

• Photo Studio Equipment

• Digital Camera Reviews



What Dr. Nicholas Hellmuth and Erick Flores  
Recommend for attending Photokina 2018

## Dr. Nicholas and two assistants attended Photokina 2016

Updated Oct 12, from original post August 8, 2016

### At Photokina 2016 we visited over a hundred booths of diverse products:

SAVAGE Universal had a nice booth filled with all kinds of products we have not noticed there in earlier years. We are interested in many of their new products. We will do a separate page on SAVAGE products as soon as possible.



SWAROVSKI OPTIK offers digiscoping combinations. In a few months they should have new models which we would like to evaluate for opening up potential new markets (more than bird photography).

We feel that more photographers should learn the differences between a SWAROVSKI telescope on your camera compared to a normal telephoto lens.

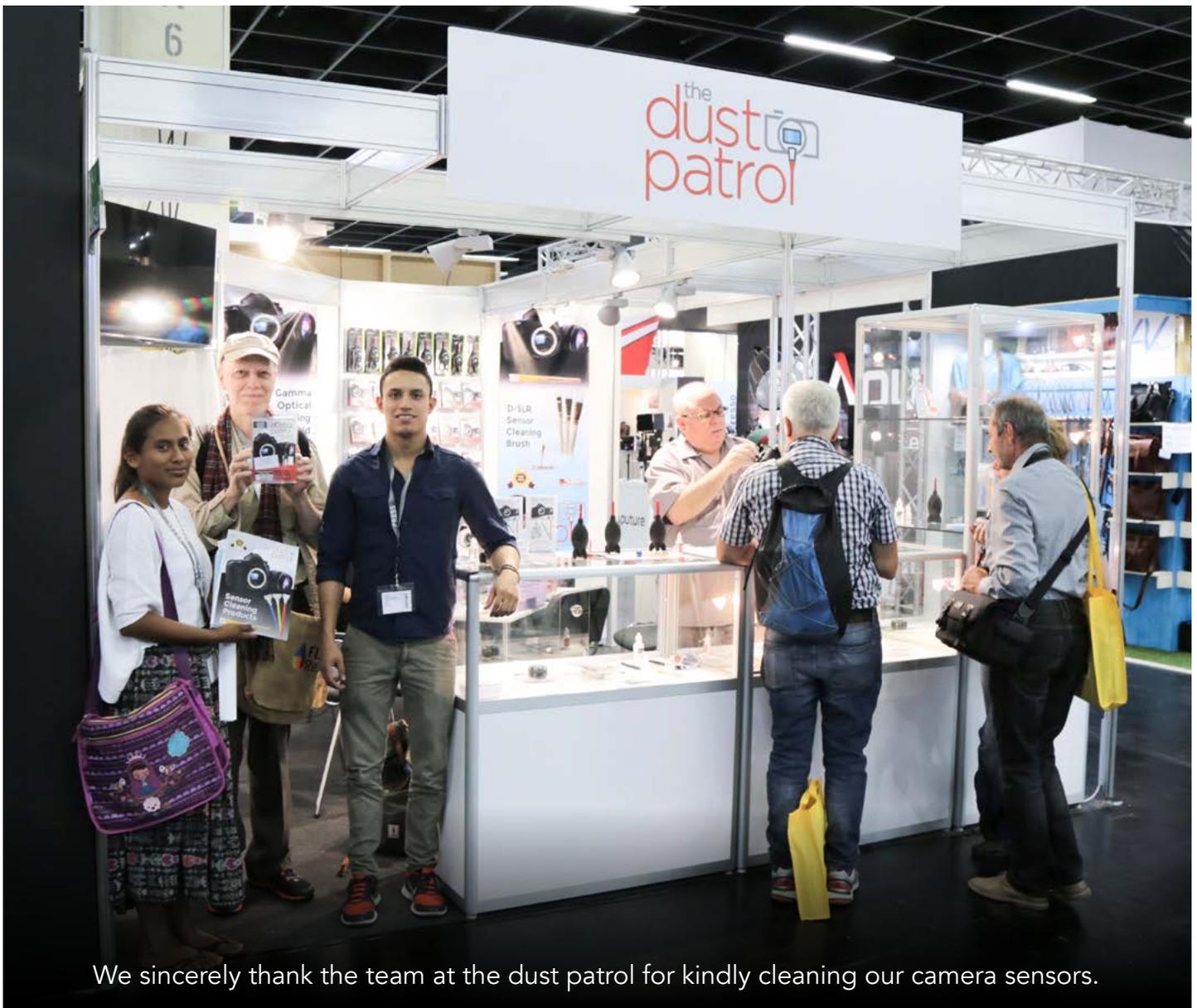


The Leica and Sinar booth was hospitable. The new model of the Leica S system is a medium-format camera we could definitely compare with our past years experience with Hasselblad, Leaf, Phase One, and other high resolution cameras.

Since we had attended three international trade shows before Photokina and attended two more after Photokina, the overall trip was about 46,000 miles (about 74,000 kilometers) of flights to three continents in just one month. But as soon as possible we will update pertinent pages on this digital photography site.

During early December we will take 15 of our staff in three 4WD vehicles to remote jungle-covered mountain areas of Guatemala. This would be a great place to test, evaluate and write reviews on the new products we saw at Photokina.

The FLAAR team of PRESS consists of Dr Nicholas, camera and photography editor Erick Flores, and camera and photography assistant editor Senaida Ba. Back in our home office there are about 25 of us on the FLAAR teams.



We sincerely thank the team at the dust patrol for kindly cleaning our camera sensors.

