



2016 KRESGE
EMINENT ARTIST

LENI
SINCLAIR

THE KRESGE FOUNDATION

CONTENTS

- 5 Forward**
By Rip Rapson
President and CEO
The Kresge Foundation
- 6 Artist's Statement**
- Life**
- 10 Leni Sinclair: Back In The Picture**
By Sue Levytsky
- 22 A Reader's Guide**
- 24 Photographs: The Music**

- 13 Other Voices**
Hugh "Buck" Davis
- 27** Bill Harris
- 35** Robin Eichele
- 47** Harvey Ovshinsky
- 55** Peter Werbe
- 71** Juanita Moore and Lars Bjorn
- 85** Judge Damon J. Keith
- 97** Rebecca Derminer
- 97** Barbara Weinberg Barefield
- 40 Coming to Amerika: Leni Sinclair Chronicled Our Dreams and Aspirations**
By George Tysh

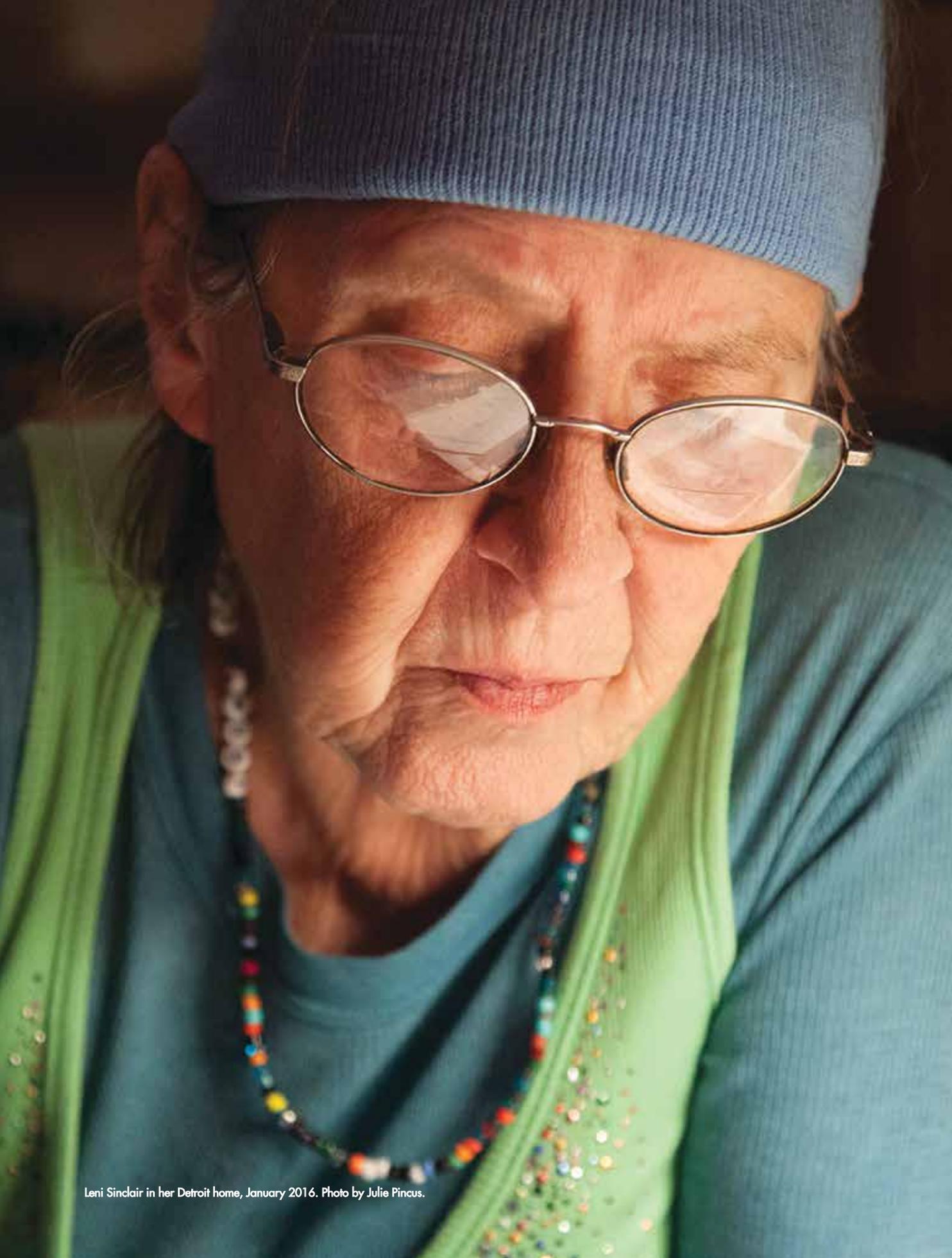
- 42 The Greatness of Leni Sinclair**
By John Sinclair
- Art**
- 52 When Photography is Revolution: Notes on Leni Sinclair**
By Cary Loren
- 62 Leni Sinclair: Out of the Dark**
By Herb Boyd
- Activism**
- 68 The Evolution of a Commune**
By Leni Sinclair

- 76 "John Sinclair"**
By John Lennon
- 78 A People's History of the CIA Bombing Conspiracy (The Keith Case): Or, How the White Panthers Saved the Movement**
By Hugh "Buck" Davis
- 90 Photographs: The Times**
- 100 Biography**
- 107 Our Congratulations**
Michelle Perron
Director, Kresge Arts in Detroit
- 107 A Note From Richard L. Rogers**
President
College for Creative Studies

- Kresge Arts in Detroit**
- 108** 2015-16 Kresge Arts in Detroit Advisory Council
- 108** The Kresge Eminent Artist Award and Winners
- 110** About The Kresge Foundation
Board of Trustees
Credits
Acknowledgements



Bob Seger concert, Pine Knob Music Theatre, Clarkston, Michigan, 1976.



Leni Sinclair in her Detroit home, January 2016. Photo by Julie Pincus.

FOIRE WORD

I don't know if we've had an Eminent Artist quite so modest about her artistic output as Leni Sinclair. To hear her tell it, she *just happened* to take a lot of photos while she was busy doing other things, such as trying to tilt the axis of the socio-political-cultural world as we knew it. And it *just so happened* that some of those photographs captured the energy and excitement of an era – the anarchic, the madcap, the quixotic.

And like all *just-so* stories, that explanation is *just too pat*.

Leni Sinclair didn't *just happen* to get these shots. She was both an instigator in the movements of the 1960s and an eagle-eyed documentarian.

She wanted to capture moments for posterity, turn glimpses into gazes. She wanted us to know what we'd missed if we weren't there to see saxophonist John Coltrane in his trance of creation at Detroit's Drome Lounge. Or the gentleman we now know as Iggy Pop, twisted like a serpent against a microphone stand at the old Grande Ballroom. Or the Nigerian rebel musician Fela, performing at the Fox Theatre, fists thrust above his head, his eyes burning with defiance. Many of us don't know what it was like to be there. Yet, through Leni's photos we are transported to the front row.

Artistic expression is often a mixture of the beautiful and provocative, the extraordinary and the everyday. But it is always a highly individualized reflection on questions and ideas rooted in our culture, history, and sense of possibility.

Thank you, Leni Sinclair, for reminding us of that. We are honored to recognize you as the Kresge Eminent Artist for 2016.

Rip Rapson
President and CEO
The Kresge Foundation

ARTIST'S STATEMENT

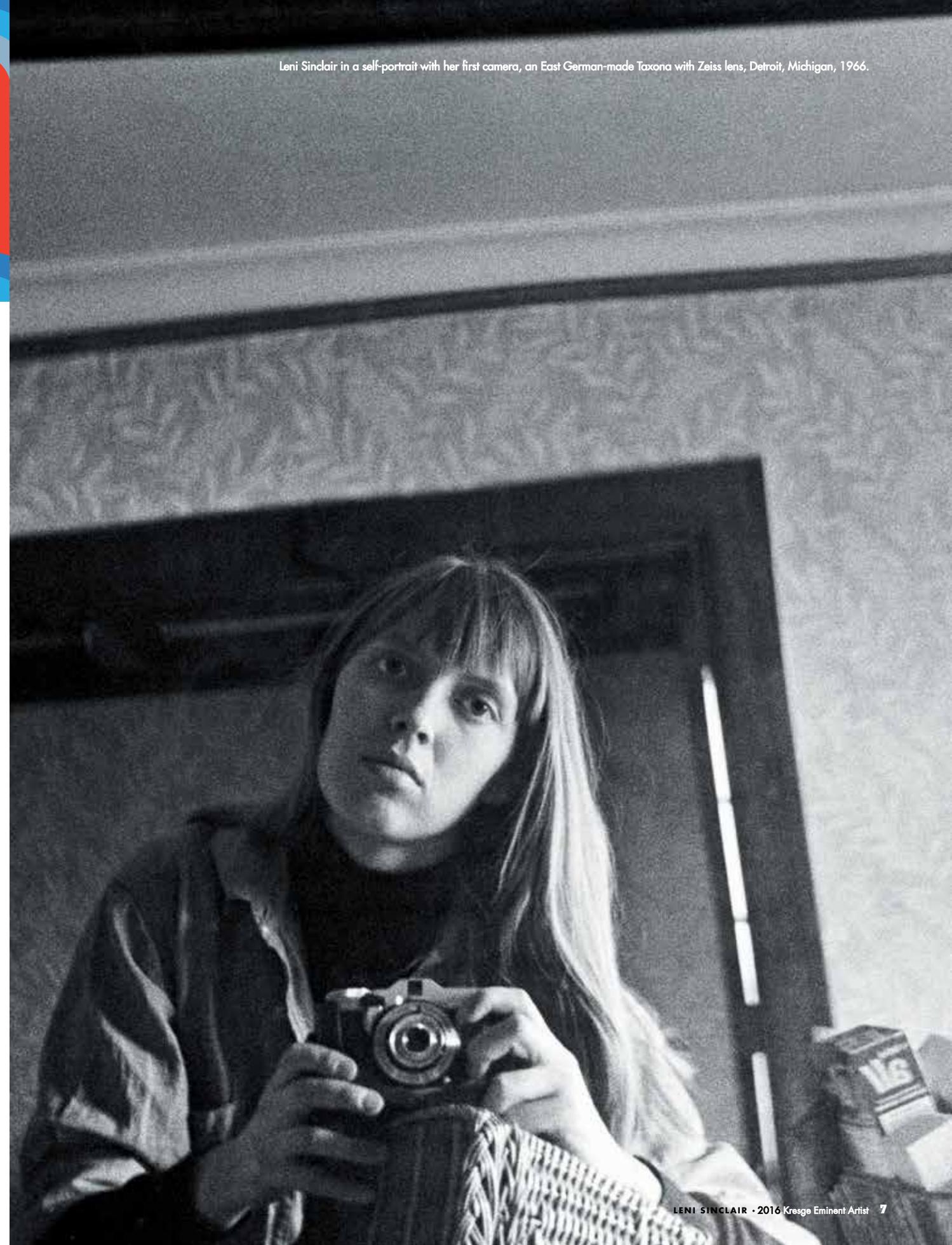
I decided to become an artist on November 1, 1964, the day I joined the Detroit Artists Workshop and adopted its philosophy, which has guided me the rest of my life. The philosophy says it doesn't matter what kind of job you need to hold to keep bread on the table - if you think of yourself as an artist in your heart, you know you are far more than that job and no one can take away your dignity and your sense of purpose in life.

Since I already owned a camera, my purpose in life became documenting all the activities and movements I became involved in, from anti-war and civil rights demonstrations to the Detroit Artists Workshop, the White Panther Party, and so much more. But I was especially obsessed with photographing musicians, which is how I amassed an archive of tens of thousands of photos of musicians who were mostly from Detroit or passing through Detroit. My archive is a virtual Who's Who of Detroit musicians, from jazz, blues, R&B, Motown, rock'n'roll, reggae, African music and more.

Since my arrival in Detroit over 50 years ago, the city has lost almost two thirds of its population, the magnificent train station is now a ruin, and parts of Detroit look like a war zone. But the music never stopped, and never will. And that is what makes Detroit such an exciting place to live, a place where I can be myself. I may not have much money, but I feel wealthy beyond measure. In the words of the great Bob Seger, "These are the memories that make me a wealthy soul."

Leni Sinclair, 2016

Leni Sinclair in a self-portrait with her first camera, an East German-made Taxona with Zeiss lens, Detroit, Michigan, 1966.





Life

"The turning point in the history of Western civilization was reached with the invention of the electric guitar." - Leni Sinclair

Leni Sinclair: Back In The Picture

By Sue Levitsky

PHOTOGRAPHER AND CULTURAL ACTIVIST LENI SINCLAIR STEPS INTO THE SPOTLIGHT AS THE 2016 KRESGE EMINENT ARTIST, AWARDED IN RECOGNITION OF HER DOCUMENTATION OF DETROIT'S COUNTERCULTURAL MOVEMENT AND ITS ACCOMPANYING ROCK SCENE OF THE 1960s AND 1970s.



The MC5: Fred Smith, Michael Davis, Dennis Thompson, Rob Tyner, Wayne Kramer, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1967.

Anyone who has seen them has a favorite. Whether it is one of her brooding MC5 group portraits, jazz band leader Sun Ra in full “intergalactic” gear, John Coltrane melded to his saxophone, or Black Panthers in strident salute, Leni Sinclair’s photographs radiate the zeitgeist of the 1960s and 1970s as no others. Authentic, raw and powerful, her images singularly captured the era’s explosive mix of music, youth, politics and race as “she was always shooting from inside out, never outside in,” says her

friend and colleague, *Fifth Estate* founder Harvey Ovshinsky. “That’s why her photos are so compelling, so exciting. As Robert Capa said, ‘If your pictures aren’t good enough, you’re not close enough.’”

Leni was not only close enough but was, in many cases, a progenitor of the countercultural revolution as it erupted in Detroit, helping found the Red Door Gallery, Detroit Artists Workshop, Trans-Love Energies, White Panther Party, Rainbow People’s Party, *The Ann Arbor Sun* and *The Detroit Sun*. Documentarian, activist and advocate, Leni was a “frontovnik” to use World War II correspondent



Group of demonstrators at the historic March on Washington, D.C., August 28, 1963.

Vasily Grossman’s term – a front liner in the anti-war movement, the fight for civil rights, prison reform and social justice.

“Leni Sinclair both contributed to the social changes of the 1960s and 1970s and documented the movement’s fleeting moments for posterity,” says Kresge Foundation President and CEO Rip Rapson. “Through her ceaselessly curious and probing lens, she has built a riveting and expansive body of work that enables us to understand those times – particularly from a Detroit perspective – at a more profound and multifaceted level.”

Now 76, Leni lives in a modest home on the edge of Detroit, surrounded by boxes of slides, mountains of negative proof sheets and mounting requests for exhibitions and use of her iconic photos. Her images are increasingly showcased in museums, such as Detroit’s Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History, which held a solo exhibition of her photos in 2009, and will be included in the Detroit Institute of Arts’ upcoming exhibition, “Detroit After Dark.” Her photo of Nigerian musician Fela Kuti became the poster for the 2010 Tony-award winning musical “FELA!” A definitive book of her photographs awaits publication while “Louder Than Love,” the acclaimed documentary on the Grande Ballroom, features much of her work.

Leni’s main preoccupation at the moment, however, is fulfilling her commitment to The Knight Foundation – a significant grant supports her creation of a database and online archive chosen from her more than 57,000 photos of Detroit’s musicians, a project stemming from her 1984 book, “Detroit Jazz Who’s Who.” “Leni’s archive of Detroit jazz musicians is an absolute treasure,” says jazz historian Jim Gallert. “Her pictures will turn out to be one of the major resources of jazz history in the country.”

“In venerating a chronicler of Detroit’s countercultural history of the 1960s and 1970s, a cult figure with an underground reputation, The Kresge Foundation has made a thrilling leap in naming photographer Leni Sinclair as its Eminent Artist of 2016,” says Nancy Watson Barr, curator of photography at The Detroit Institute of Arts.



Olga Arndt and Ernst Arndt with Leni, age 1, and sisters Irmegard (center) and Hiledegard. Königsberg, East Prussia, 1941.

Born in Turbulent Times

Leni Sinclair was born Magdalene Arndt on March 8, 1940, in what was then Königsberg, East Prussia (now Kaliningrad, Russia). An ancient city founded in 1255 by the Teutonic Knights during the Northern Crusades, Königsberg was largely destroyed during World War II, forcing Leni’s family to evacuate from their home.

“The Russians had begun their offensive against Nazi Germany in 1944 but evacuation of the populace – mainly women, children and the elderly – was not authorized by the Nazi government until January 1945. If you tried to leave before that, without permission, you would be shot,” Leni says in discussing her childhood. As the Red Army had already conquered Poland and cut off East Prussia, the only way to leave was to cross the frozen Vistula Lagoon to reach Danzig/Gdansk for evacuation by sea. Leni, her mother and her three siblings were among the refugees to survive the journey, crossing the ice in horse-drawn wagons while being attacked by Soviet aerial bombers and fighter aircraft. They were part



of the largest exodus in human history – 31 million people, including ethnic Germans, were moved within Central and Eastern Europe between 1944 and 1948.

The Arndt family was eventually assigned permanent residence on a collective farm in Vahldorf, a Saxon village near Magdeburg in the German Democratic Republic (GDR or East Germany). Upon completing the equivalent of eighth grade, Leni, a gifted student, was streamed into an accelerated teacher-training program – educators were badly needed in the new country.

But her selection evinced what would become a lifelong political activism. “You had to stand up in a ceremony at graduation and declare you didn’t believe in God,” she says. “I wasn’t religious but how can they tell me not to believe in something? I refused to comply and wasn’t allowed to graduate.” She soon escaped East Germany, making her way to West Germany, “a trip still possible” in 1958, before the erection of the Berlin Wall in 1960. The only bit of home she brought with her was a camera purchased with 200 GDR marks, a going-away gift from her mother.

A Radical Perspective

“My cousin Otto had found good fortune in America years before me. He inspired me in my dreams,” says Leni, in remembering her determination to come to America and be part of the bohemian jazz scene she romanticized as a teenager. Leni arrived in the USA in 1959, sailing aboard the S.S. United States to New York City from the German port of Bremerhaven. She settled in Detroit, rooming with relatives who sponsored her trip.

They would also find her jobs as a nanny and live-in maid, which is how she found herself living and working in Grosse Pointe, Michigan. Her new home in the exclusive lakeshore community provided the unsettling view of buses arriving from Detroit and spilling out the “African-American cooks, laundresses, gardeners, here to work for the day. It reminded me of Johannesburg. I grew more radicalized just by watching what was happening around me,” says Leni. “I didn’t leave my ideology behind when I came to the United States, I was radical before I arrived.”

She began journalism classes at Wayne State University (WSU) in 1960 but says she quickly realized that the language requirements were too arduous, so she switched to geography.

After a year’s sabbatical in Germany visiting her



Top: Leni and her sisters working on a collective farm in Vahldorf, Germany, 1955. Photo by Otto Klemm. Bottom: Leni posing for her neighbor in Grosse Pointe, 1960. Photo by Chet Greiling.

family, Leni returned to Detroit and WSU, where she published a story about her East German experiences in the *Monteith Journal*. Her words garnered the interest of Professor Otto Feinstein and Leni began working as his assistant. Feinstein had come from the University of Chicago to teach political science at WSU’s Monteith College, an alternative liberal arts college with small classes. Feinstein was also the founding editor of *New University Thought* in 1959 – one of the most influential left-wing journals of its day. She maintained the subscriber rolls for the magazine and would come to assist in all aspects of publishing – mimeographing, collating, inking and helping distribute the publication – tasks she would later manage and expand upon at the Detroit Artists Workshop Press.

Red Door to the Detroit Artists Workshop

Leni was already a member of the avant-garde Red Door Gallery when she met John Sinclair in 1964. A forerunner of the Detroit Artists Workshop, the Red Door celebrated art in all its forms and served as a combination rehearsal studio and exhibition space. “We did happenings, art installations. If we had known anything about the art movement in New York, we might have called it Fluxus,” she remembers. Two of its founders, poet George Tysh and jazz artist Charles Moore, became lifelong friends and frequent subjects for Leni.

The opportunity to photograph her musical idols in performance arrived when 26-year old John Sinclair invited Leni to accompany him on his forays into Detroit’s jazz clubs. John was then a graduate student at WSU and the Detroit music critic for *Downbeat* magazine. The two would find much in common, including a love of progressive jazz and a dedication to artistic and political freedom. Despite her misgivings – as a liberated woman she didn’t believe in marriage – they wed in June 1965. (Leni and John would have two daughters: Marion Sunny Sinclair, born in 1967, and Celia Sanchez Mao Sinclair, born in 1970 while John Sinclair was incarcerated in a Michigan state prison.)

