



2000 MOUNTAIN ROAD, NW (IN OLD TOWN) ALBUQUERQUE, NM 87104
(505) 243-7255 www.cabq.gov/museum

THIS EXHIBITION HAS BEEN MADE POSSIBLE IN PART BY the generous support of the New Mexico Humanities Council, the exhibition's lead sponsor, as well as the Albuquerque Museum of Art and History and the National Ghost Ranch Foundation. Additional support has been provided by Dr. and Mrs. Howard Lowery; Brian Crockett, museum consultant; the University of New Mexico Press; the Georgia O'Keeffe Museum; the Albuquerque Museum Foundation; Heritage Hotels and Resorts/Hotel Albuquerque; Nielsen Bainbridge; Whole Foods Markets, Albuquerque; New Mexico Magazine, media sponsor; Bogen Imaging; Beaver Toyota, Santa Fe; Lowepro/Daymen U.S., Inc.; Hahnemühle Fine Art Papers; Imaging Spectrum, Inc., Dallas; Plastic Supply, Inc., Albuquerque; and Ilford Photo/Harman Technology, U.K.

The book *Ghost Ranch and the Faraway Nearby*, published by the University of New Mexico Press, includes 90 photographs reproduced in duotone by Craig Varjabedian and essays by Jay Packer, writer and photographer; Marin Sardy, writer and editor; Belden C. Lane, writer and retired professor of theology at St. Louis University; Douglas A. Fairfield, arts writer and curator; and Rob Craig, pastor and former Ghost Ranch executive director. The volume is introduced in forewords by Debra Hepler, current Ghost Ranch executive director; and Cathy Wright, director of the Albuquerque Museum of Art and History. A 1980 appreciation of Ghost Ranch written by Georgia O'Keeffe serves as the afterword. The book is available at The Gallery Store in the Albuquerque Museum and other fine bookstores.

Exhibition curated by Cathy Wright
Exhibition panel and brochure text by Marin Sardy

Brochure printed by Dual Graphics, Inc.

Photographs Copyright ©Craig Varjabedian. All Rights Reserved
Essay Copyright ©Marin Sardy. All Rights Reserved



The Albuquerque Museum is a Division of the Cultural Services Department of the City of Albuquerque
Martin J. Chávez, Mayor



Chimney Rock and the Red Hills of Ghost Ranch, New Mexico 2007

Georgia O'Keeffe and the Faraway Nearby

Ghost Ranch is perhaps best known as the longtime home of artist Georgia O'Keeffe, who captured some of its most stunning scenery in her paintings of dried bones and red mesas, and who coined the enigmatic term that remains deeply linked to her place of inspiration: "the faraway nearby."

For O'Keeffe, the bones, cliffs, and distance of Ghost Ranch came together in an enveloping sensation echoed in a painting of an elk skull over rounded, receding hills which she titled *From the Faraway Nearby*. Ghost Ranch was integral to her artistic process, as a place where the open possibility of the landscape became one with what she felt inside herself; where depth and focus at once conflated the spatial orientation of the objects she painted, and pulled her nearer to her creative source.

By the time O'Keeffe first found Ghost Ranch in 1934, she had spent almost every summer in New Mexico since 1929, staying at the Taos residence of Mabel Dodge Lujan. When luck conspired to at last bring her to the hidden gem, she immediately made it her new home, renting a casita from Arthur Pack for the first two seasons, and then moving into his former house, Casa de los Burros. Four years later, she convinced him to sell her the house, where she lived every summer (wintering in the village of Abiquiú) until her death in 1986.



Cerro Pedernal No. 2, Sunset, Abiquiú, New Mexico 1996

The U-shaped adobe is strategically set on 12 acres among the red pygmy hills, with its back to a natural amphitheater between Chimney Rock and Puerta del Cielo. Before it, the Piedra Lumbre basin reaches toward broken-topped Cerro Pedernal's gentle ascent into the ever-moving sky. For her, this landscape was not a foe to be conquered—and its beauty did not stem from softness and delicacy.

It has been said that in her art and in her life, O'Keeffe re-imagined the West. She took dry bones and skeletal ridges and gave the world a new way to look at them. At Ghost Ranch she found and revealed a world that was neither beautiful nor sublime, but something unique that borrowed from both and formed them anew.

The Albuquerque Museum of Art & History

GHOST RANCH

and the Faraway Nearby

PHOTOGRAPHS BY

CRAIG VARJABEDIAN

July 12 - October 11, 2009



Oak Leaf and Cottonwoods, Ghost Ranch, New Mexico 2001

Craig Varjabedian

Throughout the process of making the 60 black-and-white images that comprise the exhibition *Ghost Ranch and the Faraway Nearby*, photographer Craig Varjabedian aimed to capture the evanescent light and sweeping forms at northern New Mexico’s fabled Ghost Ranch, in photographs as authentic and compelling as the vistas and intricacies of the landscape itself.

To achieve this kind of visual interpretation, he relied on an idiosyncratic combination of equipment that included a large-format camera that creates 5”x7” film negatives and vintage Carl Zeiss Protar convertible lenses. Together, these components capture an extraordinary amount of detail and seem to magnify the mood of each scene.

Widely acclaimed for his images embracing the people and places of the American West, Varjabedian has based his 35-year photographic career on an intuitive ability to reveal contemplative and often sublime elements in his subject matter, as well as a deep grasp of the technical aspects of the photographic process.