## Action cam

You can expect much much more than GoPro at Photokina 2016. GoXtreme action cams are but one example of ultra HD action cams.

[www.goextreme-action-cams.com](http://www.goextreme-action-cams.com)

[www.GoPro.com](http://www.GoPro.com)



## 360-degree VR Cameras

When I noticed HumanEyes Technologies in the Photokina 2016 catalog, I wanted to go to their booth to say hello. I have experience with their advances in lenticular technology already a decade ago. When I arrived at their booth I noticed that their booth today features VUZE, a 3D 360 degree virtual reality camera.

<http://vuze.camera>

[www.HumanEyes.com](http://www.HumanEyes.com)

[www.Sphericam.com](http://www.Sphericam.com)

- Cameras
  - point-and-shoot
  - DSLR: everything Sony, Nikon, Canon, Leica, Sigma and every other brand you can imagine
  - Mirrorless cameras
  - medium format
  - large format
  - for tri-linear scanning backs
  - for medium format backs
  - for DSLR cameras
  - aerial cameras (Phase One)
  - panoramic cameras (Seitz)
  - lenses
  - 360-degree cameras

## Lenses for Nikon and Canon

30 years ago the output from off-brand Japanese lenses was pathetic. I can still remember the output from a Tamron lens used by my Austrian girlfriend Suzanne. It was awful.

Five years ago one of our photographers bought a Sigma telephoto lenses since it was less price than Nikon. But he said that after using it he found it "slow."

For these reasons we prefer not to use lenses not made by Nikon or Canon (or Leica). That said, Nikon kit lenses made in Thailand are junk, they fail after only a few years. So I can estimate the issues with using a Nikon lens which today are Made in China.

Zeiss lenses Made in Germany 30 years ago provided awesome quality and last forever. Downside of Zeiss lenses made today for Nikon and Canon is that they do not offer automatic focus. For this reason many photographers prefer the newer Sigma lenses which seek to overcome the iffy reputation of these lenses.

