

# Ghost Ranch Spring Newsletter



Your Ghost Ranch Spring Newsletter  
Welcoming the Season!



Photo by David Manzanares

## NEW Oppenheimer Film Set Tour!

New Mexico is abuzz with *Oppenheimer's* domination at this year's *Academy Awards*. Partially filmed at Ghost Ranch, *Oppenheimer* took home several awards including Best Picture, Best Director, and Best Actor.

At present, scheduled tours of the *Oppenheimer* set at Ghost Ranch have been temporarily suspended and pop-up tours will be posted after April 10th, whenever possible. The tours will be on Saturday at 10 AM ONLY and bookable the prior Saturday starting at 10 AM, first come first serve after the tour is open online.

The tour will focus on the film set, replicating Los Alamos during the WWII years and the little-known relationship between Ghost Ranch and the Manhattan Project. The stunning 360-degree views from across the highway are worth the price of admission alone.

Please visit our [website](#) for dates and times.

## Cara Romero: The Gathering

Opening  
January 13, 2024  
4:00 PM - 7:00 PM

Through December 2024

Florence Hawley Ellis Museum  
of Anthropology

Ghost Ranch  
Abiquiú, New Mexico



Photo by Cara Romero

On January 13, 2024, more than 100 visitors came to the opening of *Cara Romero: The Gathering*, an extraordinary new exhibition in the Florence Hawley Ellis Museum of Anthropology, featuring the work by renowned Chemehuevi fine art photographer, Cara Romero. The exhibition, which will be on display through December 2024, features photographs of Indigenous women, many on horseback, heralding a world reborn.



On assignment for a special commission, Romero sought a place and people to create a singular photograph whose concept centered on uplifting the sacred role Native women hold in the world. Specifically, Romero set out to reexamine the worldviews embedded in the biblical story of the Four Horsemen by portraying instead four Native women bringing hope, joy, abundance, and prosperity.



This narrative contrasts with the traditional apocalyptic vision, instead offering a message of hope and rebirth, centering humanity's responsibility towards the health of our planet. The project found its perfect setting as a result of synchronicity and inspiration between Romero and arts professional Joanne Lefrak, who had recently begun her new role as Director of Experience and Social Impact at Ghost Ranch.

Romero's artistic practice and Lefrak's vision ultimately brought Indigenous women leaders to ride horseback in the breathtaking, world-famous landscape of Ghost Ranch, a place steeped in history, natural beauty, and spiritual resonance.



Romero, known for her staged and theatrical portrayals of contemporary Native life — which alternates between serious and whimsical approaches to narrative — doesn't simply snap photos of her surroundings. Instead, her photos layer content, time, and study. In the case of this project, Romero needed to examine the particulars of working with horses and riders; she needed time with the land to scout locations, consider the sun's trajectory, and prepare for a final production that united four inter-tribal women riding on horseback, carrying sacred items amidst an epic backdrop. This grouping of photographs provides viewers insight into the photographer's method; these photos render highlights from each day of the gathering that took place between nine women at Ghost Ranch in July 2023.

In this ambitious project, Romero brought together a diverse group of Native women - Trina Jae Reid (Diné), Juanita Toledo (Wawatowa, the Pueblo of Jemez), Keri Ataumbi (Kiowa), and Sonwai LaRance (Hopi, Tewa, Navajo, Assiniboine) - each symbolizing a facet of healing and rejuvenation. The artists were trained by experienced wrangler Bri Cimino, culminating in a dramatic final shoot overseen by a skilled production crew.

Ghost Ranch's Facilities team worked with the Museum team to transform the museum space. They installed brand-new flooring and repainted the walls, giving the museum a fresh new look for current and future exhibitions.

## Ghost Ranch Welcomes

### New Mexico Veterans for Art and Community Building

Nine veterans and two facilitators gathered for the first *Creativity, Connection, and Joy* workshop, led by Michelle Holdt, founder of Creative Compassionate from January 11 to 14, 2024.

The workshop took place the same weekend that Cara Romero's exhibition, *The Gathering* opened at the Florence Hawley Ellis Museum.

The retreat was made possible through a mini-grant from the Arts and the Military Initiative, a project of New Mexico Arts.

The Arts and the Military Initiative supports the larger mission of New Mexico Arts, which is to ensure that "the arts are central to the lives of New Mexicans." New Mexico is home to more than 140,000 veterans, and this initiative aims to:

- (1) Create more opportunities for military and veteran audiences – including active-duty service members, reservists, National Guard members, veterans, their families, caregivers, and others – to meaningfully engage with the arts; and
- (2) Build capacity among New Mexico organizations to offer arts programs for military-connected participants.



The veterans' retreat focused on mindfulness, restorative circles, art making, and creating healing connections amongst participants – themes that resound in Romero's work and creative process. And as Romero worked with the "golden hour" – those luminous moments before sunset – the veterans' gathering generated a similar light, one that they were sure they would carry with them, as they returned to their regular lives.

As they wrapped up their "gathering" time together, the participants shared their heartfelt thoughts about their life-changing experience at the ranch:

*"I'm still processing the soulful experience that just happened."*

*"I'm still basking in the sister/brotherhood that was our 4 days at the Ghost Ranch. A truly unforgettable event. Egos were left behind, and open hearts ruled. The retreat is changing my life."*

*"A few times in my life I've been blessed to be in a sacred space and recognized it in the moment. That's how our weekend felt to me."*

And Michelle Holdt shared, *"It was an incredible honor to serve veterans and to spend the weekend at such a majestic place. I am eager to return and continue this deeply meaningful and vital work."*





## AmeriCorps Is Not a Moment, It's a Movement

Ghost Ranch was thrilled and honored to have been selected to host an AmeriCorps team, starting January 5 until mid-April. These young adults have been working on building trails and improving accessibility and signage for trails.

For the past three decades, AmeriCorps alumni, members, and volunteers have become the next generation's thought leaders, innovators, and changemakers in global corporations, national social good organizations, and public service fields. National service provides opportunities for Americans to serve their country domestically, address the nation's most pressing challenges, improve lives and communities, and strengthen civic engagement.

Outdoor Adventures and AmeriCorps have also been hard at work updating old interpretive and nature trails on the Ranch, both on the mesa and out in the Painted Desert. They are especially proud to share their new version of the *Mesa Nature Trail*; it comes complete with an adorable children's coloring book and a Mesa Nature Trail Guide that educates Ranch guests on desert flora.



The updated Piedra Lumbre trail will be a new addition to Outdoor Adventure's offerings of guided hikes on the Ranch. AmeriCorps has been spending many long days and putting in a lot of elbow grease to turn this decades-old 'out and back' trail into a loop that takes you through multiple ecosystems and habitats within our desert biome. When completed, this trail will be a lovely and educational guided hike for day guests and visiting school groups.

Also on their checklist is helping complete an accessible trail that encircles the alfalfa grounds (pictured above).

AmeriCorps is enjoying their stay in the newly renovated Yucca and Roadrunner buildings on the mesa. They make their breakfasts and dinners in the communal kitchen there, sharing prep and clean up, but eat with staff and guests in the Dining Hall at lunch. They have made use of most of our hiking trails, and have taken pottery classes with Barbara Campbell and stone carving with Robin Keck. On weekends they often pile in their bright red van and head for Santa Fe or Taos, or set off on other adventures...although sometimes it is just grocery shopping.

Finally, AmeriCorps has been contributing so much to other organizations in the community, from building kestrel boxes with Abiquiu Lake Amigos to helping out at the Espanola Animal Shelter, Española Humane.

**AmeriCorps we LOVE you!**

## Sustainably Yours: Stewarding our Sacred Lands

*Parts I & II*





## Cultivating a Greener Future with Ghost Ranch *Part I*



As spring breathes new life into our beloved Ghost Ranch, we are excited to share our commitment to sustainability and renewable energy.

Ghost Ranch is embarking on an awesome journey towards a greener future, and we invite you to join us every step of the way.

With the publishing of this newsletter, we are kicking off a fundraiser to support our efforts in replenishing and enhancing the natural beauty of Ghost Ranch. Every tree planted represents a commitment to preserving our ecosystem for future generations.

Picture yourself in the awe-inspiring landscape of Ghost Ranch, where orchards of fruit trees thrive, harmonizing with a vibrant ecosystem of blossoms, bees, birds, and ladybugs, enhancing the beauty of our lives. Envision the fertile earth replenished with hearty cottonwoods and drought-resistant junipers breathing life and love into every corner of our sacred sanctuary. Please help make this dream a reality with your **gift**.



Do you remember the sad occasion of 2023, when Ghost Ranch lost two iconic cottonwoods, forever changing the landscape in front of the dining hall? Standing tall for centuries, one gracefully and silently fell in the dead of night during heavy rains, while the other, weakened by illness required careful removal.

Our ambitious initiative to enhance the ranch's ecological footprint through planting and replacing fallen trees, promoting biodiversity, and mitigating climate change comes with a price tag. We've done our homework: planting and caring for a tree over two years costs \$500.00.

Considering the costs involved, we're reaching out to our community, inviting you to join us in this journey towards a greener future. Together, we can make a significant impact on Ghost Ranch and the planet we call home.

**And never forget... you are *tree-mendous*!**

Your support through donations, volunteering, or simply spreading the word is deeply appreciated as we work towards a more sustainable and vibrant environment for future generations.

To donate in support of our tree-planting initiative please visit:  
<https://www.ghost ranch.org/donate/>

## Solar Array: The Sun will be "Working" at Ghost Ranch this Summer *Part II*



As Ghost Ranch jumps feet first into 2024, we want to impress upon our guests, our staff, and Mother Earth that we are making big progress in reducing our carbon footprint.

Thanks to a collaborative effort between SunPeak, Ghost Ranch, and a generous donation from a Ghost Ranch supporter, we will install a ground-mounted solar array just west of the main entrance, north of US 84.

As the sun shines on Ghost Ranch this summer, these panels will help us

produce about 170,000 kilowatt hours (kWh) of clean, cost-effective electricity for the Ranch.

This project is a win for the Ranch in many ways. First, since most of the utility-provided electricity in the area is produced by coal, utilizing solar technology to harness energy from the sun significantly reduces our reliance on fossil fuels. These solar panels will reduce the Ranch's carbon footprint by 340,000 pounds of carbon dioxide every year. This makes the Ranch more sustainable and helps us do our part to combat climate change and protect the environment for future generations.

Second, the system provides a strong economic benefit. Solar equipment and installation costs have become quite competitive, making this project an excellent use of donor-provided funds. For every \$1 received in donated funds, the Ranch will reap about \$3 in electrical cost savings. With solar, the Ranch will be saving \$0.15 for every kilowatt hour of electricity produced from the sun instead of sourcing the electricity from the grid. On an annual basis, we expect to save about \$25,000 in total, and that savings will continue each year for the lifetime of the solar system, which is upwards of 25 years.

Third, the system will also contribute to the local grid's reliability. Reducing our electric load by using solar power during periods of high demand (i.e. the middle of the day), helps the grid respond more efficiently to other local energy customers.

Fourth, this project aligns with our sustainability values and allows us to model best practices to the thousands of visitors we host each year. The message that the Ranch uses an abundant New Mexico resource – the sun – to produce clean, renewable energy and also does so in a financially prudent way represents our organization well.

Lastly, solar power offers scalability, which means incremental future expansion of the system is attainable. This installation happening this spring is Phase One, and as a result, the Ranch will immediately reduce its carbon footprint and expenses. As more funding becomes available, additional solar capacity can easily be added and would get us closer to our goal of net-zero emissions operations.

