

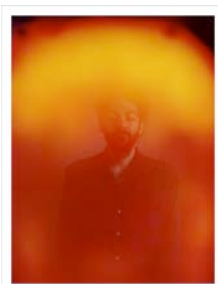
M+B

Interview

ART

An Aura is Worth a Thousand Words

By MARTHA TUBER 12/02/2008



Interpreting a person's aura is akin to reading Tarot cards or tea leaves, or playing with crystals. Sure, it can be fun to find out your supposed spiritual or mystical fate according to a swinging crystal, but I don't put much stock in any of it. Others do, of course: In the 1970s, at the height of the vogue for Mood Rings, Guy Coggins invented the first-ever aura camera. As far as I can tell, Coggins' appropriately named [AuraCam](#) is a rewired Polaroid connected to a pair of biofeedback sensors—but

if you simultaneously touch the sensors and pose for the camera's six-second exposure, a unique, full-color fog or halo will develop in your photo. According to Coggins, this is your aura. The AuraCam comes with a corresponding computer program that prints out a two-page "aura reading" specific to each photo.

With a healthy dose of skepticism, New York-based photographer [Carlo Van de Roer](#) purchased his own AuraCam (they sell for about \$10,000). For the past month or so, he has been invited people whom he considers "in the public sphere" to sit for an AuraCam portrait in his Soho studio. In addition to the obvious aesthetic appeal, Van de Roer is working off the notion that "a picture is worth a thousand words"—given the AuraCam's original purpose, his portraits are the extreme. Van de Roer will ultimately compile the portraits, along with their individual "aura readings," into a book or a gallery show.

I was orange—not my favorite color, but I will admit that the readings seem eerily truthful. I'm planning to take the images to a professional aura reader (they do exist), and we'll see what happens.

