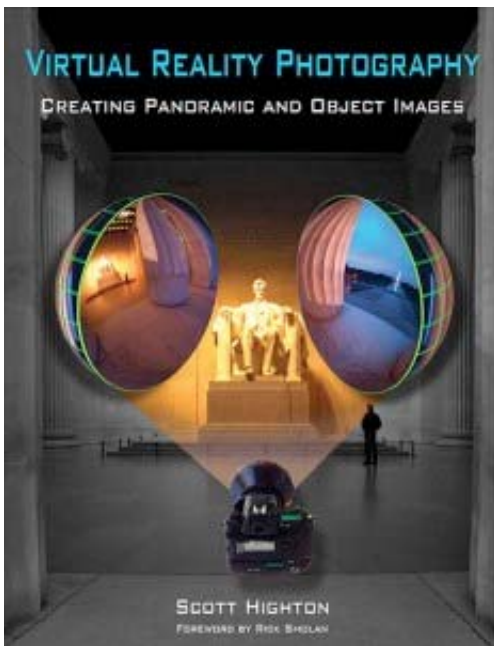




# Book Review: Virtual Reality Photography

July 19, 2010 By [PictureSoup](#) [1 Comment](#)

## Creating Panoramic and Object Images



*Virtual Reality Photography, Creating Panoramic and Object Images* (ISBN 978-0-615-34223-8) is written by Scott Highton, an expert in virtual reality (VR) photography. There are two types of VR photographs: panoramas that show a 360 degree view (outward view of your/the camera's surroundings) and object photographs that show 360 degrees of an object. Think of websites you might have visited where you can "turn" a product to see it from all sides; or a website that lets you "walk into" a room and view it as if you were inside the building—those are examples of VR photography.

The author is one of the pioneers of VR photography, and as such has both the experience and knowledge needed to not only understand, but, educate readers about the principles and techniques of VR photography. Highton has produced the definitive book on VR photography. Not only does he explain the principles behind the different types of VR photographs, but he goes into further detail explaining the nuances of creating the images, from the planning stage through to completion.

The book is separated into four sections, the first on basic photography principles and techniques, the next two sections on panoramic and object imaging respectively, and lastly a section on business practices.

Equipment is discussed in detail, both the equipment needed for capturing images as well as the software to create the final VR images. In addition to equipment that may need to be purchased, when possible, Highton includes items that a photographer can fashion himself; as well as inexpensive items that can be used in a studio situation and which may already be lying around your home or studio.

Folks who capture VR—panoramic or object photography—may be pro photographers, but odds are they're likely also realtors, web designers or others in interactive media who have varying levels of photography understanding. Pro architectural or commercial product photographers, who never had the need to study VR photography and now have to ramp up their knowledge and produce panoramic and object VR imagery are also target readers of this book.

For this reason, Highton felt it was necessary that he include a basic photography section in the book. “This book is intended to help all of them [VR photographers]—as a reference resource providing specific information they might need at a given time, rather than as an intended cover-to-cover read. The book includes technical notes for those who really want to delve into the math or physics of how things work in photography, but is otherwise written and illustrated in a straightforward manner intended to help photographers at *all* levels better understand their craft and techniques,” says Highton.

For those photographers who know the basics, simply jump ahead to the sections you need to learn about. Then again, if you flip through the basic photography section you might even pick up something you hadn't known before. Highton has put together one of the most comprehensive sections on basic photography that I've come across.

Highton explains further, “There are so many foundations of photography that need to be understood, if not mastered, before one can create *effective* panoramic and object VR imagery. It made sense to provide those foundations as a separate section in the book, which is also regularly referred back to throughout the book. For example, it is important to understand the basics of photographic exposure in order to be able to calculate an effective (and consistent) exposure for an entire 360-degree panoramic sequence, which could have illumination levels varying by 10 or more stops (between sunlit and shadow sides of a panorama). Similarly, it is important to understand the basics of focus, depth of field, sharpness, hyperfocal distances, etc. in order to maximize sharpness throughout a 360-degree panorama. Without having these basic photography foundations available, many readers of the book would become lost as they delved into the more complicated technical demands of creating interactive photographic VR.”

The sections on creating panoramic and object photography offer a wealth of education. Photos and diagrams accompany the text throughout, to help explain the various techniques. Where appropriate, the author includes creative options that VR photographers can use to take their imagery to the next level. He also discusses shooting panoramas underwater, and includes a chapter on aerial photography.

The business practices section is a great addition to the book, especially for photographers who have never had to quote or shoot VR photographs in their career before. In addition to basic principles that the author includes in the book such as a glossary of business/legal terms, he also explains the nuances of a commercial VR photography shoot and the added costs, both in the capture phase and post-production, so photographers reading the book won't end up undercharging for their services. He also includes a case study of a shoot, complete with estimates from multiple photographers showing the differences in how they shoot/bill jobs. If you're just getting into this type of photography, the business section alone is a must read.

To purchase *Virtual Reality Photography, Creating Panoramic and Object Images*, go to <http://www.vrphotography.com/bookpromo.html>.

— *Diane Berkenfeld*