Baltimore – This year, Maryland Institute College of Art’s (MICA) Exhibition Development Seminar (EDS) class, along with 11 artists, examines the continuously shifting definitions of shelter and privacy through the interdisciplinary group exhibition, Under Cover. From Friday, Jan. 27–Sunday, March 11, the approximately 50 works of sculpture, photography and video explore how private dwellings and public spaces have begun to merge and how, as a result, concepts of and expectations for shelter, protection and privacy have been irrevocably altered. The class looks at how densely populated cities, surveillance of the public and digital overexposure of personal information have contributed to dissolving the boundary between public and private space. As public domain continues to advance, perhaps the only shelter left is in the privacy of the mind. The exhibition, taking place in Fox Building’s Decker Gallery, 1303 W. Mount Royal Ave., will include a reception on Thursday, Feb. 2, 7–9 p.m. and a press preview on Thursday, Jan. 26, 9:30–11 a.m. (all media are welcome to RSVP by Thursday, Jan. 19 to news@mica.edu).

“The class has invited a group of artists to think about privacy in real and virtual spaces, new models of urban or nomadic living, and the omnipresence of surveillance in contemporary life,” EDS faculty member Jeffry Cudlin said. “All of these issues are at the forefront of how we live now. They directly affect a group of students who are eyeing the current economic climate and trying to navigate a world in which all activities could be regarded as suspicious—and monitored accordingly.”

The annual EDS class enables students to examine the curatorial process through the research, planning and production of a major exhibition.

Featured artists:

James Coupe
In Panoptic Panorama #1: I am Standing in an Empty Room, commissioned for Under Cover, Seattle-based artist James Coupe plays with the idea of public surveillance. Five cameras are located in the center of the gallery, configured to monitor a 360-degree field of vision. Computers process the video captured by the cameras and filter out any footage that contains movement. Five screens on the gallery wall construct a panoramic representation of the space via the camera
feeds in this five-channel video work. Regardless of the number of people in the gallery, it always seems empty in the video footage. Although the panorama appears unified, each screen is temporally inconsistent and discontinuous with the others.

**Jen Davis**

*Webcam*, a series of photographs by Brooklyn-based Jen Davis, comments on relationships in real and virtual life, which can be parallel to each other or completely dissimilar. *Webcam* documents a fictional, web-based relationship between the artist and “Alexi,” a character that Davis constructs as an avatar for her relationship. Over the course of three months, the fictional relationship evolves from friends to lovers, imitating the progression of an actual real-world relationship, despite the fact that “Alexi” never sees the artist. The photographs fixate on the false sense of intimacy created in the virtual world that attempts to mask feelings of loneliness and isolation.

**Vin Grabill**

Vin Grabill is a Maryland-based artist who creates video collages that express the movement of both television stills and crowded streets juxtaposed with images of nature. In Grabill’s piece, *Frontier*, window frame structures slowly move, allowing for different visual collages to be seen together and therefore enabling a dialogue between images of exposure and crowdedness with scenes of privacy and calm.

**Nate Larson and Marni Shindelman**

The collaborative work of MICA photography faculty member Nate Larson and New York-based artist Marni Shindelman focuses on the ever-disintegrating distance between reality and virtual culture. In their series, *GeoLocation*, Larson and Shindelman use Internet-based statements and Global Positioning System (GPS) technology from Twitter to locate the physical places where Twitter messages have been sent. They then capture the location through a photograph and use the original text of the Twitter post to narrate the scene that results. The image is often comically ironic when juxtaposed with the original Twitter post.

