, but are called "tetrameles nudiflora" in Latin by botanists and "fromager" by the French. The "shoe-



box camera" with its 3:1 aspect ratio and f/16 aperture has proved its worth for tree panoramas, while 4:1, as with the FT-2, is more suitable for landscape shots in the Himalayas or Tibet.

But there were also a few exceptions where I didn't want to do without it, as the panoramas of Bayon or Angkor Wat opposite show. In November 1997, when the German Apsara Conservation Project was in its first year of life, Hans Leisen and I came to the Bayon seminar organised by the Japanese Government Project. Shortly before our arrival in Siem Reap, although it was the middle of the dry season, there was a terrible downpour that lasted two days and even flooded the centre of Siem Reap. Bayon had become a small island - and that's when this panorama was created, followed three years later by the panorama of Angkor Wat. These two panoramas and the trees alone were worth all the trouble with the "shoebox camera".



Super Roundshot

Classic panoramic photography probably reached its peak with the Super Roundshot from the Swiss company Seitz Phototechnik. I got to know the founder Hermann Seitz at Photokina 1986. He was standing at the edge of a Swiss stand offering his Roundshot 35/35, which could take pictures as long as the 35 mm film would allow. I was looking for a technically sound alternative to the FT-2, a slit-scan camera that used standard film and a normal lens. His Roundshot had a 35mm lens, unfortunately. Nevertheless, I bought one and used it a few times.

I became friends with Hermann Seitz. He told me the story of the Roundshot. He liked travelling with his family, with three growing sons with him, who didn't have the patience to wait in peace until he had finished taking the picture at a nice spot, as he couldn't decide which section to take. So he thought "I'll just take the full panorama and when I get home I'll take my time to choose the best section". If I remember correctly, he was a precision mechanic at Sinar at the time. Before the next holiday trip, he built a camera that could record 360 degrees on 16mm film, which was fixed to the roof of the car. After the trip, he had brought home a few metres of exposed film, but he didn't have time to evaluate it because he was full of ideas on how to improve the camera. And the sons were growing...

The Roundshot 35/35 sold very well and the company Seitz Phototechnik, which had been founded in the meantime, was able to afford its own stand at Photokina. When I visited Hermann at the stand in September 1992, he told me with great enthusiasm that he was bringing the Super Roundshot to Cologne as a new product. It uses 70mm film, you can change lenses, vary the object distance from close-up to infinity and the camera "can even run on rails along a wall and shoot it!". "And what do you do with a camera like that?" He said I was a creative man and I'd find something. I only had a grin for him.

Just four months later, at the end of January 1993, my old dream came true and I travelled to Cambodia to finally see Angkor. As I walked along the reliefs in the

galleries at Angkor Wat, I couldn't help thinking about how to photograph them: Shooting distance about 2 metres, relief depth plusminus 1 to 1.5 cm and length 50, 60 and 100 metres. French photographers confronted with this challenge before the Second World War solved the problem with what we now call "stitching", of course in black and white and not nateless. That's when I remembered the new Super Roundshot by Hermann Seitz. As soon as I got back to Cologne, I called him. Could the camera also shoot a 100 metre long wall in the tropics? "Of course!" was his reply. "Then I have an exciting project in Cambodia," and I told him about Angkor.

First of all, we had to solve the problem of buying the camera. The university of applied sciences approved 45,000 SFR for the purchase. As it was too risky for me to travel to Cambodia with all the equipment and a team, I travelled in February 1994 with just 10 metres of track, 2 construction site lights and with Wolfgang Kohl and Patrick Pawig. We were commissioned by Jean Pütz at WDR to shoot a 20-minute programme for the science show. Good thing we did it!!! The camera and the travelling lighting had to be improved considerably. The camera had to be repaired during these test shots because the film transport failed. In addition, myriads of insects swarmed out when the halogen lamps were switched on, and the shots had to be taken at night to eliminate the uneven, disturbing daylight. A different light source had to be developed. At the time, I was offering a seminar on panoramic photography and had about a dozen participants. I offered them the opportunity to come to Cambodia if they would help solve the lighting problem. The light source ended up being 2.5 metre long daylight fluorescent tubes and there was no problem with insects.

