

GREAT LAKES PARANORMAL RESEARCH TEAM

PARANORMAL PHOTOGRAPHY

By: Liza Segleau – Team director and paranormal photographer

Access & history:

With all the advances in technology today, everyone has access to a camera of some kind. Our cell phones come loaded with features, some, better than others. People are using pictures these days to communicate online. The industry seems to have exploded in various directions. However, we must not forget that photography remains crucial in the paranormal field. Photography has been one of the oldest methods used in paranormal investigations. From the metal pictures with flash to the Polaroids, the film cameras all the way to the digital cameras. People have sought to explain the unexplainable through photography. It is crucial to continue to develop the technique, skill, and the art of paranormal photography.

The skill:

We are very used to the point and click, throw-away cams and on an on. But if we get a bit more serious, it can take skill, a good quality digital camera, a good eye, a good aim, knowledge of light, shadow, dark, and movement. In the paranormal world, pictures are an important part of any investigation. The paranormal can be hard to capture in any setting and with any tool, let alone a camera. Therefore, there are some things you can do to improve your odds of capturing a paranormal event.

Tools of the photography field are quite extensive and pricey. The advice from this writer, keep it simple. Seek out: a good flash, capability of taking photos in the dark, a good tripod, capability to take short videos (just know that this drains your batteries very quickly). Look at disposable versus chargeable batteries. It is up to you if you use film, Polaroid or a digital camera. These days digital is in. But some in the field use all three. Speed of development and the material sometimes matters, but not always.

First of all, get to know your camera, what it can and can not do. That can't be said enough. Get to know all the settings, how to change them and how to change them back to normal settings. Read the manual. Some are hard to read, but at least go through it, so you are familiar with the various categories and what it says your camera *can* do.

Test yourself. Increase your knowledge. Know what a bug looks like flying in front of your camera. Know what rain might look like. Know what dust looks like when you take a photo. Know what happens if you take a photo of something shiny. Know what a picture will look like if you accidentally move or jerk away. Others will depend on you being able to explain and sort things out into two categories, normal and not normal.

What should you choose, hands free or tripod methods? You have to get to know yourself and the environment. For this writer, she tends to shake a bit and has balance issues. Tripod has been a very good friend. But when it comes to the random photos, almost by default, without a tripod.

GREAT LAKES PARANORMAL RESEARCH TEAM

The environment:

Think about what and where you will be taking photos. Is it outside? Is it inside? Day time? Night time? What will the lighting be like? What space will you have to work in? Will you be alone? Will others be around you casting shadows? What are some safety issues you want to cover? How will you record what you photographed? What will help you take good, accurate and clear photos? Know that quality is just as important as quantity in the paranormal field.

We know that it will be extremely rare that any intelligent haunting will be able or be willing to pose for a good, quality, smiling picture. So if that is true, then what? You almost have to consider yourself out in nature where things move, flutter, run, or slither. In the paranormal world, consider yourself out of your environment and into the paranormal environment where the unpredictable rules. How you set yourself up does matter.

Light can be everything and nothing. In the paranormal field we have been working with different types of color and lighting: Thermal imaging which finds heat signatures, ultra violet light, green light and full spectrum. This is a bit beyond the scope of this writer skill to explain color. The basics is that people can see a limited range of color and light with in that said scale. Hence, things might be in a different color or light we can not perceive. Here is a page that can give you more details:

<http://www.physicsclassroom.com/class/light/Lesson-2/The-Electromagnetic-and-Visible-Spectra>

Many situations can contaminate photos. People walking around or near the area being photographed, can cast shadows into the field of photographic vision. If it is cold, you or someone else's breath might cross the cam. A bug might streak by and cause a colorful line in the photo. The house or building might be riddled with dust and you will see orbs in all your photos. Sometimes there will be high levels of static electricity that can also create balls of light. Moving ceiling fans can cast spooky shadows. If it is a humid day or evening, droplets of water sometimes can be seen in photos. Again, pay close attention to your environment.

Protocols:

Rules and routines are very important for investigators. To collect data, you need to start with a set routine, so you know exactly what you did. This routine will teach you what worked in collecting the data and what did not work. As you learn, you can change and improve your routine.

It is recommended that you use a pad and pen. Brief and concrete notes of what was going on at the time you took the photo can be a life saver. Make brief notes, nothing drawn out. Make note of: Time, area, object to be photographed, if someone was in the room or near you when you took your photos, etc. After the investigation, you won't remember all the details. Be observant, take a good look at the room before you take the picture. If doubt creeps in, you might have to discount the anomaly.

Don't just take one photo. You need to compare a photo with something. Take at minimum 6 photos in a row of the object or area you are photographing. (You could decide to take 5 or 8. The importance is to do it the same way each time. Taking several pictures of a particular area, also helps if something

GREAT LAKES PARANORMAL RESEARCH TEAM

walked in front of you or in range of your camera. You increase your odds of capturing it and studying it a bit more. Or, you increase your odds of taking pictures of an object that might move on you. Objects have been known completely disappear. Having good notes and that set of 6 photos allows you to compare. If you know for sure there was a book on the table when you started to take that shot and by the end of the series it was gone, then...you might have something.

