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Haunted Houses



Synopsis

When I was between the ages of five and eight, my sister and I slept in a large attic bedroom. At nightfall the room was filled with gypsies who glided around in clusters. They wore colorful thin flowing dresses and rummaged greedily through my drawers and books as if they would steal everything. I lay in bed as stiff as a board, trying to will myself invisible, praying they would not notice me looking . . . Daylight obliterated the gypsies, rendering them as thoroughly insubstantial as they had been real in the dark. I had a vague understanding that my vision was private, so I never told my family what I saw. So began Corinne May Botz's fascination with the invisible, a phenomenon that has profoundly influenced her approach to photography in style and subject matter. For more than ten years, she searched for ghost stories in buildings across the United States. She ventured into these haunted places with both camera and tape recorder in hand; her photographs, accompanied by first-person narratives, reveal a rare glimpse into American interiors, both physical and psychological. This book includes more than eighty haunted buildings, from the legendary to the ordinary, including Edgar Allan Poe's house in Baltimore, a New Jersey tavern, and a Massachusetts farmhouse, a log cabin in Kentucky, and a number of private residences. The text includes ghost stories told to the author by those who lived through the moving rugs, creaking floors, apparitions, disappearing and reappearing objects, cries in the night, mysteriously burning candles, and other unexplained occurrences.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The photographs in this book get under my skin in the best way. Page after page, these dark interiors blow my mind and I end up in a space where I don't really care whether they are haunted or not. I forget I am in the physical world. Instead, I am on a tour of Botz's mind. Her mastery of the camera and cinematic way of imagining these spaces, inspires awe, curiosity, emotion; more than any ghost of which I have dreamt. One thing they do not inspire is fear. Perhaps the camera always creates enough distance for us to escape our fears. Or perhaps her courage in visiting these spaces alone allows us to be courageous in looking at them. I can see her standing there, breathing in the dust and dodging cobwebs to show us what she saw inside these houses. Or maybe these houses are just normal old houses that have nothing scary about them. The camera does this too: it tricks us into thinking we should be thinking something else. Botz wants us to think a lot of things and with pictures as thought-provoking (and beautiful) as these, it is hard not to.

In this amazing and often surprising book, the author captures images and stories from everyday people about the strange and otherworldly entities with whom they share their homes and lives. The result is a strange marriage of the mundane and the unknown; a psychological portrait that is more intimate and touching than creepy or scary. The photographs of haunted houses gathered over much time and space seem to capture perfectly the impossibility of capturing the subject matter. As I spent time looking at the individual images, I could often start to 'feel' the ghost- the sense of loss, absence, and emotional mystery is so strong- Beautiful. And all those stories- Wow! The author mentions in the introduction that many Victorian women writers used ghost stories as a way of talking about things that they couldn't talk about directly. As I read the modern day ghost stories in this book I began to wonder, could that be true of these as well?

When I got my shrink wrapped copy from , I noticed pages 33 through 48 were missing, and I had pages 49 to 64 twice. In other words, instead of the page numbers being consecutive and chronological from 1 to 208, they went from 1 to 32, then 49 to 64, then 49 to 208. Of course was great about shipping me another copy, free 2 day shipping, and I returned the defective one. I wouldn't have noticed it right away except I was looking for houses from the New England area... Once that was sorted out... The design of this book is stylish (white text on black pages), the text is thought provoking, and the photographs are evocative. This volume is a collection of separate, short narratives, each by one person about one property. However, the arrangement of pictures and writing was slightly confusing. Given the author's introductory discussion about the importance of people's connection to a sense of place, I was a little surprised the contents of the

book didn't seem more organized: it may have been better if all the photos of each house were arranged together. It may have helped the reader imagine the places if pictures of different houses weren't scattered throughout, with captions listed four pages in advance. Even though I understand the author probably wanted to maintain the "voice" of each narrator in print, as a painter (and fan of Winslow Homer's watercolors) it kind of bothered me that on page 102 the speaker refers to the "Homer Winslow" print (which I'm assuming should be Winslow Homer?) -- twice. At first I thought I was experiencing déjà vu until I realized on page 104 the same sentence is repeated two sentences later (except the second time the word "truly" is omitted: "I truly believe one must be very sensitive to their surroundings to feel and understand what is happening.") There was one photo on page 179 that looked like the corner of a teenager's bedroom or a disorganized craft area in a nondescript motel -- except the caption said it was the Carey Mansion in Newport, Rhode Island. There was no further mention of the place in the book, but I believe it's the house shown in the opening credits of the original "Dark Shadows" TV series (1966-1971). Still, this was a fun, unique book, even though it may be too creepy to read alone at night, when it becomes even easier to imagine something sinister and disturbing in what may at other times appear to be the most familiar, mundane, and innocuous scene.

I really liked this book. Hated to pay the money that I did. I would like to have had a better description of the photos rather than just where the photos were shot. The photos were nice, but there was no detail about what I was looking at, just the name of the place where the photos were shot.

Even as a participant in Corinne's book, I could not have imagined the tasteful and creative expression executed on the pages of her book. The photography is creative, adding a unique perspective to a visual interpretation. She captures not only the heart but the very soul of the homes explored in her book. The first hand narratives compel you into the mysteries of the unexplained phenomena occurring within the walls of the homes of everyday people throughout the country. What was most interesting was the discovery more than a year after Corinne's book published. I was flipping through the pages when I noticed something strange. The photo of the dining room window reflects the hallway where the desk left to me by the previous owners stood at the time. And, in that reflection there appears to be a young girl seated at the desk. But, there was no one in the house but her and me when she took the photographs. Did Corinne capture the image of a ghost in her photograph? It certainly appears so!

You always see ghost story books but I thought this book had a different slant on a haunted house. It was well done and I really enjoyed it.

Great book, although more of a picture book than stories.

Nice photos but really more of a coffee table book. The ghost stories, told by people living or working at the locations, are disappointing. Not worth purchasing in my opinion.

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