At the end of the 1994/1995 winter semester, 6 students, Wolfgang Kohl, Patrick Pawig, Janusch Pawig, Horst and Alice Koehr, Hans Leisen and 800 kg of luggage arrived at Frankfurt airport. There was no problem getting the equipment to Phnom Penh. The team was able to fly on to Siem Reap, but the Russian aeroplanes were

too small for the crates with the rails and especially the crate with the fluorescent tubes. The road to Siem Reap was barely passable at the time. Fortunately, there was still the option of travelling on the Tonle Sap by speedboat, which took about 6 hours. Security in the country was still very poor, Markus Kreisel and Andreas Kotulek volunteered to come with me.

The levelling of the rails took a few hours and so we started laying them right after lunch to expose a test film right after sunset. Two students developed the film in the darkroom of the Angkor Conservation Office and put it under the magnifying glass on the light box into which the transport box for the fluorescent tubes had been converted. At midnight, two students came into the temple with me and took three exposures, one each on Kodak PLUS-Xpan, Kodak TECHNICALpan and Ektachrome 64. A 100 metre long relief resulted in a 2.15 metre long exposure. The students thought it could be the longest and asked me to enter it in the Guinness Book of Records. And indeed it was recorded in 1995! At the time, the Durst company launched the Lambda digital enlarger, with which the Taimlab in Cologne took the longest photo in the world for Photokina 1996: 65 metres long.

Seitz Phototechnik also built a slit-scan enlarger on which Markus Kreisel and Andreas Kotulek printed the reliefs. The Musée Guimet presented an exhibition of the relief photos in winter 1995. The stirring of the ocean of milk was 60 cm high and 12 metres long.

After we had also photographed the reliefs in the Bayon, we took a group shot, as made possible by the slit-scan technique. I was inspired by "Choreography for Five Nudes" by Joachim Bonnemaison. I took the Super Roundshot to Angkor again in the summer 1995 when Julia and Christian came along with their friends. In the years that followed, I took a few more group shots of this kind.

Even before the Super Roundshot travelled on the rails along the reliefs in Angkor, it was on its way to Ladakh as a panoramic camera in 1994, the last year of the "Save

Alchi Project". After taking pictures of the reliefs in Angkor, the Super Roundshot travelled to Mustang in the summer of 1995, Markus Kreisel was there again. We needed a pony just for the camera and tripod. A porter hauled a Honda generator to Lomanthang in order to load the batteries.





In the Bayon: *From left to right: Markus Hitzler, Martin Strehle, Stefan Reiser, Hans Leisen (front), Bruno Fromm (back, guest), Jaro Poncar (front). Markus Kreisel (top), Andreas Kotulek, Markus Hitzler (again), Martina Oeter (guest), March 1995, and so on... (Bayon-Gruppenbild.tif)*



In the Bayon: *From left to right: Christian and Tanja, Julia and me, Danny, me again, Peter, Christian and me, and so on... August 1995 (Kids im Bayon.tif)*



Alchi, Zimskhang: *From left to right: Maren Graef, Maren Graef, Jaro, Barbara Sedlaczek, Markus Kreisel, Hans-Martin Müller, Anja Gerner, Martina Oeter, Sebastian Endemann, Tonda Málek, Jaro, Barbara, Markus Kreisel, Sebastian Endemann, Maren Graef, Hans-Martin Müller, Anja Gerner, Martina Oeter, Tonda Málek (Alchi-Team.tif)*



Mustang, Lomanthang, 1996 (

After photographing the reliefs in Angkor in the spring of 1995, I took the Super Roundshot to Mustang, where I documented the architecture as part of a DFG project. Markus Kreisel, who was also in Angkor the year before, and Birat Thapa were my assistants. We needed a pony just for the camera and the tripod. To charge the batteries, a porter hauled a Honda generator to Lomanthang.

Years later, the panoramas taken at that time were exhibited in the Rubin Museum in New York.



iPanoramas

My nephew Wolfy is to thank for my serious interest in photos I took with my iPhone. He recommended we take a boat trip on the Vltava River in Prague. So on 9 June 2023, I travelled from Litoměřice to Prague with Susanne. We parked the car in the underground car park of the National Theatre as we were about to take a boat trip on the Vltava. The light was marvellous and the classic view with Charles Bridge and Hradčany in the background called out for a panorama. And I didn't have a camera with me! Sudek took the panorama from the same spot in the early 1950s, which is on the cover of the book "PRAHA PANORAMATICKÁ" published in 1959. I was saved in this situation by my iPhone, which I have owned since the beginning of 2020 at the insistence of Christian and Susanne and, as the masses do all the time today, use as a camera. And it also has the "PANO" function. Of course, I couldn't resist the temptation and tried it out at the first opportunity. And even though the result was amazingly good, I didn't think about doing any serious panoramic photography with my phone (!). Admittedly, there were some nice features of photography with the



phone: infinite depth of field compared to my classic panoramic cameras, high light sensitivity and, above all, the ability to save the time and place of the shot, which is very important as I get older. And you can always take it with you because it fits in every jacket pocket.

