Corinne May Botz ‘99 (photography) chased a paradox—she was a visual artist trying to capture the unseen. In creating *Haunted Houses* (The Monacelli Press, 2010), her recent book and related exhibitions at The Kennedy Museum of Art in Athens, Ohio and California State University in Sacramento’s Design Gallery, Botz photographed and collected oral ghost stories throughout the United States. By focusing on the invisible and the layers of memories that are imbedded in everyday spaces, she revealed the emotional and psychological connection that people have with their homes.

Botz was inspired by turn-of-the-century spirit photographs and ghost stories written by women in the Victorian age. “The stories were often used to express domestic discontents,” she explained. “Ghosts were a vehicle to explore topics, such as abuse, property rights, loss, and unfulfilled desire. Many of these authors were considered ghostlike themselves—alienated and marginalized by society. I wanted to understand this connection between women, ghosts, and houses. When I traveled to these spaces, I thought about the legacy of the women who had lived there, and I tried to pay tribute to these lost histories.”

She used a large format camera during the project, a method evoking the spirit photography she’d been inspired by, with exposures ranging from a few seconds to a few hours. Unlike the photography that inspired her, she wasn’t attempting to capture images of ghosts—she was capturing an idiosyncratic-visual image of the physical spaces they haunt.

In collecting the oral histories of the living who inhabit these spaces, Botz found that they share a unique bond with the ghosts who share their homes.

“I met this family in Pennsylvania who had lived in their house for over 40 years, a house where in the 1930s a brother and sister were violently murdered,” Botz said. They knew this when they moved in. “The family experienced the ghost in a number of ways over many years. Once, the contents of an entire bedroom were thrown about, for example. Yet they were never afraid. They felt for this past inhabitant and the unjust way she died. They made space for this woman in their lives.”

“There’s an interesting issue of ownership and sharing space that comes up with haunted houses. I was pleasantly surprised by the openness of the people I met and how they are willing to...
Halloween Mayhem at MICA

MICA’s annual Halloween party, one of the College’s most well-known student traditions, is famous for the inventive costumes crafted for the event. Attracting nearly 1,000 students every year, its music, food, and good-natured mayhem are outdone only by the Costume Contest Parade. Students compete for a range of awards, such as Best Group, Best Use of Material, and Best Performance. In recent years, winning costumes have depicted the BP oil spill, a realistic replica of Mount Royal Station on roller skates, and an elaborate performance based on Adobe Photoshop. The next party will take place on Saturday, October 29.

Visit fyi.mica.edu for more Halloween-related images, especially additional works at Green Mount Cemetery.