

***“We Are Continually Exposed to the Flashbulb of Death:”
The Photographs of Allen Ginsberg (1953-1996).***

February 20 - April 5, 2015

Curated by Barbara Fischer and John Shoesmith.

Presentation House Gallery’s forthcoming exhibition celebrates the artistic pursuits—both visual and verbal—of Allen Ginsberg (1926-1997), one of the most prolific poets of the twentieth century.

During his career as a revolutionary writer, composer, and activist, Ginsberg extensively documented his life in photographs, amassing an archive that now encompasses thousands of images. Last year, the University of Toronto received a donation of 7,600 of Ginsberg’s prints, the largest single collection in the world. Presentation House Gallery is thrilled to bring a selection of these images to British Columbia for the first time.

Taken over the course of four decades, the photographs juxtapose Ginsberg’s ever-changing surroundings with a steadfast group of friends, lovers and muses, alongside fellow Beat poets including Jack Kerouac, Lucien Carr, Neal Cassady and William S. Burroughs. The prints extend beyond mere depiction, however, tracing the poet’s literary influences through music, political freedoms and even Buddhist philosophy. Ginsberg captioned each of the gelatin silver prints in handwritten script, further integrating his photographic and textual mediums. Indeed, the same shrewd honesty and liberated spontaneity that guide Ginsberg’s poetry are also channelled through his lens.

Organized by the University of Toronto Art Centre and the Justina M. Barnicke Gallery with the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library at the University of Toronto, with special thanks to the Larry & Cookie Rossy Family Foundation. This exhibition features a brochure with essays by Louis Kaplan, Professor of History and Theory of Photography and New Media, University of Toronto, and curator John Shoesmith of the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto.

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