

The Art Centre: The Spiritual Epicenter of Keystone College

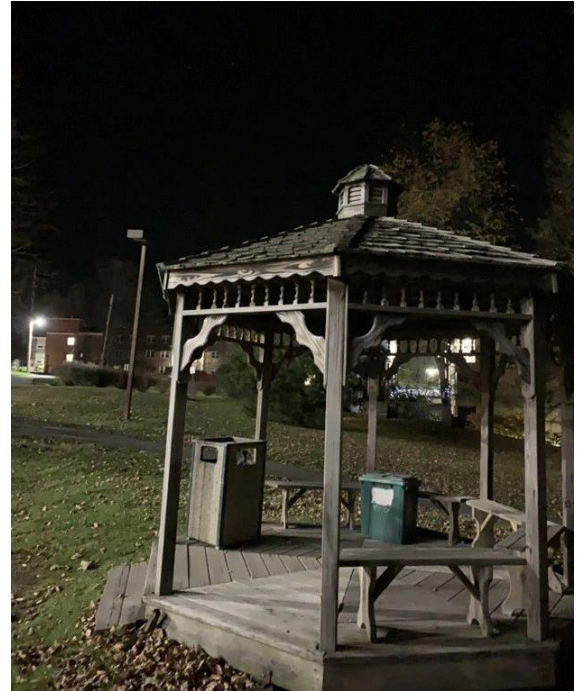


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As the consensus most haunted building on campus, the art centre lore is quite extensive and my own experience there is very vivid and lengthy. You can find the full account on the KPS Youtube channel under the KPS Stories podcast episode titled “A Single Creaking Floorboard: the Art Center.”

Popular Lore:

One of the best-known Keystone ghost stories involves the ‘little Indian girl’ said to live in the Art Centre. The story goes that the little girl was born out of wedlock when her mother met and fancied a white man. When her husband found out that he wasn’t their baby’s father, he was predictably very angry about the whole thing. Many students and staff have reported seeing the three characters in this tragic story. The little girl hides in the ceramics studio. See figure 3 below. Meanwhile, her mother can be seen on the side of Harris Hill searching for her beloved daughter. Lastly, the figure of a shadowy brave is said to run across the catwalk in the Art Centre as he angrily looks for his wayward wife and bastard child.



Firsthand Accounts:

A ceramics professor named “Gina” and her students once recounted to me a remarkable story about their paranormal experiences in the studio. Gina said that strange activity was expected within the studio and that everyone accepted the little girl’s presence there. Projects being misplaced, fans behaving strangely, and lighting anomalies are common enough to no longer really scare people.

However, Gina told me about “that day.” An incident attested by several other witnesses in the room. She said that when she came in for work that morning, the fans in the ceramics room were ‘going crazy’ even though they were always set on low just to keep the air moving in the building to keep down the fumes from stains and varnishes. She said something was aggressively wrong in the whole building that day and she felt like something was actively telling her she wasn’t welcome. Gina felt uncomfortable enough to leave early, where she drove into a severe thunderstorm. She said a huge branch flew down as she was driving home and busted her windshield, causing considerable damage. She felt in her heart that this was a warning from whatever entity in the studio had made the place so miserable that day. She also said other professors and students all felt “it” that day. It was like a tide of negativity just came over the building and everyone within for that day.

Nadine and her friend “Tiffany” used to work in the ceramics studio late at night, which is basically when all artists do their work. Once when they were in the studio with two other friends, they heard a woman singing from the second floor catwalk area. When they looked up, there was nothing there out of the ordinary. They took this as a sign to postpone their work to the following night and left the studio post haste.



Personal Experiences:

It's time to share my most elaborate haunted Keystone encounter. I want to preface this by introducing everyone involved. There's Jared, DJ, and I from campus safety. Alex and Jess, two prominent KPS members and good friends of mine. There's also my ex-fiance Gwen and Alex's ex-fiance Shannon, who were both witnesses to what happened the third night. Finally, there's "John" a student who was vehemently skeptical and told us our interest in ghosts was ridiculous. Liam, a student officer from campus safety was also present in the smoking gazebo on the first night.

The story happened over three nights that took place within a few weeks of each other. The first night, DJ and I took Alex and Jess on a tour of the campus at lockdown. The second night is the main part of the story, and the third night took place the following weekend when Alex and I tried to replicate what happened.

