

Ghost Ranch and the Faraway Nearby, by Craig Varjabedian. University of New Mexico Press, June 2009. 144 p. ill. alk. ISBN 9780826336217 (cl.), \$45.00.



Focusing on the iconic landscape in northern New Mexico, *Ghost Ranch and the Faraway Nearby* is the companion piece to Craig Varjabedian's 2009 photography exhibit at the Albuquerque Museum of Art and History. This gorgeous book (titled after O'Keeffe's 1938 painting of the same name) illuminates the unique beauty of Ghost Ranch as well as Varjabedian's talent as a landscape photographer.

While the strength of this book lies with the photographs, it is lovingly supplemented by essays about the mystique of Ghost Ranch. These are written by several people with a connection to the place, including a photographer, writers, a museum director, Ghost Ranch's director, a pastor, and a retired professor of theology. Their words, written from different points of view and perspectives, all emphasize the importance of place and landscape for those who have been touched by Ghost Ranch.

Craig Varjabedian spent five years living on Ghost Ranch land in order to make the photographs, but he has been going to Ghost Ranch regularly for over twenty years to visit and work. He explains in his preface what this has meant to him as a photographer and as a human being. In his words, "the true meaning of a place transcends the words we use to describe it." This is quite apparent when viewing his photographs. While Georgia O'Keeffe painted the amazing colors of the landscape, Varjabedian solely uses black and white photography to convey the enormity, drama, and overall geography of Ghost Ranch.

One essay explores the history of Ghost Ranch, from its earliest use as a hunting stopover by Native peoples to the Gallegos family and the Archuleta brothers in the 1800s; from Caroline Bishop Stanley in the 1920s to the Presbyterian Church which owns it today. Another essay focuses on the geography and geology of the landscape and the transformative quality it holds. Two other essays focus more on the transcendent aspect of the landscape and the spirituality it induces in the visitor. Finally, a short essay by Georgia O'Keeffe who put Ghost Ranch on the map exclaims her love of the place, "one of the most beautiful spots in the country."

This attractively illustrated and affectionately narrated book includes ninety-one duotone plates of the artist's photographs and nineteen other black and white images. Selected essays include bibliographical notes, and there is a substantial bibliography at the end of the book. This volume is essential for academic libraries that serve programs in photography, studio art and Southwestern studies.

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