

Paranormal Research @ IGT

Photographic Anomalies



Chris Garrison - Indy Research Coordinator
chris@homebrew.net

Introduction

- In order to know what is potentially paranormal in ghost photography, we must know what is NOT paranormal and rule it out first.
- If we do not know how to separate normal from paranormal, others will, and it will hurt our credibility, and the credibility of the club as a whole.

Can you tell normal from
paranormal?

Test yourself with these
pictures!



Control



- This is my basement before any experimenting, like going into a ghost hunt location before anyone's walked around in it.
- Nothing much to see here.



Ooops! Finger Orb!



- It happens to the best of us, a finger slips into the picture and gets hit by the flash to become a “super orb”.
- This one’s fairly obvious because of the skin color and incredible brightness.



The Dreaded Camera Strap Vortex!!!



- Note the silver braiding in the “vortex”, it’s a dead giveaway.
- Especially common with sideways photos as the strap falls to the side.
- Again, the bright flash, and being within the focal length makes it look alien and interesting.



Nightshot light streaks



- This is a candle on a barstool. I took the picture with night settings and no flash, then moved the camera after the shutter clicked, making streaks.
- Often even small LEDs on electronics can make what looks like jagged “energy lines”.
- Watch out for other double exposure issues too.



Smoke!



- Smoke, even the slightest bit, can look like a solid ectoplasm.
- This was done with incense burning near the lens. Cigarette smoke (even secondhand) is often a culprit for “mists” and “ectoplasm”.
- No smoking on site on ghost hunts or investigations!



Water droplet “orbs”



- This was done by spritzing water from a spray bottle up in the air, and then taking a picture.
- Any drizzling rain will ruin your ghost photography as water droplets make wonderful false orbs.



Classic Dust “Orbs”



- These were made by fluffing a pillow in front of the camera, waiting a bit, then taking a picture.
- The dust lingered in the air a long time after this experiment.
- Notice the transparency and also the apparent complexity of these. It would be easy to see a “face” in the patterns due to “matrixing”.



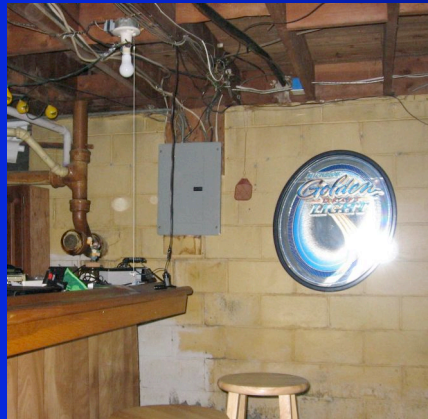
Concrete dust “orbs”



- This was done by blowing Quickcrete dust into the air and then taking a picture.
- Simulates scuffing feet in a dry, dirty area such as a basement.
- These orbs look a little more solid than the pillow dust.
- Shows the importance of taking pictures before an area is disturbed!



Bounceback!



- Note the mirror and the “orb” to the left.
- Flash or other light sources reflected in windows, mirrors, or any shiny metal objects can cause this.
- Even off-camera reflective surfaces can cause bounceback!



Lens Flare



- Pretty much the same as bounceback, but from a direct light source.
- Commonly seen in movies when the camera pans past the Sun, creating extra images of the Sun in a line.
- Notice the flare image of the lightbulb near the bottom and slightly to the left of the bulb.



Hair!



- Hair makes for some spectacular “energy trails” or “vortexes” since being out of focus and illuminated makes them hard to identify.
- Especially look out for this when it’s outdoors and windy if you have longer hair.



Hair again



- Even closer to the lens, out of focus hair looks large and transparent.
- The glow at the top is once again a finger intruding into the picture.



Steam



- For this one, I held a lightly steaming mug of boiling water under the lens.
- It looks remarkably like the smoke photo from earlier.
- Be careful in cold weather, even your own breath could look like this.



Finger over flash shadow



- While I was trying to get a good example of paranormal-looking hair strands, I accidentally covered part of the flash with a finger.
- The large, dark, murky area to the top left is only the shadow of my finger!

Conclusion

- Just because a photo looks cool does not make it paranormal!
- Most of these anomalies were caused by the flash, particularly if it is set close to the camera's lens.
- Do everything you can to debunk your own pictures so you can better withstand scrutiny by skeptics.
- It's disappointing to have a cool photo debunked, but it makes genuine paranormal photos even more special.
- Do your own research... do experiments like the ones I did here to see what various non-paranormal things can make false positives.