“When I met John, radicalism took a different turn. It didn’t mean going to meetings and demonstrating with placards. It meant creating a whole new society we could feel comfortable in and of course, that included being



Top: Red Door Gallery founders and friends. From left: Alan Stone, Leni Sinclair, Robin Eichele, Martina Alguire, unknown; front: George Tysh. Bottom: The wedding of Magdalene Arndt and John Sinclair, June 12, 1965. From left: John Sinclair, the new Mrs. Leni Sinclair, John’s brother, David Sinclair and his sister, Kathy Sinclair.

I have known Leni since August 1970, when I became one of the attorneys defending John Sinclair and two other White Panther Party members charged with conspiring to bomb the CIA office in Ann Arbor two years earlier. People forget that, although John was an imposing presence through his writing, poetry and musical exploration, he spent two-and-a-half years in prison before the state Supreme Court invalidated the old Michigan marijuana law as cruel and unusual punishment.

During that time, the White Panther Party (40 or so counterculture youths living in a couple of buildings on Hill Street in Ann Arbor) were led by John's brother David and by Leni. She was a quiet leader, but very influential.

It is clear that the attraction between Leni and John was based on shared cultural and political interests. Because I was not much interested in music, I did not realize what an avid and accomplished concert photographer she was.

My most vivid memory of Leni was when we argued the marijuana case at the Michigan Supreme Court, where Leni sat outside the entrance tied to a chair and gagged with an American flag. When we argued the wiretap case in the United States Supreme Court, John was out of prison and, as a party to the case, had to be allowed in the courtroom. They sat in two throne-like chairs at the back of the chamber - another vivid image.

Leni and I have remained friends since. I am the family lawyer for whatever petty hassles have arisen over the years. She sits at my table at the old left fundraiser, the Buck Dinner.

Leni Sinclair richly deserves this Kresge award. She has lived on the edge of poverty her entire life because of her politics and her devotion to her art. She deserves a little comfort and a lot more applause. ☺

Hugh "Buck" Davis • Attorney



The Mardi Gras Indians

Leni Sinclair photographed Mardi Gras Indians from 1995 through 2000, while living in New Orleans. The connection between African Americans and Native Americans was forged in the 1740s and 1750s, when New Orleans' escaped slaves found asylum with Louisiana Native American tribes.

Today, over 38 different Indian tribes or "krewes" celebrate their roots at Mardi Gras wearing elaborate handmade Native American ceremonial apparel. Each Indian creates his or her own suit, which may weigh upwards of 100 pounds. Leni became passionate in her desire to create an archive of the Indians in their brilliant, intricate creations, calling their design and parade presentation "one of the great underground artforms in America."

Her photos of the Mardi Gras Indians are shown throughout this monograph.

against war and against racism and poverty," said Leni in a 2016 interview on Michigan Radio (WUOM).

The Detroit Artists Workshop, located near the WSU campus, was founded in November 1964 by John, Leni and 14 others to showcase jazz concerts, poetry readings and art exhibitions to both its members and the broader community. The group created a number of social and artistic initiatives including: Free University of Detroit, a free alternative education institution; a housing cooperative known as The Castle, where artists might live inexpensively and devote their time to the creation of art; the Detroit Artists Workshop Press; an alternative newspaper and a variety of magazines such as the writing and poetry-focused *Work*, jazz-focused *Change*, and *Who're* for exchange and exploration of ideas between poets and writers.

Leni photographed countless musicians, writers, poets, artists and filmmakers during her three years at the workshop, including John Coltrane, Archie Shepp, Sun Ra, Marion Brown, Lester Bowie, Aretha Franklin, Marcus Belgrave, Ron English, Larry Nozero, Lyman Woodard, and poets Dudley Randall, Bill Harris, Allen Ginsberg, Charles Olson and Robert Creeley. Her 1966 photograph of Coltrane, snapped during one of his genius flights of improvisation, remains one of her most reproduced. It



Leni Sinclair with daughters Sunny (left) and Celia (foreground), April 3, 1970.

was most recently featured in the November 17, 2015 issue of *The New Yorker*.

On Stage at the Revolution

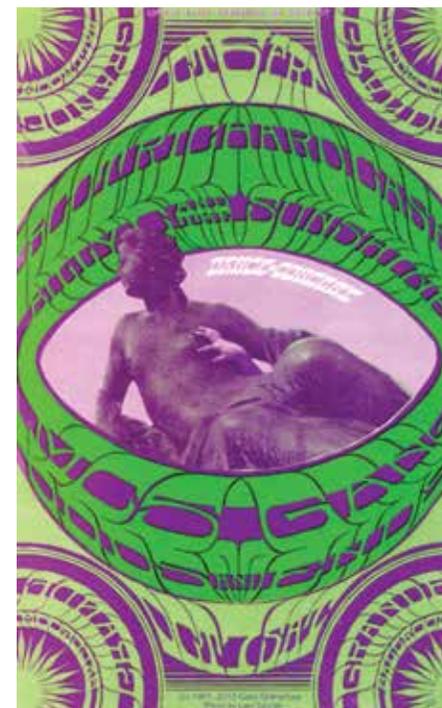
America's anti-establishment, countercultural movement was gaining momentum and by 1966, the lines between culture and politics had blurred irreversibly at the Detroit Artists Workshop as it transformed into Trans-Love Energies – a loose corporation of various "hippie" media and production companies united to promote the liberal



Trans-Love Energies sponsored the April 1967 Belle Isle Love-In, Detroit, Michigan.



MC5 in concert at the Grande Ballroom, October 31, 1968.



Above: Poster designed by Gary Grimshaw, with photo by Leni Sinclair, for concerts by the Scott Richard Case, Billy C & the Sunshine, MC5, Gang and Odds & Ends at the Grande Ballroom, October 1967. Top, right: Robin Sommers' poster with Leni's photo of the MC5's Master of Ceremonies, JC Crawford. "Crawford always brought on the MC5 with the same introduction," says Leni, "Brothers and sisters, let me see a sea of hands out there for the time has come. You must decide if you are part of the problem, or part of the solution."

artistic, social and political values espoused by the group and later, the White Panther Party.

The bands MC5, Psychedelic Stooges and the UP, the Trans-Love Lightshow, the underground newspaper *Warren-Forest Sun*, Detroit Lemar (Legalize Marijuana), the Trans-Love Poster Company and a retail enterprise known as "The Store" were all part of the pioneering endeavor.

"We wanted to make it exciting to be in Detroit and not have people leave for the coasts," remembers Leni in explaining the Trans-Love mission. "We wanted Detroit to be more like San Francisco or New York's East Village." Trans-Love sponsored Detroit's first "Love-In" on Belle Isle in 1967 – coinciding with San Francisco's "Summer of Love." But its message was best embraced in what became the epicenter of Detroit's countercultural activity, the *Grande Ballroom*.

Those who were there remember the Grande as the hotbed of Detroit's "freak" and youth-quake scene, attracting the hottest touring national and international music acts of the day: the Who, Janis Joplin, Sly and the Family Stone and Eric Clapton. It was a heady time, with Leni and artists Gary Grimshaw and Robin Sommers creating the Grande's mind-blowing nightly lightshow, Grimshaw churning out his hand-drawn psychedelic posters, and Leni, shooting every musician to hit the boards. During this time Leni helped her husband, then



Trumbull Avenue and Forest Avenue during the July 1967 riots, Detroit, Michigan.

the manager of the Grande's house band, the MC5, brand the group as "the" revolutionary rock and roll band of its time through her concert and posed promotional photos of its members. Brandishing guitars as if rifles, the group exemplified music as their generation's weapon of choice.

White Panthers and Rainbows

By July 1967, Detroit was aflame. The conflagrations of the 12th Street riot left 43 people dead, more than 2,000 injured and over 7,000 arrested, including members of the MC5.

The Detroit Police Red Squad thereafter increased surveillance of the city's politically radical organizations, including the Trans-Love commune. "The police harassment was incredible," remembers Rebecca Derminer (Becky Tyner) about life on Forest and Second Avenues in Detroit. "The police were breaking down our door all the time."

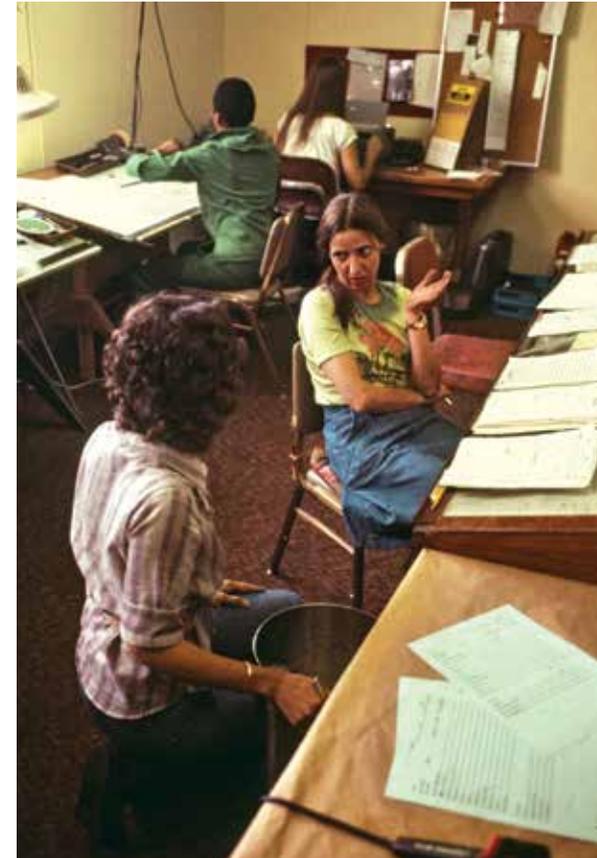
Trans-Love soon abandoned Detroit for Ann Arbor, where it became the far-left, anti-racist White Panther Party. Founded by Leni, John and fellow activist Pun Plamondon in 1968 in support of the Black Panther Party and the cultural revolution of the times, the group was spearheaded

by the MC5, who spread its anarchical message through performances and recordings.

The Warren Forest Sun also relocated to Ann Arbor in 1968 and became the The Ann Arbor Sun. As the White Panther Party's Minister of Education, Leni was the paper's senior contributor. Many of her photos of major counter-cultural and activist figures of the era – Black Panther co-founder Huey Newton; Chicago Seven activists Abbie Hoffman, Jerry Rubin and Tom Hayden; and poet Diane di Prima – were taken for the *Sun* as were her photos of the love-ins, demonstrations, festivals and protests of the era. Now seen as historic documents, Sinclair's images are vivid proof of the emotional energies generated by the social and political conflicts of the time.

The FBI targeted the activities of the White Panther Party and by 1969, declared it "one of the most dangerous organizations in the country," says Leni in her book, "Detroit Rocks." The statement was supported by the MC5, the White Panther Party's Ministers of Information, who later that year severed their affiliation with the White Panther Party upon the advice of their new management at Atlantic Records.

With their frontmen gone, the White Panther Party



Leni Sinclair laying out *The Ann Arbor Sun* newspaper. Photo courtesy of Barbara Weinberg Barefield.

December 10, 1971, in Ann Arbor's Crisler Arena. The 15,000-seat stadium sold out in three hours. The rally turned out to be the defining organized event of the White Panther Party and a significant concert in rock'n'roll history, with John Lennon and Yoko Ono's performance of Lennon's original song, "John Sinclair." It would be the first live performance by a Beatle since that band's demise. Stevie Wonder, Bob Seger, Archie Schepp, Commander Cody and His Lost Planet Airmen, and speakers Bobby Seale, Allen Ginsberg and Rennie Davis were also on the bill.

John Sinclair was released from prison on an appeal bond on December 13, 1971 – two days after the Ann Arbor concert and four days after the Michigan Senate passed a bill that significantly reduced the penalties for possession of marijuana.

Victory in the Supreme Court

In 1969, while incarcerated, John Sinclair, along with White Panther Party Minister of Defense Pun Plamondon, was charged with conspiracy to bomb the CIA's recruitment headquarters in Ann Arbor, where a bomb had gone off on September 29, 1968.

Once again, Leni marshaled her organizational energies to arrange her husband's legal defense. William Kunstler, Leonard Weinglass, Jane Fonda, Attorney General John Mitchell, FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover and U.S. District Judge Damon J. Keith, were among the historic figures involved in the *United States v. U.S. District Court* (1972), or what became known as *The Keith Case*. The 8-0 landmark decision by the Supreme Court upheld the requirements of the Fourth Amendment in cases of domestic surveillance targeting a domestic threat and ultimately led to President Jimmy Carter's 1978 signing of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act.

End of the Rainbow

The Rainbow People's Party remained in Ann Arbor until 1974. The commune became heavily involved in local politics and community life, founding the Ann Arbor People's Food Co-op, which is still in existence, and obtained funding for free outdoor concerts, a free health clinic, a day-care center and a community center. The Ann Arbor Blues & Jazz Festivals of 1972-1974 were also very much a Sinclair family affair – John produced and Leni photographed the astonishing array of jazz greats who came to perform: Miles Davis, Sippie Wallace, Hound Dog

would eventually switch identities again, becoming the Rainbow People's Party by the early 1970s.

Freeing John Sinclair

"Leni was very seriously focused on what needed doing to get John out of jail," says Frank Bach, the lead singer of the rock band The UP and a resident of the Ann Arbor commune, regarding Leni's activities from 1969 to 1971.

John Sinclair had been sentenced to 10 years in Michigan's Marquette State Prison for the possession of two marijuana cigarettes. Although it was Sinclair's third offense for carrying illegal drugs, his sentence was widely regarded as overzealous punishment.

It would take a village to bring about John Sinclair's release: family, friends, lawyers, journalists, poets, jazz musicians, doctors, teachers, state legislators and a few courageous judges, united by the indefatigable Leni. "She would cover as many public events as possible," remembers Bach, "talking up the situation, distributing information, getting people interested."

Leni and her brother-in-law, David Sinclair, raised money for John's legal defense through a series of benefits culminating in the "Ten for Two" concert, held on



Commander Cody and the Lost Planet Airmen performing at a free concert in Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1970.

Taylor, Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf, Freddie King and dozens of others.

The year 1975 marked the return of a key group of Rainbow members to Detroit, where they threw their supportive efforts behind the initiatives of the city's new mayor, Coleman Young, most visibly in the *The Detroit Sun*, the new manifestation of *The Ann Arbor Sun*.

Leni and John Sinclair legally separated in 1977 and later divorced. Leni continued to build her photography portfolio of jazz musicians through her work for the Detroit City Council in the late 1970s and early 1980s. "I was really deep into photographing jazz musicians when I worked for the city through the CETA program (Comprehensive Employment and Training Act)." Leni credits that work for making her book, "Detroit Jazz Who's Who," possible.

Focus on the Present

The future is bright but a bit intimidating to Leni, who has spent decades as a private citizen taking care of her family.

"My new success scares me, how I'm going to handle it," she says in contemplating life moving forward. Her resurrected career is gaining momentum, bringing invitations to participate in projects about Fela Kuti and jazz visionary Sun Ra.

Yet her longing to truly be back in the picture is sincere as well, eliciting a fervent desire to "have time to drive around and take pictures again." New work will most certainly reflect her current passions for reggae and African music – in her seventh decade, Sinclair continues to frequent clubs and dance halls throughout the metro Detroit area.

Exuberance, humility, awe – Leni Sinclair manages to exemplify each as she reflects on the significance of her work. "I'm an untrained photographer who loved what she was shooting, took lots of pictures and would occasionally get lucky," she says.

But her favorite photo illustrates why this fabled documentarian managed to snag the telling shot every time. It's one of her with Judge Keith, her "hero" for his role in bringing the Supreme Court to rule unanimously that the government does not have the right to wiretap or trespass without a warrant. As with all of her historic photos, she's in the picture, looking out, part of history in the making.

"Leni captured the moments we were making history," says Harvey Ovshinsky. "We could write about it, we could describe it, but Leni showed us."

Sue Levytsky writes about the arts and popular culture. Her essay was written expressly for this publication, of which she is also the editor.



A Reader's Guide

HISTORIC EVENTS, INFLUENTIAL FIGURES, LEADING MOVEMENTS, AND RELEVANT TERMS OF THE 1960s and 1970s U.S. CULTURAL AND POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

Bella Abzug
(July 24, 1920 – March 31, 1998): Lawyer, U.S. Representative, political activist, leader of the Women's Movement and co-founder of the National Women's Political Caucus.

Roland Gérard Barthes
(November 12, 1915 – March 26, 1980): French literary theorist, philosopher, linguist, critic and semiotician; key influencer in the development of schools of theory including structuralism, semiotics, social theory, design theory, anthropology and post-structuralism.

Beat Generation: Group of authors whose literature explored and influenced American culture in the post-World War II era, including Allen Ginsberg (*Howl*, 1956), William S. Burroughs (*Naked Lunch*, 1959) and Jack Kerouac (*On the Road*, 1957).

Black Panther Party: Revolutionary black nationalist and socialist organization active in the United States from 1966 until 1982.

Eldridge Cleaver
(August 31, 1935 – May 1, 1998): American writer, political activist and early leader of the Black Panther Party.

The Chicago Seven: Political radicals charged with conspiracy and inciting to riot for their participation in the Vietnam War protests at the August 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago, Illinois. The group included Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin, leaders of the Youth International Party; Tom Hayden and Rennie Davis, leaders of the Students for a Democratic Society; local Chicago organizers John Froines and Lee Weiner; and pacifist David Dellinger, chairman of the National Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam. There were originally eight defendants, with Black Panther Party co-founder, Bobby Seale, earning a separate

four years in prison for contempt of court during the trial for his protests over the court's denial of his wish to defend himself. In February 1970 five of the seven were found guilty. An appeals court overturned the convictions in the fall of 1972, citing Judge Julius Hoffman's procedural errors and his overt hostility to the defendants. None received jail sentences or fines.

Committee to End the War in Vietnam: Nationwide coalition of anti-war activists formed in 1967 to organize large public demonstrations in opposition to the Vietnam War.

Detroit House of Correction (DeHoCo): Prison in Plymouth, Michigan, built in 1930 and owned by the City of Detroit until 1986 when it was sold to the state, becoming a women's prison. Closed in 2004.

Detroit Police Red Squad: Detroit branch of nationwide police intelligence units which infiltrated, spied and gathered intelligence on political and social groups during the 20th century including labor unions, civil rights organizations and countercultural activists.

Walker Evans
(November 3, 1903 – April 10, 1975): American photographer best known for his work documenting the effects of the Great Depression for the Farm Security Administration (FSA).

Medgar Evers
(July 2, 1925 – June 12, 1963): African American civil rights activist from Mississippi who worked to overturn segregation at the University of Mississippi and gain social justice and voting rights. Evers was assassinated by white supremacist Byron De La Beckwith.

Fascist: One who adopts a dictatorship philosophy that puts nation and race above the individual.

Fifth Estate: Politically and socially radical underground newspaper founded by Harvey Ovshinsky in Detroit, Michigan in 1965.

Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA): Federal law, passed in 1978 by the 95th Congress, which prescribes procedures for the physical and electronic surveillance and collection of "foreign intelligence information" between "foreign powers" and "agents of foreign powers" (which may include American citizens and permanent residents suspected of espionage or terrorism).

Fourth Amendment: The Fourth Amendment to the United States Constitution prohibits unreasonable searches and seizures and requires any warrant to be judicially sanctioned and supported by probable cause.

Robert Frank
(November 9, 1924): Swiss-born American photographer and filmmaker best known for his widely influential book, *The Americans*. Published in the United States in 1959, the book's photographs presented a bleak, alienating and lonely view of American life and society.

Freak: A participant of the bohemian scene that began in California in the mid-1960s; also used to refer to the post-hippie and pre-punk period of the early to mid-1970s. Overlaps with hippies, pacifists, politicized radicals, non-political psychedelic music fans, and generally non-political progressive rock fans. Those connected with the subculture often attended rock festivals, free festivals, happenings, and alternative society gatherings of various kinds.

Vasily Grossman
(December 12, 1905 – September 14, 1964): Author and World War II correspondent for the Soviet military paper *Krasnaya Zvezda* (*Red Star*). Grossman spent most of the four-year battle between the Soviets and the Germans reporting from the Eastern front.

Guerrilla theatre: Originated in 1965 by the San Francisco Mime Troupe, which, in the spirit of the Che Guevara writings from which the term *guerrilla* is taken, engaged in performances in public places and committed to revolutionary socio-political change.

Woody Guthrie
(July 14, 1912 – October 3, 1967): American singer-songwriter and musician whose musical legacy includes hundreds of political, traditional and children's songs, ballads and improvised works. He frequently performed on a guitar with the slogan "This machine kills fascists."

William Kunstler
(July 7, 1919 – September 4, 1995): American self-described "radical lawyer" and civil rights activist known for the notoriety of his clients, many of whom numbered among the leading political activists of their time. Kunstler's defense of the "Chicago Seven" from 1969–1970 led *The New York Times* to label him "the country's most controversial and, perhaps, its best-known lawyer." Co-founded the Law Center for Constitutional Rights in 1966 along with Arthur Kinoy and others.

Lumpen hippies/proletariat: Dispossessed, displaced people cut off from their expected socioeconomic class; the lowest level of the proletariat comprising unskilled workers, vagrants and criminals and characterized by a lack of class identification and solidarity.