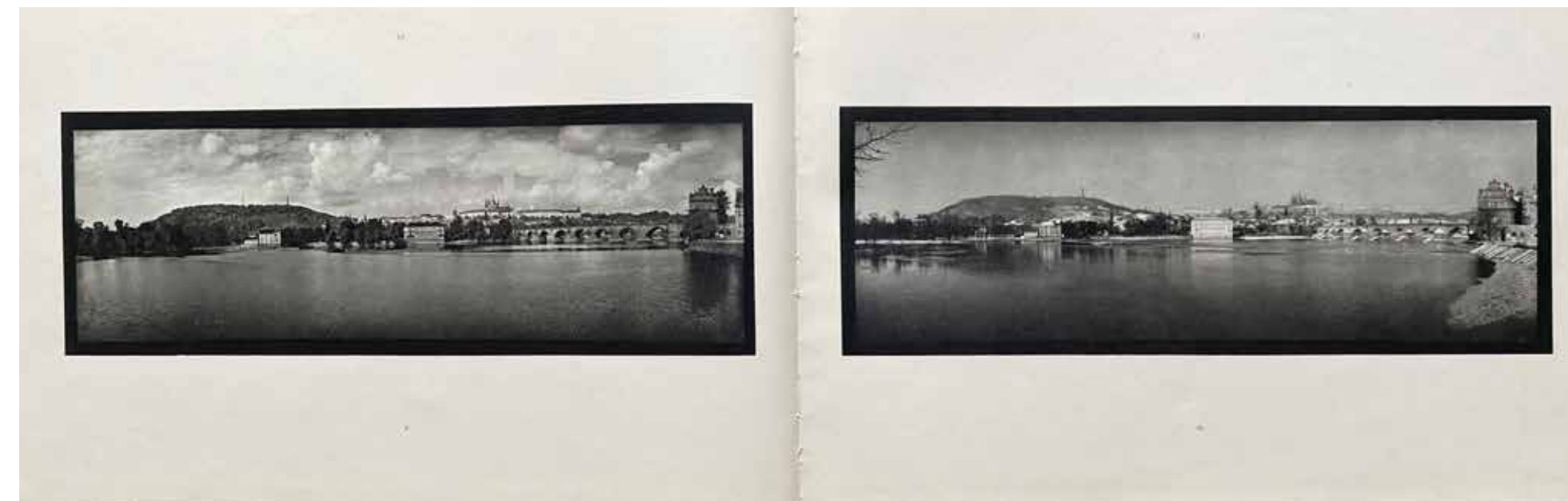
Over time, I took with the iPhone more and more panoramas, most of which I left unedited in as I didn't take them seriously because anyone with a smartphone can do them. Sudek, who had inspired me to take panoramic photographs, plagued himself with a Panoram IV from the early years of the 20th century, which provides negatives in 30 x 10 cm format. For exactly 40 years I struggled with the FT-2, a Soviet (!) panorama camera, the only 35 mm panorama camera with a 50 mm focal length lens, i.e. a standard lens for 35 mm film. It delivers panoramas in a 4:1 aspect ratio format with a viewing angle of around 120 degrees. On 22 October 2016, I made the last click of my life on a film, in Rome with an FT-2. At that time, I already was making panoramas by "stitching" on computer pictures I took with my digital Olympus. This can result in panoramas of any length and with any aspect ratio. But I have consistently used the same aspect ratio of 4:1 as for the FT-2 panoramas and 3:1 for the Panoram IV. While the Panoram IV and the FT-2 deliver panoramas with a picture angle of about 120 degrees, the iPanoramas, as I now call the panoramas made with the iPhone, have different picture angles, mostly a larger one, as you can also see on this double page.

On the bank of the Vltava, I made the decision to recognise the panoramas I have taken since the beginning of 2020 as photographs. To distinguish them from those "stitched" taken with the digital Olympus E-5, I call them "iPanoramas". All the panoramas on the iPhone that I found worthwhile, I downloaded and resized to



my standard 4:1 or 3:1 aspect ratio formats. I arranged a selection, this catalogue of panoramas with the iPhone, chronologically and arranged them in a book format. The captions give the location, date and file name of the panorama.