If I won the Lottery, I would probably tend to take a chance with Zeiss Otus lenses. But I am not convinced that any 35mm DSLR can match the quality of a Phase One or comparable medium format back with a Zeiss lens made 30 years ago (I use Phase One, Hasselblad, and Leaf medium format backs on my Hasselblad ELX; unfortunately you can't get batteries from Hasselblad for an ELX any more).

Zeiss Milvus lenses have not fared very well in reviews against the continued move of Sigma to make better lenses.

However, I would be tempted to test the Milvus 2/50M and Milvus 2/100M since much of the photography that I do is macro. I would assume these go to 1:1.

## Point-and-Shoot cameras

Downside of point-and-shoot cameras is that they can't handle large areas of pure white, especially the strong lights over most booths. Worst offenders are Canon point-and-shoot cameras (so we stopped asking for this brand, and switched to Sony).

These white areas either burn out, or if not, then the black areas turn solid black (to allow the white areas not to be burned out). Yes, you can overcome this in several ways, but at a trade show as busy as Photokina you are lucky to get a view of a booth without people's heads and backpacks blocking your view.

The Nikon point-and-shoot camera I got was so awful I literally dumped it and bought a Sony (since I needed one quickly). But for DSLR cameras, I find the Nikon D810 and Nikon D5 acceptable. I have and use both. We also have several Canon DLSR cameras since to evaluate digital cameras you need to actually have them (not merely be a copy-and-paste faux review site).

## Telescopes, digiscoping

Several brands of telescopes were available. The two biggest booths, of international brands are

- Celestron
- Swarovski

Plus there were a dozen Chinese companies whose brands are not yet known internationally.

Of the two booths, Celestron and Swarovski, I tend to visit the booth of Swarovski because this is a prestige brand, because I lived in Austria eight years (my PhD is from Karl-Franzens Universitaet, Graz), and because the booth personnel have been helpful each time I visit the booth (every two years at Photokina).

Swarovski offers both binoculars and telescopes. I am interested in the telescopes, since I am interested in photographing birds which appear in Maya and Aztec art of Mexico and Guatemala. For example, 1st-3rd century murals of San Bartolo, Peten, Guatemala clearly show a nest which is identical to the meter-long woven nests of two species of oropendola. But the birds pictured in the mural are neither species of oropendola... the birds in the mural are identified by David Stuart as an oriole (close relative of the two oropendola; several orioles also weave remarkable nests of comparable size.

But more important than the bird is the need to capture an image of the flower of the host tree. We know the tree is an acacia genus. But to identify the species a botanist needs to see the flower.

The flowers of acacia are not very big, so would need a digiscope of professional quality.

Acacia trees are covered with sharp thorns. These thorns are hollow, and inhabited by fierce, stinging ants. So most of the local Maya people chop down the acacia. Our goal is to work to convince the local Maya to not chop down acacia trees, in order to provide more host trees for the oropendola.

This oropendola is not well known; the most famous oropendola is a relative: Montezuma oropendola. This bird weaves its almost meter-tall nests mainly in ceiba trees.

[www.SwarovskiOptik.com](http://www.SwarovskiOptik.com)





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## Filters

Thirty years ago I used a diverse range of filters:

- Filters to keep dust off my lens
- Polarizing filters to get rid of bothersome reflections
- Color balance filters

Nowadays it is a waste of time and distortion of color to use color balance filters. Plus the presence of a filter on the front of your lens lowers the image quality (not to mention if the glass (or plastic) of the filter is dirty or has scratches). You should put a gray card or MacBeth ColorChecker in your photo, or photograph anything gray (concrete or a wall) or anything white. Then color balance in Adobe Photoshop or other Adobe or comparable software.

Obviously it is better to do color balance before you start to take your photos. But Canon and Nikon software is so useless in this respect if you look at what Phase One offers (easy, two clicks and you have PERFECT gray balance).