Mandamus: An extraordinary judicial remedy in the form of an order from a superior court to any subordinate court, corporation or public authority – to do (or not do) some specific act which that body is obliged to do under law (or refrain from doing) – and which is in the nature of public duty, and in certain cases one of a statutory duty. Its purpose is to remedy defects of justice and is at the discretion of the court.

March on Washington: Historic political rally for human rights held on August 28, 1963, in Washington D.C. in which participants demanded civil and economic rights for African Americans. Rev. Martin Luther King delivered his "I Have A Dream" speech during the rally, calling for an end to racism. Attended by 250,000 people, the march is credited with helping to pass the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and preceded the Selma Voting Rights Movement, leading to the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

The New Left: A broad political movement of the 1960s and 1970s consisting of educators, agitators and others who sought to implement a broad range of reforms on issues such as gay rights, abortion, gender roles and drugs.

Gordon Parks
(November 30, 1912 – March 7, 2006): African-American photographer, musician, writer and film director prominent in U.S. documentary photojournalism in the 1940s through 1970s – particularly in issues of civil rights, poverty and African-Americans – and in glamour photography.

Plum Street: Former Detroit neighborhood today bounded by Michigan Avenue, the Lodge Freeway, and the Fisher Freeway. Home to underground newspaper the *Fifth Estate*, the area was known in the late 1960s as Detroit's hub of art, rock and roll, anti-war, drug and hippie activity.

Students for a Democratic Society (SDS): U.S. student activist movement, one of the main representations of the New Left. Developed and expanded in the mid-1960s, the organization held its last convention in 1969.

Susan Sontag
(January 16, 1933 – December 28, 2004): American writer, filmmaker, teacher and political activist who wrote extensively about photography, culture and media, AIDS and illness, human rights, communism and leftist ideology. Her first major work, the essay "Notes on Camp," was published in 1964.

Augustus Owsley Stanley III
(January 19, 1935 – March 12, 2011): Audio engineer for the Grateful Dead who became the first private individual to manufacture quantities of LSD, a hallucinogenic drug. Key figure in San Francisco hippie and countercultural movement of the 1960s.

Leonard Weinglass
(August 27, 1933 – March 23, 2011): U.S. criminal defense lawyer and constitutional law advocate, co-representative, along with William Kunstler, for the defense of the Chicago Seven in their 1968 trial.

Woodstock Nation: A specific reference to the attendees of the original August 1969 Woodstock Music and Arts Festival held near Bethel, New York and also those baby boomers in the U.S. who subscribed to the values of the American counterculture of the 1960s and early 1970s.

Coleman Young
(May 24, 1918 – November 29, 1997): The first African-American mayor of Detroit, Michigan, serving from 1974 to 1994.

Marvin Gaye and pianist Teddy Harris in performance at the University of Detroit fieldhouse, Detroit, Michigan, 1976.

The Music

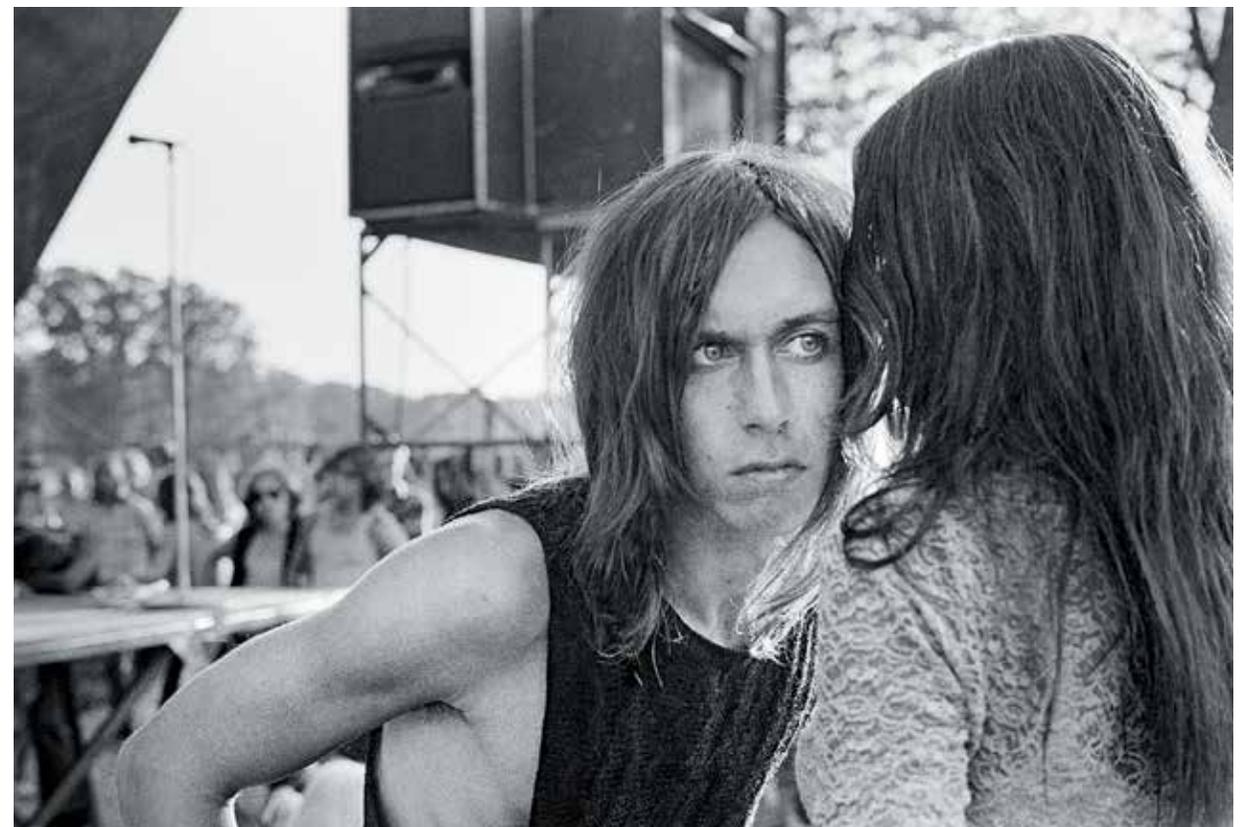




MC5 guitarist Fred Smith at the Hill Street commune, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1968.



MC5 guitarist Wayne Kramer at the Hill Street commune, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1969.



James Osterberg, Jr., aka Iggy Pop, in Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1969.

In the reddish glow of my memory's safelight there is one constant in the blur of four score and ten years ago: Leni. That time registers now on my mind's eye like a montage of passing time in black and white noir flicks, days of a calendar fluttering away, or riffling pages in a commonplace book. When it slowly finds refocus, there is Leni. Always Leni. There. All ways. Leni. Right in the middle of the smoke, manifestos, poetry, music, innocence, community, naiveté, egotism, and mundane b. s. in the metallic silver of what was.

Think how different it would have been had she not been there, doing the needed, the necessary day by day, cajoling, collecting, cranking it out, collating, stapling, stacking, distributing, believing, providing. Being Leni! The embodiment of the political and esthetic possibilities we were trying to meld out of the fire-charged air of the 1960s. Each of us, in our various weird-dude guises, yearning toward who we wanted to be, in a humane, all-inclusive co-op world, without being cut down or co-opted.

Leni. Queen Bee and drone. Quietly center stage, or in the wings, clicking away. Leni. A right hand, a shoulder, an ear, eyes, ever about the work. Work I, II, however many there were; however much it took. It got done and she did a lot, always more than her share, but too often without acclaim.

Because of her we see ourselves, as we were then, or, at least her version of us. It would be even more of a blur had she not left us proof, evidence it was not just something that happened in a dark room of our imaginations all those years ago. ☺

Bill Harris • 2011 Kresge Eminent Artist, poet, playwright and founding member of the Detroit Artists Workshop





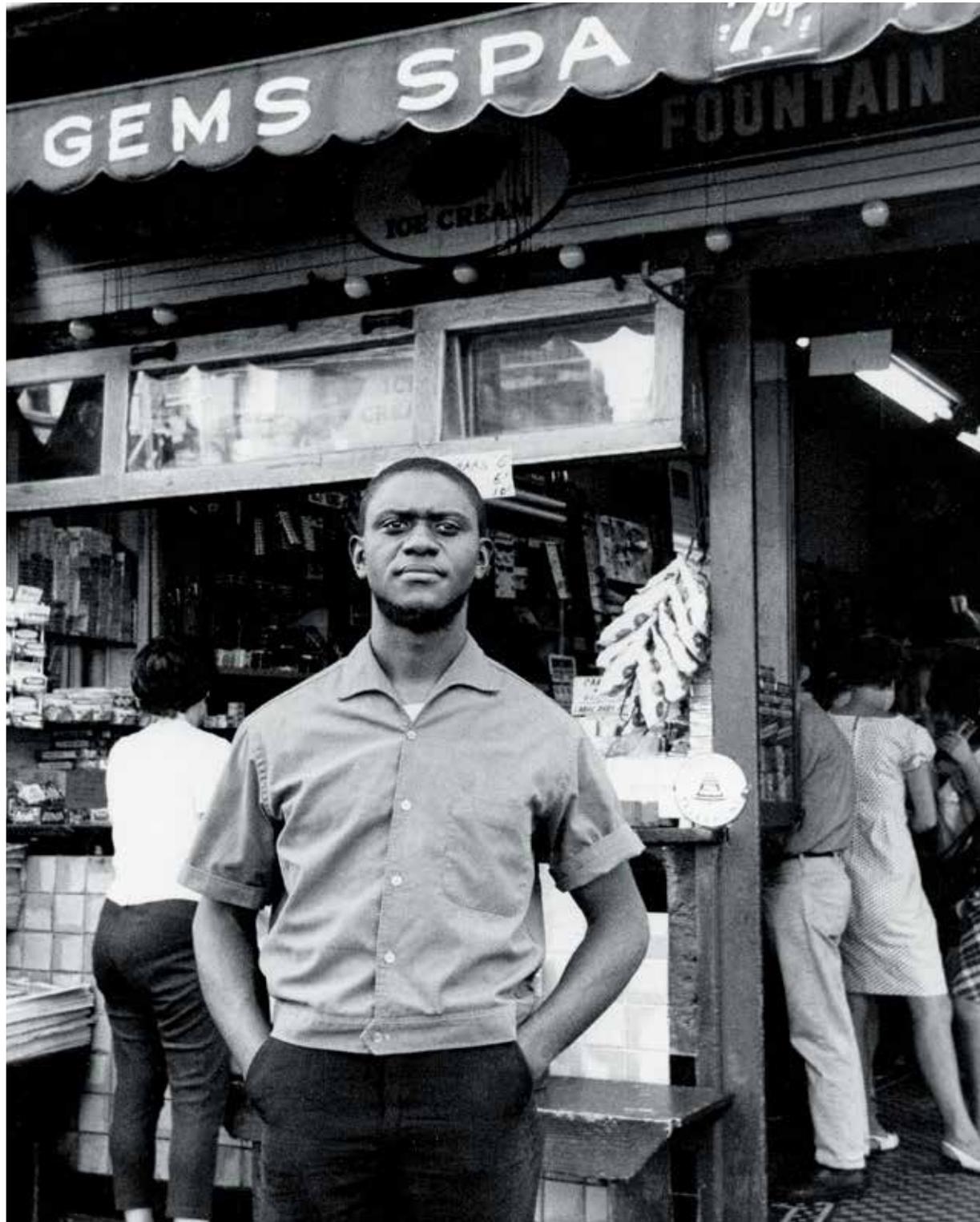
Rod Stewart with Faces at Cobo Hall, Detroit, Michigan, 1974.



Pete Townshend on guitar and Keith Moon on drums in The Who's first Detroit-area concert, Southfield High School, Southfield, Michigan, 1967.



James Brown performing at Watts Club Mozambique, Detroit, Michigan, 1982.



Jazz tenor saxophonist Pharoah Sanders, East Village, New York, New York, 1965.

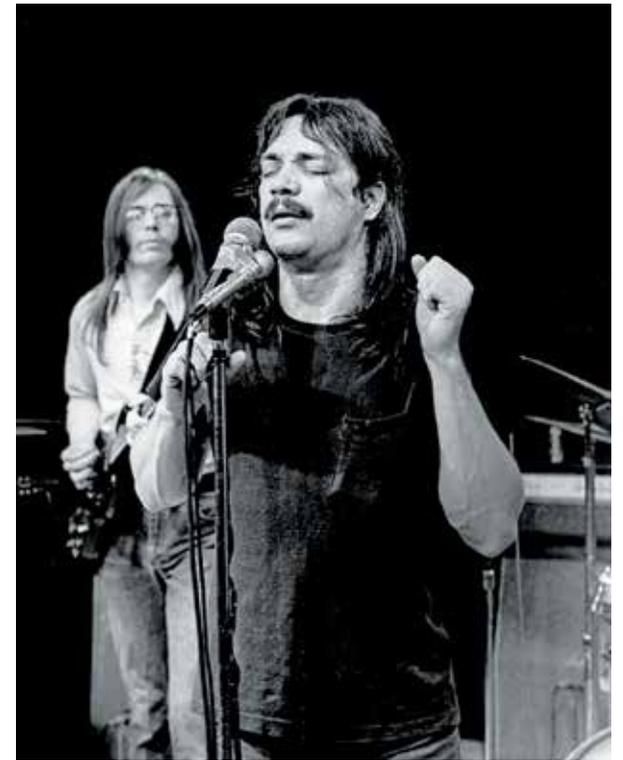


Reggae Sunsplash Festival, Montego Bay, Jamaica, 1982.

Dr. John at Ford Auditorium, Detroit, Michigan, 1973.



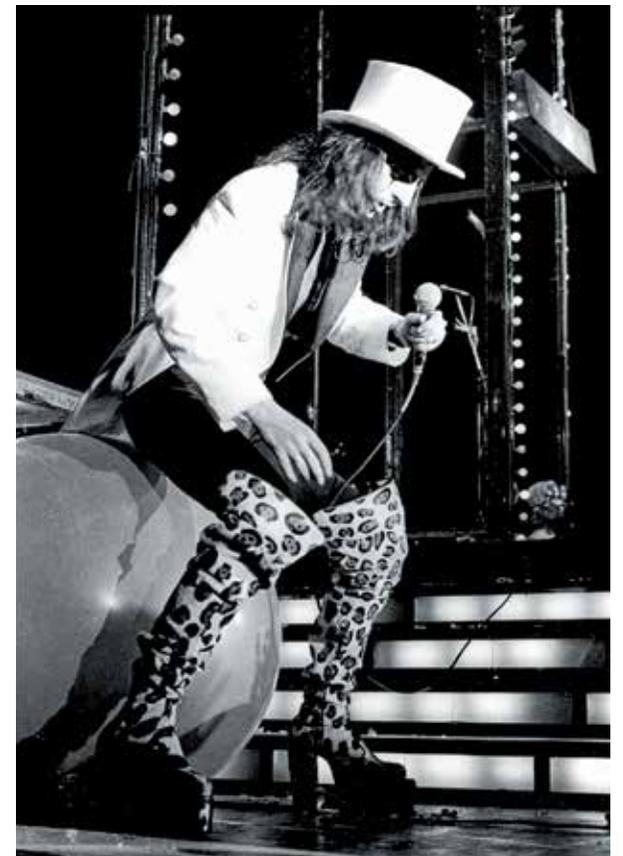
The Rolling Stones' Mick Jagger and Keith Richards at Cobo Hall, Detroit, Michigan, 1972.



Guitarist Steve Gaines and Mitch Ryder, Detroit, Michigan, 1973.



Jimi Hendrix at the Masonic Temple, Detroit, Michigan, 1968.



Alice Cooper at Crisler Arena, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1973.

The first day I met Magdalene Arndt on the Wayne State Campus she was on a rare break from her work assisting Otto Feinstein and his wife Nicki where she played the role – I would discover along the way – of operations manager, editorial assistant, head mimeographer, and all-around go-to person at the hub of their multi-faceted teaching and publishing enterprise. *New University Thought*, the magazine they produced, was taking its place as a leading journal of contemporary intellectual journalism. Otto was a professor at Monteith College, a historical small college sparked by the Ford Foundation that was spliced into the fabric of a large urban university. And Leni, as she was fondly known by everyone who knew her, was an essential energy in keeping those gears turning.

Leni and I grew to know each other very well through many hours shared at the mimeo machine, publishing first the *Monteith Journal* and, later, many of the early *Free Poems Among Friends*, *Work and Changes* publications released during the days of the Detroit Artists Workshop. Then, as now, Leni always had a quick and generously shared smile, and a can-do-everything outlook that I am sure was built on her success at escaping the deprivations of the German Democratic Republic and making her way in the world on the currencies of her intelligence, perseverance and good humor.

It was about the time the Workshop journey got underway – motivated by the vision of cooperative creative energy and the realities of the 1960s – that I became aware of Leni’s omnipresent lens. Her eye and her camera were always on duty, sensing and capturing the essentials as they streaked by. She had a unique ability to be part of the action while she was capturing the action. We are indebted to her for “being there” and preserving some of our most memorable moments ... many of which we veterans of the 60s could not accurately restore without the assistance of her vivid images. Thank you, Leni! ☺

Robin Eichele • poet, co-founder Detroit Artists Workshop





Aretha Franklin at Cobo Hall, Detroit, Michigan, 1980.

Prince at Cobo Hall, Detroit, Michigan, 1980.



Coming to Amerika:

LENI SINCLAIR CHRONICLED OUR DREAMS AND ASPIRATIONS

By George Tysh

When Karl Rossmann, the protagonist

of Kafka's picaresque novel *Amerika*, debarks from a passenger ship in New York harbor, he can't possibly anticipate the strange adventures awaiting him on these shores. Here was a legendary New World to be explored. And when Leni arrived at the port of New York in 1959, the future must have seemed equally uncertain.

Barely out of her childhood in the German Democratic Republic (communist East Germany), Leni had chosen to escape to the land of jazz and intellectual freedom, and headed to Detroit, where she had family connections. Her earliest employment was as a full-time live-in maid with a Grosse Pointe family, and on her Wednesdays off, she'd take a bus to downtown Detroit then walk up to the Cultural Center in search of the land of her imagination. She usually carried around a copy of Allen Ginsberg's *Howl*, hoping to attract the attention of some "beatniks," and lucked out one day on the steps of the Detroit Institute of Arts. But when she realized that many of these folks were students at Wayne State University (WSU), she recalls thinking, "In order to be a beatnik, you might have to be a student."

In 1960 Leni enrolled at WSU, eventually majoring in geography, a topic of our conversation when she and

I first met in 1962 at the offices of New University Thought. NUT, as the staff of that New Left journal fondly called it, was one of the many brainchildren of WSU Monteith College professor Otto Feinstein. It brought together hip academics, students and artists in the name of peace and social progress, and became a meeting place for the likes of Leni and me. (I was then a Monteith student about to transfer to English studies in poetry.) I had gotten cued into theoretical geography by poet Charles Olson's essays on "place" and "the local," and his reference to Carl Sauer's "Land and Life." "The task of geography is conceived as the establishment of a critical system which embraces the phenomenology of landscape, in order to grasp in all of its meaning and colour the varied terrestrial scene."¹ Little did I realize that those very words that Leni and I pondered would eventually apply to her endlessly creative photo-documents of America.

In the early spring of 1964, Leni returned from a yearlong trip to Europe, enlisted in American citizenship classes, and was just in time to witness the final months of the Red Door Gallery. Her photos of that project (organized by painter Carl Schurer, his scholar wife Sheila, painter Larry Weiner and me, and frequented by poet Robin Eichele, jazz trumpeter Charles Moore and photographer

Leni Sinclair, New York City, New York, 1967. Photo by Teddy Dienstfry.



From left, George Tysh, Leni Sinclair and Charles Moore outside the Red Door Gallery, Detroit, Michigan, 1964.

Harvey Columbus, among many others) are some of the few records of a collective paradigm for the vast effort just around the historical corner, the Detroit Artists Workshop. In a seminal moment at the Red Door one afternoon, my poetry professor, Keith Waldrop, dropped by the gallery with poet Robert Creeley, whose work we were reading in class. They asked if we were all coming to Creeley's reading on campus that night, and of course we wouldn't miss it. Leni and I and a crowd of others sat enthralled in Lower DeRoy Auditorium as Creeley completely gutted and then renovated our ideas about writing and commitment.

After the reading and book signing, Creeley, Leni and I headed over to the Bronx Bar for drinks, then up to her apartment where we talked far into the night about the New World of poetics that had just opened up. At one point, she asked Creeley about a poem in his collection

"For Love" called "For Rainer Gerhardt," since she had also corresponded with that same German poet. It's surprising today how small the world of experimental writing was back then, but that poem says something I've always associated with Leni's attitude towards life: "the wandering and inexhaustible wish to / be of use, somehow / to be helpful."² Little by little, she began to formulate her own engagement with the world of art, that near-mythical Beat existence that she had only dreamed of, and here it was right at her fingertips.