On a trip with my family to Ladakh in August 2023, I still had my *Olympus E-5* with me and took a series of stitched panoramas with it. But that was it. After that, I only took iPanoramas...





The year 2019 ended with the beginning of my iPhone panorama photography, without being aware of it. I didn't have my digital OM E5 with me when I went on a trip to Montserrat with Julia and her family. The "zákon schválnosi", as "Murphy's law" is called in Czech, provided beautiful light. So I couldn't resist and set my iPhone to "PANO" for the first time. And it wasn't the last time... On the first iPanorama is my granddaughter Pati.

Pati in Marganell, a municipality on the northern slopes of Montserrat, 30.12.2019, (IMG_0214)



Unlike my panoramic cameras, the iPhone has an incredibly large depth of field. I demonstrated this to my former colleague with this shot.

Wilfried Löbach in my office, 7.1.2020 (IMG_0287)



The tax office asked me to send a photo of my office at home. So I took my brand new iPhone, took this panorama and sent it to the tax office. And that was it.

Right from the start, our apartment offered me some beautiful motifs, as you can see on the following pages.



The iPhone offers another possibility: since the panorama does not have to be taken at a constant speed, it can even be paused briefly and passed on to another photographer, so an iPanorama can have more than one photographer.



PANO and iSelfie? That was a question I tried to answer when Wolfgang and Barbara visited me, because it was Wolfgang who had introduced me to the possibility of self-portraits with 35 mm cameras in Yemen back in 1977. With every panoramic camera I had used, it was not possible due to the depth of field of the lenses fixed at infinity. With Seitz's Roundshot cameras, I could have done it, but I only did it once or twice. With the single-use camera 'Kodak

Strech 35' launched by Kodak in the early 1990s, I only took self-portraits. However, these are only excerpts from a normal wide-angle shot and therefore do not belong here.



Our apartment offered me many motifs that I could never have captured with my traditional cameras, and stitching would have been too cumbersome...



At home, 5.6.2020 (IMG_0565)



Susanne with Hans Gerhard und Tilly Rumpf, 14.6.2020 (IMG_0593.jpg)

From Olympus E5 to iPhone

In October 2016, the time had come: in Rome, after 40 years, I made the very last click with a FT-2. The last Ektachrome film had come to its end. But that wasn't the end of my panoramic photography. Digital photography also offers a possibility of creating panoramas of any angle: either by "stitching"

two kinds of digital panoramas, stitched and the ones taken by the iPhone. To distinguish the stitched ones from those created with the iPhone, I call them "iPanoramas". It was only when I had finished selecting and editing the images presented here that I checked with the Internet to see if the term "iPanorama" existed and found "iPanorama is a very powerful plug-in with



a sequence of digital images ("in photography, stitching refers to the creation of a large photograph from various smaller individual shots, usually showing overlapping sections of the subject", says *Wikipedia*). This meant that even when I was travelling, be it in Mustang or Ladakh, I was in the position to create panoramas with my Olympus E-5 and I didn't have to wait for them to be developed in a lab in Cologne. Now, you even don't necessarily need a camera to take photos. Any smartphone can make them. I've also owned an iPhone since the end of 2019 and of course I took photos with it. It took me some time to discover and use the "PANO" function on my iPhone. I now had

which it is possible to professionally display 360 degree views on a website", so the term iPanorama had already been used. Nevertheless, I'm sticking to the name as the word panorama is also misused a lot.

Stitching has considerably expanded the field for my panoramas, as I am no longer limited to the 50 mm focal length, *f*/5 and 1/100 second with 35 mm film, as is the case with the FT-2. A big advantage of stitching is that you don't have to take the individual shots immediately one after the other. For the panorama on the following page, 8 shots were used for stitching, whereby I waited between the individual shots to ensure that there were no people in the

picture, whereas I had to take the iPanorama on the left at a favourable moment without interruption. The iPanoramas also offer some new possibilities. Thanks to the very short focal length of the iPhone lens, the depth of field is very large and this allows, for example, panoramas with people at a table, you can even briefly interrupt the take and hand the iPhone to another photographer and

There was not a single panorama in the show, and the documentation was not made with a camera in the classic way. A very appealing aspect of taking photographs with an iPhone, which suits my getting older, is that it saves the location and time of the shot...



include yourself in the same panorama. And in Marakkesh I took for the first time a panorama at night. The resolution of the iPanoramas is comparable to the stitched ones from my Olympus. On the double page 36/37, I am showing the two ways in which I can make panoramas until my last click...