It started on a nondescript spring night in 2018, when DJ, Jared, and I stopped at a packed Hibbard smoking gazebo to see who was around and kill some time. Second shift campus safety was usually dead after 10pm, so we would always see if anybody was hanging around to chat with and get us to midnight. So, this particular night, the 'butt hut' was poppin. Alex, Jess, John, and Liam were all there, and when the three of us entered the gazebo it was literally packed. I remember distinctly sitting ass cheek to ass cheek with the people on either side of me it was so packed in there. It was cool to have such a lively crowd, so that was much better than standing far off to the side and yelling into the gazebo.

The topic of Keystone being haunted came up, as Jess and Alex were both deeply invested in the paranormal after having their own experiences earlier in their careers. Liam then shared the brief encounter he had with a lady in white while sitting in the same butt hut some time earlier, where she passed into a stand of pines and simply never emerged from the other side. He laughed and said he must have been high and imagining things.

As I recounted some of the lore of haunted Ward Hall, Alex asked if she could come with us on lockdown that night. Since nothing else was going on, I said “sure why not?” Jess decided to join as well, and so they were set to accompany DJ and me through the buildings alleged to be haunted. At that point, John sneered at how dumb we all were for believing in fairy tales. The conversation carried on for another half hour or longer and moved across a wide variety of subjects.

The ashtray in the centre of the gazebo was filling up fast with spent butts. As one cigarette turned into long chains of cancer-causing glee, the tray became filled over the course of the conversation. As we got ready to leave, John began running down belief in ghosts again. In one of the strangest things I’ve ever seen, a gust of wind passed through the gazebo at that time and spewed sand and cigarette butts into John’s lap. What’s strange is that my ass cheeks and his were literally pressed together but not a single fleck of sand touched me. Liam, who was on his other side, was similarly untouched by the sand. I looked up and saw that Jess, Alex, and DJ were already looking back and forth between each other looking freaked out. We all saw it and John himself blurted out “what the fuck?” before brushing the debris off his hoodie and going back to what he was saying.

DJ told me the next day at work that he noticed something else strange as we all talked. He said every time people were laughing and having fun, the street light just outside the gazebo was bright and steady. But when people started gossiping or talking negatively about their peers and professors, the light flickered and buzzed. He said it was like the energy of the group fed the energy of the light. Perhaps coincidence, but interesting if auras are a real thing.

With the end of our shift approaching, DJ and I took Alex and Jess to Ward hall, where nothing interesting happened. Then we went through Capwell with similar results. We finally came to the Art Centre, where Alex felt immediately drawn to the second floor catwalk, where Mikayla’s self-portrait stood overlooking the guard rails. When Alex looked into the baleful eyes of the painting, she became panicked and asked to leave the building. She explained that something was very wrong in the building and that she wanted to come back on a night when we could spend more time there.

That opportunity came a few nights later. Another huge butt hut crew was assembled, and this time everyone wanted to come see the spectacle of a real ghost hunt in the Art Centre. The building was empty for the night. Not even Mikayla was there, leaving it devoid of any human presence. The whole group gathered in the drawing studio: DJ, Jared, Gwen, Shannon, John, Alex, Jess, and me. John and Jared are both skeptics and were goofing around as Alex and Jess tried to sit quietly on one of the desk-tables and concentrate. This was going nowhere fast, so Alex and Jess told everybody else to leave. So we did.

The rest of us went to the butt hut behind the Art Centre. Shannon, John, and DJ smoked cigarettes and we all talked for probably 20-30 minutes without any sign from our friends in the building. After a while, Jared got bored and went to lock down other buildings. When I asked if

he wanted help, he just waved me off and said he'd take care of it and to let him know if we saw any ghosts. Not long after this, Gwen and John also got bored and started to talk about leaving along with DJ. Shannon didn't say a word, being an incredibly shy person in general.

Suddenly, Alex came running out of the back doors. She sprinted across the parking lot and ran up to me. "Steve, you gotta come in here and see this! I can't believe it!" Alex didn't run: she had asthma and was a pretty heavy smoker. Something was off, so I accompanied her back into the building. As we walked, she explained that the two girls felt drawn to the ceramics studio. They both sat on desk tables and started asking questions out loud, like you see in ghost hunting shows. After several minutes of nothing, she said they felt the air in the room change. Then they started getting answers. She felt convinced they were talking to the little Indian girl of the legends.



Alex opened the doors to the ceramics room, where Jess was still sitting silently on a middle desk table. The room was dark, but the lights outside made it possible to still each others' faces relatively clearly. Every few minutes, car headlights from the highway would flash across the top floor, bathing the whole room in soft white. Jess was calmer than Alex, but would later tell me she was quite scared throughout the whole incident.

