



PHOTO © 1978 JERRY DANTZIC



MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Art

Taking the Long View

With an old camera, closing the horizon's circle

It started with a \$1 purchase on a 1971 vacation jaunt. Jerry Dantzig, then 45, a photography professor, was picking over the odds and ends in the Freeport, Me., flea market when his eye caught an old photograph of some 2,000 Protestant ministers. He bought the picture and took it back to his Brooklyn studio. Looking at it with a magnifying glass, he marveled at the tack-sharp faces and the lack of dis-

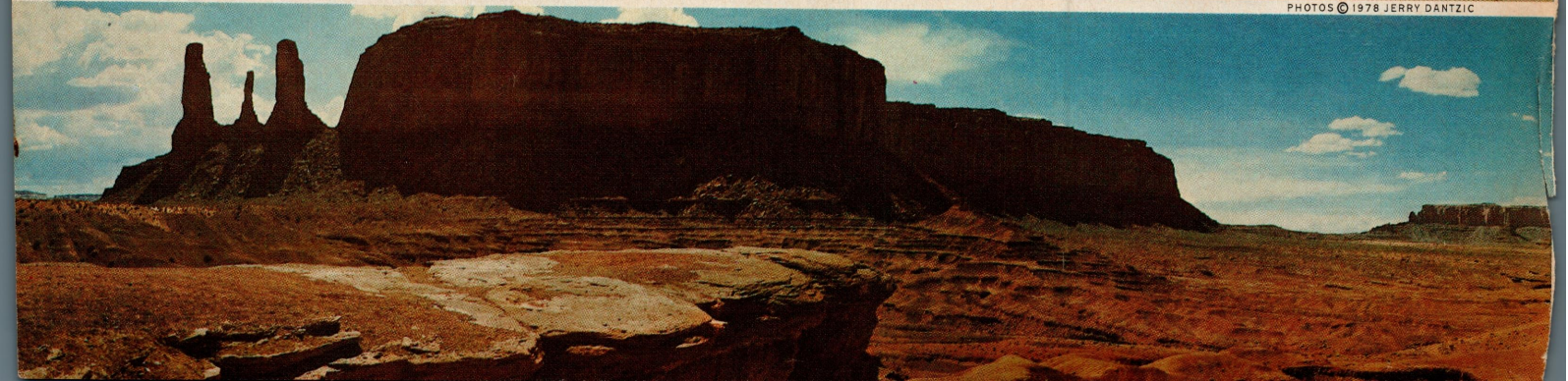
ortion at the ends of the long horizontal photograph. "It suddenly occurred to me," says Dantzig, "that I had no camera in my studio that could do that." After more than a year of inquiries, he found and borrowed the camera he wanted—a turn-of-the-century model called the Cirkut. Soon he was obsessed with the seamless panoramas he was able to produce with it. Some 20,000 miles and 280 exposures lat-

er, Dantzig's obsessions went on display: last week twelve views of U.S. cities and landscapes, ranging in length from 61 in. to 78 in., were exhibited in Manhattan's Museum of Modern Art.

Dantzig does not claim to be doing anything "terribly new. I'm taking an old idea and running with it," he says. As far back as 1844, Germany's Friedrich von Martens and his Panorama-Kamera took a 150°-angle photo of Paris on a curved daguerreotype plate. After the invention of flexible film, other cameras were designed to sweep the horizons. Dantzig's choice, the 50-lb. Cirkut sits on a tripod and is rotated on a vertical axis by a clockwork



PHOTOS © 1978 JERRY DANTZIC





Top: Chicago's lakefront in a 1977 panorama spanning 210°. Below: Manhattan Bridge seems to curve toward Brooklyn in a 1974 picture

mechanism, while its film is moved at the same speed past its aperture.

When Dantzig acquired his Cirkut, it took him months to repair it and learn to use it, as well as to find the right film (from Kodak at \$30 a one-shot roll). Last summer he set out in a rented Dodge van with his wife Cynthia and their son Gray, 10, to cover 30 states in 100 carefully planned days. Most often people were friendly and helpful. In Butte, Mont., a supervisor led the Dantzics around a mine for two days to find the right vantage point; in San Antonio a cop held up traffic while they took a picture of the Alamo; in Albuquerque a bank president escorted them to the roof of his bank to scout the view. Only in New York City, says Dantzig, was "getting on someone's roof



CYNTHIA DANTZIG

Photographer Dantzig with his Cirkut camera
"Taking an old idea and running with it."

a major hassle. They think you're a jumper."

Dantzig has found working with the Cirkut a new and powerful experience.

"All my life I've been trained to see in a small rectangle. Suddenly I've had to relearn to see, and it's terrific." Viewers of his panoramas have to relearn to see as well. In the Cirkut panorama there is no vanishing point, and each shot has a slightly skewed perspective different from what is normally seen by the human eye. The result, with some horizontal straight lines appearing curved, and some curved lines straight, is slightly disorienting.

Dantzig is so enthusiastic about his panoramas that he wants to go on and on with them, to create "an incredible archive, unlike anything that exists on earth." Meanwhile he is hoping to put into book form some of his photos of the past few years. His working title: *America at Length*. ■

At bottom: a midafternoon shot of Monument Valley in Arizona and Utah (210°). Above: a 190° sweep of 20th Century-Fox back lot