**Kelly Loudenberg**

New York City-based producer and director Kelly Loudenberg’s series of video documentaries, *New Urbanism*, documents artists’ efforts to blur the boundaries of public and private space in order to remind people of simple, basic necessities. Loudenberg’s piece, *New Urbanism: The Waterpod*, is a video documentary of a project that studied a fully self-sufficient living space, named *The Waterpod*, which was equipped with means for producing food, water and shelter. The film follows four artists who lived exclusively on the 30-by-100-foot barge for five months. The video documents life on the *The Waterpod*, which was open to the public, as it traveled around New York City’s five boroughs. *New Urbanism: Tent City*, another video by Loudenberg, documents the transformation of a vacant lot in New York City into a temporary village for the homeless.

**Mary Mattingly**

New York-based artist Mary Mattingly comments on economic globalization and the modern nomad. The sculptural work, *Wearable Portable Architecture*, is engineered out of multiple costumes that combine to transform into a shelter. The costumes are insulated to maintain comfortable body temperatures and come equipped with GPS, Internet and other technologies—all powered by solar panels. They encompass, cradle and protect the body in an attempt to shield against the physical environment. By collectively creating an inhabitable shelter, they also afford private space in a world where existence is increasingly rootless and contingent.

**Patrick McDonough**

Washington, D.C.-based artist Patrick McDonough addresses American consumerism and playfully critiques the tension between art and the utilitarian object. The installation series, *Awning Studies*, focuses on the awning as a distinction between public and private spaces. His project, which includes a newly created piece for *Under Cover*, explores the functionality and relevance of awnings, imagining them migrating free into the world, unattached to buildings. By installing them in trees, over the water and on a combination of steel and clear acrylic supports, he questions the extent to which these decorative structures provide a clear distinction between public and private space.

**Anne Percoco**

New Jersey-based artist Anne Percoco creates utilitarian objects that meet the basic needs of people in communities around the globe who have been affected by unfortunate living conditions, such as extreme poverty, lack of shelter and pollution. These are all results of growing populations in already dense cities. Percoco collects detritus from these
areas—including water bottles, trash and candy wrappers—and then uses them to create shelters and forms of transportation. These constructions, such as the piece, *Indra’s Cloud—Keshi Ghat*, are meant to help people better flourish in environments where community, shelter and privacy are changing due to overpopulation.

**Keith Perelli**

Keith Perelli explores social, political and personal issues through his paintings, prints and drawings. His painting series, *Return*, catalogs his personal need as a native of New Orleans to come to terms with the slow sociological and ecological recovery of the Gulf region from Hurricane Katrina. In the hours and weeks following the storm, Perelli grappled with the physically and psychologically changed landscape through quiet reflection and observation of both the local populace and the land. Through this series, Perelli attempts to express the loss of not only a physical shelter, but also a community he had come to recognize as home.

**Saul Robbins**

New York photographer Saul Robbins’ series, *Initial Intake*, exposes the private relationship and space shared between the psychotherapist and the client. The photographs are taken from the viewpoint of the patient’s chair, where one can observe intimate details of the office: balled-up tissues, raking light through the window during an afternoon session and books waiting to be examined. In this series, Robbins publically exposes the usually protected privacy of one of the most truthful and intimate relationships.

For updates and more information about *Under Cover*, visit micaundercover.com. MICA’s galleries, which are free and open to the public, are open Monday–Saturday, 10 a.m.–5 p.m.; and Sunday, noon–5 p.m. They are closed on major holidays.

*Under Cover* is made possible partially through generous support from the Friends of the Exhibition Development Seminar.

For high-resolution images or interview requests, contact MICA’s Office of Communications at 410.225.2300.

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*Founded in 1826, Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA) is the oldest continuously degree-granting college of art and design in the nation. The College enrolls nearly 3,500 undergraduate, graduate and continuing studies students from 48 states and 54 countries in fine arts, design, electronic media, art education, liberal arts, and professional studies degree and non-credit programs. Redefining art and design education, MICA is pioneering interdisciplinary approaches to innovation, research, and community and social engagement. Alumni and programming reach around the globe, even as MICA remains a cultural cornerstone in the Baltimore/Washington region, hosting hundreds of exhibitions and events annually by students, faculty and other established artists.*