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Strange Aura of Kirlian Photographs

Kirlian photography or the Kirlian effect, allegedly, a means of capturing on film the glowing emanations of what might be called, 'the life force itself.'

Semyon Kirlian, the discoverer of the Kirlian effect, was an obscure, largely self-educated electrician and part time inventor who lived with his wife, Valentina, in a modest two-room apartment in the Russian city of Krasnodar.

In 1939, using equipment at the local hospital, where he worked as a maintenance man and electrician, he constructed an unusual device for making photographs of any object placed in a high-frequency electrical field. His first subject was his own hand. When Kirlian developed the photographic plate, he was startled to see that a mysterious glow emanated from the finger tips in the dark, a silhouette-like image. Fascinated by this unexpected result, he and his wife continued experimenting, gradually perfecting their techniques and experimenting and photographing an ever-expanding range of subjects, both living and inanimate.

The results were provocative in the extreme. A fresh-cut leaf, for example, would be surrounded by a bright aura and its surface spangled with myriad points of light. A few days later the same leaf would have a dimmer aura, and most of the points of light would be gone. An inert object, such as a coin, would show only a faint aura and no points of light at all. A human hand might produce light effects that were blurred and disorganised if its owner was ill or worried, but might be bright and sharp if they seemed in good health.

The Kirlian's continued to work during the post war decades, eventually introducing colour photography to their investigative techniques. Not until the 1960s, however, did they obtain a modest government research grant; thereafter official enthusiasm began to grow. Had the Kirlian's, with their "bioluminescent" images, discovered evidence of a new form of energy? Had they, in fact just confirmed what psychics had been saying for thousands of years that all living things are surrounded by an invisible aura? Might not the Kirlian effect be turned to practical use in such fields as medicine, biology and perhaps even criminology? Such possibilities seemed endless.

They seemed endless, too, to Thelma Moss, a Psychologist and a handful of US researchers when they first learned of the Kirlian effect in the early 1970s. What particularly excited Moss was the effects promise of repeatability under laboratory conditions, a quality somewhat lacking in other so-called psychic phenomena.

Within months of reading about Kirlian photography, Moss was in the Soviet Union, conferring with researchers and acquiring scientific literature. Back in California in early 1971, she and one of her students, Kendall Johnson, set about constructing a Kirlian device of their own. After many trials and a number of failures they succeeded.

By May 1972, Kirlian research in the United States was sufficiently advanced to sustain what was called the First Western Hemisphere Conference on Kirlian photography, Acupuncture and the Human Aura. Some conferees reported that they had been able to replicate some of the specific effects by the Soviets and added a few of their own. E Douglas Dean, for example, photographed the hand of a psychic healer and reported that the corona of light surrounding her finger tips flared whenever she thought of healing. Moss and Johnson reported on a subject who could "invariably change his blue-white corona to a red blotch by deliberately making himself angry."

But as enthusiasm for Kirlian photography grew, so did scepticism. On October 15th, 1976, an article in the influential journal *Science* argued that the Kirlian Effect was probably produced solely by the amount of moisture present in the subject. As for repeatability, the authors of the article also noted that about 25 variables had to be controlled before any Kirlian photograph could be interpreted, thus implying that many famous Kirlian photographs might be useless. Some physicists have speculated that the effect may merely represent displacement currents that effect photographic emulsions, but reveal little about the subject itself.

Meanwhile research continued. Moss claimed 100% success in using the effect to predict the ability of soybean seeds to germinate. She has also reported making Kirlian videotapes showing plant auras getting brighter at the approach of a human hand. Physicists at Drexel University report correlations between fluctuations in finger-pad coronas and forms of minor pain, mental exertion and hyperventilation.

Yet, while fragments of alleged evidence accumulate, a central problem remains; what actually produces the Kirlian Effect? Is it a new form of energy or merely a manifestation of a known form? For Thelma Moss, at least, the answer is clear. "I wouldn't see any purpose mucking about in this field," She said, "If I thought it was entirely an electrical phenomenon."

There seems to be no evidence that Kirlian photography is a paranormal phenomenon. Some experimenters believe that it reveals a physical form of psychic energy, while others theorise it as the etheric body. Experiments in

photographing objects in electrical fields, prior to Kirlian, were called 'electrography' or 'electrographic photography.' Little value was given to the process and so little attention was given either. Electrographic photographs were exhibited as early as 1898 by a Russian named Yakov Narkevich Yokdo. There were also published, evidential photographs of leaves, with coronas that were presented by two Czechs, S. Pratt and J Schlemmer, in 1939.

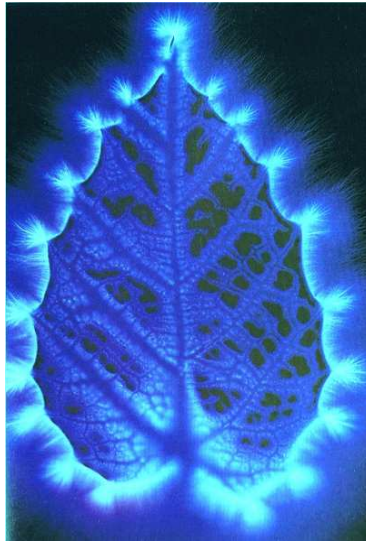
The principle of Kirlian photography, as well as all electrography, is the corona discharge phenomenon, that takes place when an electrically grounded object discharges sparks between itself and an electrode generating the electrical field. When these sparks are captured on film, they give the appearance of coronas of light, which can be effected by temperature, moisture, pressure and other environmental factors. Several Kirlian techniques have been developed, but the basic ones generally employ a Tesla coil connected to a metal plate. The process is similar to the one which occurs in nature, when electrical conditions in the atmosphere produce luminescence, auras, such as St. Elmo's fire.

There is evidence that Kirlian photographs can give indications of the health and emotional changes in living things. This is brought about by changes in colour, brightness and patterns of light. Other researches have found that changes in the emotional conditions of humans can be detected by changes in the brightness, colour and formation patterns in the photographs.

At the University of California Centre for Health Sciences, a plant's leaf showed changes when being approached by a human hand. Even when part of the leaf was cut off, the glowing portion of the amputated portion still appeared on film. Hence many of the enthusiasts declare that the leaf phenomenon is evidence of an etheric body. The critics of the phenomenon state that it completely disproves Kirlian photography, the contention being that, "if the method truly photographed a bio field, then the aura should disappear when the organism dies".

Supporters of Kirlian photography do however; foresee its applications in diagnostic medicine. It has been used in the detection of Cancer but with only a sporadic success rate. Some believe that it will eventually be attached to CT or CAT scanners which utilise a thin beam of X-rays to photograph an object from 360 degrees. It could also be attached to MRI scanners. These use no X-rays but employ magnetic fields to produce images of body cells and water tissue.

Kirlian photography has been used by the Russians in sports psychology to access an athlete's metabolic process and fitness.



Above is a photograph of a healthy leaf taken with Kirlian photography, it shows a bright and symmetrical corona or aura.



The picture above is of an Ivy Leaf. What is remarkable about this picture is that the tip, which shows slightly fainter, is missing from the original plant and had in fact been cut off. This demonstrates the phenomenon known as the 'phantom' effect. This effect is the same when taking photographs of human parts that are missing, showing them to be present. Some believe, showing that the etheric body always remains intact, and free of earthly problems.

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