You can take photos at random. But when doing the baseline photos (or pre-investigation photos), make sure you have a structure and a plan on how you will do your photos before the investigation begins. Random photos are usually done during EVP sessions, when doing walk through's, during a moment the energy has shifted and you want to check things out. Sometimes an entity will give permission for a photo to be taken during an EVP. Do go ahead and do random photos, just label them well, separate from your series photos.

Make sure you either use no flash or flash during your set of photos. Never stop in the middle of a string of 6 photos and change your lighting. Things will appear very different one from the other. You can change your lighting choices in the next string of 6 photos. Even better, if you want to take a string of photos of the same area with one set of lighting and then change your lighting in the next set, sometimes it helps compare and contrast. See if the lighting or lack of made any significant difference. If your flash makes noise, do announce it, so if a recorder is near by, people know what the beeping sound was. You can say something like "Flash". Or "Craig using cam with flash".

Human side of photography:

As human beings, we have the gift of imagination and categorizing our environment. This is a human, survival skill. If we can't make sense of what we see, a range of motions turns off or turns on. If we can't categorize, we can become very ill, dysfunctional, in extreme cases, shut down and die. This is why isolation wards in prisons are so detrimental to people. Our brains are programmed to classify, decode, categorize and make sense of what is around us and call it something. Know that our brains will run to find that one file that will explain away what is in the photo. Just be aware that your brain might pull the wrong file and give you an erroneous explanation. Teach yourself to look at your photos from various angles, BEFORE your brain has an opportunity to convince you that you see a face or a body in the photo. Sometimes we are desperate to find something. Always remember to debunk your photos if something does not seem quite right. And don't get upset or frustrated if you find nothing. Finding nothing happens 80% of the time. Get use to it.

Know that in this field there have been many poorly taken photos which leaves anything and everything up for questions and doubt. Poorly taken photos are always in danger of being tossed out due to lack of quality and good notes. If you know what things look like in this world on film, that will increase your skill to point out what is not explainable and possibly paranormal. Practice is critical in paranormal photography. Take a lot of photos. Know what works for you. Know what works for your camera. Know what things *should* look like. Know when you can say with certainty what appeared in your photo, was or was NOT normal and be able to explain why. Again, awareness of your environment and good notes at the time you took the photo are critical.

Also know that people take photos seeking the paranormal like crazy. These photos tend to be random,

GREAT LAKES PARANORMAL RESEARCH TEAM

just because, done with cell phones and no notes of what was going on. When they see something out of the ordinary, they freak out. No efforts to debunk the photo are made. They become quite attached and sensitive about the film or photo they took. By the time they consult with you, they have already decided what is in the photo, they have shared it with half the world and they have given their own explanation of what it is. Many times, they are really not asking you what you think, they already know, almost beyond certainty. Usually they take one photo. It tends to be blurry, with lack of light, or too much light, distorted, they see a face, a blob, dust, and the list goes on. They will want you (despite the fact that they want it to be paranormal) to explain it and declare it the most scariest photo in the world! Keep your feet on the ground and stick to your guns. Find and rehearse kind ways to say, *that was a wonderful CRAPPY photo and NO it does not prove beyond doubt, that there was a ghost standing there.*

Possible paranormal activity and your camera:

The presence of the paranormal can have an impact on your camera equipment. It is known in the field that if the energy in the room increases or changes in some way, it can drain your batteries and shut down your camera completely. Or, your batteries might be just fine, but other parts of your camera might jam or stop working, just be aware and patient. Sometimes just talking friendly to whatever might be there, can help. We tend to say that either the entity just does not want to be photographed, is scared of the camera, or the entity needed the energy *from* your camera. So before you are left completely in the “dark”, bring extra batteries, parts and even an extra camera, ALWAYS. Don't forget to make notes of what happened to your camera, when and where.

Room for experimenting:

Experimenting is really important. We would not be at this stage of paranormal photography if it had not been for those who came before us. Do make notes on which photos are experimental. Make notes on how you set it all up, why, when, where and final results. New discoveries are being made all the time. You might make a few of your own and can add your discoveries to this humble paper.

Final notes:

Taking photos in the paranormal is like working in a lab, an unpredictable one at that. You need to go through your list and check it twice. Take time to check and make sure you have everything you need for that particular situation. Take a moment to make sure everything around you is safe to proceed. Lay out your tools, put all your tools together and in the right place. Put on your lab coat, special t-shirt, whatever you feel comfortable in. Grab your pad and pen. Now, let the investigation begin.

For comments, questions, possible additions to this summery: please email Liza at glprtwi@gmail.com.

Please find a check list on the following page for your use. Adapt as needed.

GREAT LAKES PARANORMAL RESEARCH TEAM

CAMERA EQUIPMENT CHECK LIST:

Date / time of investigation: _____

Investigation Location / address: _____

- Plenty of batteries
- Extra cables, electrical cords
- Camera
- Extra lenses if available
- Pad and pen
- Extra film if needed
- Tripods, for desk or tall telescope type
- Flash drive if available
- Extra memory card if available
- Plastic bags or covers in case of rain
- Other _____

Other Notes / Needs:
