

Dreaming of New Mexico

Well-known photographer documents his passion

In the fall of 2007, shortly after Craig Varjabedian completed his book "Ghost Ranch and the Faraway Nearby," he was approached by The University of New Mexico Press to create a book celebrating New Mexico's Centennial of Statehood in 2012. It was one of those "sí, yo puedo" moments, as we say in New Mexico.

Varjabedian felt it was time to write a love letter to this place he first visited in his twenties and fell in love with in the pre-dawn light on the Santa Fe Plaza, this place that he pines for when he is away, unlike anywhere else he has lived. For him, New Mexico is magical, a wedding of old and new, simple yet complex, profound.

The original plan was for a book of photographs from across the state with quotations by New Mexico authors. But as Craig began looking through his archives of images taken over the nearly three decades he has been photographing here, he decided not to cover the state geographically, but

rather put together a selection of photographs that give you its flavor. The images had to rise above being documentary and speak about the people and the landscape on an emotional level.

When Marin Sardy's short essay (Marin wrote the main essay in the Ghost Ranch book) began to develop, he decided to use her essay rather than a selection of quotations. In addition to Marin's essay, "A Particular Kind of Dream," Jeanetta Calhoun Mish brought a poet's insights into the character of the photographs. As often happens with creative projects, the book was beginning to take on a life of its own.

By the time the book was finished it included 90 black and white images, about 10 percent of them digital and about a third of them new, taken specifically for the book.



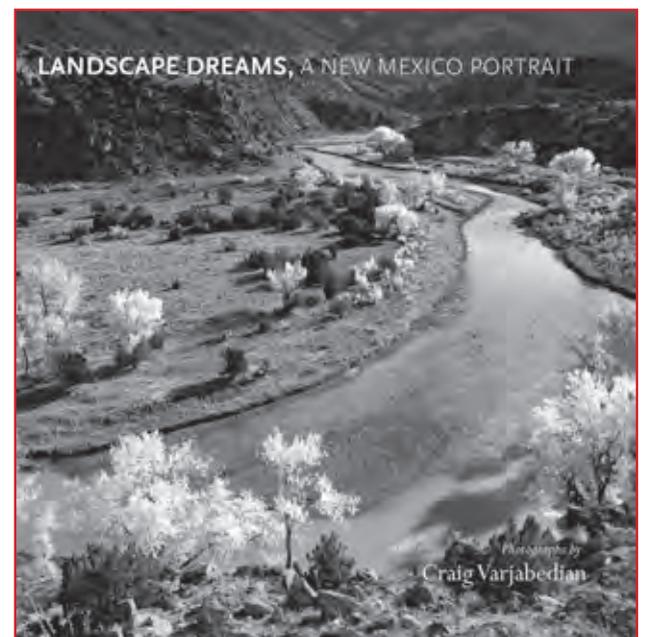
Photographer Craig Varjabedian. Photo by Harold Lee Jones.

No detail was left to chance; equally as important as the content was the selection of the image for the jacket. "Landscape Dreams" dictated that the image have some quality of a dream, something unexpected, the ability to seduce the viewer.

Varjabedian still prefers the process of the view camera. It is slower, allowing time for reflection, time to get to know a place. The images are presented in elegant duotone reproductions, providing a level of quality incredibly close to the originals.

"Landscape Dreams" is the seventh photography book by Varjabedian. When asked if he thought our changing times would mean that his next would be an Ebook, he responded: "Many books being published today, particularly books that are largely text based, will almost effortlessly translate to the electronic medium and customers seem poised to accept this new way of reading a book. Art books and photography books, in my opinion will always be an exception ... The choice of paper, the quality of the reproductions and the color and tactile quality of the cloth for the cover all combine to make up the viewer's entire experience with that book. My belief is that art presented in a printed book form can cause one to pause; to study what is being presented and contemplate the meaning of what has been viewed in a much more profound way than I believe can currently be achieved while viewing a book using an electronic device."

—Joan Fenicle is a photographer and artist.



Photograph ©Craig Varjabedian.

Landscape Dreams Photo Contest, the ultimate New Mexico photography contest with over \$8,000 in prizes, opens October 1 with entries due November 30. Enter at santafecreativetourism.org/landscape-dreams-photo-contest

Two exhibitions of selected photographs from "Landscape Dreams, a New Mexico Portrait," are currently planned for: The Afterimage Photography Gallery, Dallas, Texas – September 22-October 31 William R. Talbot Fine Art, Santa Fe, NM – November 23-December 29

Multi-media digital presentation and book signing: Friday, October 26, 6-7:30pm CCA Cinematheque, 1050 Old Pecos Trail, Santa Fe (hosted by Garcia Street Books)

Albuquerque book signings are planned next month; check our November Spotlights for details.

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