

A whole new world of virtual reality in the city

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Bengaluru: As she fits the Oculus Rift over your head, Caecilia Charbonnier says, "It's like the scene from *The Matrix*, where you have to choose between the red pill and the blue pill". As you focus, you find yourself staring at an ancient TV set, on a grey and white floor that stretches on to the horizon. Then, someone does something, and you find yourself in a spaceship, looking down on earth. It's disconcerting, and brilliant.

"When you deal with normal VR systems like the Oculus Rift, you usually sit on a chair with the headset on, and you rotate your head. Here, we add a motion capture system that allows you to move in space, and see your own avatar," says Charbonnier.

Charbonnier is in Bengaluru at the behest of swissnex India, an initiative of the Swiss State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation (SERI), in association with the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs. It's also a part of the Swiss Consul General in Bengaluru. She is a co-founder of Artanim, a foundation dedicated to the development and promotion of motion cap-



FEEL THE DIFFERENCE: A VR experience of another kind

ture, started in 2011 along with Clementine Lo and Sylvain Chagué, and she is demonstrating the system's capabilities at Shoonya, on Lalbagh Main Road.

The motion capture takes place in a small platform, around five metres by three. There's some metal scaffolding that supports a number of motion capture cameras, and you're required to put on a backpack, as well as strap on sensors on your hands and feet. And when the software gets fired up, you're transported into a new world.

Artanim's VR experience also provides objects to interact with. There are 'crystals', which when plugged into complicated looking pieces of

equipment, transport you from one virtual world to the next. The experience is disorienting, and you wonder if this is what using one of Star Trek's fabled transporters feels like – what it means to be beamed up and down. There's also a torch that you can use to light your way through one of the virtual worlds.

Plans in the pipeline: The Artanim team plans to tie up with content providers in the movie and gaming business. "We also want to make the platform much bigger, around a 100sqm. This one is very small," she says.

It is small, and the experience is short, barely seven minutes. But it is an eye opener on the possibilities of VR.