

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Craig Varjabedian's 6th Book Wins "Outstanding Photography Book Award"

From the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum

Santa Fe, N.M. March 1, 2010—Craig Varjabedian's *Ghost Ranch and the Faraway Nearby* (University of New Mexico Press, 2009) wins the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum's 2010 "Outstanding Photography Book Award." The author says, "I was stunned by the award letter which arrived just last week." Mr. Varjabedian joins the ranks of past winners such as actor John Wayne and writer Larry McMurtry who have been honored for artistic talent by this premier western art museum. It also underscores eminent photography historian Beaumont Newhall's appraisal of Mr. Varjabedian's photography as, "not only beautiful but also extremely valuable documents of architecture, culture and lifestyle."

The National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum in Oklahoma City is the premier museum of classic and contemporary western art showcasing how intrepid cowboys tamed America's Wild West. At the April 17, 2010 Awards Banquet with the spotlight shining on him, it's a fitting metaphor to honor Mr. Varjabedian who so eloquently captures the luminous essence of his subjects. Natural light and the elements have always attracted and teased top photographers to depict Nature at her most inimitable. Mr. Varjabedian observes, "Here in New Mexico, it almost feels like light is a solid. There are times when I feel like I can literally reach up and catch it, and put it in a Mason jar."

What was the inspiration for this photographer-author's sixth book? "It may sound amazing, but I was called to do it. The majority of 90 plus images in this book were taken within a seven-year period. These are some of the best photographs I've ever made," offers Mr. Varjabedian. "Not that they were all easy photos to take. Many challenges presented themselves. But working through obstacles actually produced some astounding results. I'm very proud of the images—plus the experiences involved—in honing my photography skills to newer heights of discovery," he reflects.

Now, collectors and photographers can readily reach out to enjoy this poignant light from the Land of Enchantment with Mr. Varjabedian's sixth book, *Ghost Ranch and the Faraway Nearby*. Many will then understand why the area's light has smitten world-renowned artists from writer D. H. Lawrence to painter Georgia O'Keeffe. In fact, **Ms. O'Keeffe's "Appreciation of Ghost Ranch" in the book provides an endearing ending.** In this never-before-published tribute, Ms. O'Keeffe calls Ghost Ranch: "One of the most beautiful spots in the country. It's another world that you can ride over—walk—or climb."

At the Albuquerque Museum of Art & History's 2009 exhibition that accompanied the release of this award-winning book, museum director Cathy Wright noted how singular artists distinguish themselves. "Craig Varjabedian's photographs reflect both the heart of the artist and the soul of his subject. His photographs allow us to experience and to develop an awareness that reveals things inside ourselves and beyond ourselves," Ms. Wright stated. Further enriching this priceless cache of Ghost Ranch images are essays by Georgia O'Keeffe, Marin Sardy, Belden C. Lane and Cathy Wright—who have all felt, responded to and been transformed by the mysterious power of Ghost Ranch.

This book project spanned two decades to capture the soul of *Ghost Ranch*. Few places in New Mexico confer a more legendary status than the centuries-old Ghost Ranch. Located northwest of Santa Fe, overlooking the scenic Chama River, the Ranch has been a stopover since prehistoric times for sojourners of all kinds. Timeless with its incomparable sense of place and presence, this award-winning book cum exhibition leave an indelible legacy. In a nutshell, gallerist Gerald Peters (New York City and Santa Fe) noted, "Varjabedian captures both the spirit of place and the sense of enduring culture in the southwest."

Mr. Varjabedian is the founder of the Eloquent Light Photography Workshops in Santa Fe, New Mexico. He holds a master's degree in photography from Rochester Institute of Technology. Nationally, museums exhibit and collect his works. Mr. Varjabedian is the recipient of an Emmy Award; plus grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, Samuel H. Kress Foundation, McCune Charitable Foundation and New Mexico Humanities Council. His previous books include: *En Divina Luz: The Penitente Moradas of New Mexico* (which won the 1995 Association of American University Presses award for excellence), *By the Grace of Light: Images of Faith from Catholic New Mexico* (a 1997 Ben Franklin Award winner) and *Four and Twenty Photographs: Stories from Behind the Lens* published in 2007.

