

Press Release

For Immediate Release

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**Muses & Self:
Photographs by Allen Ginsberg**

with a special preview of

**A Picture of My Mind:
Poems Written by Allen Ginsberg's Photographs**

August 10, 2023 through September 23, 2023

Exhibition Reception: Thursday, August 10th

The Fahey/Klein Gallery is pleased to present ***Muses & Self: Photographs by Allen Ginsberg***. This exhibition of Ginsberg's personal photographs balances our understanding of the public, outspoken poet and most prominent figure of the Beat Generation. At his core, Allen Ginsberg was a witness and chronicler of the world; his profound admiration for the beauty of the vernacular, intense observation, and celebration of the present moment guided his photography and poetry. The photographs included in this exhibition are joyful, often tender, sometimes profound while at other times humorous – and capture Ginsberg's numerous meaningful relationships.

"The poignancy of a photograph comes from looking back to a fleeting moment in a floating world."
– Allen Ginsberg

Ginsberg had two distinct photographic periods, from the early 1950s into the 1960s and then the 1980s until his death in 1997. Ginsberg initially picked up a used Kodak Retina camera to take snapshots of the playful nature of his now-famous friends, including writers Jack Kerouac, William S. Burroughs, Gregory Corso, and Neal Cassady. Ginsberg lost this beloved camera, and his photographic tendencies went dormant. Until twenty years later, when his rediscovered negatives and prints ignited his second dalliance with photography. With encouragement from photographers Robert Frank and Bernice Abbott, Ginsberg invested in better photographic equipment and made new portraits of longtime friends and new acquaintances – including Francesco Clemente, Jean-Michel Basquiat, Toni Morrison, and Patti Smith. These subtle portraits are filled with complex realizations about his life that are echoed in the meticulous handwritten captions often incorporated beneath the images.

In conjunction with our exhibition of photographs taken by Allen Ginsberg, the Fahey/Klein Gallery is pleased to host a preview of ***A Picture of My Mind: Poems Written by Allen Ginsberg's Photographs***, a collection of ekphrastic poems generated by an AI-powered version of Ginsberg's own text corpus in response to specific photographs. Developed in collaboration with poetry collective theVERSEverse, recognized as leaders in the contemporary linguistic avant-garde, and theVERSEverse member Ross Goodwin, a pioneering code poet whose "word.camera" (2018) turns digital image data into text, ***A Picture of My Mind*** enacts a dialogue between Ginsberg's portraiture and poetry, and is supported by the Allen Ginsberg Estate and the Tezos Foundation.

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“My poetry has always been a picture of my mind moving.”

- Allen Ginsberg, *Illuminated Poems*

In his creative works, Allen Ginsberg was known to blend text and image metaphorically – as well as literally, by handwriting captions on his photographs. In celebration of Ginsberg’s avowedly experimental impulses, this collaboration utilizes an AI-powered camera to “read” a selection of Ginsberg photographs on view during the exhibition, translating his iconic vision of American counterculture into poetic responses influenced simultaneously by Ginsberg’s own canon, his undeniable presence woven inextricably into the written record of the internet, and parsed by AI. The resulting poems illuminate their companion photographs, transcending obvious interpretations of this towering literary figure to gaze more deeply into his watchful eye, and reveal the subtler echoes of his enduring voice. Just as Ginsberg innovated with automated writing techniques and popular technologies, this collection of AI generated poems taps the contemporary linguistic avant-garde to engage ritualistically, intuitively, and meaningfully with Ginsberg’s visual and poetic vernaculars.

Allen Ginsberg (1926-1997) was born in Newark, New Jersey, and emerged as a prominent voice in the countercultural movement of the 1950s and 1960s. His most famous work, "Howl," a powerful and controversial poem that challenged societal conventions and explored themes of sexuality, spirituality, and political dissent, became a touchstone for a generation seeking liberation and authenticity. Ginsberg's relentless pursuit of personal and artistic freedom made him an iconic figure, and his activism and advocacy for social justice, including his involvement in anti-war and gay rights movements, further solidified his place in American literary and cultural history. Through his groundbreaking poetry and fearless exploration of taboo subjects, Ginsberg remains an enduring symbol of artistic rebellion and the search for individual and collective enlightenment.

About theVERSEverse:

Founded in late 2021 by the writers Ana Maria Caballero, Kalen Iwamoto and Sasha Stiles, theVERSEverse is a hybrid literary gallery and collective where poem = work of art. Poems and projects curated by theVERSEverse have traveled around the world as well as in the metaverse, garnering international acclaim and the support of visionary cultural figures and art institutions. Learn more at theVERSEverse.com.

Press images available upon request

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