

**37th season**  
 Santa Fe Chamber  
 Music Festival opens  
**F3**



# ARTS

ABQjournal.com

THE SUNDAY JOURNAL

July 12, 2009



"Kitchen Mesa (Ice Cream Mountain) Reflection, Winter," is one of a series of photographs Craig Varjabedian made over five years.

## SPECTRAL VISIONS

Black-and-white photos by Craig Varjabedian capture the ethereal nature of Georgia O'Keeffe's Ghost Ranch

By DAVID STEINBERG  
 Journal Staff Writer

The world has come to know the beautifully stark landscape of Ghost Ranch through the paintings of Georgia O'Keeffe. The hills, mesas and trees of Ghost Ranch were neighbors to O'Keeffe, who lived in nearby Abiquiú.

Now Santa Fe fine arts photographer Craig Varjabedian has brought a new understanding and his vision of that landscape through his black-and-white images.

Sixty Varjabedian photographs are in an exhibit titled "Ghost Ranch and the Faraway Nearby," which opens today at the Albuquerque Museum.

They are drawn from a new book of the same title, published by UNM Press, that has a gallery of 91 of his photographs.

Varjabedian's images contain the



This photograph captures an approaching storm over a cabin used in the movie "City Slickers."

See PHOTO on PAGE F2

### If you go

**WHAT:** "Ghost Ranch and the Faraway Nearby," photographs by Craig Varjabedian

**WHEN:** Today through Oct. 11. Opening reception at 1 p.m. today at which Varjabedian will give a talk and sign copies of the accompanying book. He will also give a slide-show presentation at 7 p.m. Friday, July 17, at the New Mexico History Museum, 113 Lincoln Ave., Santa Fe

**WHERE:** Albuquerque Museum, 2000 Mountain NW

**HOW MUCH:** \$4 general public, \$2 seniors, \$1 children ages 4-12. Free the first Wednesday of every month and 9 a.m.-1 p.m. every Sunday

# THE SUNDAY JOURNAL



HOME-OWNED AND HOME-OPERATED ■ MADE IN THE U.S.A.  
129TH YEAR, NO. 214 ■ 278 PAGES IN 27 SECTIONS

SUNDAY MORNING, JULY 12, 2009

SANTA FE/NORTH ★★ ★★  
Copyright © 2009, Journal Publishing Co. ■ \$1.50

F2 THE SUNDAY JOURNAL

ARTS

## Photo exhibit finds soul of Ghost Ranch

from PAGE F1

iconic Chimney Rock, the distant Cerro Pedernal and the meandering Rio Chama.

His photography offers perspectives of nature close up and far away.

For example, there are studies of leaves, rocks and cracked mud, there are swirling cloud formations, there are pictures of imposing boulders and rocks, of impressive canyons and cliffs, of ghostly salt cedars, juniper and pines ... and even of red hills reminiscent of an O'Keeffe painting. Varjabedian's also shot horse barns, corrals, residences and two Adirondack chairs.

What is Ghost Ranch? It is a retreat, education center and ranch operated by The Presbyterian Church USA where visitors rest, hike and ride horses, and where organizations hold conferences. The property encompasses 21,000 acres in northern New Mexico.

Varjabedian has a long and respected history of shooting black-and-white photos.

"It's a conscious choice," Varjabedian said. "Not that it's any better than color or vice versa. For my work I am fascinated with the way light describes objects and reveals in subjects.

"The other thing it does



The iconic Chimney Rock at Ghost Ranch is the subject of this photograph.

it takes an image out of our normal reality. We see in color. If nothing else, black and white causes one to pause," he added.

Varjabedian's earlier award-winning books of black-and-white photography are "En Divina Luz: The Penitente Moradas of New Mexico" and "By the Grace of Light: Images of Faith from Catholic New Mexico."

Varjabedian spent an intense five years shooting at Ghost Ranch.

"I lived in a back room of a friend's family home in Abiquiú," he said. "For the most part I worked alone. Sometimes I had an assistant, depending on if I needed help carrying water and 50 pounds of gear."

He photographed everything with a large-format 5x7 Ebony view camera, mounted on a tripod, and a set of vintage lenses. The camera, he said, complements "a kind of contemplative approach that I have to my work —

slow, deliberate. It doesn't happen quickly."

Toting camera and tripod conjures images of famed photographer Ansel Adams.

Varjabedian's photograph "Moonrise Over Pack's Point" might suggest Adams' famous image "Moonrise, Hernandez."

Varjabedian said he had a chance meeting with Adams as a teenager in Michigan. Looking in a window of a gallery displaying Adams' photos, the youth was invited in.

"What stands out for me about that encounter is this flash of insight I got: I wanted to be out there in these incredible places and making images. It clarified in my mind what I wanted to do in my life," he recalled.

If the title "Ghost Ranch and the Faraway Nearby" has a familiar ring, it may be because of the 1938 O'Keeffe painting "From the Faraway, Nearby," which is reprinted in the book.

The volume also reprints, in an afterword, O'Keeffe's thoughts, penned in 1980, on Ghost Ranch's future on the 25th anniversary of Arthur Pack's gift of Ghost Ranch to the Presbyterian Church.

In the book's preface, Varjabedian explains that when he arrived in New Mexico in 1985, a friend took him to Abiquiú/Ghost Ranch and it was there, he said, "that, on some profound level, I learned to make photographs.

He addresses what possible meaning the natural landscape can have for humans: "Ghost Ranch, and places like it, exist simply to exist. In so doing they can inspire and instruct, they can transform and heal us and perhaps help us find our place and connection in the world."