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Praise for Craig Varjabedian's Photography

At first glance, the sensuous, black-and-white landscapes of Craig Varjabedian bring to mind the existential mystique of Ansel Adams. But no. Paul Caponigro turns out to be Varjabedian's muse, and that means a far subtler interplay between building and sky, windows and clouds, earth and heaven. — James Auer, Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

With a vintage lens and an eye on regional America, Varjabedian captures both the spirit of place and the sense of enduring culture in the southwest. His imagery comments upon landscape, culture, and how the two influence and imprint each other. Sometimes tinged with religiosity, sometimes humorous, his photographs have an intense clarity that befits his subject: New Mexico. — Gerald P. Peters, Gerald Peters Gallery, Santa Fe and New York

Black-and-white photos by Craig Varjabedian capture the ethereal nature of Georgia O’Keeffe’s Ghost Ranch. The world has come to know the beautifully stark landscape of Ghost Ranch neighbors to O’Keeffe, who lived in nearby Abiquiu. 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. — David Steinberg, Albuquerque Journal

BACKGROUNDER TO “Outstanding Photography Book Award” ~ 2010 Western Heritage Award

CRAIG VARJABEDIAN’S GHOST RANCH and the FARAWAY NEARBY

In his sixth book, *Ghost Ranch and the Faraway Nearby* (University of New Mexico Press, 2009), Santa Fe fine art photographer Craig Varjabedian presents a breathtaking collection of over 90 black-and-white landscape vignettes. Rustic in setting, yet refined in texture and technique, these photographs capture the ethereal light and rugged scenery of Northern New Mexico’s fabled Ghost Ranch. The volume spans two decades of image-making by the author—including five years living in Abiquiú while commuting daily to Ghost Ranch to absorb the soulful beauty of its sacredness. Since then, Mr. Varjabedian has returned many times, resulting in several newer works never before exhibited in public. These images, interwoven with interpretive essays by writers Marin Sardy, Belden C. Lane, Jay Packer, Douglas Fairfield and Rob Craig—including an unpublished “Appreciation” by painter Georgia O’Keeffe of Ghost Ranch—reveal subtle expressions of Ghost Ranch that have touched and transformed visitors for centuries. www.craigvarjabedian.com

GHOST RANCH

From its earliest days as a resting place for dinosaurs (yielding now-famous fossil beds), Ghost Ranch has hosted visitors representing a microcosm of New Mexico’s history: pre-historic hunters, colonial Spanish rancheros, cattle rustlers, wranglers, environmentalists, social reformers, nuclear physicists—and the inimitable painter, Georgia O’Keeffe. Inexplicably drawn in by the surrounding vistas, mesas, hills, drifting clouds and boundless skies, Ms. O’Keeffe found a singular place where the landscape became one with her emotions and artistic expressions—where depth and focus set afire the spatial orientation of natural objects she painted—magically pulling her into her creative source.

In *Ghost Ranch: A Place of Sojourns*, Marin Sardy writes: “That changing light gets captured by the colored cliffs, which act like prisms in the way they rearrange, magnify, and transmute the sun and air, so the rock formations never look the same from one moment to the next. It is as if they wish to tell the world that Ghost Ranch always has been and will forever be a place of sojourns...where visitors rarely stay long but invariably leave somehow changed.”

Mr. Varjabedian himself has been drawn to similar aspects of Ghost Ranch’s charm. Widely acclaimed for his images embracing people and places of the West, this photographer’s 35-year career embraces a deep grasp of photographic techniques. Yet his gift is his intuitive ability to make authentic and compelling images full of light and life. “I wanted the land to tell me how to photograph it,” Mr. Varjabedian says. “I look at it from the perspective that I went there to learn something, and the camera became the vehicle to do that. I knew I was done when the place stopped giving me pictures.”

49th ANNUAL WESTERN HERITAGE AWARDS

Conferred by the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum in Oklahoma City, the premier museum of classic and contemporary western art, the Western Heritage Awards honor those whose exemplary works in literature, music, film and TV reflect significant stories of the American West. www.nationalcowboymuseum.org