When the Red Door disbanded in summer 1964, it was replaced by our group's desire for a Detroit Artists Workshop. Leni was on board without question. Not only had she finally met the beatniks of her dreams, she had left behind one version of collective life in East Germany, only to take up with an American hipster collective in the Motor City, one founded on new poetry, experimental film and avant-garde jazz. At the Workshop, she began to devote herself to the practice of photography, and started a documentation that would eventually include such poets as John Wieners, Robert Creeley, Amiri Baraka and Allen Ginsberg; musicians John Coltrane, Archie Shepp, Sun Ra, the Detroit Contemporary 5,

the MC5, Iggy and the Stooges, Bob Seger; and such socio-political phenomena as the White Panther Party and the 1967 Detroit riots, among many, many others.

In 1964, Leni also met John Sinclair and married him in 1965, but I'll leave that story for him to tell.

Poet **George Tysh** teaches film studies at the College for Creative Studies. His latest work is "The Slip" from BlazeVOX Books, Buffalo, New York.

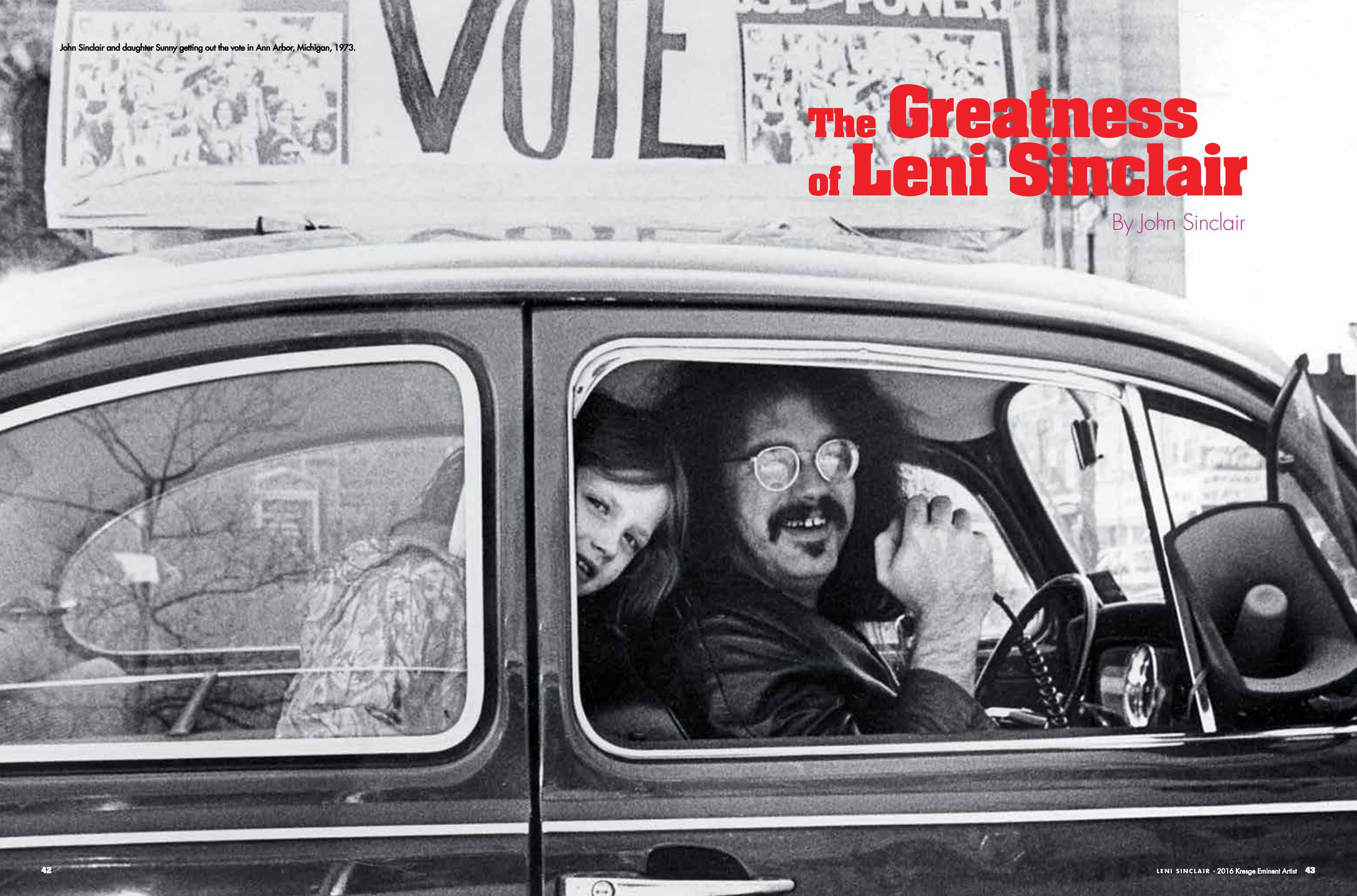
¹ Carl Ortwin Sauer. 1925. "The Morphology of Landscape." *University of California Publications in Geography* 2, p. 25

² Robert Creeley. 1982. "For Rainer Gerhardt." *The Collected Poems of Robert Creeley: 1945-1975*. University of California Press, p. 114

John Sinclair and daughter Sunny getting out the vote in Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1973.

The Greatness of Leni Sinclair

By John Sinclair





CAME

to Detroit in the spring of 1964 to attend graduate school at Wayne State University (WSU). I moved into a basement room in the Forest Arms apartments at Second and Forest Avenues and set out to connect with the people I was looking for: poets, musicians, painters, artists and creative individuals of every sort.

The closest creative outpost was a tiny storefront in the next block called the Red Door Gallery, but it exuded an aura of hipness so intense as to intimidate me, and I never summoned the nerve to pass through the Red Door.

But one day, I met the poet George Tysh walking down Second Avenue. We enjoyed a stimulating conversation, and I invited Tysh to stop by my place at his earliest opportunity. He returned later that night with the cornet player Charles Moore, and it turned out that both men were principals in the Red Door Gallery, and they quickly brought me into the orbit of their little avant-garde arts community.

Tysh, Moore, the poet Robin Eichele, the artist Larry

Weiner, the painter Carl Schurer and his wife Sheila, Harvey Columbus, Martine Alguire, and a photographer named Magdalene Arndt, a native of East Germany studying geography at WSU, were the collective force behind the Red Door Gallery and quite literally the founders of the avant-garde arts community in Detroit.

Their efforts at the Red Door Gallery established an ideological foundation for the contemporary arts and advanced the cause of creative self-expression through serious practice, setting an unprecedented example for young artists in the city to follow.

This was where my path first crossed with Magdalene, or Leni as she was known to her family in Germany. I found that she lived in the building next door, and I have to say that I fell for her not so long after Charles Moore introduced us. I courted her assiduously for what seemed like an interminable period before she finally relented and accepted my suit.

The Red Door Gallery closed in June 1964 and the summer was filled with a new sort of creative ferment as the core group in our neighborhood began to take in more people eager to establish a new center for progressive arts activity.

It was during this period that Leni started taking her camera work more seriously and set about to document the evolution of our artistic community. Shooting first her friends and associates around the neighborhood and in the Cultural Center, then musicians playing at jazz clubs, actors at small community theaters, poets in performance, painters and experimental filmmakers at work. Everywhere something interesting was going on in the arts and alternate culture, Leni was there quietly recording the scene with her little camera and capturing the energy and excitement of the times.

At the same time the civil rights movement was burgeoning, black political power was steadily growing, the anti-war movement was beginning to cohere, and what became known as the counter-culture was starting to emerge in off-campus neighborhoods.

Leni got it all with her camera. She was always there, wherever it was happening, unobtrusively clicking away in the available light and developing her film into masterworks in black and white that pulsed with the energy and excitement of the moment. As a photographer she was strictly an artist, expressing her view of the world through her lens with no thought of commercial potential or popular acclaim, publishing her shots wherever they would fit in a spirit of incredible generosity.

Leni was a committed artist of the highest order. Her American political activism dated to her attendance at the Students for a Democratic Society national convention in the Catskill Mountains in 1962. She held a day job at WSU as an assistant to Professor Otto Feinstein, who was active in the anti-nuclear weapons movement, edited *New University Thought*, and went on to found the College of Life-Long Learning at WSU. She joined the crowds at civil rights and anti-war demonstrations and contributed her photographs to the small radical publications that



Top: The Detroit Artists Workshop members had become the Trans-Love Energies commune by the time this photo was taken atop the DAW headquarters in Detroit, Michigan, April 1967. Left: Leni and John Sinclair in East Lansing, Michigan, 1964. Photo by Robin Eichele. Bottom: The cover of *Free Poems among friends*, featuring Leni handing out copies of poem were distributed free every Monday morning, Detroit, Michigan, 1964. Photo by Robin Eichele.

followed these movements.

In the fall of 1964 Charles Moore and I moved across the expressway to 4821 John C. Lodge and Leni moved in with me, along with our new housemates drummer Danny Spencer, the painter Howard Weingarden, and poet James Semark. Our new location began to serve as a sort of physical center for the local cultural community to gather. All sorts of people would stop by to exchange information and take part in the planning for bigger and better things for our community.

What we wanted was a space that was ours, a place for performances, art exhibits, film screenings, poetry workshops, and other activities of our own devise. We found our place in a house at 1252 West Forest Avenue and opened the Detroit Artists Workshop on November 1, 1964.

It was at the Artists Workshop that Leni came fully into her own as a photographer and artist. **She documented the poets, musicians, painters and performers**



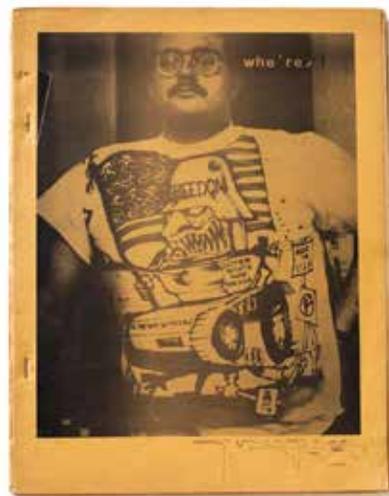
who were members of the collective and exhibited her photographs on the walls of the Workshop. She also committed herself to the organizational process through which alternative solutions are developed and implemented.

Leni shouldered more than her fair share of the duties and responsibilities incumbent upon the organizers of the Detroit Artists Workshop and our even more ambitious project, the Artists Workshop Cooperative Housing Project, which maintained six houses on the John C. Lodge service drive and around the corner on West Hancock Street as rent-by-the-room residences for the artists and other adventurous thinkers in our community.

The Artists Workshop construct flourished from fall 1964 until May 1965, when the house on West Forest was destroyed by fire. We were blessed to find even better quarters at 4865 John C. Lodge, at the corner of West Warren Avenue, where other alternative institutions like the *Fifth Estate* newspaper, the Detroit Committee to End The War in Vietnam, and the Northern Student Movement had already located. We moved the Workshop into our new storefront and soon established the Artists Workshop Press in the next space north.

At the Artists Workshop Press Leni and I were in charge of the mimeograph operation that accounted for the great bulk of our activity. I prepared the stencils for our newsletters, magazines and books on my Selectric typewriter, and Leni ran the mimeograph machine.

The Artists Workshop Press was a leading force in



1965 cover of Detroit Artists Workshop's *Where* magazine, which featured John Sinclair wearing a sweatshirt painted by Stanley "Mouse" Miller, the Detroit-born American artist notable for his 1960s psychedelic concert posters for the Grateful Dead.



Detroit jazz artist Ken Cox in performance at public jazz concert, Washington Boulevard, Detroit, Michigan, 1980.

the mimeograph revolution, an important step between the costly books and magazines printed on letterpress machines by professional printers and the cheap newsprint publications of the underground press that began to emerge later in 1965.

The benefit of the mimeograph process was that one could do the work oneself without having to pay a print shop. You could purchase paper and ink in small quantities as you went along, and penniless poets and writers like ourselves could publish our work at a cost that could be managed somehow.

We turned out thousands of pages of mimeographed materials between 1965 and 1967, including the weekly *Artists' Worksheet*, the irregular periodicals *Work, Change* and *Where*, a series of 20 Workshop Books of poetry and prose principally by Detroit writers, and a steady stream of flyers, broadsides, announcements, and other information of many descriptions.

Many of our publications featured Leni's photography on the cover and accompanying the text, exposing the quality and scope of her work as a photographer. But in every case she was back there behind the Gestetner mimeograph machine, running off 500 copies of each page, changing the stencils, adding more ink, stacking the piles of paper in a coherent system so that the volunteer collators from the immediate community could help us assemble the finished publications and staple them together into magazines and books.

In June 1965 Leni and I were married and thereafter shared a common existence centered on art, music, poetry, communal living, cultural radicalism, community organizing, forming tentative alternative institutions and working collectively to try to make significant alterations



Poet Dudley Randall at the Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit, Michigan.

in the world around us.

All of our many social adventures were meticulously documented by Leni as they unfolded. As time went on she witnessed with her camera the hippie explosion, the beginnings of the marijuana legalization movement, the rise of the MC5, the rock'n'roll revolution in Michigan, the creation of the Trans-Love Energies collective in Detroit, the free concerts in the parks in Ann Arbor and Detroit, the birth of the White Panther Party, the staging of the Ann Arbor Blues & Jazz Festivals and countless other endeavors in which she was often one of the organizers.

Our romance ended in 1977 and we have lived separate lives since then, but I've remained close to her brilliant photography and continue to use her work whenever I can – in my books, on my album covers, wherever I need a perfect picture to illustrate what I'm talking about. We've also shared the pleasure of raising our two daughters, Marion and Celia, and our granddaughter, Beyonce.

I'm proud to say I was there at the beginning of her career as a photographer and I've followed her work for more than 50 years as she's continued to develop and flower as an artist with a national and international reputation. Now the prophet is being honored in her home of more than half a century, and that's just the way it should be.

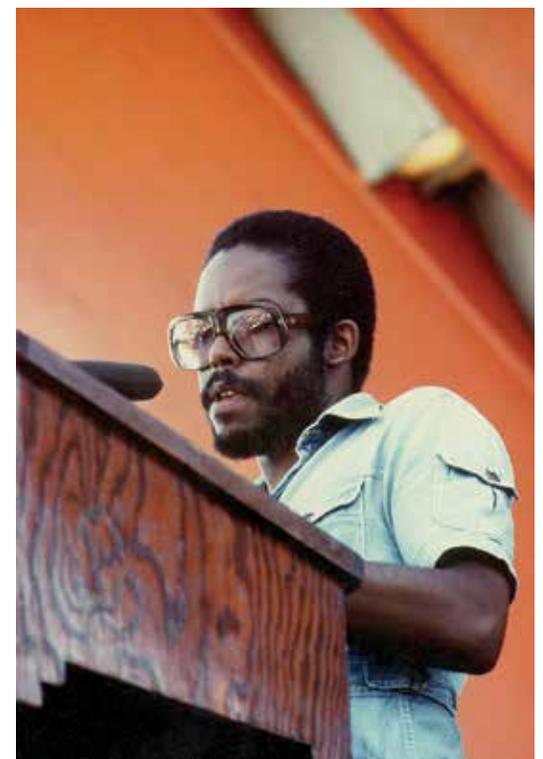
– New Orleans
February 25-28, 2016

John Sinclair is a writer, poet, political activist and co-founder of the White Panther Party.

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Jazz pianist Lyman Woodard, Detroit, Michigan, 1979.



Poet Bill Harris at the Belle Isle Band Shell, Detroit, Michigan.

Leni and John were some of the first people I met after moving back to Detroit from Los Angeles. They were involved with the *Fifth Estate* by 1966, possibly earlier. John understood the idea of an underground newspaper when we first met to talk about it and Leni dug it, too. "How can we help?" were their magic words.

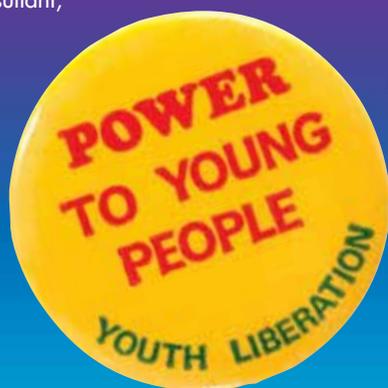
Leni and John really launched the *Fifth Estate*, they made it good looking. The early issues of the paper were just ugly – we stole graphics, there were no photographs. I could write and edit, I could publish, but it was not pretty. Leni said, "We can change that. I'm a shooter," and she showed me these amazing images of musicians. I knew nothing other than that her work was real and I needed it.

Photographs can be passive, almost like nouns, but Leni's photos were all verbs all the time. There was vitality, action and excitement to her photos. Her images added an extra dimension to the paper – a three-dimensional experience.

Her work is so worthy of this honor. ☺

Harvey Ovshinsky •

writer, educator, story consultant,
media producer, founder,
Fifth Estate



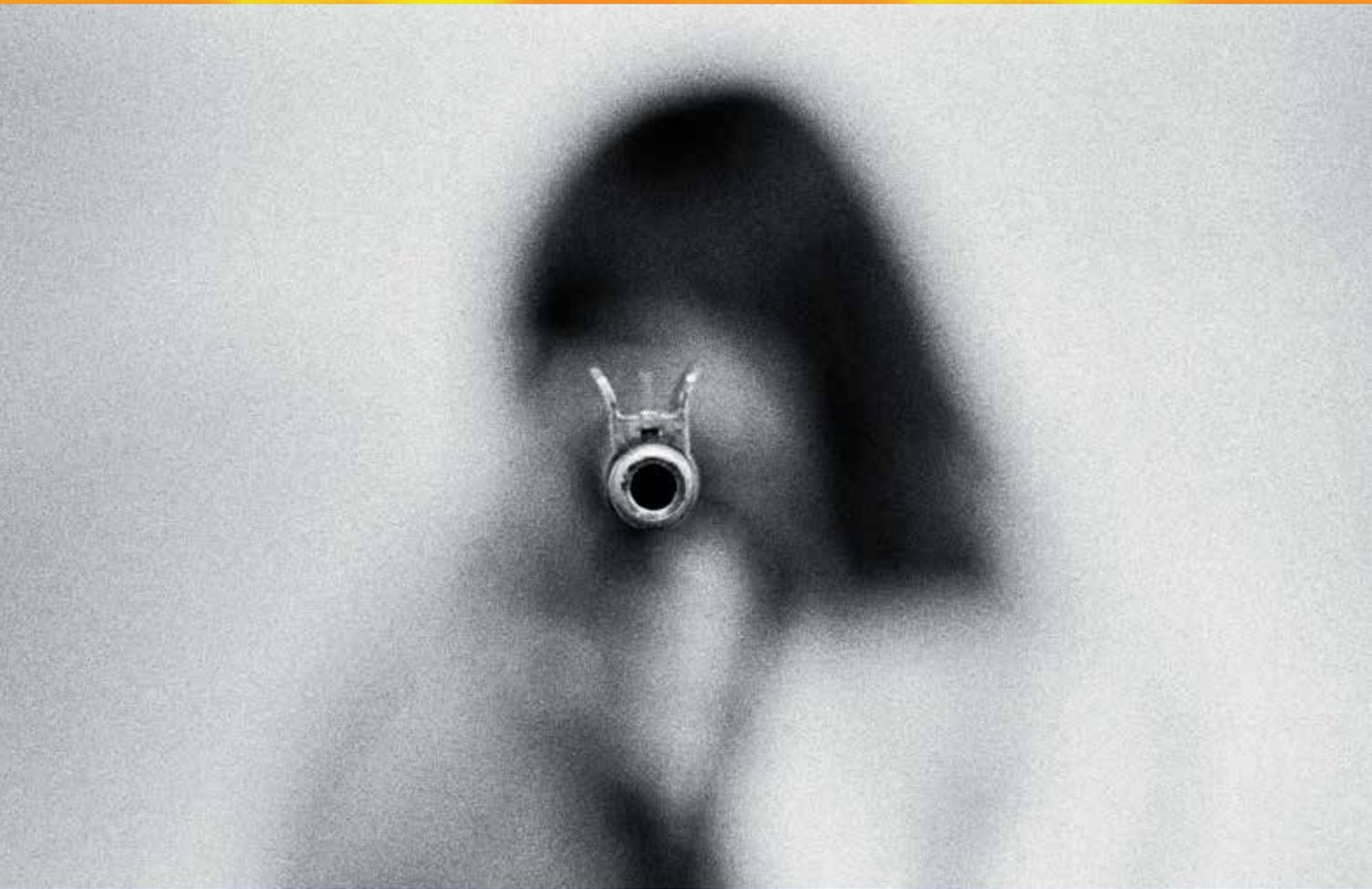
Art

"I don't know where to draw the line between politics and culture. To me it's all the same. Music is revolution."

