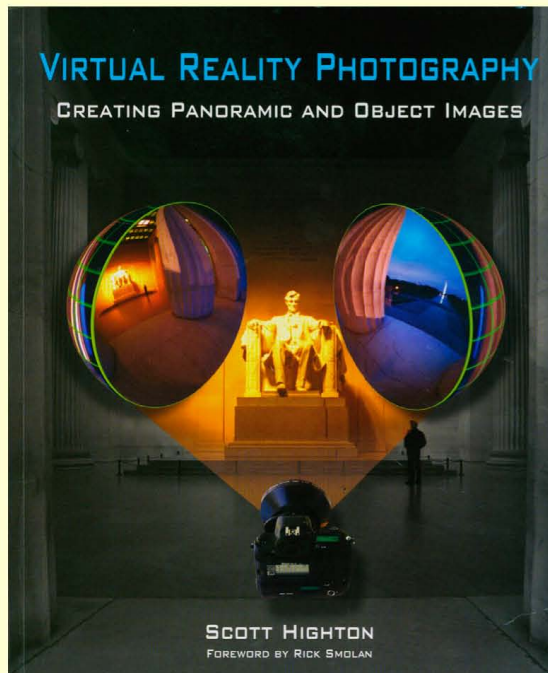# Book Review: Virtual Reality Photography by Scott Highton

By Dave Orbock
IAPP President

Don't let the title fool you; this book on Panoramic Photography includes a very worthwhile primer (112 pages) on the basics of photography.

It is my observation that many of today's digital "photographers" would benefit enormously from this part of the book. Even for the most experienced photographer this section is a worthwhile refresher and reference guide. Mastering the camera controls so that they can be used to record the image in the "mind's eye" is all important. To this end, the book attempts to cover the functionality of the camera and its use to capture the "right" light. Fill lighting, exposure, light balance, etc., are all covered in sufficient detail to enable the beginner to learn good photographic practices.

The Panoramic Process

Chapter 9 gives an overview of the panoramic process. As noted in this chapter, the recording of the panoramic image requires a new way of looking at our surroundings, especially when it encompasses 360 degrees. The discussion on cylindrical, cubic and spherical projections is quite good and helps the reader to better understand the challenge in producing outstanding panoramic images.

Chapters 10 and 11 provide more in-depth discussions of the cylindrical (chapter10) and cubic/spherical (chapter 11) processes. As with all aspects of photography, one must actually attempt the photographic process and constantly (and critically) evaluate the results. Using these chapters to guide one initially and later as a reference to help one improve panoramic image quality, should

help even the most accomplished photographer.

The remainder of Part 2 (Chapters 12-15) is designed to help the panoramic photographer further improve the quality of the resulting panoramic image. It also points out the almost limitless uses of one's panoramic image. The more thought and attention to detail incorporated into the recording of the image, the more valuable the image since it will have the possibility of becoming multifunctional.

I found Part 3 on object photography extremely interesting; however, it will probably be of limited use for most panoramic photographers. That said, the book covers the subject in enough detail to enable the beginner to produce acceptable results. The included section on lighting is useful and will help the beginner avoid serious lighting errors.

The Business of Photography

Every successful professional photographer needs to know good business practices such as copyright law, pricing, estimating, billing, negotiating, etc. To be a successful photographer, especially in our present economy that has seen so many professionals out of work or

working for substandard wages, one must be able to prepare a proposal that convinces the client that his or her needs can be met with complete satisfaction. In addition, services must be offered at a reasonable price. The information in this section goes a long way in educating the beginner and even the seasoned photographer in good (or better) business practices.

Summary

This book is very well written and presents an insider's perspective on the essential aspects of VR photography. For the beginner, or one aspiring to make a living at panoramic photography, this book is a good introduction. Even for those of us presently engaged in some phase of panoramic photography, part or full time, the book contains a wealth of information which should prove helpful in furthering our careers.

If there is one fault with the book, it is the lack of references. Most readers, including the writer, would find it extremely beneficial to be able to "dig deeper" into subjects too detailed to be explored in depth.

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For more information on the IAPP, the first Panoramic Association in the world please visit www.panoramicassociation.org.

Response from *Virtual Reality Photography* author Scott Highton:

There are extensive references and links provided on the Virtual Reality Photography web site (where they can be regularly updated) at:
http://www.vrphotography.com

For a look inside the book, or to order copies, go to:
http://www.vrphotography.com/bookpromo.html