The girls told me to sit down with them on the table and quietly wait for "it" to come back. So I joined them, feeling my heart beating out of my chest and my hands shaking. I could feel something off in the room, but was mostly just scared by how scared my friends were. They waited a few minutes and then started asking simple yes or no questions:

"Are you here again?"

"Are you scared of us?"

"Do you want us to leave?"

"Will you talk with us?"

And similar things.

After a few of these questions, a loud single squeak broke the silence of the room and the girls looked to each other in hysterics. Alex explained that the spirit in the room was answering their questions with one squeak for yes and two squeaks for no. I thought it must be a squirrel or the fabled “old building” noises found in every ghost hunting show. So I waited and listened as the questions kept going and the answers did too. A clear pattern of intelligent responses emerged: these were random floor poppings or animals scampering –whatever was up there was answering the questions being put to it.

As we sat there, the air in the room changed again, becoming aggressive and angry, especially near where the door connects the ceramics room and drawing studio. Jess looked at me and said that the angry male spirit was now present.

“Are you scared right now?” Jess asked

--one squeak--

“Are you scared of us?”

--two squeaks--

“Are you scared of him?”

--one squeak--

I don’t know how long this went on for, but I know it was long enough for me to rule out animals or flaws in the wiring to be responsible for the noises. It kept coming from the same spot, and when I finally was able to figure out where it was, the shadows felt thicker there than in the surrounding area. It was like a blacker-than-black shape was taking up a section of the room already bathed in black shadows.

I watched in disbelief as a small shadowy mass, no taller than the guard rail around the catwalk, got up from its spot and moved quickly to the far end of the room, seemingly hiding the corner nearest the ventilation system. From then on, the girls’ questions were not answered, but the angry presence seemed to take over the room. As Jess asked this new figure questions, she did not receive any answer, but her necklace snapped and fell on the table in front of her after she asked if it wanted us to leave. We didn’t need anything more, so we hurried out of the room and back out to our friends sitting in the parking lot.

The three of us were freaking the fuck out at this point and we all talked about going back in to try to get more evidence. We didn’t record anything or even think about it because of how intense the experience was. Skeptics often lambast ghost claims because there’s never any recorded proof, but I can assure you that documentation is the last thing on your mind when faced with anything supernatural.

When I got home that night I talked with Alex and Jess about it late into the morning, and then the three of us never brought it up for three years.

The next day, DJ suggested to me that it was all an act the girls put on to try to scare me. I disagreed strongly and told him that we'd go to the ceramics studio and poke around to see what we could find. A few students were working down below and watched nervously as the two campus safety officers took the winding stairway up to the catwalk and searched the area. I walked back and forth a bunch of times trying to find the spot where I saw the dark mass the previous night.

I eventually came to a spot in the floor where the wood panel had a small triangular piece missing. This caused the board to protrude by no more than a few centimetres from the rest of the floor. When I stepped over it, it made no noise. I put my whole weight (145-150) on the board, and . . . I heard the exact noise the entity used to reply to our questions. I felt a chill run through my whole body and knew that whatever stood there less than 24 hours earlier was as heavy as me and knew of this one tiny spot with the creaking floorboard. I scoured the rest of the room for a similar spot that would make a similar noise, but there was none.

Alex texted me a few days later and said she was desperate for more and wanted to go back in on the weekend when the campus was dead.

The next Saturday, Alex, Shannon, Gwen, and I went back into the Art Centre to see if we could replicate the shocking communication we had a few nights earlier. This particular night, I remember how tense the atmosphere was from the first second we walked in. I think my own expectations played heavily into it, as I was now waiting for something paranormal to happen.

The heavy shadows hung about the corners of the room and it felt like the same presence was there again, but nothing answered any of Alex's questions. She told me to sit down quietly on the desk table next to her, but I was losing my shit and had to step out into the hallway.

As I stood in the hallway with Gwen trying to settle me down, I heard Alex ask through the open doors of the ceramics studio: "Is anyone here with us?"

Just then, I heard a wind blow down the round hallway and pass by me, causing the hinges on the heavy aluminum door to pop loudly as it did so. The wind moved into the studio with Alex, and I was convinced this was a spirit coming to communicate with her. At this point, I had to leave the building and stand outside.

Gwen and I stood there for a few seconds before being joined by Alex and Shannon. Alex asked me if I was okay, and I said I was scared shitless and didn't want to go back in. She said whatever was there didn't want to talk with her, so we all decided to leave the building.

