Light Stands For photographing in



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Most cavers use normal camera flash, usually off-camera, and "paint" the cave with the flash. We have photographed caves with Metz flash units. Since these are large and powerful they are among the best brands.

Afew caves have electrical lighting. But the caves in Guatemala are in remote mountains. Sometimes even entire villages don't have electricity.

We have been exploring caves in Guatemala for over a decade, and I believe that portable studio lighting could be a better option (than flash), especially for certain kinds of cave formations.



Our interests in photographing caves are:

To show the world the natural beauty of the caves of Guatemala

To document the features of caves of the Aztec and Maya which are comparable to caves described for thousands of years as the entrance to Xibalba of the Maya.

To suggest that it is worth testing and evaluating new methods to photograph caves.

The Popol Vuh is the sacred book of the Maya civilization which describes the caves. The Popol Vuh legends date back to about 200 BC (so is over 2000 years of history).



There are two "obstacles" or "trials" of knives

Many linguists, ethnographers, ethnohistorians, and other scholars have devoted their efforts to translate the archaic K'iche Mayan language in which the only remaining written version of the Popol Vuh is written. The first translations I read spoke of a "river of scorpions." Since I know that scorpions like dark places, I expected to find a cave crawling with scorpions.

But scorpions is a play on words for the spine at the end of the scorpions tail: the real meaning is a river of sharp knife-like formations and a cave of sharp knife-like stalagmites and stalactites. Scorpions do inhabit caves, plus

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there are tailless whip scorpions in most of the caves of Guatemala. But the gist of the "obstacle course" to enter Xibalba (or to escape) is you have to pass two obstacles or trials with extremely sharp knife-like rock formations.

Much to our surprise, we have actually found a river in a cave with knife-like formations sticking out of the river. Plus we found a cave whose entire floor was hundreds and actually probably thousands of knives (out of the natural geology). We would like to photograph these to show the world that some descriptions in the otherwise mythical cosmology are based on actual features of the natural mountains of Guatemala.



Fluorescent digital lighting requires sturdy light stands

We wish to photograph the cave of knives with Westcott fluorescent lighting. Since these lamps have the softbox sticking out the front, these lamps tip over if you put them on cheap low-bid light stands. The benefit of century stands is that one of the three legs is longer than the other (so the legs can fold up to allow them to be carried easily).

Plus the century stands have an option where you can raise one leg even higher. This is so you can use the stands on stairs or on a hillside. But inside a cave these professional light stand options will be essential.

This will be a photogenic test evaluation of the lamps and the light stands. We would like to do the photography during Christmas week (when even year I go to remote areas of the jungles of Guatemala to escape the noise of parties and unfortunate occasional excess of drinking that happens on some party events).



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