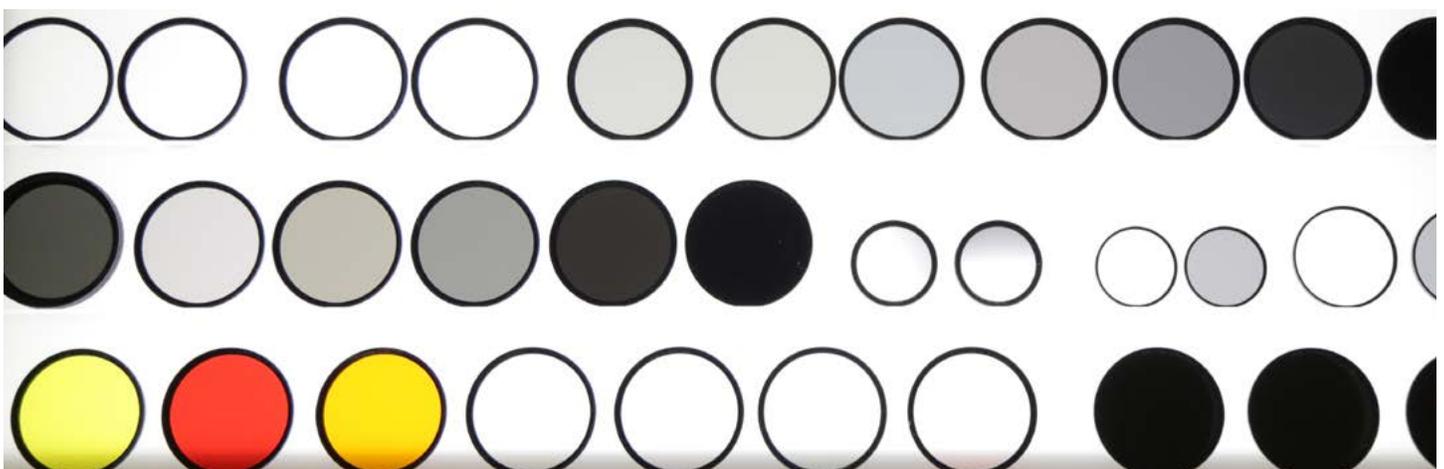
For "sky filters" to keep dust off your lens, it is best to use air to blow the dust off. A filter just introduces weaknesses in the image. So I never use any more dust filter.

Polarizing filters work, or not, depending on the angle of the sun (or angle of the studio lighting) and depend on the surface reflectivity of the objects in the image. Plus, a polarizing filter can double as a dust filter.

Why am I willing to accept a polarizing filter and not the other filters? Because most software can't remove reflections the way a polarizing filter can.

Many brands of filters were exhibited. I estimate that filters sold by Calumet and other retailers are made in China or at least not Made in Germany. That said, even one of my recent new Made in Germany, "name brand" filters fell apart (became unscrewed) after using it for a week. But they kindly (intelligently) replaced it, without cost.

Several booths were exhibiting filters which enable you to darken areas of your scene with are too bright (such as the sky). But these require rectangular filters, require special holder out in front of your lens, and require lots of patience while setting up your image. Nowadays you can do most of this in Adobe Photoshop, Lightroom, or Capture One (though I do realize it is most accurate to do this while preparing to take the photograph).



## Memory cards

I was surprised to see Toshiba's booth entirely memory cards.

- Compact Flash (too often the pins get bent)
- SD, is what I now prefer, but they are easy to lose
- microSD, none of my cameras use this.

As do almost all manufacturers, they claim "the world's fastest Compact Flash cards."

The Toshiba cards includes data recovery software. When I had Hoodman cards I had to send the cards back to Hoodman to rescue my data...

[www.Toshiba-memory.com](http://www.Toshiba-memory.com)

Their SD cards are coming out with a newer faster speeds, and up to 256 GB..... That's a lot of space.

