

# PERSONALLY SPEAKING

WITH ARAM PAN

## Meet the *real* VR Man



**FAR-SIGHTED:** Virtual-reality photographer Aram Pan hopes to pique more people's interest in VR photography. (PHOTO: COURTESY OF ARAM PAN)

### KENNY CHEE

**V**IRTUAL-REALITY (VR) photography enthusiast Aram Pan turned his hobby into a profitable business.

Virtual what, you say?

VR photography involves photographing objects from many angles and joining them in a cube-shaped virtual space. This makes the images appear as if they are in a 3-D environment.

Mr Pan, 33, told *my paper* in a recent interview he has seen an increasing number of clients since he set up a blog on his hobby last year.

Since then, his VR-photography company, Plus 720, has produced over 2,000 VR photographs and has been approached by 20 to 30 corporate clients to create virtual environments.

They range from public agencies like the National Library Board and the Singapore Civil

Defence Force to property and education firms. Among them are three companies from Indonesia and Malaysia.

One of his clients is Singapore Press Holdings Magazines, for which he has shot VR photographs of ballrooms for the Her World Brides' website.

Couples can visit the virtual ballrooms to get a 360-degree preview of the wedding-dinner venues without physically visiting them. They can also look up and down at the rooms.

Mr Pan's love for VR photography began in the early 2000s, when he was unsatisfied with how he could not capture scenes in their entirety with normal photography.

"So, I started shooting multiple images of a scene and stitched them together. This evolved into a hobby in VR photography," he said.

In 2005, he approached the Singapore Tourism Board to showcase Singapore to the world through VR photography.

While the idea did not pan out completely, Mr Pan saw business potential in his hobby.

Eventually, he set up Plus 720 to do commercial VR photography in 2007.

"But I didn't have time to develop the business then as I was too busy with work," said Mr Pan, who runs nutrition-supplement firm Plus Life.

He later made time to start the Singapore VR blog in February last year with VR shots he had taken in his free time.

The blog became very popular and has over 200,000 visitors to date, of whom almost 70 per cent are foreigners.

Among the visitors are public and private clients, who have been keeping Mr Pan busy with VR-photo requests.

For one thing, VR work from property firms has become so heavy that he has trained three part-timers to help him with photography.

Now, Mr Pan has set his

sights beyond Singapore. He set up another blog called Asian VR last December with VR photographs of Asian locales he has visited in his travels.

While he is not sure where Asian VR will take him, Mr Pan is certain of one thing.

"If I'm presented with a photography contract for work I know I wouldn't enjoy, I wouldn't do it. At the end of the day, it's about doing what makes me happy," he said.

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### HELPDESK 我的字典

**Virtual reality:**  
虚拟现实  
xū nǐ xiàn shí

**3-D:** 立体的 lì tǐ de

**Preview:** 预览 yù lǎn

**Entirety:** 全部 quán bù