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Ghost Ranch and the Faraway Nearby

While walking home on a snowy Michigan day in 1970 after taking pictures for his high school newspaper, fourteen-year-old Craig Varjabedian passed by an art gallery. Inside he saw a man with a thick white beard hanging pictures on the wall of a gallery. The teenager was awestruck by images of sky and stone, mountains and rivers, trees and thunderclouds. Seeing the young onlooker, the old man invited him in. Soon they were talking about cameras and photography.

The white-haired man was Ansel Adams; and this chance meeting sealed Varjabedian's future.



Chimney Rock and the Red Hills of Ghost Ranch, 2007.
—Photographs © Craig Varjabedian. All Rights Reserved.

hill where the whole Ghost Ranch valley opens up and felt like I had come home. Since that time, it has been a quest to make images that were consonant with the feelings the place evoked in me."

With support from the [New Mexico Humanities Council](#), an exhibition of Varjabedian's photographs, "Ghost Ranch and the Faraway Nearby," opens at the [Albuquerque Museum of Art and History](#) on July 12. At the opening reception, Varjabedian will give a talk and sign his book of the same title. After its stay at the museum, the exhibition is available to travel through the auspices of the state council.

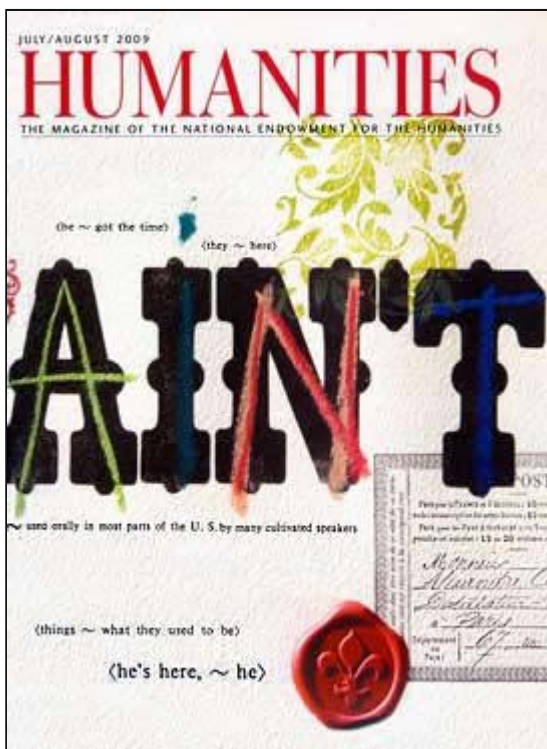


Craig Varjabedian, Photographer.

when I'm photographing those places is I can never get past the idea that these places are not real. They're made up. They're fake. And I think a very important quality of good art is authenticity."

Cathy Wright, director of the museum adds, "It is an exhibition that captures a sense of place through the aesthetic of photography, and that invites the viewer to be transported and participate in its being. It is a visual journey into the heart, mind, and soul."

—Laura Wolff Scanlan



After studying art and photography at the University of Michigan and Rochester Institute of Technology, Varjabedian went to New Mexico to finish his thesis. There, a friend took him to see Ghost Ranch, an inspirational mecca for artists, poets, painters, and photographers, including Ansel Adams, who was a frequent visitor, and Georgia O'Keeffe, who lived and painted there for more than fifty years.

"It is an almost mythic land located in northern New Mexico, and when I first saw it over twenty years ago, it took my breath away," says Varjabedian, who has been photographing the majestic landscape ever since. "I remember driving up the road and cresting the top of a

The name of the exhibition comes from one of O'Keeffe's famous paintings, *From the Faraway, Nearby*. In 1976, O'Keeffe wrote that the Far Away was "a beautiful, untouched lonely-feeling place." Varjabedian says, "What she found in the West, and at Ghost Ranch, was 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."

Similarly, Ghost Ranch offers something that is important to Varjabedian's work: authenticity. "I've photographed on movie ranches," he says, "and the difficulty I have



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