As you know, the sun is intense at the Ranch! We're excited to put the sun to good work producing clean energy that will reduce our carbon footprint and help us save on our operational costs. We are already looking forward to Phase Two and beyond; if you'd like to help us continue on our clean energy trajectory, please consider donating to help us build more solar capacity.

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## Summer is ready for you!

Summer 2024 is ready for your participation! We have an outstanding lineup and all classes through August are open for registration.

Our 'new' website is easier than ever to navigate, our Reservation Specialists are happy to assist, and once you arrive our Experience Experts will help guide you through.

Our College Staff arrives in early June, and a week later we will host an early Community Camp (17-20). Church Youth Camp follows on the 23<sup>rd</sup> through the 28th; we have space for a couple more youth groups, so spread the word.

July programming kicks off with Family Week on June 30th through July 5. Make your reservations for the Annual Ghost Ranch 4th of July parade now!



**Attention Teens:** Ghost Ranch is offering a Bird-Watching Camp just for you! Led by Raymond Van Buskirk, this amazing retreat will be held at Casa del Sol.

The Festival of Arts returns to its six-night schedule; July 7-13, 14-20, and 21-27. Many old favorites can be found in the lineup (Linocut, Stained Glass Ceramics, Silver, Hiking, Maps+, and Art Welding) but check out the exciting and diverse workshops offered by new instructors throughout July.

Here is a sampling:



- Paper Bird Sculpture  
Roberto Benavidez (2 weeks!)
- Improv for Writing  
Mari Kempes
- Plein Air Painting  
Andrea Vargas
- Beyond the Sheet (Paper Making) Chauncey Foster
- Batik and Indigo  
Gasali Adeyemo
- Yoga: Calling the Spirit Back  
Edie Tsong

The ranch will ring with the sound of music every week in July -Ghost Ranch Chorale, Earth My Body, Water My Blood: Singing and Drumming, and Gospel Choir: Union and Reunion. And, of course, there will be drawing and painting classes each week (Jennifer Pickett, Patsy Welch) as well as art lecture classes (Jenny Hirsh). Please take a look!



But wait, there's more; our summer does not end with July this year! Batik and Indigo instructor, Gasali Adeyemo, is staying around to help out with Community Camp and then we are hosting A Preacher's Retreat led by working preachers Karoline Lewis, Joy J. Moore, and Matt Skinner. Register now - 80+ other preachers already have!

Join us for Science Week happening the first week of August!

From the 4th to the 9th, dive into a variety of fascinating subjects including Botanical Portraits with Helen Byers—Paleontology—the Geology of Ghost Ranch—and the Neuroscience of Creativity.

Extend your stay through the weekend and indulge in additional activities such as a pastel class with Juliana Crowover— a herbal lecture by Denise Thronas— or captivating Astro-Photography nights hosted by the Waynes, featuring our telescope.

Also, don't miss out on 'Oklahoma Camp' with a thought-provoking class titled '63 Questions from the Book of Mark', led by Rev. Jim Miller (and remember, you don't need to be from Oklahoma to participate).

Lastly, August concludes with Writers Roundup, a writer's immersion led by acclaimed authors Lesley Poling Kempes and Robin McClean.

Come for one week, stay for 3! There is an offering for everyone, but space is limited! **Visit our website and choose your place now.**



**BLOSSOMS & BONES**  
**GHOST RANCH MUSIC FESTIVAL**  
GHOST RANCH • ABIQUIU, NM

**Have you heard?! We're revealing the BLOSSOMS & BONES Ghost Ranch Music Festival's lineup on APRIL 2!**

Get ready for another epic weekend of music (and more) coming your way on September 13 & 14.

Stay tuned - this lineup is going to be amazing!

[GHOSTRANCHMUSICFEST.COM](http://GHOSTRANCHMUSICFEST.COM)

Remember, we're just an email away at [info@ghostranch.org](mailto:info@ghostranch.org).  
Wishing you a season blossoming with happiness and new beginnings!