

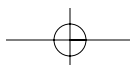
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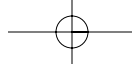
Diane G. Orr: 360-

BY CYNTHIA ANDERSON



PHOTOS ©DIANE G. ORR

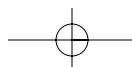


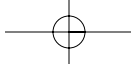


Anasazi Hands. San Juan County, Utah (100 BC-800 AD)

Degree Visionscapes

Water Babies With Dog. Wind River, Wyoming (700 AD)





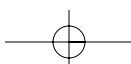
Sego Junction. Grand County, Utah (1000 BC-500 AD)



Navajo Horse Panel. San Juan County, Utah (1800-1925 AD)



Thunderhead in Nine Mile Canyon. Carbon County, Utah (750-1250 AD)



To figure out where the shot's going to be, I take measurements and use algebraic formulas. I'm back with the old-time photographers who had cumbersome equipment and would do their set-ups and then take one or two pictures. It's the exact opposite of digital. – Diane Orr

Utah resident Diane G. Orr has rolled the work of multiple lifetimes into one — painter, filmmaker, broadcast news director and now photographer. For the past four years, she has made it her mission to photograph threatened rock art sites throughout the American West with the Hulcherama, a sophisticated box camera that captures 360-degree views.

Orr's images have played an important role in increasing public awareness of these ancient sites. In 2004, her images of Utah's Nine Mile Canyon helped convince the National Trust for Historic Places to name it one of the "Eleven Most Endangered Historic Places in America." Her work has been exhibited at the Salt Lake City International Airport as well as museums and galleries in Utah and California. She received the 2006 Oliver Award for rock art photography from the American Rock Art Research Association.

Her interest in rock art took off while she was filming *Lost Forever: Everett Ruess*, the true story of an artist who vanished in 1934 while exploring Utah for perfect beauty to paint. Orr says, "I was shooting a scene at the Rochester Panel — a fantastic rock art site, very Stonehenge-y. You walk on a spit of land above two canyons to a high platform that overlooks the confluence of two streams. The rock art shows a rainbow with a man and a woman copulating underneath it and strange beasts around the outer edge.

"I was so visually interested in the site that I kept going back to it. What I observed was that the creators of the rock art had an expanded palette, and it's not the palette used by modern artists. It includes the topography of the site; light, both daily and seasonal; and the surface of the rock itself. The natural holes and cracks are part of the picture."

Though Orr wanted to do something to capture the rock art in the context of its surroundings, she rejected the idea of making a film. "I didn't want a talking head movie where an expert explained it — that sounded boring. So I started thinking about photography. I had seen pictures of the site by very good photographers, but they always showed just the rainbow part of the art. From those pictures, I never guessed how amazing the site really is."

Enter the Hulcherama, a panoramic camera manufactured for over 30 years by the Charles A. Hulcher Company, Inc. in Hampton, Virginia. The company got its start in the 1950s making sequence cameras for the military and the aerospace industry. Between 1973-75, photojournalist Simon Nathan (renowned for his *Popular Photography* column "Simon Sez") encouraged Hulcher to produce a panoramic camera and named it the "Hulcherama."

A friend of Orr's had a Hulcherama 120, and they took it to the Rochester Panel. She says, "My goal was to capture the entire scene with good foreground and background focus. The camera comes with three rollers for different focal ranges — close-up, mid-range and infinity. Most photographers use the mid-range or #2 roller, which theoretically can't focus closer than 10-15 feet. I said, let's experiment with the #2 roller, let's go closer. When I saw the pictures from that shoot, I was blown away. I thought, we haven't got it yet, but this could work."

Orr borrowed her friend's Hulcherama for the next six months and continued to refine her technique. Then came a moment of truth: she fell 14 feet off a cliff with the camera. "I wrapped my arms around it so I hit on my butt. It was amazing — I was unhurt and nothing broke, not even the lens — but I did dent a little something on the camera body. My friend said,

Orr has witnessed the continuing destruction of rock art sites due to vandalism, energy development, and other threats. She has seen places where boulders were removed with backhoes and where panels were taken off cliff faces with chain saws.

it's getting pretty rough out there, so we decided it was time for me to buy my own."

Hulcherama cameras are relatively rare. A used Hulcherama can cost more than a brand new camera, which may take months to build after an order is placed. Each individual camera is numbered. Orr says, "I got lucky. I found someone who'd only used the camera for seven or eight shots. It was Model 120, Number 39."

She recently purchased a second camera, the new Model 120s, Number 147, observing, "I did that because I work in remote areas. I bounce over bad roads. I'm in a lot of dirt and sand. And while the camera is very mechanical — digital would be murder out there — things still go wrong. So I like having two camera bodies with me, and I work with both of them." She describes the Hulcher people as "like family" and notes, "I talk to them on the phone regularly. They are always tweaking my cameras and giving me little tricks."

The 120s has a 12-volt battery-run motor. Solid state electronics control the rotational speed, which is selected with a switch and varies from 1 to 72 seconds. A manual option permits rotations shorter than 360 degrees. The film is exposed through an adjustable slit. A new feature that Orr loves is a "shift" that moves the lens up and down, raising and lowering the horizon. With the older Hulcheramas, the horizon always appears in the exact center of the picture.

