

Haunted Objects

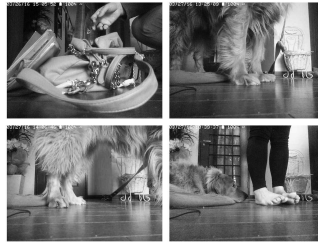
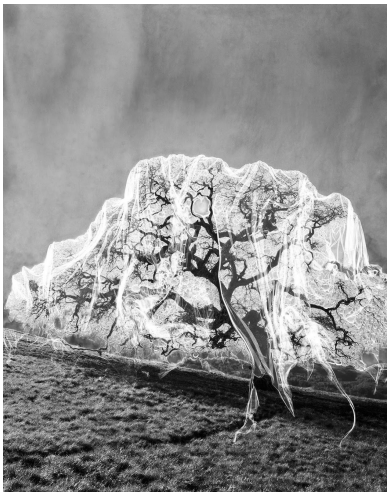
Peridot Green VII

Fall 2016

When an object is treasured, it becomes part of its owner's memory. They cradle it in their hands, their arms, and it evokes emotion and imagery. When we lose a person, it can help to hold their treasures for them.

Today we tell the story of *The Ghost-Hunter* – a husband who loses his wife, and returns to his abandoned profession to find her. To tell this story we summon two birds: Poe's Raven, and Coleridge's Albatross.

Alongside our poem, we hang the work of three photographers: Jace Becker, Joe Moore, and Midge Wattles (in collaboration with C.J. Hill). All three work with older film and darkroom techniques, and address the materiality of the medium in their concepts.



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The Ghost-Hunter

Once the sun commits to sinking, and shadows begin their drinking,
In the ever flooding dark of nighttime's tidal and unconscious sea,
In my bed and still not sleeping, yet awake from too much thinking
Of my love and keep from weeping, for I don't know where she might be.
She closed her eyes and said goodbye, and I don't know where she might be.
She's buried by the Oak tree.

Long ago she had laughed and said, how silly my love for the dead,
As I spent whole nights in empty houses toying with technology.
Calling quietly into the dark, waiting for that frightening spark
From another world or outside the place that all of us can see.
How strongly I wanted to be outside the place we all can see.
Today she's by the Oak tree.

For years it was the dead I sought, and not the living which I ought
To have given all of my love and time. For all of us should foresee
We've longer on the other side than we have in our rotting hide.
In all of that time not a spectre nor a phantom did I see.
She's gone now and still not a spectre nor a phantom do I see,
Except down by the Oak tree.

It's by that tree that I recall, my ghostly past and I appall
My now ever ghastly present, haunting all that once gave me glee.
Maddened by sadness I stormed, until a new idea had formed,
I would gather my old equipment for I knew how she may be.
Once again in dark and empty houses I'd seek what couldn't be.
I'll find her by the Oak tree.

I assembled her possessions, those she loved to an obsession,
Her carvings and a kimono, tinted by flowers and feathery.
O how when it was worn it flowed. An angels wings there seemed bestowed.
Sadly stroking her treasured things a sigh in the dark unnerved me.
I squinted in the black, "Is there someone here in the dark with me?"
The sigh came from the Oak tree.

As I stepped down the lightless hall, the arched exit there was all
Could be seen without some spirit, without our lovely life's debris.
I lingered there to contemplate, and will my sadness to abate.

I must be clear, dispassionate, to see what may be there to see.
But I'm not sure I want to see what may be there for me to see.
It will be by the Oak Tree.

Checking the needle as it skipped, and gadgets in shadows blipped
As I walked blindly towards the door, footsteps groaned near of nobody.
Hello! I called into the night. The steps, they had me all affright.
It seems no misconception the direction they stepped in to me.
It was to that place where I knew I must return. The place to me,
The terror of the Oak Tree.

I slammed the door and headed out. I would finally allay my doubt
Put to rest the absent ghosts who continually tortured me.
Despite her qualms she must assent to help my life be not misspent.
Deign once more be with the living so I will assuredly see
That there is certainly a place outside the place we all can see.
I walked down to the Oak Tree.

At its rooted and knotted base, I set each object in its place,
Dress, carvings, and photography. Her image it was hard to see.
I shouted her name to the grave, and tried myself to remain brave
For I trembled despite my past. But wait! A voice! Can it be she?
I listened for nought but silence. A rustling there! Can it be she?
I waited by the Oak Tree.

Into the nearby pond I looked, the water rippling had me spooked.
My hair stood on end when eerie shapes danced in the murk unearthly.
It is but a simple creature, not a preternatural feature
Swimming there so creepily. And that voice faintly whispering to me,
Sending chills throughout my body, that voice trying to speak to me
Just the wind in the Oak Tree.

"Give me real evidence!" I cried. "Something true! Make me terrified!"
Far off an owl responded, "Who?" as well the crickets chirped to me.
I slumped down and began to think, deep in memories did I sink.
I saw our meeting, saw our love, down inside the reflecting sea.
I saw our lives and saw our dreams, down inside the reflecting sea.
Recalled down by the Oak Tree.

She adored the paws of our dog, she bred horses, loved morning fog,
Her eyes would laugh when teasing me, I was a lock and she the key.
Always I saw us side by side, but curse this life for she has died!