There were not many photographers who dedicated themselves to panoramic photography over such a long period of time. I am quite sure that I will not experience another 'revolution' in the field of panoramic photography in my lifetime. The iPanoramas shown on the following doublespread document my last exhibition at the *Forum für Fotografie* in Cologne at the end of 2021.



Egypt, Temple of Karnak, 22.5.2023 (IMG_3646)



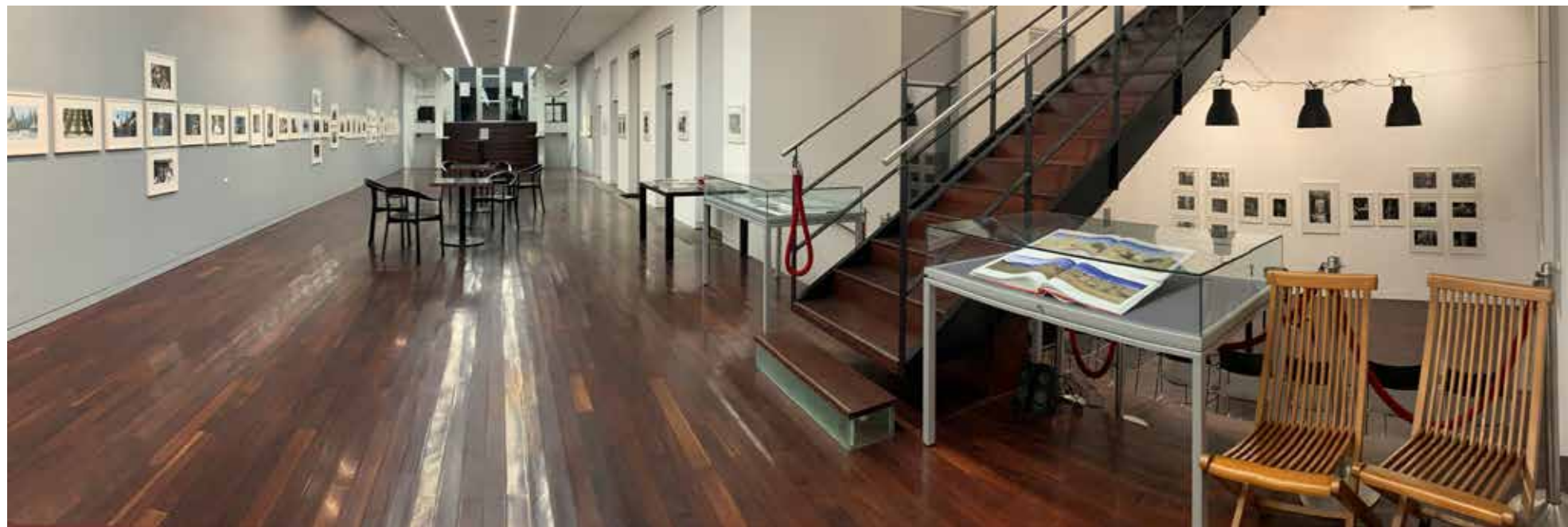
Egypt, Temple of Karnak, 22. 5.2023 (stitched, Karnak pano 02)



Köln, Forum für Fotografie, 16.11.2021 (IMG_1715.jpg)



Forum für Fotografie Köln, 13.11.2021 (IMG_1703.jpg)
 From left to right: Markus Kreisel and his wife, Martina Oeter, Bruno, Wolfgang Kohl, Barbara Sedlaczek, Hans-Matin Müller, Waltraud Hörter-Volf



Köln, Forum für Fotografie, 16.11.2021 (IMG_171.jpg)



Köln Pub "Zur Eule", 13.11.2021 (IMG_1707.jpg)
 From left to right: Markus Kreisel and his wife, Bruno, Martina Oeter, Susanne, Barbara Sedlaczek, Claudia Lanisus, Norbert Moos

The first published iPanorama

Quickly storing the films in the fridge

Czech-Cologne photographer Jaroslav Poncar on the end of film photography and how his colleague Josef Sudek inspired him

It all began with Josef Sudek. His work is Czechia's most prominent contribution to the history of photography. 'Sudek inspired me with his 1959 photo book "Praha Panoramaticka"', recalls Jaroslav Poncar, now 79. Poncar lives in Cologne's Südstadt district, taught for 30 years as a professor of photo engineering at the University of Applied Sciences and perfected panoramic photography in a unique way.

We owe him landscape photographs from countries such as Tibet, Afghanistan, Burma and Yemen, which can no longer be visited today. Poncar caused a sensation with his panoramas of the Cambodian jungle city of Angkor Wat.