Overall, the photographic journeys made for this exhibition spanned seven years, including five spent living in Abiquiú and returning daily to Ghost Ranch to watch, wait, and just be with the landscape. Now Varjabedian too has left the place—but not without absorbing some part of it that has changed him, he says, in the very deepest sense.



Old Corral and Approaching Storm, Antelope Flats, Ghost Ranch, New Mexico 2005

A practicing and exhibiting fine-art photographer for 35 years, Varjabedian is also the director of Eloquent Light Photography Workshops, in Santa Fe. Museums across the U.S. have exhibited and collected his work, and he has won an Emmy Award as well as grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Samuel H. Kress Foundation, the McCune Charitable Foundation, and the New Mexico Humanities Council. He holds a master’s degree in photography from the Rochester Institute of Technology.

Varjabedian’s previous books, both accompanied by exhibitions and published by the University of New Mexico Press, include *Four and Twenty Photographs: Stories from Behind the Lens* (2007) and *En Divina Luz: The Penitente Moradas of New Mexico* (1995), which won the Association of American University Presses award for excellence. His exhibition catalog *By the Grace of Light: Images of Faith from Catholic New Mexico* (1997) won the Ben Franklin Award.



Cow Skull on Ghost House, Ghost Ranch, New Mexico 2006

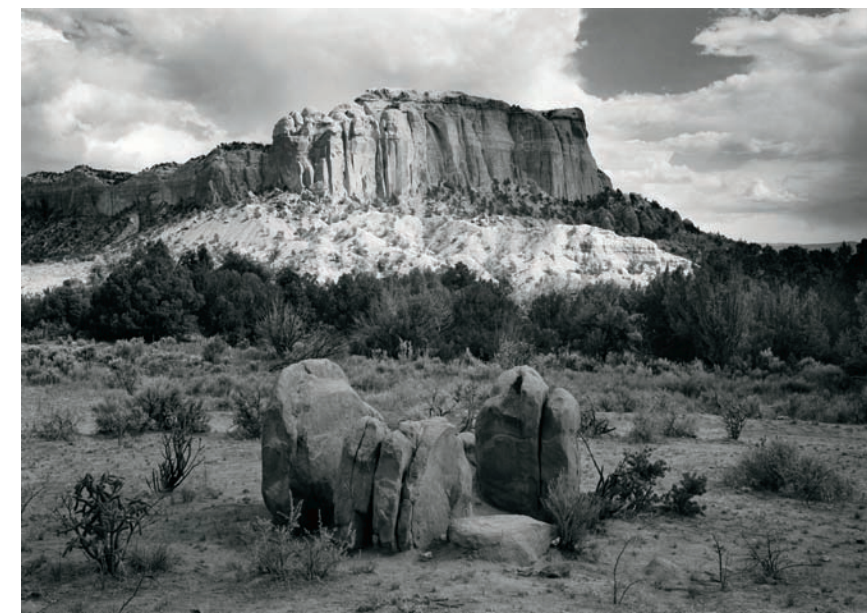
Ghost Ranch

Few places in New Mexico have achieved a more legendary status than the centuries-old Ghost Ranch. Located 13 miles northwest of Abiquiú, overlooking the Chama River on the broad Colorado Plateau, the retreat has been a stopover since prehistoric times for sojourners of all kinds.

From its earliest days as a resting place for dinosaurs—yielding famous deposits that hold some of the continent’s oldest fossils—Ghost Ranch has hosted an array of visitors that together represent a microcosm of New Mexico history. Tewa, Navajo, Ute, and Apache passed through on hunting expeditions. They were followed, in the 1800’s, by colonial Spanish ranchers and cattle rustlers, who were eventually replaced by a stream of American wranglers, environmentalists, and, since 1955, the Presbyterian Church.

The 21,000-acre, 32-square-mile spread encompasses the adobe buildings of the Ghost Ranch Conference and Retreat Center, creek bottom thickets of cottonwood and scrub oak, and massive red cliffs. Fields of porous boulders lie clustered to the west, and far to the south and east, undulating badlands pocked by scattered piñon and cholla reach around the slowly decaying ruins of homesteads, corrals, and other relics of human presence.

Opened as a guest ranch (and officially named) in 1935 by Boston transplant Caroline Bishop Stanley, Ghost Ranch then passed into the hands of another Easterner and a leading pioneer of the conservation movement,



Kitchen Mesa and Clearing Storm, Ghost Ranch, New Mexico 2007

Arthur Pack, who ran the place according to his personal ethic: more than a haven for “dudes,” it was also a working ranch and an enchanting piece of earth that deserved protection. Through World War II and into the 1950’s he hosted high-profile visitors ranging from Manhattan Project physicist Robert Oppenheimer to film stars like Cary Grant and John Wayne.

When Pack decided to relinquish ownership of Ghost Ranch, however, he and his wife, Phoebe, felt strongly that it shouldn’t continue on as another elite playground for a chosen few. So with the idea that it would be a center for outdoor education and a spiritual retreat, they gave the ranch to the Presbyterian Church. Led by its first director, Jim Hall (who followed the tenet that “theology is what you do”), this ushered in a new era marked by efforts to make equally available, to anyone, the tranquility and beauty for which Ghost Ranch is renowned.

Ghost Ranch’s allure lies as much in its changeability as in its timelessness. The distinctive sandstone cliffs, with bands of rust fading to peach, yellow, and lavender, give the place a hidden, protected feeling while at the same time becoming like prisms in the way they rearrange, magnify, and transmute the sun and air. They seem to echo that Ghost Ranch always has been and will forever be a place of sojourns—a place of both transition and transformation, where visitors rarely stay long but invariably leave somehow changed.