Over time, she learned that the D slit gives her pictures the sharpest focus, and she almost always stops down to f/22 for depth of field. She uses all of the camera's rotational speeds, though she favors the slower ones. "I love shooting in caves and working at pre-dawn and post-sunset, so I want the slowest speed I can possibly get. I can crawl inside tiny, dark granaries and get very good exposure with 800 ASA film and a 64-second rotation."

Orr found that one of the biggest challenges of the Hulcherama was the lack of conventional through-the-lens viewing. "You have to envision 360 degrees in your mind for each

lens," she points out. "I use Mamiya 35, 45 and 80mm lenses, and each lens results in a different-sized negative. For example, the 35mm lens gives a nine-inch-long negative, while the 80mm gives a 20-inch-long negative. It took me at least a year to get comfortable pre-visualizing my images, and I still make mistakes."

When Orr goes out into the field with her gear — carried with the help of her dog Biff and good friends or one of her three sons — she has already visited a site several times. She knows exactly when and where the light will hit the rock art, and often she has only one moment to get the shot she's after. She uses telescoping survey rods, stabilized with a tripod, to lift the camera as high as 17 feet. "It's not a quick set-up," she laughs. "To figure out where the shot's going to be, I take measurements and use algebraic formulas. I'm back with the old-time photographers who had cumbersome equipment and would do their set-ups and then take one or two pictures. It's the exact opposite of digital."

Orr shoots with medium format Kodak Portra NC 120 roll film; in her experience, the Kodak backing rolls the smoothest through the camera. After getting the negatives developed at a lab, she scans them at 470 dpi with an Imacon Flextight Photo digital drum scanner. She finds that the Imacon delivers excellent density penetration as compared to flatbed scanners, which she feels don't provide enough detail or color in the shadows.

She relies on her visual memory to reproduce the colors of the landscape. "Negative offers a range and subtlety of color that I like, but it depends on me having a good memory to pull it out. The auto buttons on the scanner don't know if I was there at dawn or sunset. The true color's got to be in my head."

Because each image is 360 degrees — a complete circle — Orr uses Photoshop to select where the composition begins and ends. Occasionally she may clip an image if it improves the composition. She may also soften the background focus, remove the shadows of herself and her dog, or manipulate skies. "However, I'm very true to the light source," she notes. "If brushing a cloud

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ENTRY FORM

My pictures are like movies in the sense that time is involved. It's not a quick grab. When I watch people in galleries, they stand for quite awhile. And I think they're on the journey. – Diane Orr

slightly up instead of down helps the eye travel better across the picture, I do it.”

To Orr, sharpening is an anathema. “I don't sharpen at all when I scan, and I don't even sharpen to print. I personally like an almost painterly quality. That's the feeling I'm going for, so I don't regard extreme photo-realism as the ultimate.”

For printing, she uses an Epson Stylus Pro 9800 on Hahnemühle Photo Rag paper, a heavyweight, absorbent paper with a soft surface. Over time, she has made her images larger and larger — now up to 70 inches long by 15 inches high. She feels that larger prints convey the majesty of the rock art sites more effectively.

She explains, “I have a journey in mind for you when you stand in front of my pictures. I consciously take your eye forward, backward, up, down, diagonally, into layers, out to layers. My pictures are like movies in the sense that time is involved. It's not a quick grab. When I watch people in galleries, they stand for quite awhile. And I think they're on the journey.”

As far as what the rock art means, Orr doesn't subscribe to any specific interpretation. She appreciates the art's graphically fresh quality and feels that its creators viewed the world very differently from any people living today. Certain characters appear over and over, and she identifies them as part of a giant story. “I try to feel the story behind the characters, but I don't know what the story is,” she says.

Her current project is documenting rock art sites of early hunting cultures in Wyoming. Some of these sites continue to play a role in the lives of the Eastern Shoshone people. She observes, “There are sites where people went, and still go, to connect with greater beings. I've been to sites so powerful that I've wondered if I should photograph them. I try to be careful

about how the images are seen and used. In general, Native Americans have a favorable reaction to my work. They understand that I'm attempting to do something positive by photographing the sites. My hope is that people will experience the glory of the rock art and want to fight for it.”

In the past four years, Orr has witnessed the continuing destruction of rock art sites due to vandalism, energy development, and other threats. She has seen places where boulders were removed with backhoes and where panels were taken off cliff faces with chain saws. Despite Nine Mile Canyon's federal recognition as an endangered site, industrial traffic near the rock art continues to increase. Important sites in southern Utah are threatened by subdivision growth, public land sales and a proposed dam. One of the motivations behind Orr's fall 2006 exhibit at the St. George Art Museum, “Visionscapes: Vanishing Rock Art Sites of the West,” was to generate support for protecting the southern Utah sites.

For the foreseeable future, Orr plans to spend 100 days a year or more in the field photographing rock art sites in Utah, Arizona, Nevada, California and Wyoming. She sums up, “I don't know how, when or if my subject matter will change, but right now I'm locked into these sites, these cultures, these artists. It's still absorbing me, it's still going deeper. There will probably be a time when another story moves in, but for now, this is the one.” ▲

For more information about Diane Orr, her photographs and rock art research associations, visit www.dianeorr.com.

Cynthia Anderson is a freelance writer based in Santa Barbara, California.



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