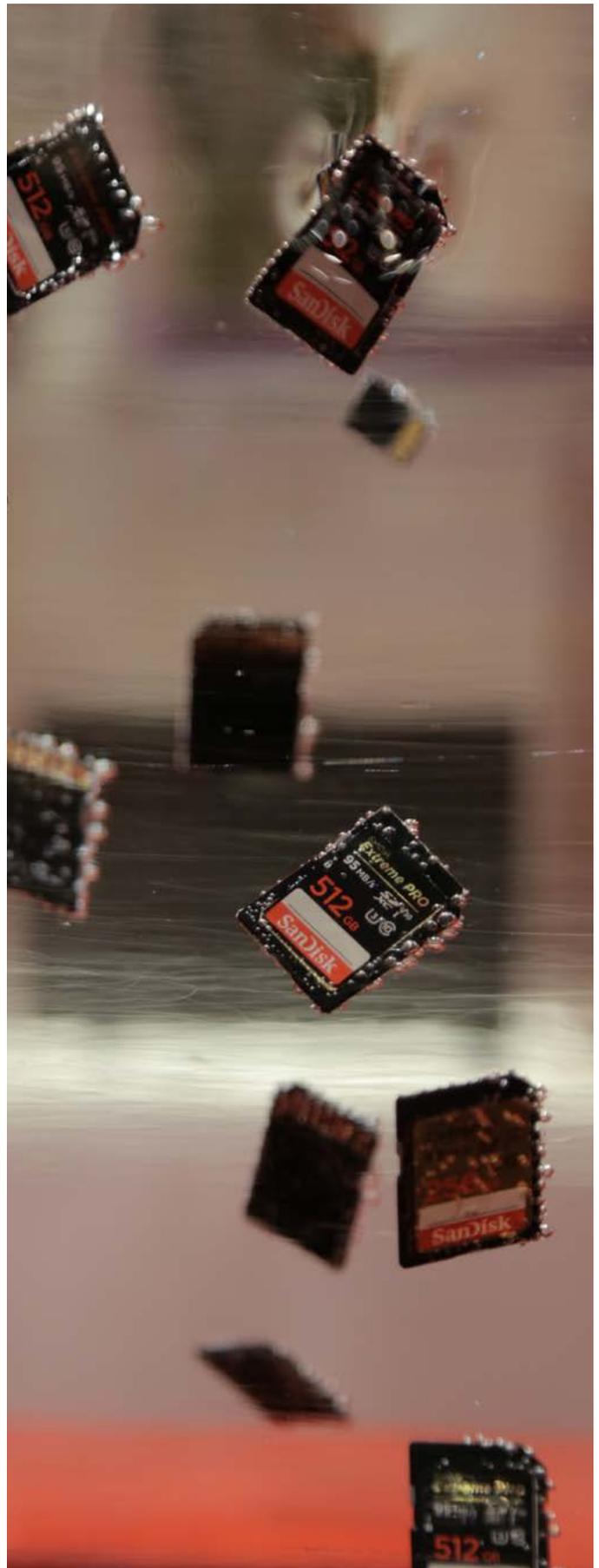
Hoodman, sadly my last Hoodman card eventually failed. But my San Disk card has a fault lock button... so no brand is perfect. Hoodman is now selling accessories for drones. They have a landing platform so that dust does not get into the camera and get into other parts of the drone. Hoodman also offers a viewing hood so the sun does not bother your view.

There was a Chinese company offering memory cards. It is my educated guess that most memory cards come from one or two factories, of which surely one is in China. So if brands under other names are really made in China, the original Chinese brand should be as good as the USA or Japanese version.

Hoodman

San Disk

SD card with 1 Terabyte can be seen in the booth of Western Digital, Hall 4.2 (San Disk, hall 2.1, A14). The PR release of the SD Association indicates that cards up to 2 TB are now available.





## Accessories

By far the best quality, and an impressive range of diverse products, are from NOVOFLEX. This year their booth is on the other side of the aisle.

I must admit I miss both my Leica bellows and my Hasselblad bellows. For macro photography in the 1970's through 1980's these bellows were great.

