White, Blue, Red, Purple, Green Spots

Posted by crystalcross - 14 Jan 2012 18:58

The ORB the dreaded and feared ORB

So, this is a subject which which has been covered several times or at least touched on in various forums on here. But I just want to create a formal discussion on the subject and perhaps some explanations, descriptions, and possible assistance in minimizing them.

You've seen them I'm sure, those dreaded white or off-color spots in digital (or non-digital) photographs which are often misinterpreted as paranormal orbs. They happen quite often indoors and outdoors alike. They range from one big dot, to multiple large dots, and even to multiple dots of various sizes.

So lets cover this in various parts. First lets discuss what causes them. Simply these are objects which are being illuminated by a direct and bright light at an angle which directly bounces the light back into the lens. These objects are often out of focus because of their distance from the lens and so they appear as big translucent dots even though they are mostly very tiny almost invisible dots. And finally sometimes we don't even see the dot itself, but rather the lens flare created by the reflection off the dot. This in turn compounds the difficulty in determining the cause of the problem.

So now that we know what they are, how about we next look at what causes them or makes them happen worse? Here are a few factors which can increase the chance of seeing these spots:

1) Flash being in very close proximity to the lens.

2) Digital Camera

3) Camera uses a wide angle lens, or closes the aperture (size of the hole the light passes through when taking the picture) to limit the light.

4) Darker background, or night photography which increases the contrast.

5) Cheaper camera with cheaper optics or a cheaper digital element.

So, if we look at these factors it starts to become a bit more obvious why we see so many of these. Because with the advent of affordable digital cameras many of these items are in perfect alignment to create beautiful "Orbs". It wasn't until more individuals started to be able to afford portable cameras that more and more of these appeared. And most all of these affordable cameras (digital or not) have every single one of these factors.

Almost always the automatic flash is directly above the lens area. The flash if very bright, and the cameras usually have automatic aperture mode which closes the aperture as needed. And the orb pictures are normally taken at night which amplifies the effect even more.

This is not a fly-by-night explanation but rather one that is recognized and accepted by photographers (paranormal and not) world round. As a matter of fact its something which has been put into many of the FAQ (Frequently Asked Question) pages of the top consumer electronics companies who sell digital cameras. With the exception that they call them spots not orbs. Orbs is simply a term used by most of us in the paranormal realm.

Now that we know what they are, what causes them, and what makes them worse perhaps its time to discuss how to minimize them. Since they are particles you can never really totally remove them, but you can certainly reduce the conditions which cause them to show up.

The number one thing you can do to help reduce them is to stop using the built in flash on your camera. If your camera allows for an external flash, then purchase one and enable it. Place the flash a few feet to the left, right, top or bottom of the camera and facing at an angle not exactly parallel with the aim of the camera. This will cause the reflection to aim at some angle other than directly into the camera.

Or if your camera allows for timed exposures, then do not use a flash at all. But rather use a tripod and some extended time exposures. That will certainly remove those types of effects.

Next, if that is not possible you can reduce (not remove) the effect by putting your camera into Aperture mode and increasing the aperture to the lowest possible setting. Also by adding a little bit of "Zoom" to the camera. The wider the angle the more exposed it will be to that flash effect. But again keep in mind that these two means will only reduce but not remove the effect.

You can try to find some way to divert the flash to an alternate angle, but chances are that you will only serve to create additional reflections or even worsen the problem.

And finally the other solution is to simply be aware of the problem and know that dots will likely need to be ignored since they will always appear when the conditions come into play.

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Re: White, Blue, Red, Purple, Green Spots

Posted by TressesOfNephthys - 14 Jan 2012 19:07

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If only I knew how to do any of that stuff to my camera haha. Though it sounds useful, even for everyday photography.

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Re: White, Blue, Red, Purple, Green Spots

Posted by crystalcross - 14 Jan 2012 19:18

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TressesOfNephthys wrote:

If only I knew how to do any of that stuff to my camera haha. Though it sounds useful, even for everyday photography.

Probably the easiest thing you can do is zoom in a bit. That in itself may help somewhat. Perhaps not much, but every little bit helps.

As for the Aperture mode, not all cameras have that. Its normally denoted by an "A" in a box on the selector wheel where you have "Auto" "Manual" and little icons of a runner, a landscape, and a portrait. I have several digital cameras, two of them have it and one does not.

If you have a specific camera, we can try to lend assistance as best as we can. Most manuals for cameras are available on the internet in PDF format.

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Re: White, Blue, Red, Purple, Green Spots

Posted by Steven Matrix - 19 Jan 2012 14:53

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CC, we may also want to try out using one of the cheap digital cameras with the flash on, setting it to a weaker strength; then have an off camera flash/slave set up to the side. The digital camera/flash would trigger the flash/slave to the side. This may be a way of curbing "the orb effect".

If our experiment works, it would be an option for folks as it's relatively easy to pick up cheaper flashes and slave units; this would [if it works] make the photo(s) more accurate.

I just had this discussion with someone the other day who I could tell thinks that orbs are spiritual. It did no good for me to explain what causes them. So better to show than explain.

Like my wife says, people want something to believe; but let's try and provide something that not only can be believed in, but is fact at the same time. That's why we're here.

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Re: White, Blue, Red, Purple, Green Spots

Posted by crystalcross - 19 Jan 2012 15:08

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And I also think that part of the communication breakdown may be that statement "Most all orbs in Flash photography are just dust" may be seen to mean "Orbs do not exist". But that in fact is NOT what is being said. We don't (or at least I don't) disbelieve that orbs exist, or even that you could conceivably capture them in a photograph. The only thing that I'm saying is that if you use flash photography in such a way that it is conducive to creating the "Orb Effect", then you essentially invalidate any images taken that way. Because you have no way of knowing if its an actual energy orb or a orb created by dust or other particles. Its a known (and accepted) fact that cameras (mostly digital, but not limited to digital) cause that type of effect. Accepted by those into paranormal photography and those who just take non-paranormal photographs alike.

I personally almost think we should start having some classes on photography, and photographic effects as it relates to Paranormal Investigation. Perhaps cover 30% on just basic photographic techniques, and 40% on Paranormal Specific photographic techniques. And then the other 30% can be covering the importance of multiple medias within an investigation.

Thoughts?

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Re: White, Blue, Red, Purple, Green Spots

Posted by Steven Matrix - 19 Jan 2012 15:23

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crystalcross wrote:

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Yep, I've been wanting to put together some photo clases [could do it with short video tutorials as well] and articles on all kinds of subjects.

Let me also be clear on what I've touched on as well before; I do believe in what I would call a "spiritual" orb. But I'm also of the opinion that 99% of them cannot fall under the spiritual category. So I agree with you in that I think that orbs do exist, but it has to go beyond the realm of bad technology.

We are not trying to push our beliefs on others either folks and as such we will all go on this journey together and see what we find. We may even consider doing small workshops with members who are interested in this, not just for the orb subject, but for all aspects of this type of photography. I for one am learning myself and have no problem in passing on what I've found out. We're all here to help each other and if we're going to present this stuff to the public, let's present them with truth rather than just another opinion. Just my 2 cents.

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