– Leni Sinclair

When Photography is Revolution:

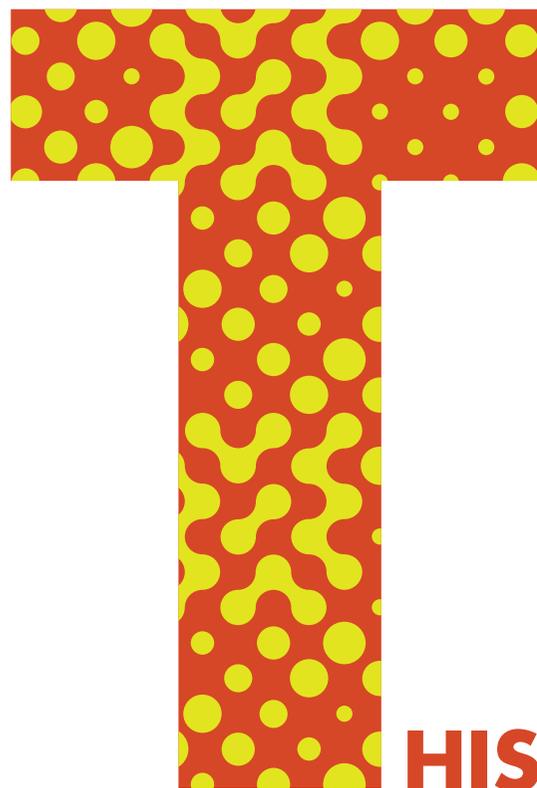
NOTES ON LENI SINCLAIR By Cary Loren



MC5's Fred Smith behind a rifle at the Hill Street commune, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1969.

I KEEP THINKING, IT COMES TO THIS: CULTURE DISPLACING THE STATE. – Charles Olson, *Mayan Letters*

66



HIS

"Machine Kills Fascists" is the message Woody Guthrie wrote on top of his guitar in 1941, not only aimed at Nazis, but at poverty, racism, union-busters and economic inequality in the USA. Guthrie ennobled ideals of hope and unity through folk music and inspired change – motivating protest by the working class (and a young songwriter named Bob Dylan). Guthrie's music linked culture and politics and inspired beat culture – all nourishing the nascent Detroit Artists Workshop.

Leni Sinclair was a founding member and photographer of the workshop, documenting jazz concerts and poetry readings at this small bohemian collective. Throughout the 1960s, Leni's relationship to photography, art, activism and communal living merged into a defining idea: culture crossed with politics.

As the collective evolved into the rock'n'roll-centered Trans-Love Energies and more activist groups, such as the White Panther Party, Leni focused on documenting the MC5 and underground culture. The MC5 called their

music *avant-rock*, the first rock band to identify themselves as hippie revolutionaries. It was a sweaty, chauvinist, male-centered, pre-feminist era and Leni was a major documentarian of the period.

Leni's archive includes portraits of the MC5 in leather bullet-belts, American flags, posing with rifles, exploring Zug Island – propaganda of the 1960s, produced for the White Panther Party. Used and published in underground books, magazines, records and newspapers distributed across the nation, they were the image of disaffected youth: high-energy, threatening, mad and shocking – a confrontational display of counterculture.

Revolutionary photography is the art of marketing and promoting progressive change and is notably ignored in most photo-histories. The work is not easily classified; not tailored for commercial, fine art or documentary genres. Leni's photography has been in service to music and rebellion for more than 50 years – a significant achievement and contribution.

Italian born Tina Modotti (1896-1942) was a revolutionary photographer working with Mexican muralists Diego Rivera and José Clemente Orozco. Modotti's poetic



American singer and activist Woody Guthrie.

series of peasants, workers and still-life photos of acoustic guitars, bullet-belts, sickles and Mexican corn were powerful symbols exhibited at her one-woman retrospective: "The First Revolutionary Photography Exhibition" in Mexico held at the National Library of Mexico City in 1929.



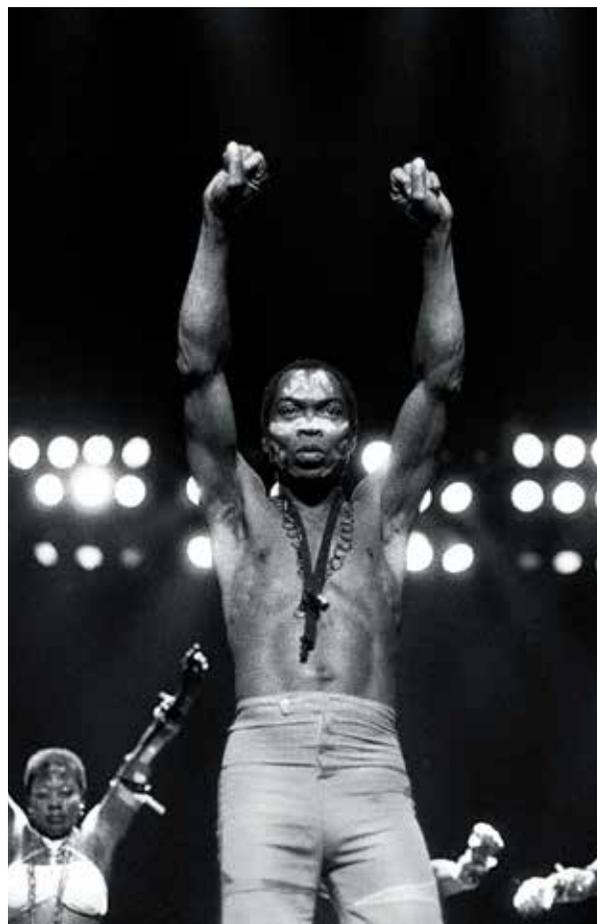
Leni's photography of the MC5 with guns and guitars raised high echoes back to Modotti's revolutionary still-lives, sharing a poetic sensibility with her – a link of power and beauty found in the commonplace. Leni and Modotti both countered regressive politics with the subtle inspiring force of photography.

Alberto Diaz Guitérrez (1928-2001), better known as Korda, was the photographer of the Cuban socialist revolution and best friends with Fidel Castro. His iconic, revered portrait of Latin American revolutionary Che Guevara – one of the most reproduced in the world – is a symbol of avant-garde fashion and revolutionary struggle.

Leni's candid portraits also capture the power, romance and elegance found in Korda's best work. Her image of Afro-beat pioneer Fela Kuti in a power salute was licensed as a poster for the 2010 Broadway musical "Fela!" and then used as a key image, poster and motif in the African film "Finding Fela" (2014).

Leni captured the Fela photo at the Fox Theatre of Detroit in 1986, a legendary concert held a few weeks after Fela's release from Nigeria's toughest prison. The photo has been posted up on walls across Lagos, the capital of Nigeria, where it's a well-loved symbol of agitation and revolt, an ideological weapon against militarism and corruption. The image has also been bootlegged on T-shirts and posters around the world, another chic symbol of revolution.

Korda, Modotti and Leni worked during stressful times, producing photographs to further progressive



Top, left: Tina Modotti's 1927 gelatin silver print still-life photo, "Bandolier, corn, sickle." Top, right: "Heroic Guerrilla Fighter," Korda's iconic 1960 portrait of Cuban revolutionary, Che Guevara. Bottom: Fela Kuti at Fox Theatre, Detroit, Michigan, 1986.



MC5 on Zug Island, Detroit, Michigan, 1969.



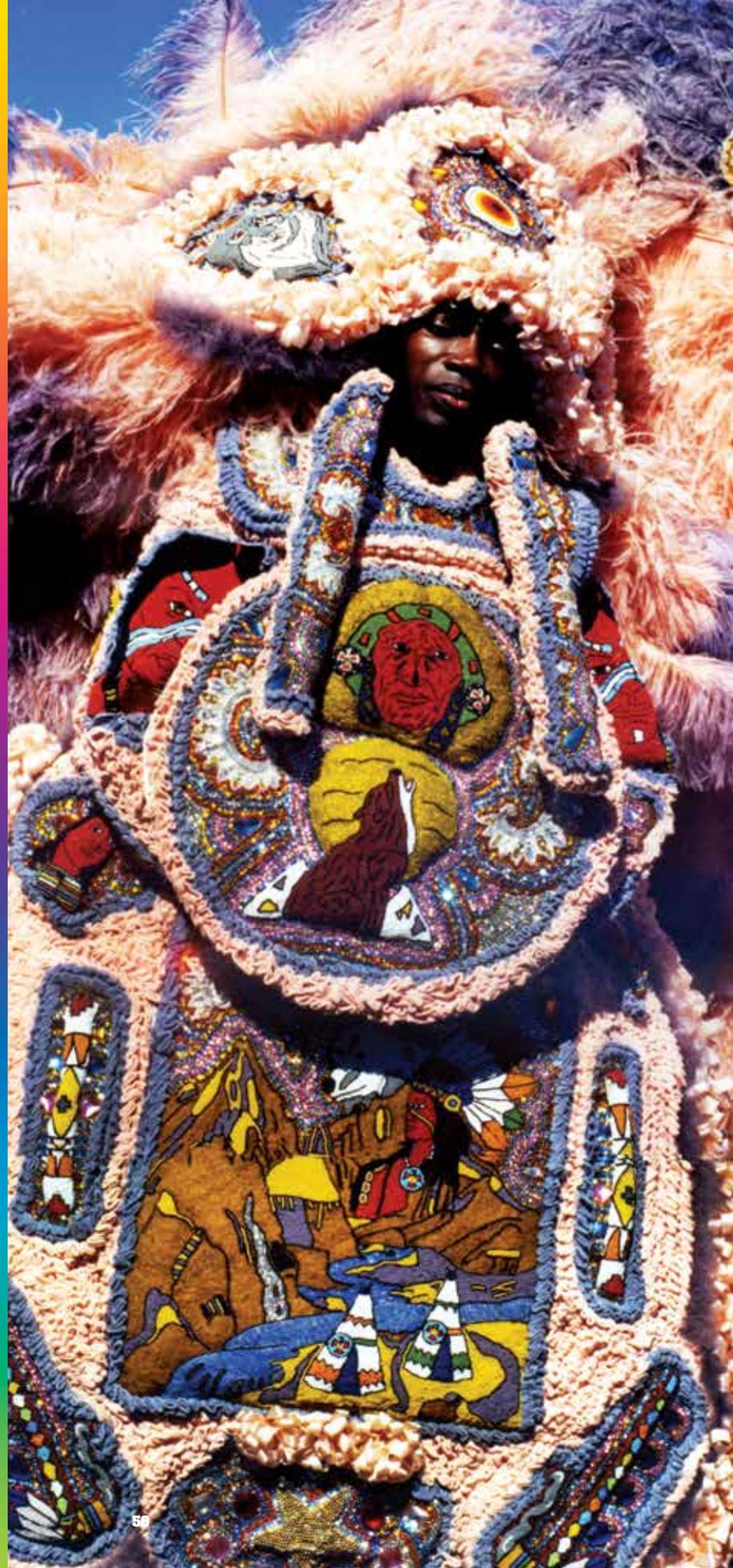
MC5 at the Hill Street commune, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1968.

Leni was and is an extremely bright and very keen political observer, fully committed to recording the creativity and genius around her. She is now known primarily for her photos of jazz and rock musicians such as Sun Ra and Iggy Pop, yet she was an important contributor to the *Fifth Estate* when we began publishing in the 1960s. She took many, many extraordinary photos of political and civil rights demonstrations as the paper's photographer.

Although the arts and politics were very male dominated at the time Leni came along - there wasn't a lot of feminism in the early 1960s - there was never a question as to her role as an important person within the Detroit Artists Workshop and later in its more political manifestations as the White Panther Party and Rainbow People's Party. She was essential to photographing not only the cultural events of the time but the political. Leni is an important documentarian of her time and official recognition for her contributions to the annals of Detroit history is long overdue. ☺

Peter Werbe •

talk show host, journalist



change. During the 1960s, Leni helped construct and reimagine a freer open society – with art, music and poetry at its core; where free education, healthy food, free health-care and legalized marijuana were major goals – a not-too-crazy dream of saving the world. Her life was entwined with art, politics and free expression.

The Education of a Radical Photographer

Leni saw “through foreign eyes,” she often said. She didn’t look at other photographers much and was largely self-taught. Her images were used not only in the White Panther Party’s *Sun* newspaper, but were freely reproduced through the Liberation News Service to a large network of underground papers. Music and musicians have been her greatest love. When foreigners think of Detroit music, many of the images they recall are Leni’s subjects and photos.

With an ability to become nearly invisible, Leni moved through crowds and concerts with ease. Her reactions were quick, authentic and heartfelt. She avoided the spotlight and took few posed portraits, preferring to photograph in darkness, to blend in with her surroundings. As a result, her photos are naturally lyrical, connecting easily to music and the urban experience. Her use of ambient or natural light, light-based experiments, and straight-on gaze was intuitive. Her independent style ran counter to traditional commercial, documentary and fine art photography.

Leni lived within a utopian social project without connections to financing, galleries or museums. Her music photos are the best known, but there are other layers to her art; documents of commune members, street people, police reactions and daily life in the counterculture. “Lumpen hippies,” said poet John Sinclair. “Those were our people. That was the White Panther Party. We were the voice of the lumpen hippie, just like the Black Panther Party was the voice of the lumpen proletariat.”¹



Time-exposure photo of Rob Tyner at the Grande Ballroom, 1967, in Gary Grimshaw poster.



“Martyr Medgar Evars,” Washington, D.C., August 28, 1963.

“Photography is subversive,” wrote Roland Barthes, “not when it frightens, repels or even stigmatizes, but when it is *pensive*, when it thinks.”² Leni’s work lies outside the personal or diaristic; her photo album is a thinking album for a generation in revolt, a story of the New Left and hippie culture, pioneering and experimental. From small bohemian gatherings to Woodstock Nation, jazz clubs to arena rock, beatnik life to hippiedom – Leni’s work contains the aura of an insider, recordings of the authentic. Her black and white photography has aged well, lending the work a traditional link with the past – an emotional patina of human warmth and connectedness.

Leni often speaks of herself as a “participant observer,” a term used in cultural anthropology as someone documenting observations, or doing research while actively working within the population under study. She was a propagandist of the underground and her photographs are some of the essential records of this mythic time. Leni’s story is a journey many radicals shared with her: defining moments in the counterculture of Detroit and the nation.

The March on Washington: “Martyr Medgar Evars,” 1963

Leni attended a 1961 antinuclear demonstration in Chicago led by activist and future congresswoman Bella Abzug, one of the first anti-war protests in the nation. She heard about the Chicago march through Otto Feinstein, a professor at Wayne State’s Monteith College, and of the 1963 March on Washington through her membership in the Students for a Democratic Society. Most of Leni’s photos at the D.C. march are typical impressions of packed crowds and picket signs, monuments and protest.

But one of her images stands out as a masterwork: “Martyr Medgar Evars” – a photo taken on August 28, 1963 – the same day Bob Dylan debuted his classic ode to the slain martyr: “Only a Pawn in Their Game.” The photo saves and shows an anonymous poem handwritten across window blinds used as lines of paper installed on top of an old flatbed truck. The anonymous poem is a work of folk art, scrawled in simple block letters.

A young African-American woman in dark glasses steps into the scene, skipping across the photo, a note of optimism and glee in the eulogy. The poem and the young woman fuse into unified elements. This talent for pairing disparate subjects inside of events charges many of Leni’s photos with the quality of a narrative, a desire to tell a story beyond the image. This type of street-photo is unusual for Leni, but it conveys her eye for composition, her habit of surveying the entire scene, and the search for justice overlapping her art.

Jazz and Improvisation

Leni learned to work with chance mistakes and odd depth-of-field settings to extend her camera’s vision during the Artists Workshop years. The gradual development of her various experimental techniques, as applied to music photography, ultimately came to give her work a



Saxophonist Larry Nozero in a time-exposure photo, East Lansing, Michigan, 1965.



John Sinclair and MC5 members with guns and guitars at the Hill Street commune, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1969.

unique and unorthodox style.

One of Leni's most identifiable techniques arose from her preference for natural lighting. She never used flash, out of respect for the artists' space. In her photos of saxophone players John Coltrane and Larry Nozero, Leni picked up light trails – the pattern of light shining off the brass instruments in a short stretch of time – by using an open camera lens aperture. The trails mimic a psychedelic view and these photos are some of her key works – jazz art. Light trail images and stroboscopic freeze-frames were not wholly unknown in photography of the period, but were considered avant-garde.

Trans-Love Energies, the MC5 and the White Panther Party

Leni and John Sinclair were married in 1965 and their partnership would endure throughout the various transformations of the cultural groups they'd continue to develop. Drugs had arrived on the music scene and Detroit had an early source from a pipeline to the purest West Coast

Owsley Stanley LSD – a significant reason for the city's growth as a psychedelic urban center.

John Sinclair began to manage the MC5 in 1966 and the Detroit Artists Workshop evolved into Trans-Love Energies, an informal partnership between John, Leni, poster artist Gary Grimshaw and MC5 lead singer Rob Tyner. Leni's role as a cultural photographer would grow in its significance, her documents promoting the counter-culture as an alternative.

The MC5 was critical in the transformation of the Detroit Artists Workshop into the psychedelic rock culture of Trans-Love Energies. As the White Panther Party and MC5 gained national profiles, Leni's photography along with Grimshaw's artwork created the graphic identity of the band, effectively branding the MC5 in counterculture.

Leni created a major body of work around the MC5, every photo an insurgent image. The mock-surreal set-ups, the gun props, outrageous costumes and raw sexuality set their photos apart from other bands. The entire White Panther Party worked to support the MC5 and



achieve success. "The MC5 was the White Panthers,"³ said John Sinclair. With the MC5, Leni perfected her own *anti-style* – a style of insurrection and a record of the band at a

peak moment in time – 1968, a year known for protests and social conflicts.

Band images with gun props made powerful photos. Leni later regreted taking them, since they gave off a militant vision of the band and White Panther Party, inconsistent with history. At the height of aggression in Vietnam and worldwide anti-war protests, at a time of psychedelic revolution and the Black Panther Party, Leni's photos of armed hippies were shocking and attention-getting: pure transgressive theater. Leni's unforgettable photo of the shirtless, sneering MC5 members wearing White Panther Party buttons was spread across the inner gatefold of their album "Kick Out the Jams." It rocked the rock world; a defiant challenge, capturing the greasy primal energy of the music. Added below the photo were John Sinclair's inflammatory liner notes, which banned the record from all Detroit-based J.L. Hudson's department stores, and were removed from later pressings.

Let The Record Serve

One of Leni's enduring achievements has been to say something new about this nation's identity. Hers was a journey not unlike that captured in Walker Evans' "American Photographs," Jack Kerouac's "On the Road," or Robert Frank's "The Americans" – works embracing randomness and the sadness of the road. But Leni's work was anchored in subculture – a slice of investigative localism that speaks to a lost time, guided by the reality and delirium of the 1960s.

Leni's first attraction to photography was to keep a connection to her family back home in East Germany. Her private tourist anthology was rerouted, becoming a deeply evolved and highly public one. "Through photographs," wrote Susan Sontag in a collection of essays titled "On Photography," "each family constructs a portrait chronicle of itself – a portable kit of images that bears

witness to its connectedness... Photography came along to memorialize, to restate symbolically the imperiled continuity and vanishing extendedness of family life."⁴

While most photographs function as memorials attached to a sentimental ideal of the past, Leni's family album was a rearrangement of the family itself.

Leni's work is memorializing, subversive and defiant. Several works straddle the boundaries of theater and performance art, years before they were common subjects in contemporary photography. Her values and idealism live in her documents: a diamond of underground culture – an anti-aesthetic that shines as a beacon.

Cary Loren was named a Kresge Literary Arts Fellow in 2013. Together with his wife, Colleen Kammer, Loren runs The Book Beat, an independent bookstore in Oak Park, Mich., where he facilitates a discussion group on world literature. He is the author of the biographical text for a forthcoming book about Leni Sinclair.

¹ Interview with John Sinclair by Legs McNeil and Gillian McCain, *Please Kill Me* (Grove Press, New York, 1996) p.48

² Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (Hill and Wang, NY, 1982) p.38

³ John Sinclair interview in Mathew J. Bartkowiak, *The MC5 and Social Change* (McFarland and Co., Jefferson, NC, 2009) p.734

⁴ Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (Picador, New York, 1977) p.8, 9

Leni Sinclair: Out of the Dark

By Herb Boyd

When Leni approached me with the idea for what became “Detroit Jazz Who’s Who,” seeking my help to provide the text, there was no hesitation on my part – the project really was a labor of love. I eagerly began compiling the material via interviews and research on the musicians, hoping to complement Leni’s tremendous archive of photos.

At that time, along with the late Tommy Glover and Ed Nelson, I co-founded the Jazz Research Institute, then based at Wayne State University’s Black Studies Department, where I was a coordinator of the curriculum. To finance the project, we solicited several potential donors. My then mother-in-law put in the lion’s share with a loan. We completed the book in several months. The book was further enhanced by a preface by jazz pianist Ken Cox, a poem by John Sinclair, added historical text from jazz historian Lars Bjorn, and artwork by design genius Gary Grimshaw. There is also a blurb from Detroit Mayor Coleman Young.

Leni was seemingly at every jazz concert and club. Her presence was expected, though. People had no idea what it took, night after night, to document those musical and magical moments. Plus, it wasn’t only jazz and rock and roll on her agenda, but reggae, blues and pop. And then there were the daytime events, the political rallies, marches and demonstrations where her ubiquitous camera captured the drama and gave visual evidence of another “happening.”

