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Ginsberg, Giard and Bronson

By **Chris Dupuis**

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We Are Continually Exposed to the Flashbulb of Death showcases three of history's most important queer artists, who will be shown together for the first time. This includes Allen Ginsberg and his collection of images originally intended for a private collection. Credit: **University of Toronto Art Centre**

It's a bit overwhelming to imagine simultaneous exhibitions by Allen Ginsberg, Robert Giard and AA Bronson. But that's exactly what the University of Toronto Art Centre has done this fall. Under the mantle *We Are Continually Exposed to the Flashbulb of Death*, three of history's most important queer artists will be shown together for the first time.

The spark began with Ginsberg when the centre recently acquired nearly 8,000 of his photographs from a private donor. Focusing on his early adulthood and the emergence of the Beat movement, the images were created originally as a private collection for the artist. Captioned by the legendary poet's own words, they give insight into his beginnings, his lovers and his ever-widening circle of friends.

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From there, Robert Giard's portraits of gay and lesbian writers came into the mix. Inspired by a performance of Larry Kramer's *The Normal Heart* in 1985, Giard set out to document a sector of the literary world that was quickly disappearing. Shot from the mid '80s until his death in 2002, the series includes images of Edward Albee, Michael Cunningham and Ginsberg himself. As well as capturing pivotal literary figures, the images observe the transformation of the LGBT movement from a private, intimate, outlawed existence to one of visibility, acceptance and celebration.

AA Bronson completes the program with a career-spanning mix of works. Including early and recent self-portraits, it also features his installation *Tent of Healing*, a shamanistic invocation of queer spirits as a means of coping with the trauma of AIDS. As the only surviving member of the artists' group General

Idea, Bronson's presence serves to connect the other historical exhibitions to the culture of queer art production today.

"All three exhibitions picture times and people, which reconnect to Ginsberg's work from the vantage point of the present," gallery director Barbara Fischer says. "Together, they tell a story of nearly 60 years of change and a remarkable, ongoing social revolution."

We Are Continually Exposed to the Flashbulb of Death

Tues, Sept 2–Sat, Nov 15

University of Toronto Art Centre, 1st floor

15 King's College Circle

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