Creative hand visible in the photos

As a young man, he wrote a letter to Sudek to get hold of the book with the Prague photographs. Sudek was flattered that someone could be enthusiastic about such a 'poorly made book'. Nevertheless, the photographs are magnificent, especially considering that he had to operate the camera with one arm. 'Sudek lost his right arm in the First World War. He took the photographs with his left hand, so to speak,' explains Poncar with an ironic laugh. Amazon did not exist in 1959, and the antiquarian book proved too expensive for Poncar's modest parents to buy as a gift for their son. "The communists weren't very nice to them," Poncar adds with amused bitterness, and Sudek himself only had one copy left.

In 1966, Jaroslav Poncar managed to move to the West with the help of a scholarship to RWTH Aachen University. The book became a topic of discussion again in 1976 when Josef Sudek died at the age of eighty. A friend of Poncar's who was managing the estate found the letter he had once written to the 'master' — as Sudek was known in Prague. They spoke on the phone, and Poncar's parents, who were living in Czechoslovakia, travelled to Prague, purchased the book, 'and that's when I had the idea that perhaps the panorama camera still existed,' Poncar recalls. He bought it and took his first pictures of Brühl Castle with it. When his elderly parents were allowed to travel to the West, the son fulfilled his mother's lifelong dream with a trip to the châteaux of the Loire, which he naturally captured on camera. These photographs, as well as the later photographs of Paris, a considerable number of which are now in the Bibliothèque Nationale, demonstrate the true class of Poncar's method.

In their best compositions, they decode the landscape or urban space. We see not only the castles, but also the surrounding landscape or neighbouring small towns. When viewing them, it immediately becomes clear why a castle was built on this particular hill and not on any other.

France's representative architecture corresponds subtly with nature. The same is true of the urban scenery of Paris. Here, too, the creative hand is visible, uniting town houses with squares and streets to form magnificent ensembles.

However, the visual impact of these photographs is particularly impressive, as Jaroslav Poncar's panoramas correspond much more to our natural vision than a conventional photograph. This is because our vision is not fixed on a single perspective, but is guided by constant movement, which gives us a much more complex sense of space. What drives Poncar, who also travelled the world as a news photographer for the dpa agency, today is what he considers an irrefutable fact: 'Analogue photography died in the 21st century. Whether it's Kodak or Polaroid, they're all dead,' Poncar laments.

When Ektachrome films disappeared more than ten years ago, the artist quickly bought 100 packs and stored them in a refrigerator he had purchased specifically for this purpose. But by 2016, this reserve had also been depleted. He had to accept the final proof of the end of analogue photography last summer during a visit to Prague. As he was about to embark on a boat trip on the banks of the Vltava River, he was overwhelmed by the blue of the sky. It was annoying that he didn't have a camera with him. Then he remembered that the iPhone also has a panorama function. He managed to take the picture right away, and only then did he realise that Josef Sudek had taken the cover photo for his book 'Praha Panoramaticka' at exactly this spot.

Jaro on Jaro

Jaroslav Poncar has compiled an overview of his life's work in the illustrated book 'Jaro on Jaro' (192 pages, £45), which is available on the photographer's website. The book tells the stories behind individual images. Those who wish can also order a signed copy with a personal dedication from the artist. (EB)

"Film photography died in the 21st century. Whether it was Kodak or Polaroid, they all died."

Jaroslav Poncar

Photographer



Paris, 17.6.2021 (IMG_1280.jpg)



Rekonstruierte Panoramafotografie, wie hier in Paris, sind die Spezialität des in Köln lebenden Fotografen Jaroslav Poncar. Foto: Jaroslav Poncar

Die Filme noch schnell im Kühlschrank gelagert

Der tschechisch-kölnische Fotograf Jaroslav Poncar über das Ende der analogen Fotografie und wie Kollege Josef Sudek ihn inspirierte

VON THOMAS LINDEN

Jaro über Jaro

Jaroslav Poncar hat einen Überblick seines Lebenswerks in einem illustrierten Buch mit dem Titel „Jaro on Jaro“ (192, €45), das auf seiner Website zu bestellen ist. Das Buch erzählt die Geschichten hinter einzelnen Bildern und zeigt eine persönliche Verbindung zwischen dem Fotografen und dem Kameramann Josef Sudek.