I was among the countless number of Detroiters who were amazed at her energy and determination to record what few others realized were historical milestones. I remember our days at *The Detroit Sun* and *Metro Times*, where we often collaborated on stories about the city’s arts and entertainment world. Even on short notice she was available, arriving to an event just in time to get the photo for the next issue’s lead story.

Another thing about Leni was her uncanny ability to capture the essence of a performance or speech. Her 1966 shot of John Coltrane at the apex of a solo is exemplary of that unique sense of timing. There were also those candid photographs of notables, catching them in quiet reflection or expressive moods.

Working with her on “Detroit Jazz Who’s Who” gave me several opportunities to see her creative ingenuity in the dark room, how she dipped a negative and slowly brought the image into focus. **Once during a stint with photographer Gordon Parks, he told me that when it came to photography, “it all happens in the darkroom.”** These could have been Leni’s words as well because the artist behind the camera was even more skillful in the darkroom.

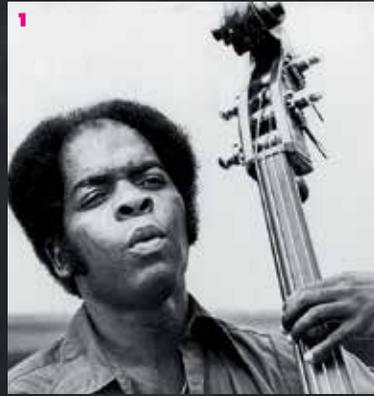
Her unstinting devotion to Detroit’s musicians, particularly the often-neglected jazz coterie, has been a constant refrain. The respect she has lovingly shown through her photos of them has been reciprocated by their praise of her work, which they often display proudly and share with friends and relatives.

Much of what she did in the dark is finally coming to the light as more and more institutions and media discover her archives or visit her website. This fresh wave of excitement and recognition from The Kresge Foundation is just what she needs to propel what, to me, has been her ceaseless quest to let the camera speak for her.

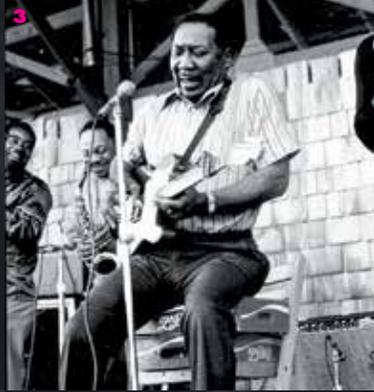
Herb Boyd is an author and jazz historian.



1 Marcus Belgrave 2 John Coltrane 3 Miles Davis 4 Faruq Bey 5 Sun Ra 6 Wendell Harrison 7 Regina Carter 8 Charles Mingus 9 Alice Coltrane 10 Malachi Favors 11 Archie Shepp 12 Betty Carter 13 Elvin Jones 14 Walter Wolfman Washington.



1 Don Mayberry 2 B.B. King 3 Muddy Waters
4 Sundiata Keita.



Albert King at Ethel's Cocktail Lounge, Detroit, Michigan, 1978.

Representatives of the Black Panther Party at a demonstration to free Black Panther Huey Newton outside the Federal Building in Detroit, Michigan, 1969.

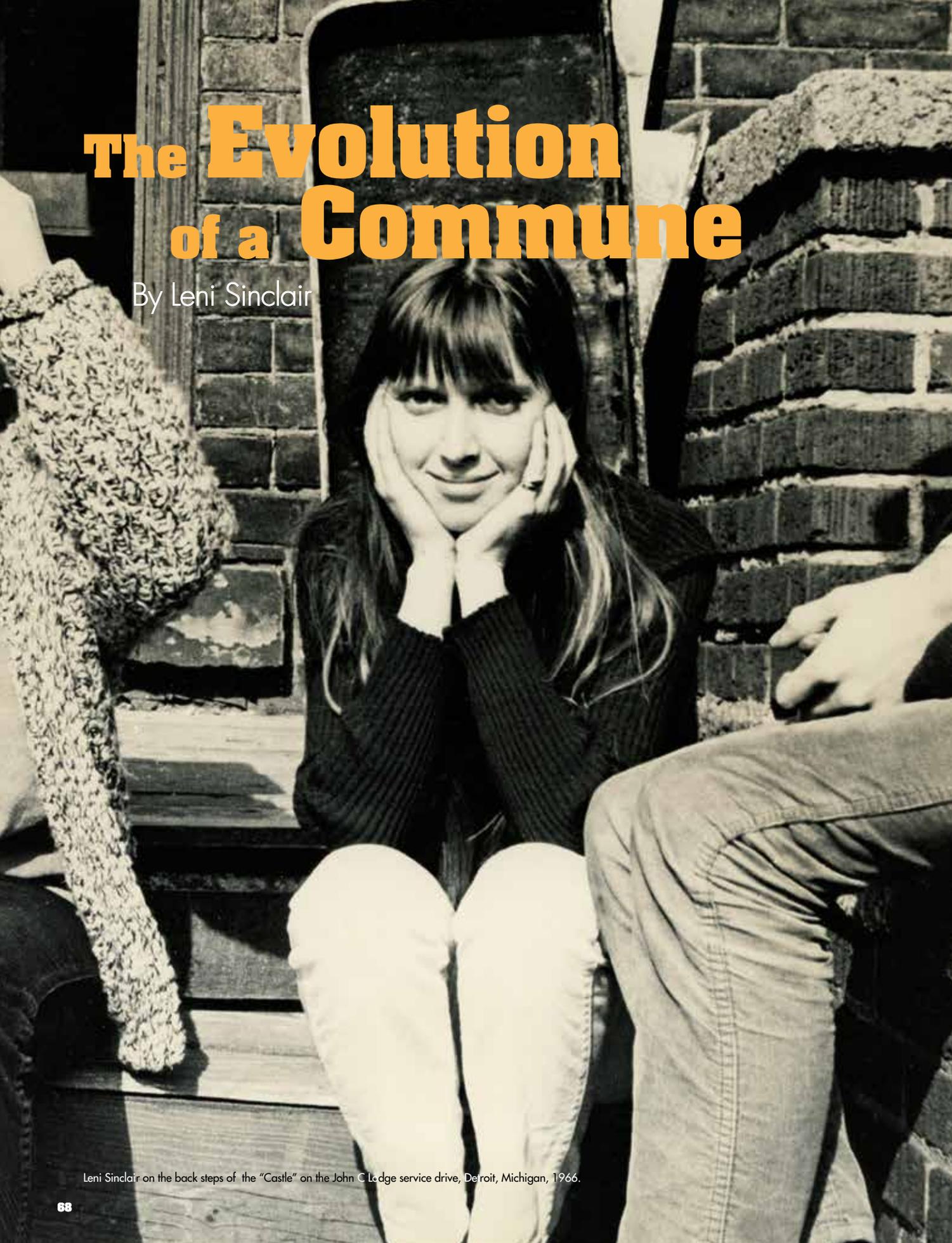
Activism

"My negatives don't lie, they are waiting to tell the truth."

- Leni Sinclair

The Evolution of a Commune

By Leni Sinclair



Leni Sinclair on the back steps of the "Castle" on the John C. Lodge service drive, Detroit, Michigan, 1966.



N 1964,

when I moved in with my future husband, John Sinclair, he was already living in a commune, although we didn't call it that back then. He shared a townhouse on the John C. Lodge service drive with several musicians from the Detroit Artists Workshop. In 1966 while John was serving six months in the Detroit House of Correction, the commune disbanded. When he was released, we moved to an attic on Plum Street, where we managed the *Fifth Estate* Bookstore. That was the only time John and I lived alone as a couple and that experiment lasted exactly three months. Soon we moved back to the Wayne State area and rented an old dentist's office above the offices of Committee to End the War in Vietnam and the *Fifth Estate* on the corner of Warren Avenue and the Lodge Freeway.

This office had four or five small rooms stacked with dental chairs and equipment that was soon cleared as people came to join us. This was the nucleus of the Trans-Love Energies commune. It's not that we decided to establish a commune, it's just that we had a lot of plans for the future. Moving in together instead of paying rent



Top: Leni Sinclair and fellow Trans-Love Energies commune member Genie Johnson (future wife of Pun Plamondon) at the Trans-Love Energies store on the corner of Second and Forest Avenues in Detroit, Michigan, 1968. Bottom: Psychedelic Rangers on duty at an outdoor concert in Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1972.

on separate apartments made economic sense. As our numbers increased, we moved to a former medical clinic in a building nearby at Forest and Second Avenues. The waiting room became THE STORE where we sold hippie beads, buttons, bumper stickers, candles, underground newspapers, records, posters and more.

Back then the police didn't like hippies very much, and we were harassed and under constant surveillance. When our Trans-Love building was firebombed, we made a hasty strategic retreat to Ann Arbor. There we rented a huge mansion on Hill Street, which had enough rooms to accommodate the MC5 band members, families and entourage (who had taken over our space in the dentist's office) and the Trans-Love people.

But we came with a reputation. The day we moved in, more conservative Ann Arbor citizens held a candlelight vigil, carrying signs that read: "Sin like in SINclair." Ouch! We also received a visit from the town's top vice cop, Lt. Eugene Staudemeier. He challenged John about why we moved to Ann Arbor, and John challenged him right back, saying in effect "this is a free country and we can move wherever we want. If you don't mess with us, we won't mess with you." A truce was struck. We established our own hippie police force, the Psychedelic





Leni Sinclair, gagged and bound in protest over the denial of an appeal bond for the then incarcerated John Sinclair, at the Michigan Supreme Court with David Sinclair at the microphone, Lansing, Michigan, 1971. Photo by David Fenton.

the two households. (David Sinclair and his band and entourage had moved into **1520 Hill Street**, the mansion next to ours, about a month after Trans-Love had moved to Ann Arbor.)

For the next two and a half years, the work of the commune was almost single-mindedly devoted to freeing John “from the clutches of the man,” as John Lennon put it. The UP became the new White Panther Party band, playing countless benefits to raise money for John’s legal defense and help keep our lights on. But when Frank Bach, the lead singer, became a single father, his parental duties clashed with his

Rangers, who kept peace and order during our free concerts and events, including the Ann Arbor Blues and Jazz Festivals. The Ann Arbor police stayed away from our concerts after that, except for the undercover officers posing as hippies.

Trans-Love produced three rock bands: the MC5, which was managed by John Sinclair, the UP, managed by my brother-in-law David Sinclair, and the Psychedelic Stooges, managed by Jimmy Silvers. The MC5/Trans-Love house was a constant beehive of activity and creativity and loud music, mostly avant-garde jazz.

The band soundproofed the garage and practiced there for hours every day. The rest of us were always busy, designing stage clothes for the band, designing and distributing flyers, working on light shows, mimeographing press releases, organizing benefits, taking photos, and creating things that we could sell at our store at the Grande Ballroom.

After signing a contract with Elektra Records, the MC5 moved to their own house in nearby Hamburg and later severed their relationship with the White Panther Party (on advice of their new label, Atlantic Records, and new manager, Jon Landau), which the band members and John had created in 1968. **The Trans-Love/White Panther commune continued at the Hill Street house until John was sentenced to nine and a half to 10 years in prison for possession of two marijuana cigarettes in July 1969.** We couldn’t pay the bills so David Sinclair opened his big heart and big house next door and we consolidated



A White Panther Party celebration at the Hill Street commune, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1971.

economic duties. We came up with a plan for collective childcare. Each one of us would sign up for a two-hour shift of watching the children — his and my two daughters. **This new arrangement freed us to devote more time and energy to the Free John Now! Campaign and the children benefited from having constant supervision by fun-loving young people.**

But why stop with collectivizing childcare? Soon we made big wall charts with everybody’s name and all the tasks that had to be done in two-hour increments. Besides baby duty, there was kitchen duty, office duty, cleaning duty, community organizing duty, and a host of others. Everyone was free to decide what they wanted to do that day as long as they did something.

The number of people living at our mansion on Hill Street was always fluctuating. I remember coming home



White Panther Party members in front of their national headquarters, 1520 Hill Street, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1970.

from a trip one day to find that five or six people from the Felch Street commune had all moved in with us. A sympathetic carpenter in the community built us a dining room table big enough to seat 28. We all ate together, enjoying four or five course gourmet macrobiotic dinners, most often cooked up by Frank Bach. We bought our brown rice in 100-pound bags from Eden Foods, and procured fruit and vegetables at the Eastern Market in Detroit. Soon we started taking orders from other community members, and thus was born the Ann Arbor People’s Food Co-op, which is still flourishing more than 40 years later.

The work to free John had to be carried out on many fronts. We organized demonstrations, benefits, petition drives, newspaper ads and acts of guerrilla theater, such as the night a bunch of hippies gathered around a table piled high with a pound of marijuana, donned rubber gloves and rolled hundreds of joints. They put two joints each in envelopes addressed to every Michigan State Representative and State Senator, with a note explaining that they were now in possession of two marijuana cigarettes and could be sentenced, like John Sinclair, to 10 years in jail. (Newspaper reports said that most of the politicians turned their envelopes over to the state police, but not all of them.)

With the help of brilliant lawyers, and the support of people from all over the country, we eventually succeeded



Sunny Sinclair on a rock painted with a White Panther Party rallying cry, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1971.



Fred Smith and John Sinclair in handcuffs, arrested and charged with assault on a police officer, Oakland County jail, Pontiac, Michigan, 1968.

Leni Sinclair's first solo exhibition of photographs was held at The Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History in 2009. The museum felt Leni's work represented an important document of time and space in Detroit, when the city was in its heyday and the greatest American and international artists performed here. Leni instinctively recognized the genius and creativity that existed among these musicians and artists and recorded that period for the city. Such a time and place is now gone from Detroit but Leni's work tells the story for posterity – what Detroit was, how Detroit sounded and felt.

It's especially important that an artist such as Leni Sinclair has been named the 2016 Kresge Eminent Artist. Leni has labored in humility, under a cloak of invisibility for many years. To see her being recognized for the significance of her contributions to the cultural history of Detroit should prove inspiring to many other artists who work in relative obscurity. Her selection illuminates the possibility of greatness achieved when you are passionate about your art and put this type of energy into what you do – the rewards will come. I believe her selection will propel others to work with even greater passion to pursue their artistic goals. ☺

Juanita Moore • President and CEO of the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History



I had the privilege of working with Leni on "Detroit Jazz Who's Who," which was published in 1984. It was one of the many projects of the Detroit Jazz Center (and its Jazz Research Institute) in the early 1980s. I joined the board of the Jazz Center at the invitation of John Sinclair and Herb Boyd, whom I had met in the late 1970s while researching the history of jazz in Detroit. Leni had been acting as staff photographer of the Jazz Center, photographing our concerts at 2110 Park Avenue, Orchestra Hall and elsewhere. Her portfolio of Detroit jazz musicians – pianist Kenny Cox, saxophonists and band-leaders Sam Sanders and David Swain, among them – was already substantial, as she'd been documenting Detroit's jazz life since the mid-1960s. She's a true jazz activist. ☺

Lars Bjorn • author, educator, jazz historian





Left: John Lennon and Yoko Ono giving a press conference at New York City's Federal District Court following their deportation order; Chicago Seven activist Rennie Davis at Ono's side. Right: Leni and John Sinclair joined the Lennons at their invitation to visit them in New York and help plan nationwide peace rallies. Photo by Robert Agriopoulos.



did we learn there was one among us who regularly reported to the FBI. To this day we don't know the informer's identity, but just the thought of it puts a big chill on the idea of living in a commune again.

With the help of some of the best lawyers in the country we won our case in the Supreme Court. The unanimous decision to uphold Judge Damon Keith's ruling in June 1972, ensured that the Fourth Amendment to the Constitution, which protects citizens against warrantless wiretapping or searches, remained the law of the land. The Justice Department dropped the charges against the indicted White Panther Party leaders, and John was finally a free man.

To all the people who lived and worked together in the 1510/1520 Hill Street commune, I want to say you are every bit as important as John Sinclair and John Lennon. Without you, it could not have been done. To you and to all of our supporters far and wide I want to say: Thank you for helping free my husband and for helping keep our country free.

Leni Sinclair, Minister of Education, White Panther Party

Adapted from Leni Sinclair's 2011 interview with the Ann Arbor District Library.

in winning over the Governor, the Michigan House and Senate, and the Michigan Supreme Court. A new Michigan law was enacted that reduced the sentence for possession of marijuana from 10 years to a one-year maximum, and a four-year maximum sentence for sale and distribution (including giving a joint to a friend, if that "friend" turned out to be an undercover cop), rather than 20 years to life.

In December 1971, John Lennon and Yoko Ono came to Ann Arbor to headline the historic John Sinclair Freedom Rally at Crisler Arena, playing to a sold-out audience of 15,000. And just two days later, on December 13, John walked out of prison after having served two and a half years.

But John wasn't a free man yet. Two years earlier, shortly after he was sent to prison to begin serving his sentence, John and two other White Panther leaders were indicted for conspiracy to blow up a clandestine CIA recruiting office in Ann Arbor. A conviction on that charge could put him back in jail for another 15 to 25 years. Our little band of White Panther hippies, which was just beginning to organize the fight to free John from his marijuana sentence, was suddenly faced with an even bigger Goliath in the form of the CIA, the FBI, the U.S. Justice Department and the whole Nixon administration.

Paranoia struck deep. We believed that our house was bugged and that our phone was tapped. We started holding our defense strategy meetings in the park, thinking we were safe from the uninvited ear. Only 20 years later

FREE JOHN SINCLAIR AND ALL POLITICAL PRISONERS!

**JOHN SINCLAIR
FREEDOM RALLY**

FRIDAY
DEC
10
1971

JOHN LENNON & YOKO ONO
STEVIE WONDER • BOB SEGER • COMMANDER CODY
ED SANDERS • BOBBY SEALE • TEAGARDEN & VANWINKLE • ALLEN GINSBERG
PHIL OCHS • ARCHIE SHEPP & ROSWELL RUDD WITH C.J.Q. • JERRY RUBIN • THE UP
RENNIE DAVIS • DAVE DELLINGER • DAVID PEEL • FR. JAMES GROPP
MCs BOB RUDNICK & ANNE LAVASSEUR

CRISLER ARENA
ANN ARBOR

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John Sinclair

By John Lennon
Copyright ©1972
Lenono Music (GMR)
All Rights Reserved

It ain't fair John Sinclair
In the stir for breathing air

Won't you care for John Sinclair
In the stir for breathing air

Let him be
Set him free
Let him be like you and me

They gave him ten for two
What else can the judges do
Got to, got to
Got to set him free

If he'd been a soldier man
Shooting g---- in Viet Nam
If he was the CIA
Selling dope and making hay

He'd be free
They'd let him be
Breathing air like you and me
Back home

They gave him ten for two
What else can the judges do

Got to, got to
Got to set him free

They gave him ten for two
They got old Lee Otis, too
They got to, got to
Got to set him free

Was he jailed for what he done
For representing everyone
Free John now if we can
From the clutches of the man

Let him be
Lift the lid
Bring him to his wife and kids

They gave him ten for two
What more can the bastards do
You got to, got to
Got to set him free



Bob Seger at the Free John Sinclair rally, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1971.



"Free John Now" demonstration at the state capitol building in Lansing, Michigan, 1971.



**A People's
History
of the CIA
Bombing
Conspiracy
("The Keith
Case");
Or, How
the White
Panthers
Saved the
Movement**

By Hugh "Buck" Davis

The CIA Conspiracy Trial Legal Defense Team. Top row, left to right: William Kunstler, Pat Richards, Liz Gaines, Lenoard Weinglass, Ken Kelly and Ken Mogill. Bottom row, left to right: Terry Taube, Genie Plamondon, Neil Bush, David Sinclair, and Buck Davis.

THE

Beginning: Bombings and Conspiracies

In early August 1970, two thin white guys with Afros and purple t-shirts that read "White Panther Party" came into the offices of the National Lawyers Guild at 5705 Woodward Avenue in Detroit. A few weeks earlier Lawrence (Pun) Plamondon, the first white revolutionary in modern times to make the FBI's Top Ten Most Wanted list, had been arrested in Michigan's Upper Peninsula for allegedly throwing a beer can out of a van. When caught, Plamondon was being driven by Detroit White Panther Party chapter member Jack Forrest, who later pled guilty to harboring a fugitive.

Plamondon, Forrest and John Sinclair (then serving his sentence for marijuana possession) had been recently indicted for the 1968 bombing of the CIA recruitment office in Ann Arbor. Plamondon, already facing numerous charges around the county, went underground at the news of the indictment and ultimately went to Algeria, where Eldridge Cleaver of the Black Panther Party was

also a fugitive. But there wasn't any marijuana or alcohol (or hippie girls) in Algeria, so Plamondon did not last long. The FBI was already hot on his trail, working with information obtained from an informant who had infiltrated the White Panther Party and become an intimate friend of Plamondon's wife.