### (Portable) Flash

Metz

[www.Metz-Mecatech.de](http://www.Metz-Mecatech.de)

### Backdrop Paper (Background paper)

SAVAGE Universal Corp.  
[www.SavagePaper.com](http://www.SavagePaper.com)

### iPhone Accessories

NOVOFLEX  
ZEISS

## Carrying Cases

Pelican and most of the leading brands are present. The booth where we stopped was SKB.

[ExplorerCases.com](http://ExplorerCases.com)  
[Nanuk.com](http://Nanuk.com), [PlasticCase.com](http://PlasticCase.com)  
[Peli.com](http://Peli.com)  
[SKBcases.com](http://SKBcases.com)

## Software

I did not notice anyone from a RIP software company, though surely several brands were present.

For Color Management, only x-rite. There was no Barbieri or anything comparable

Adobe was the most recognizable brand for processing photographs, though actually there were several other brands present.

Capture one



What a great opportunity, to have Zeiss quality on your iPhone.





FOVEX Metric model from Seitz Phototechnik AG, Switzerland.



Roundshot model from Seitz.

## Lens Cleaning

## Cleaning Sensors

TheDustPatrol.com  
Green-Clean.at  
VisibleDust



## Tripods

The SIRUI catalog shows a Chinese factory on its opening page, but gives no Chinese address. Irrespective of where they are made, this is the most extensive catalog

[www.berlebach.de](http://www.berlebach.de)  
[Gitzo.com](http://Gitzo.com)  
[Novoflex.com](http://Novoflex.com)  
[Sirui.de](http://Sirui.de)

## Drones (and their action cameras)

There were perhaps five brands of drones, including the popular brand DJI action cam brands (much much more than GoPro)



## Virtual reality (eye masks)

In the mail hallway from the North Entrance, there was a sitting area where you could put on the eye masks and experience virtual reality. You could also do this in booths inside the halls.





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STS Inks shows its nice color gamut printing images from the FLAAR children's educational book division, [www.MayanToons.org](http://www.MayanToons.org).



Since we do most of our photography in remote rain forests or mountains of Guatemala, we at FLAAR are a good place to test camera cases (to help your equipment survive). As soon as cases from SKB would be available to us, then we can evaluate them for our thousands of readers around the world.





SKB CASES



The advantage of yellow cases is that they would be easier to recognize, since we bring literally tons of equipment in a 4-wheel drive double-cabin pickup truck. We would like to test more cases that protect the cameras, since we have to drive 1,000 kilometers back and forth (from our office in Guatemala City) for our jungle photography in the Peten-Belize area of Central America.

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## Why should you come to Photokina 2018?

- action cam brands (much much more than GoPro)
- virtual reality (eye masks)
- drones (and their action cameras)
- lighting of every size, shape, and technology
  - studio lighting
  - reflectors
  - portable flash units
- backdrops (such as SAVAGE)
- tripods of every size and shape
- camera memory stick options
- cameras
  - point-and-shoot
  - DSLR: everything Sony, Nikon, Canon, Leica, Sigma and every other brand you can imagine
  - Mirrorless cameras
  - Sensors smaller than full-frame (Olympus, Pentax, etc)
  - medium format
  - large format
  - for tri-linear scanning backs
  - for medium format backs
  - for DSLR cameras
  - aerial cameras (Phase One)
  - panoramic cameras (Seitz)
  - lenses
  - telescopes, digiscoping
  - 360-degree cameras
- software for processing photographs
- accessories for iPhones
- batteries
- filters
- lens cleaning and cleaning sensors
- cases, backpacks
- video equipment
- binoculars
- printers
  - wide-format inkjet printers
  - printable media (canvas, fine art paper, photo paper, etc)
  - after-market ink
  - office printers, primarily for Photo books (wedding albums, etc)
  - binding machines for photo books