Das Buch ist ein Überblick über das Leben des Fotografen Jaroslav Poncar, der in Köln lebt und seit 1966 in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland wohnt. Er ist ein bekannter Landschaftsfotograf, der seine Werke in Form von Panoramen und Einzelbildern veröffentlicht hat.

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Fotograf Jaroslav Poncar in Köln. Foto: Thomas Linden

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For black-and-white panoramas, I used Kodak Panatomic-X, a legendary panchromatic black-and-white film known for its extremely fine grain, high sharpness and wide tonal range, which was manufactured from 1933 to the early 1990s. An ideal film for large enlargements. For the colour images, however, only Kodachrome 25 was an option, although I would have preferred Ektachrome 64, but it was too sensitive. Since I wasn't a big fan of Kodachrome, I only had one roll with me! When we reached the valley near Padum, a rainbow stretched across the valley, and of course I couldn't resist taking the black-and-white film out of the FT-2 and inserting the Kodachrome. All the gods of the Himalayas must have been smiling on me when I took the first colour panorama! As I saw two months later in Cologne...

On 10 September 2024, the first iPanorama was published in the Kölnische Rundschau newspaper. To my satisfaction. As you can see, it was only minimally cropped. And what will happen to the rest of the iPanoramas? I will print out a selection on my Epson printer for as long as I enjoy doing so.



Approach to Padum, September 1976, (lad005korr.tif)

Over the course of 50 years, I have used cameras made between 1896 and 2019 (iPhone). What should happen to the cameras? The Musée Nicéphore Niépce in Chalon-sur-Saône is interested in acquiring not only my photos, but also the cameras. But shouldn't Sudek's camera go to the Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague where all the negatives of his panoramas are housed?

Köln, March 2026

Vážený pane Poncare,

Velice Vám děkuji za zaslanoou publikaci. Partie týkající se panoramatické kamery Josefa Sudka a vlastně i jeho slavné knihy Praha panoramatické jsou skvělým doplněním našich dosavadních informací. Pana Rudolfa Gabriela (Sudek mu říkal Archanděl Gabriel) jsem znal dlouhá léta, byl to nejen jeho přítel, ale také vášnivý sběratel. V 80. letech jsem pracoval jako archivář v nakladatelství Odeon, ale když pak začátkem 90. let krachovalo, byl jsem už v Uměleckoprůmyslovém muzeu. Pro muzeum jsem tehdy úřední cestou převzal zbytky materiálů vrácených z tiskáren (byly v jednom redakčním kumbálu na Národní 36). Vše jsem utřídil a v jedné krabici od fotopapírů 50 x 60 cm jsem našel 284 Sudkových panoramat pro roku 1959 realizovanou knihu. Sloužily tehdy jako náhledové kopie pro práci v tiskárně. Některé nejsou ideálním stavu, ale že se zachovaly, to byl zázrak. Ještě před samotným koncem Odeonu jsem tam inicioval druhé vydání publikace, a to hned v pěti jazykových mutacích (včetně italštiny a španělštiny). Podkladem pro reprodukce nebyly negativy, jako u prvního vydání tištěném hlubotiskem, ale právě tyto předlohy. Výsledek nebyl tak "romanticky" temný, některým lidem to trochu vadilo. Že to prý není opravdový Sudek. Z Vašeho Sudkova dopisu ale vidím, že ani on sám nebyl výsledným tiskem prvního vydání stoprocentně nadšen.

Získané fotografie jsem pak opakovaně vystavoval, s dr. Z. Kirschnerem v Rudolfinu při příležitosti tohoto druhého vydání knihy, pak v Evropském domě fotografie v Paříži a jednotlivé fotografie při jiných příležitostech na mnoha dalších místech. V současné době připravuji pro galerii v Litoměřicích výstavu Josef Sudek: Putování na sever, kde budou další panoramatické snímky z tamního kraje.

Jak vidíte, panoramatické tvorby Josefa Sudka si nejen velice vážím, ale stále ji v nejrůznějších obměnách představujeme veřejnosti. V neposlední řadě i v naší komorní Galerii Josefa Sudka, kde zítra otevíráme už devadesátou středně dobou výstavu. V tomto případě to bude tvorba Sudkova kolegy Tibora Hontyho, jeho sociální fotografie 30. - 60. let.

Rozhodnete-li se do sbírkových fondů našeho muzea věnovat panoramatickou kameru Josefa Sudka, bude uložena na pravém místě. Samotný autor nezištně odkázal Uměleckoprůmyslovému muzeu v Praze více než dvacet tisíc svých pozitivů a dvacet sedm tisíc negativů.