The guys who walked into the Guild office were White Panther Party Chief of Staff and John's younger brother, David Sinclair, and Minister of Propaganda, David Fenton. They announced they were going to New York to recruit William Kunstler and Leonard Weinglass to represent Sinclair and Plamondon. They asked if I would be willing to represent Forrest and act as local counsel on the bombing conspiracy. Never having handled a felony or been in federal court, and still technically employed by Wayne County Neighborhood Legal Services until my fellowship ran out, I naturally said, "Yes." It did not seem like a big risk. Kunstler and Weinglass were the two most prominent lawyers in the country after the Chicago Seven Conspiracy trial. I assumed that they would not take the case. I was wrong.

Why me? The White Panther Party had already retained lawyer Justin (Chuck) Ravitz, who had been representing Sinclair since the days of the Detroit Artists Workshop and was still appealing Sinclair's latest marijuana conviction and attempting to get him out on bond. The back story is that a couple of weeks before Plamondon and Forrest were busted, Ravitz and I were at a party hosted by lefty law professor Mark Stickgold of the Wayne State University Free Legal Aid Clinic. I had volunteered to open the Guild office in January 1970, but had been handling political misdemeanors (primarily Black Panthers charged with impeding pedestrian traffic with aggressive sales of their newspapers) for some time before that. After a few beers and a few tokes, Ravitz and I were talking about our clients. He said, "I'm really tired of the White Panthers." I felt the same way about the Black Panthers. We agreed to trade clients for the next year. *That is how I ended up at the first pre-trial conference with Kunstler, Weinglass, U.S. District Judge Damon J. Keith, and U.S. Attorney Ralph Guy.*



Trial Court: The Decision

Judge Keith gave us just a few months – until early October – to file our pre-trial motions because all three of the defendants were incarcerated. All of the ordinary motions would be prepared in Detroit, primarily by Ravitz and me. But the electronic surveillance motion was prepared in New York by the Center for Constitutional Rights. My memory is that Ravitz and I filed upwards of 20 motions, including one to have the chief witness for the government, David Valler, submit to a psychiatric examination.

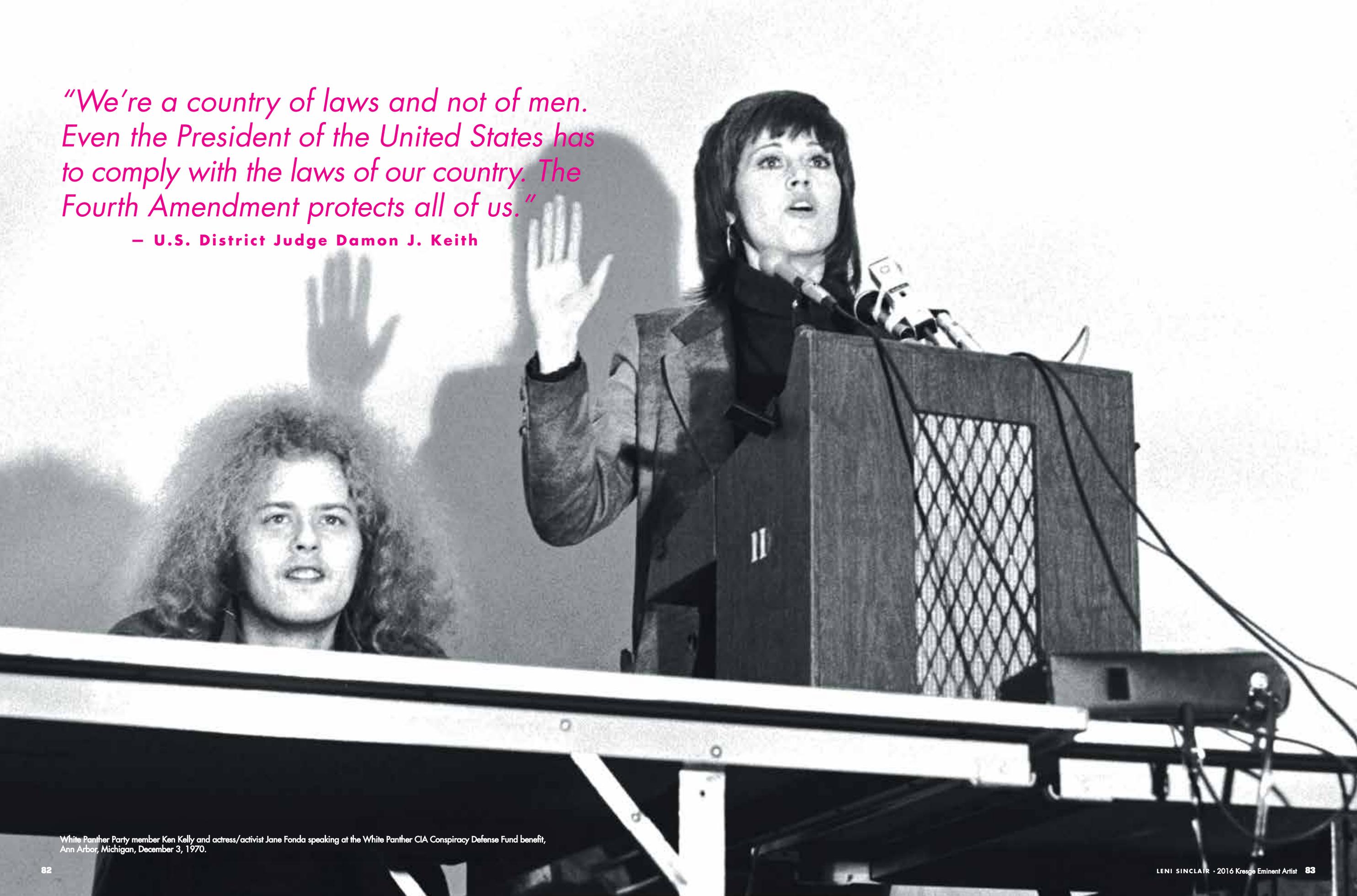
There had been eight bombings in southeast Michigan in the fall of 1968 and Valler, who lived near Wayne State, was calling the editor of *The Detroit News*, implicitly confessing. The *News* ran a front-page story with Valler's picture and the headline "Is this the bomber?" Ultimately, according to Jack Forrest, Valler took 40 hits of acid and turned himself in. Valler not only confessed to all the bombings, but implicated Sinclair, Forrest and Plamondon in the CIA blast. He got a sweetheart deal and a light sentence. The *News* made him its "youth" columnist in the *Sunday Magazine*, where he dutifully condemned the counterculture and radical politics from prison for the next few years until the case was over. Then he was released. We had many people come forward who had known Valler and told us how crazy he was



Top: Leni Sinclair and David Sinclair, John Sinclair's brother, outside Jackson State Prison after visiting John, 1971. Photo by David Fenton. Bottom: Leni Sinclair and U.S. District Judge Damon J. Keith, 2008. Photo by Richard Lipack.

"We're a country of laws and not of men. Even the President of the United States has to comply with the laws of our country. The Fourth Amendment protects all of us."

– U.S. District Judge Damon J. Keith



White Panther Party member Ken Kelly and actress/activist Jane Fonda speaking at the White Panther CIA Conspiracy Defense Fund benefit, Ann Arbor, Michigan, December 3, 1970.



The Supreme Court of the United States, Washington, D.C., 1972.

(painting vulgar pictures of Jesus and consuming an extraordinary amount of hallucinogenics and other drugs). That led us to make the psychiatric motion.

The strain of the case was especially intense for me because my wife Camilla was pregnant and due to deliver our daughter in early September. But Abigail did not come until a month later in October, when Camilla went to the hospital to be induced. Ravitz and I kept working until about 5 a.m., when the hospital called and I rushed over. Ravitz went home and changed for a Court of Appeals argument on another of Sinclair's bond motions. We got back together and filed the motions later that day.

The government responded and, to our surprise, admitted that there were electronic interceptions. The hearing on the motions was scheduled for early December 1970. That morning, the weather was terrible and the airport was closed – Kuntsler and Weinglass were not going to make it from New York. We were going to have to argue. Neal Bush, another young defense attorney, turned to me, saying that he had never argued a motion before. I said that I had never handled a federal case. At the hearing, Judge Keith patiently and politely heard and denied all of our motions, except the one concerning the wiretaps. Since the government had admitted their existence, he ordered them produced. There was another round of briefing

regarding the timing and circumstances of the disclosure of the surveillance.

At the next hearing in January 1971, Judge Keith ruled the intercepts illegal as warrantless political surveillance. Thus, the government had to turn over the tapes and we had to have a "taint" hearing to see whether they would affect the trial. Judge Keith was considering having the trial first and then having a hearing to determine if it had been prejudiced by evidence derived from the intercepts. The government, objecting strongly to revealing their contents, assured Keith that Plamondon was not the target of the intercepts and that it would not affect the trial. Keith still insisted that the tapes be disclosed.

At that point, U. S. Attorney Ralph Guy, apparently on orders from Washington, told Keith that the government did not intend to disclose the wiretaps before or after trial. The judge looked at the defense and said, "Mr. Kunstler, make your motion." In the face of a dismissal, Guy asked for 48 hours to appeal to the Sixth Circuit by way of mandamus (a special motion to a higher court to compel a judge to do a particular act). The extension was granted.

We never knew how the Nixon-Mitchell White House/Department of Justice decided to pick this case in which to take a stand. Similar motions had been filed in other cases and Warren Ferguson, a courageous federal

judge in Los Angeles, had ruled warrantless political electronic surveillance of U.S. citizens illegal in a case involving the Black Panther Party. But that was post-trial and the regular process of appeal was not going to be fast. Plus, he granted a stay of the disclosure order. The government apparently wanted a rapid review and chose the case of this political band of counterculturalists in Michigan. Perhaps they thought that the defense would be weaker than in one of the other big anti-war/Black Panther Party cases. Plus, they knew that the tapes were irrelevant to the charges.

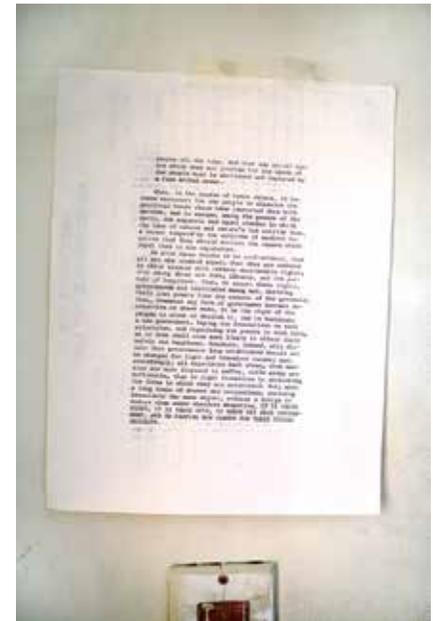
The Sixth Circuit

The mandamus was against Judge Keith's disclosure order and made him a party to the case. **That is how the case, United States v. U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan, came to be known as "The Keith Case."** The Sixth Circuit ordered a short briefing schedule and oral argument on the day of the filing of the briefs. It was agreed that I would write the mandamus portion of the defendants' brief and the electronic surveillance section would be written in New York. Kunstler would fly to Cincinnati. I would drive down. We would put the halves together in the morning and then argue that afternoon. Judge Keith did not participate.

I had no clue about mandamus and was working very long hours on all of the other political cases that were being handled by the Detroit Guild office. I needed access to a federal law library at odd hours. A Guild member was working for a federal judge and gave me a key to the chambers. I could come and go as I wanted. Security at the courthouse was different then.

Technically, I had a good argument that this was not a proper case for mandamus. If we could defeat it on technical grounds, the case against our clients would be dismissed. We had to try. But the impetus was with the government. We knew that the Department of Justice and the White House wanted a decision in this case as a ratification of their policies. Accepting the mandamus under a "special circumstances" rubric, the Court of Appeals decided the case on the merits.

The day before the scheduled argument in Cincinnati, I drove to Columbus to see old friends. But going down I-71 to Cincinnati, I hit a patch of black ice, slid into the median and rolled four times. The Samsonite briefcase



A portion of the U.S. Constitution as displayed near the front door of Leni Sinclair's Detroit home, 2016. Photo by Julie Pincus.

that my mother gave me when I graduated from law school shattered and cut off the top half of my right ear. I was taken by ambulance to the local hospital.

Kunstler, always magnificent in crises, grabbed a ride in Cincinnati and rushed to the hospital and the scene of the accident. The originals of my half of the brief were spread along the median in the snow. Kunstler collected them and took them to a dry cleaner in Cincinnati, where he had them dried and pressed. He went to court, argued and we won 2-1.



The Ann Arbor Sun reports on the White Panther's victory in the Supreme Court, 1972.

I think of what Leni has done for our constitution and for America, and for all that we hold so dearly when we go to Washington and see etched in marble the Supreme Court's four words: Equal justice under law.

Leni, we salute you and your husband, John, for making those words a reality under the Fourth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution because of the decision in the White Panther case, which the United States Supreme Court unanimously upheld.

Through her activism and her photography, Leni has captured iconic images of major cultural, political and social figures and events.

Over the past 60 years, she has showcased an unremitting multi-faceted view of our great city and its beautiful citizens. Her complete body of work should serve as a reminder that people can make a difference, they can work together, collectively, to encourage, foster and support each other and above all, ask questions.

Leni's tireless advocacy, which began the moment she arrived in this country, embodies this basic principle. I have no doubt that her legacy as an activist and advocate of social change by way of her camera is a celebration of everything that makes this country great. Congratulations, Leni and I salute you. God bless you. ☺

Judge Damon J. Keith •

Senior Judge for the United States Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit, Tribute to Leni Sinclair, 2016 Kresge Eminent Artist Award reception, March 22, 2016, Detroit, Michigan





Top, left: Judge Damon J. Keith, Hugh "Buck" Davis and Leni Sinclair at the party honoring Leni Sinclair as the 2016 Kresge Eminent Artist, Detroit, Michigan, March, 2016. Photo by Barbara Weinberg Barefield. Top, right: A noted constitutional scholar, Leonard Weinglass was co-legal counsel for the White Panther Party's defense along with attorney William Kunstler. Bottom, left: Attorney for the defense William Kunstler. Kunstler was one of the most famous lawyers in the United States in 1972.

On To The Supreme Court

After the victory in the Sixth Circuit, it was a foregone conclusion that the government would seek, and the Supreme Court would grant, a judicial review. Once the court took the case, on June 21, 1971, the forces began gathering. The legendary Arthur Kinoy, one of the co-founders with Kunstler of the Center for Constitutional Rights and law professor at Rutgers, would argue for the individual defendants. The brief would be written at the center.

Now Judge Keith decided to directly participate and went to Bill Gossett, one of the partners at legal firm Dykema Gossett and a former president of the American Bar Association. Gossett took the case *pro bono* and engaged Abraham Sofaer of Columbia Law School to write the brief for Judge Keith. *Everyone knew that this would be a watershed case, particularly with the streams of political dissent (youth, anti-war, civil rights, black liberation, feminist, environmental, LGBT) bursting forth in 1971.* The government, determined to maintain the Counter-Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO) against these movements, as its final submission likened the case to the

occasions in U.S. history when federal troops had to be called out to quell domestic disturbances, producing a list. Predictably, they were all racial incidents or labor disputes.

Importantly for progressives, all of the big anti-war and Black Panther conspiracy trials around the country were put on hold because similar motions had been made in each of them, with the government uniformly admitting to warrantless wiretaps of the defendants and their organizations. It made no sense for them to move forward in the face of the impending decision in The Keith Case.

The argument was held February 24, 1972. Because I had an appearance in the trial court, I was allowed to sit inside the bar, although I was not admitted to practice in the Supreme Court. As the only free defendant, Sinclair, who had been released days earlier, had to be allowed into the Supreme Court argument. He and his wife Leni sat on two throne-like chairs at the back of the chamber in purple White Panthers shirts.

Erwin Griswold, my law school dean and President Nixon's Solicitor General, refused to argue the case for

the government. The Justice Department brought in Robert Mardian, head of its internal security division and the first guy to resign after Watergate. Justice William Rehnquist had recused himself because he had helped formulate the policy at the Justice Department. The courtroom was packed and the stage was set.

Mardian was not an accomplished appellate advocate and the justices pounced on him quickly. As a final ploy, Mardian produced a tape and begged the justices to listen to it in chambers so that they could hear exactly how dangerous these defendants were and why it was necessary for the government to use such means. One of the justices asked if the government would agree to have the defendants' lawyers listen with them. Mardian replied that he would agree for Gossett to hear the tapes, but not Kinoy.

Justice Thurgood Marshall, who had argued *Brown v. Board of Education* with Kinoy, turned his chair around and never looked at the Government again during the argument. Gossett acquitted himself well. But Kinoy was brilliant, going up and down the bench reminding one justice after another of statements they had made in previous cases, which compelled them to rule warrantless electronic political surveillance illegal.

The unanimous 8-0 Keith decision was released on June 19; *U.S. v. U.S. District Court (Keith)*, 407 US 297 (1972). The Watergate burglary occurred three nights earlier. Kinoy always theorized that Rehnquist had tipped someone that they were going to lose Keith on Monday. *Thus, the "plumbers" were not installing wiretaps into the Democratic National Committee office, they were taking them out.* No evidence has ever disproved the theory. Regardless, the combination of the decision and Watergate ultimately led to the end of the Nixon presidency and a comprehensive expansion of political rights.

Quietly, all of the big conspiracy cases, including the Weatherman indictments in Detroit and elsewhere, were dropped. The government could not prove a single case without its illegally obtained evidence, or didn't want to suffer further embarrassment and exposure of COINTELPRO, so it abandoned them. That is how the White Panther Party and Judge Keith saved the movement from years of surveillance, COINTELPRO disruption and conspiracy charges.

Attorney **Hugh "Buck" Davis** is co-founder of Constitutional Litigation Associates, PC, in Detroit, where he practices in civil rights, discrimination and criminal defense cases.

Adapted from a speech originally presented to the Detroit and Michigan National Lawyers Guild Annual Dinner of 2010.



The exposé of the "Watergate plumbers" and their wiretapping equipment ultimately led to the resignation of President Richard M. Nixon on August 8, 1974.

The Times



Rosa Parks, Detroit, Michigan, 1982.

Mothers against the war in the Ann Arbor to Detroit Peace March, 1969.



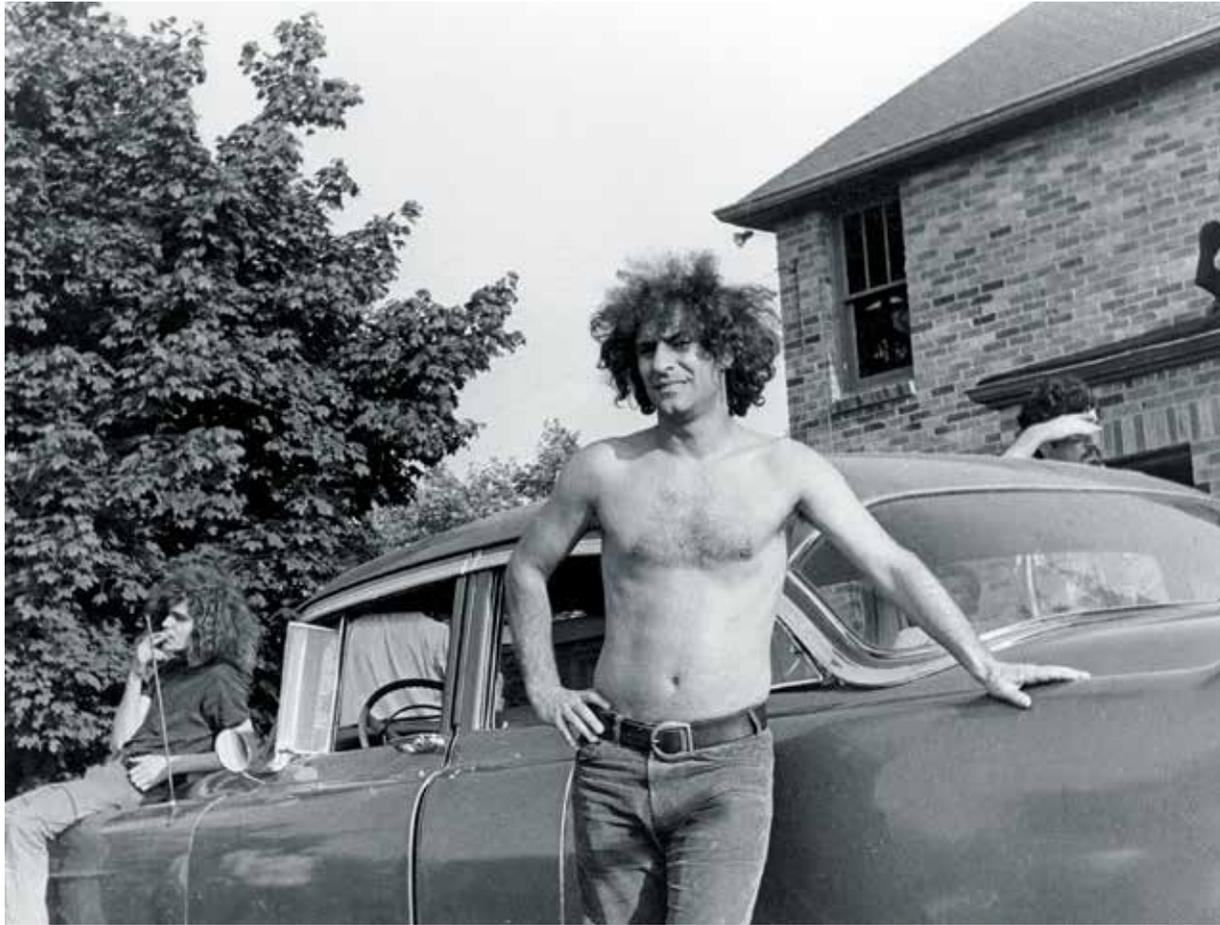
Mounted police, Detroit, Michigan, 1963.