What's particularly strange about this incident is the strain it put on our friendships. Alex, Jess, and I would all remain friends after the incident, but didn't talk about it together at any point until a Zoom meeting 3 years later when they were long graduated and living far from Keystone. Alex made this point after we spent HOURS talking about what happened and it stuck with me. Later, when I would retell the story on the KPS Stories podcast, Alex and Jess took it very

personally that they were not called to be on the show. Truthfully, I hadn't heard from either of them in months and didn't think to contact them when the idea for the episode was discussed in the studio and we just recorded it. While we met later to discuss this and I apologized for my oversight, we have not spoken again since.

To speculate very briefly on the nature of this haunting, I believe with the words of Christ that you "know a tree by its fruits." The fact that this incident essentially ended two important friendships of mine and left all three of us with many sleepless nights and uncomfortable memories suggests that the presence in the Art Centre is more than a lost little girl looking for a friend.

When DJ and I used to lock down the building at night, it felt perfectly fine when someone else was present. When we were alone, the place was loaded with eyes watching every step we took. It got bad to the point that we started locking entirely from the outside, which took three times as long but at least it got us away from whatever was watching us in the studios.

There was an artist working there who I'll call "Mikayla." She was a classic 'troubled' student who stirred up harmless trouble for Sodexo, campus safety, and other officials at the school. She was the first friend I made at the College and someone I think of with only fond memories. I spent many many hours talking with her as I watched her brutal outlines slowly turn into masterful works of charcoal, ink, and paint.

Mikayla was certainly quirky and many found her downright strange, but she was one of the most logical and intelligent people I met at Keystone. She vehemently denied that the Art Centre was haunted, and she used to spend many nights sleeping in the drawing studio without a single problem. As time went on, I started to wonder if this was as innocuous as she made it seem. Mikayla didn't drink or use any drugs, which is something we share and bonded over instantly. This is notable because the overwhelming majority of art students at Keystone would smoke weed to get in the zone with their art and sometimes pop Adderall to stay up all night and finish. When they would tell stories about weird things they saw at night, I'd just say "of course you were seeing shit."

Mikayla developed a fondness for a model skeleton in the drawing studio that she named "Oscar." He was a model from the ribs and torso and then the skull. I didn't find this strange at all until I watched as this skeleton moved closer to her over successive months and years. When Mikayla was a sophomore, Oscar was all the way across the room and just sitting there. By the time she was a senior, she slept with Oscar a metre away from her mattress, facing her. She began including Oscar in more and more of her art, including a haunting self-portrait of her standing in the studio with her arm around him.

This fucked with me for two reasons. First, my prior knowledge of demonic activity was oddly mirrored in Mikayla's increasingly strange behaviour. As she became more and more attached to this skeleton, she started eating less, sleeping less, and becoming more erratic in general. High stress hits every art student as they prepare for their senior show, but this went above and beyond. I'd heard (and experienced) a negative presence in the building and wondered to DJ if this entity was slowly taking a hold on Mikayla.

Second, I re-stumbled upon an image of the Jewish demon called the "dybbuk" after I watched the movie when Matisyahu has to force such a spirit back into a haunted wine cabinet. The image shows a skeleton clinging to the back of an unsuspecting host and sucking the life force from them. When I saw that again my heart started pounding because it looked EXACTLY like Oscar watching Mikayla as she slept. It's all conjecture and hopefully my imagination, but the dread in the pit of my stomach always warned me it was something more.

After Mikayla graduated, the energy in that building became too hostile for me or DJ to enter it, even together. It felt like the presence was hungry again with Mikayla having gone, and looking for a new host. I have little doubt that the manifestations of the little girl in the ceramics studio are NOT a little girl, and that this being was latched onto Mikayla, draining the soul she didn't believe existed.

KPS Investigation Encounters:



The Keystone Paranormal Society investigated the Art Centre on the second expedition at the school in May of 2024, which led to some uneasy moments. As we first entered the Art Building, we immediately had a strange phenomena happen with our walkie talkies. Both Jake and Michael's walkie talkies went off in static, but Michael had his in the front hoodie pocket and Jake hanging from his backpack. That freaked us out, but we proceeded to see if we could contact any spirits that we had long heard about from Steve. We sat in the dark and did an EVP session with our spirit box, but nothing happened. Other than some strange creeks and gusts of wind, we did not encounter any intense activity, but certainly it felt like something was off.