

Being green doesn't have to be a complicated cerebral process involving governments and corporations. It's as simple as just incorporating it into your lifestyle and work. **AUDREY PHOON** reports on how several enterprising individuals have done it

## Living in sync with nature

SIX months ago, Paul Coleman and Mette Kristine Oustrup moved from France to Singapore to set up a social enterprise called Qi-Global, which focuses on environmental issues.

The aim is to give Asia a bit of a nudge in the right eco-direction, which Mr Coleman feels is lagging somewhat behind the rest of the developed world.

"Going green is the future of business, and there's so much stuff going on in Europe and America but so little in Asia," says Mr Coleman, citing the example of the website Ted.com, which brings together the world's foremost thinkers and doers. "Only 0.5 per cent of what they've done has been contributed by the Asian community."

He may not be far off track, especially since a 2006 survey conducted by Forbes Research in Singapore found that nearly 42 per cent of respondents believed that protecting the environment was a job for the government. Things have changed since then, with both companies and individuals learning that eco-responsibility lies with everyone, but Mr Coleman hopes that his organisation can help bring the message closer to people.

### Eco events

With Qi-Global, he says, the hope is that "other people will soon jump on board, and help people realise that humans and nature should live in balance". How the company plans to do this is via a website and a soon-to-launch a bio-journal (printed on recycled paper with vegetable-based inks); its main focus, however, is on events, such as the one it will organise at the National Museum on Oct 8.

The five-hour event, for which tickets are priced at \$250 per person, is titled "Human Progress In Harmony With Nature". It is the company's first, and also the first large-scale private eco event of its kind in Singapore. In line with Qi-Global's aim to draw people's interest by



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"showing them that there are others out there who are doing incredible, inspiring things", it will showcase eco-businesses that are "lucrative and sexy" - organic gourmet fare producers, for instance, and chic, low-carbon products such as luxurious kites, eco lingerie and furniture from actor Colin Firth's eco store in London.

In addition, there'll be up-close-and-personal discussions with personalities such as wildlife conservationist Lone Droscher Nielsen and sustainable jewellery designer John Hardy.

"We don't expect people to stop shopping altogether," explains Ms Oustrup. "We just want them to stop thinking

**Eco couple:** Mr Coleman and Ms Oustrup's Qi-Global, which focuses on environmental issues, aims to give Asia a bit of a nudge in the right eco-direction



**Green ideas:** Qi-Global's bespoke lamp which is completely made from driftwood (left) and an easy and stylish way to grow veggies and herbs at home and in the office (above)

they can't contribute because they can, in many ways - when they go shopping, for example. By looking into the history and provenance of what they buy - where and how it was made, and what materials were used."

With about half the 245 tickets for the event sold, and requests for Qi-Global to set up similar concepts in Shanghai and Bali, the company seems to be on its way to making a difference, both here and in the region.

It looks as several other individuals who have recently set up similarly social-conscious businesses.