S pozdravem
Jan Mlčoch

Dear Mr. Poncar,

Thank you very much for sending me the publication. The section on Josef Sudek's panoramic camera and, in fact, his famous book Panorama of Prague are a wonderful addition to our existing information. I knew Rudolf Gabriel (Sudek called him Archangel Gabriel) for many years; he was not only his friend, but also a passionate collector. In the 1980s, I worked as an archivist at the Odeon publishing house, but when it went bankrupt in the early 1990s, I was already working at the Museum of Decorative Arts. At that time, I officially took over the remains of materials returned from the printers (they were in an editorial storeroom at Národní 36) for the museum. I sorted everything and found 284 of Sudek's panoramas for a book published in 1959 in a box of 50 x 60 cm photo paper. At the time, they served as preview copies for work in the printing house. Some are not in ideal condition, but it was a miracle that they were preserved. Even before the end of Odeon, I initiated a second edition of the publication, in five languages (including Italian and Spanish). The basis for the reproductions was not negatives, as in the first edition printed by gravure, but these very originals. The result was not as "romantically" dark, which bothered some people. They said it wasn't the real Sudek. But from your letter, Sudek, I can see that even he himself was not 100% enthusiastic about the final print of the first edition.

I then exhibited the photographs I had acquired repeatedly, with Dr. Z. Kirschner at the Rudolfinum on the occasion of this second edition of the book, then at the European House of Photography in Paris, and individual photographs on other occasions in many other places. I am currently preparing an exhibition for the gallery in Litoměřice entitled Josef Sudek: Journey to the North, which will feature more panoramic photographs from that region.

As you can see, I not only greatly appreciate Josef Sudek's panoramic work, but we also continue to present it to the public in various forms. Last but not least, in our intimate Josef Sudek Gallery, where tomorrow we are opening our 90th medium-term exhibition. In this case, it will be the work of Sudek's colleague Tibor Honty, his social photography from the 1930s to the 1960s.

If you decide to donate Josef Sudek's panoramic camera to our museum's collection, it will be stored in the right place. The author himself selflessly bequeathed more than twenty thousand of his positives and twenty-seven thousand negatives to the Museum of Decorative Arts in Prague.

Best regards
Jan Mlčoch



Eugene O. Goldbeck (1892-1986)

He pushed the limits of his craft by working with ever larger groups in striking designs. For his largest group shot, in which 21,765 men were arranged to represent the Air Force insignia, he spent more than six weeks building a 200-foot tower and making blueprints of the formation and attire of his subjects. The photograph was subsequently featured in Life magazine and became the most frequently reproduced of his prints. Goldbeck's interest in panoramic photography extended beyond its lucrative potential. In later years he used it to record serene landscapes and city skylines, often for his own pleasure. Over a dozen trips around the world offered him access to many striking scenes, and he took exceptional photographs of the Parisian skyline (1927), the Pyramids and Sphinx in Cairo, Egypt (1971), and the ancient fortress city of Machu Picchu in Peru (1972), among many others. Goldbeck patented several improvements to the Cirkut camera, the most important of which enabled the camera to operate from great heights while maintaining an even scan.

Josef Sudek (1896-1976)

Sudek was originally a bookbinder. Although he had no experience with photography and only had one hand due to an amputation, he was given a camera as a gift. He studied photography for two years in Prague under Jaromir Funke. His disability pension from the army gave him the necessary freedom to devote himself to art. In 1947, he acquired a Panoram IV, a 10 × 30 cm panoramic camera from 1894. Most of his photographs were taken with large-format cameras, which allowed him to dispense with enlargements and create contact prints instead.

Epilogue

"Panoramics are, admittedly, hard to collect, because of their size (this is also what explains their rarity). They were also among the first sorts of photographic images to be hung on walls, because they did not correspond to conventional norms they could not be stuck into an album. The prints are sometimes very large indeed - difficult to handle or put in a frame. Since they were made to hang on a wall, and to be exposed to light, they were destined to get easily damaged. Many disappeared when their owners died or moved house. To house mine, I have had to have special pieces of furniture built, to bring in special restorers, and so on. Not to mention, once more, the break in traditional attitudes which they require: getting free from classical perspective, putting oneself in the state of mind of rotation and eightlessness."

Quote from the book by Joachim Bonnemaison, ("Panoramas - Collection Bonnemaison, Photographs 1850-1950"), published in 1989. This also remains true in the digital age of photography...

© Text and Photos:
Jaroslav Poncar

Köln, March 2026