Demonstrators singing "We Shall Overcome" at the National Student Congress, Bloomington, Indiana, 1963.



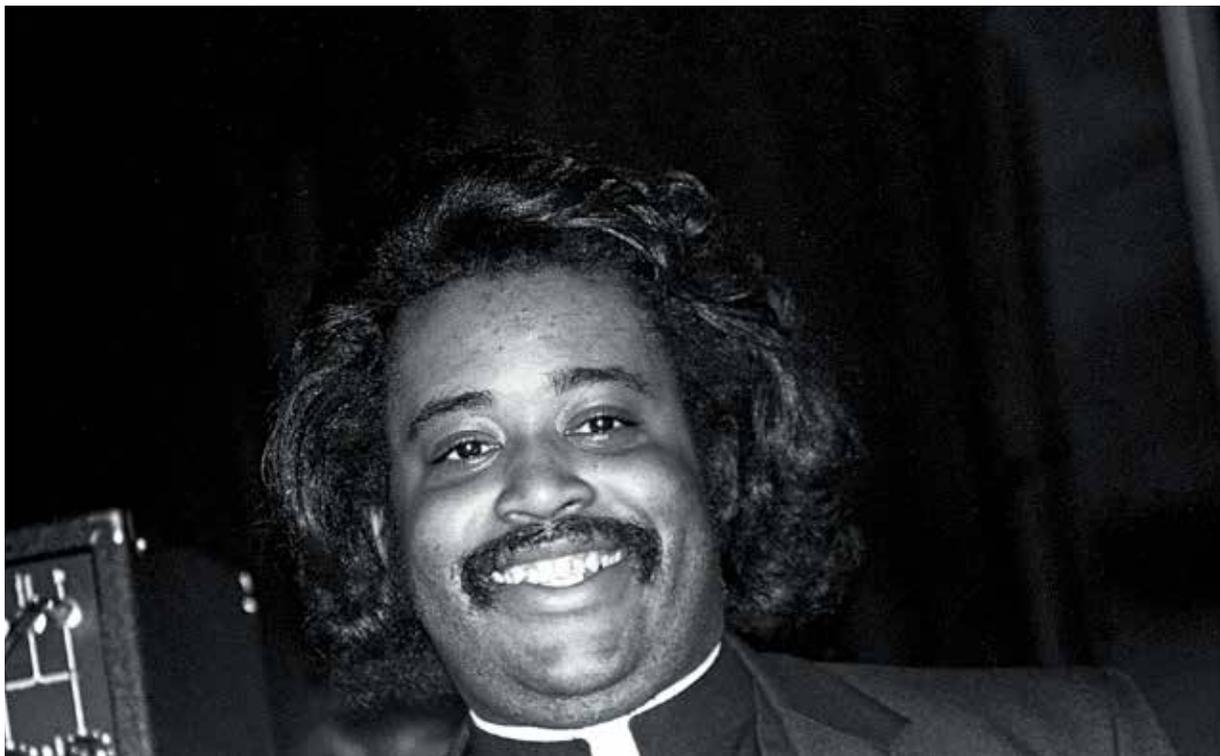
The *Fifth Estate's* Peter Werbe, White Panthers Pun and Genie Plamondon and Yippie Jerry Rubin at the Underground Media Conference, Madison, Wisconsin, 1970. Leni Sinclair's photo courtesy of the *Fifth Estate* and Peter Werbe.



Activist Abbie Hoffman, one of the Chicago Seven, in Ann Arbor, Michigan, for the Underground Media Conference, August, 1969.



Drug culture conference at State University of New York at Buffalo. Guest speakers included Timothy Leary and Abbie Hoffman, 1969.



The Rev. Al Sharpton at Watts Club Mozambique, where he was part of James Brown's entourage, Detroit, Michigan, 1982.



Double exposure photo of poets Allen Ginsberg and Charles Olson at Robbie's Cafeteria on Telegraph Hill, San Francisco, California.



The Dramatics, rally to re-elect President Jimmy Carter at Cobo Hall, Detroit, Michigan, 1980.



President Jimmy Carter at Cobo Hall, Detroit, Michigan, 1980.



Detroit Mayor Coleman Young, Detroit, Michigan, 1980.



The Rev. Jesse Jackson at Cobo Hall, Detroit, Michigan, 1980.

Leni has preserved our memories with her photography much more than the rhetoric and narcissism of the time. We are collectively able to look at these photos and reflect on a time long past that significantly influenced our lives, actions and beliefs. Her contribution to the community is her work and photography, the success of coming here from East Germany and forging a remarkable life. She has struggled and we are all so happy her cultural and artistic contributions are being acknowledged. ☺

Rebecca Derminer • former White Panther Party member and wife of MC5 lead singer Rob Tyner



Leni has been one of my heroines and inspirations since December 10, 1971, when I spent well over 10 hours in Ann Arbor's Crisler Arena with some 15,000 hippies, students, activists, potheads, CIA and FBI agents.

The John Sinclair Freedom Rally, which Leni played a pivotal role in conceiving and organizing, became one of the most climactic experiences of my young college life. Sent to prison for 10 years for possessing two joints, John's incarceration was the outrage that united not just those in the arena, but all over the country, if not the world. For so much of her life, Leni has been the behind-the-scenes cement, both documenting and helping to make monumental things happen. Helping her husband John get out of jail was one such event.

The rally, featuring one legend after the next, was extraordinarily long, but flew by (John Lennon and Yoko Ono performed at 3 a.m. and there were more performances afterward). One of the most moving and memorable moments occurred when Leni's live phone call to John was broadcast to the audience. We all heard the emotion, devotion, courage and hope in their voices, and we knew this injustice could not continue. Two days later the Michigan Supreme Court released John.

For me, this event was an epiphany, awakening me to how the misuse of justice threatens the freedoms promised by our democracy – but also how people can fight back to make the world a better place. I promised myself that after I graduated (I was an art student at the University of Michigan College of Architecture and Design), I would meet Leni and the others from the Rainbow People's Party and help them in their efforts.

About a year later, I attended a meeting for volunteers for *the Ann Arbor Sun* newspaper at the Hill Street homes of Leni, John and others in the Rainbow People's Party. In April 1973, my name appeared in the staff box. Over the next three-plus years, I moved from illustrator, cartoonist, graphic artist, photographer, art director and editorial board member to publisher. I often worked with Leni, either at a light table laying out galleys of the newspapers, in the darkroom (developing and printing one another's film), or taking photos at events and concerts.

I was inspired by her creativity and talents, her commitment, loyalty and devotion to her ideals and family, and her ability to work, work, work.

In 1975, we moved the *Sun* to Detroit, during a time of increasing flight, racism and negativity. It was a tough time to start a new business, especially one that focused on being positive about Detroit, but, truly, there was so much to report, promote and applaud. Through Leni and John, I learned about Detroit, and met and experienced some of the most exhilarating people, music and happenings. Although the *Sun* did not survive, my friendship with Leni continues after more than 40 years. For years, Leni has been hidden in the shadows, behind the scenes or behind the stars. She is now being recognized as the gem that she is. She is one of those rare people who really makes the world a better place. ☺

Barbara Weinberg Barefield •
photographer, designer, community activist



Biography



Iggy Pop in performance at the Grande Ballroom, Detroit, Michigan, 1969.

Leni Sinclair

(nee Magdalene Arndt)
Born: March 8, 1940
Königsberg, East Prussia
(now Kaliningrad, Russia)

American citizenship: 1964



Top: Leni front, left in Magdeburg, Germany, 1954.
Middle: Camping with friends in East Germany, 1957.
Bottom: Leni, 1958.

EDUCATION

1960-1966
Wayne State University

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

1964
Member
Red Door Gallery
Detroit, Michigan

1964
Co-Founder
Detroit Artists Workshop
Detroit, Michigan

1965-1968
Photographer
Fifth Estate
Detroit, Michigan

1967
Photographer
The Warren-Forest Sun
Detroit, Michigan

1968
Co-Founder
White Panther Party
Ann Arbor, Michigan

1968-1974
Photographer
The Ann Arbor Sun
Ann Arbor, Michigan

1970
Co-Founder
Rainbow People's Party
Ann Arbor, Michigan

1974-1976
Production Manager
The Detroit Sun
Detroit, Michigan

1979-1982
Occupational Therapist
The John Coltrane/Charlie Parker
Community Development Corporation
Malcolm X Academy
Detroit, Michigan

1990-1991
Staff
Detroit Police Red Squad
Notification and Distribution
Compliance Program
Detroit, Michigan



Leni holding Celia Sinclair, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1970.

SELECTED AWARDS AND RECOGNITIONS

9/2013-9/2016
Grant: Leni Sinclair Photo Archive
The Knight Foundation
Detroit, Michigan

2016
Kresge Eminent Artist Award
The Kresge Foundation
Troy, Michigan

2016
Proclamation
Resolution honoring Leni Sinclair,
Kresge Foundation 2016 Eminent Artist
County of Wayne
Detroit, Michigan

SELECTED LECTURES

**Viet Nam and Rock
Civil Rights and Jazz**
The Lee Honors College
Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, Michigan

**What's Going On: The Literature
and Music of Motown**
Wayne State University
Detroit, Michigan

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2009
**Legends of Music:
Photographs by Leni Sinclair**
Charles H. Wright Museum
of African American History
Detroit, Michigan

2013
Art et Gourmandise Gallery
Lille, France

2014
Susanne Hilberly Gallery
Ferndale, Michigan

2014-2015
The Lee Honors College
Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, Michigan

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

1998
Destroy All Monsters Archive
Boihmans Van Beuningen
Rotterdam, The Netherlands

2014
**Roots & Branches:
The 50th Anniversary of the
Detroit Artists Workshop**
Center Galleries
College for Creative Studies
Detroit, Michigan

2015
**Motown: Detroit-München
und zurück –
What's Music Got to Do With It?**
Galerie Christoph Duerr
Munich, Germany

2015
Fela's Wimmin
Kalakuta Museum
Lagos, Nigeria



Leni at a free concert in Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1971.



Cabin on the Au Sable River in mid-Michigan, 1964. Photo by George Tysh.



Supporting Nelson Mandela, Detroit, Michigan, 1981.



Removing a small chunk of the Berlin Wall, Berlin, Germany, November 14, 1989.

2015
Fifth Estate 50th Anniversary Exhibition
 Museum of Contemporary Art
 Detroit, Michigan

Planned for Fall 2016
Detroit After Dark
 Detroit Institute of Arts
 Detroit, Michigan

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

Detroit Jazz Who's Who
 Herb Boyd and Leni Sinclair
 Jazz Research Institute
 Detroit, Michigan, 1984

Detroit Rocks
 A Pictorial History of
 Motor City Rock and Roll
 1965 to 1975
 Gary Grimshaw and Leni Sinclair
 Detroit Artists Workshop Press
 Detroit, Michigan, 2012

SELECTED REFERENCES

Music & Politics
 John Sinclair, Robert Levin
 The World Publishing Company
 New York, New York, 1971

**Guitar Army
 Street Writings/Prison Writing**
 John Sinclair
 A Rainbow Book
 Douglas Book Corporation
 New York, New York, 1972

**Ten For Two: The John Sinclair
 Freedom Rally**
 Director: Steve Gebhardt
 Distributor: Vaughn Films
 United Kingdom, 1973

Chris Handyside
 "Leni Sinclair: Rock photography's
 overlooked grand matriarch"
MetroTimes.com (February 4, 2004)
www.metrotimes.com/detroit/leni-sinclair-rock-photographys-overlooked-grand-matriarch

John and Leni Sinclair Papers
 Bentley Historical Library
 The University of Michigan
 Ann Arbor, Michigan

**Grit Noise and Revolution:
 The Birth of Detroit Rock 'n' Roll**
 David A. Carson
 University of Michigan Press
 Ann Arbor, Michigan, 2006

The U.S. vs. John Lennon
 Directors: David Leaf, John Scheinfeld
 Lionsgate Films
 Santa Monica, California, 2006

**It's All Good:
 A John Sinclair Reader**
 John Sinclair
 Headpress
www.worldheadpress.com/
 2009

**The Detroit City Poets Oral
 History Project**
 Monika Berenyi, curator
 Wayne State University
 Undergraduate Library
 Wayne State University
 Detroit, Michigan, 2011

**Sinclair, Leni. "AADL Talks To:
 Leni Sinclair"**
 Interview. Audio blog post. *Aadl.org*
 Ann Arbor District Library, 9 Dec.
 2011. Web. 17 Feb. 2016.

**Detroit Rock City:
 The Uncensored History
 of Rock 'n' Roll In
 America's Loudest City**
 Steve Miller
 Da Capo Press
 Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 2013

Rock in Fashion
 John Varvatos and Holly George-Warren
 Harper Design
 HarperCollins
 New York, New York, 2013

Louder Than Love
 The Grande Ballroom Story
 Directors: Tony D'Annunzio, Karl Rausch
 Producer: Tony D'Annunzio
 Loud Productions
 Detroit, Michigan, 2012

Detour in Detroit
 Francesca Berardi
 Humboldt Books
 Milan, Italy, 2015

**Heaven Was Detroit:
 An Anthology of Detroit
 Music from Jazz to
 HipHop and Beyond**
 Edited by M.L. Liebler
 Wayne State University Press
 Detroit, Michigan, 2016

aramanegallery.com
www.aramanegallery.com/project/leni-sinclair

detroitartistsworkshop.com
www.detroitartistsworkshop.com/sinclair-leni/

Gettyimages.com
www.gettyimages.com/galleries/photographers/leni_sinclair

"Photographer, activist Leni Sinclair named
 2016 Kresge Eminent Artist." Ryan Grimes.
michiganradio.org. February 22,
 2016. <http://michiganradio.org/post/photographer-activist-leni-sinclair-named-2016-kresge-eminant-artist>

SELECTED COLLECTIONS

Detroit Institute of Arts
 Detroit, Michigan

The Lee Honors College
 Western Michigan University
 Kalamazoo, Michigan



Leni with part of her archives now housed at the Bentley Historical Library at The University of Michigan. Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1977. Photo by Hugh Grannum.



Leni with daughter Sunny, left, granddaughter Beyonce, center, and daughter Celia, right, 2016. Photo by Michelle Lundgren.



Receiving her proclamation from Wayne County, Detroit, Michigan, 2016. Photo by Julie Pincus.



Our Congratulations

Kresge Arts in Detroit is thrilled to announce Leni Sinclair as the 2016 Kresge Eminent Artist, honoring her for a singular, lifelong devotion to art and activism.

As a photographer, Sinclair's iconic images of major cultural, political and social figures and events, spanning the last six decades, present a riveting, multifaceted view of Detroit. As an activist and advocate for social change, Sinclair was a co-founder of many influential vehicles that supported the emergence of an avant-garde art scene and radical social movement in Detroit – among them Red Door Gallery, the Detroit Artists Workshop and the White Panther Party.

Sinclair's art and activism are inseparable forces and we are honored to shine a light on the critical contributions of her art practice to Detroit.

Since 2008, Kresge Arts in Detroit has annually honored an exceptional artist for lifelong professional achievements and contributions to the cultural community of metropolitan Detroit. The Kresge Eminent Artist Award, administered for The Kresge Foundation by the College for Creative Studies, includes a \$50,000 prize that acknowledges artistic innovation, integrity and depth of vision. The Eminent Artist Award recipient is selected by the Kresge Arts in Detroit Advisory Council, a volunteer group of leaders in the metropolitan Detroit cultural community.

Leni Sinclair has spent much of her life as an under-recognized force in Detroit's music and political scene. It is our hope and expectation that the 2016 Kresge Eminent Artist Award will be the first of many substantial and well-deserved acknowledgements of her unwavering contributions to art, culture and community.

Michelle Perron

Director, Kresge Arts in Detroit

A Note from Richard L. Rogers

Leni Sinclair is a Detroit original, though she is not originally from Detroit.

It was here she found her artistic voice and went on to create a remarkable body of work that documents the artistic voices of so many who form Detroit's essential cultural narrative. And it was here that she shaped her art into an instrument for social justice and worked tirelessly to achieve a more equitable and caring society.

The College for Creative Studies is proud to participate in honoring Leni Sinclair as the 2016 Kresge Eminent Artist because her career resonates so well with CCS's mission. Its founding purpose as the Detroit Society of Arts and Crafts in 1906 was "to encourage good and beautiful work as applied to useful service." Leni Sinclair has without doubt produced good and beautiful work and has always seen the purpose of art and artists as serving the well-being of those in need and of the larger community.

The Kresge Arts in Detroit program proceeds from this same spirit, a belief in the vital role that artists play in our lives and in the contributions they are making to the revitalization of Detroit. That spirit infuses The Kresge Foundation's commitment to the arts. CCS is grateful to Kresge for the opportunity to administer this program which encourages artistic experimentation and gives the public greater access to the richness of our region's talent.

Richard L. Rogers

President, College for Creative Studies

2015-2016 Kresge Arts in Detroit

2015-16 Kresge Arts in Detroit Advisory Council

Devon Akmon
Director, Arab American National Museum

Gary Anderson
Artist Director and Co-Founder,
Plowshares Theatre

Jane Hoehner
Director, Wayne State University Press

Gary Loren
Co-Owner, The Book Beat, 2013 Kresge Artist
Fellow in the Literary Arts

Judith Molina
Director, Institute of Music & Dance
at Marygrove College

Juanita Moore
President and CEO, Charles H. Wright
Museum of African American History

Marsha Philpot (aka Marsha Music)
Writer, 2012 Kresge Artist Fellow
in the Literary Arts

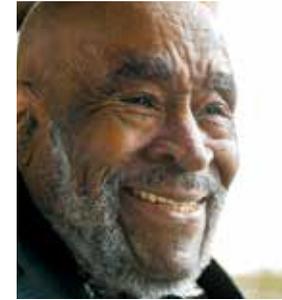
Gregory Wittkopp
Director, Cranbrook Center for
Collections and Research

The Kresge Eminent Artist Award and Winners

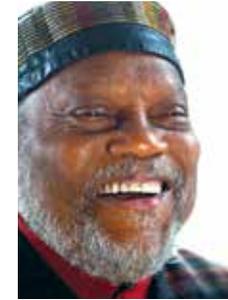
Established in 2008, the Kresge Eminent Artist Award honors an exceptional literary, fine or performing artist whose influential body of work, lifelong professional achievements and proven, continued commitment to the Detroit cultural community are evident. The Kresge Eminent Artist Award celebrates artistic innovation and rewards integrity and depth of vision with the financial support of \$50,000 as judged by the Kresge Arts in Detroit Advisory Council. The Kresge Eminent Artist Award is unrestricted and is given annually to an artist who has lived and worked in Wayne, Oakland or Macomb counties for a significant number of years.

The Kresge Eminent Artist Award, annual Kresge Artist Fellowships and multiyear grants to arts and cultural organizations in metropolitan Detroit constitute Kresge Arts in Detroit, the foundation's effort to provide broad support to the regional arts community.

The College for Creative Studies administers the Kresge Eminent Artist Award on behalf of The Kresge Foundation.



Charles McGee 2008
Artist Charles McGee was named as the first Kresge Eminent Artist in recognition of his work as teacher and mentor to generations of young artists and his founding of arts organizations and galleries to support and share their work. His paintings, assemblages and sculptures are in important collections around the world and the permanent collection of the Detroit Institute of Arts. Photo by Michelle Andonian.



Marcus Belgrave 2009
Internationally recognized jazz trumpeter Marcus Belgrave dedicated his energies to music education and performance excellence in his chosen home of Detroit, spreading the language of jazz to generations of students. Performing nationally and around the world until his death in 2015 at the age of 78, Belgrave was a beloved mentor to many young musicians who went on to greatness themselves. Photo by Justin Maconochie.



Bill Harris 2011
Detroit's distinguished author, literary critic and educator Bill Harris was named a Kresge Eminent Artist for his commitment to cultivating creative writing talent as a Wayne State University professor and for his own literary contributions as author and playwright. Now professor emeritus, Harris continues to write and enjoy national acclaim for his poetry, plays, novels, essays and criticism. Photo by Carol Pincus.



Dronsfield.
Naomi Long Madgett 2012
Award-winning poet, educator and publisher Naomi Long Madgett was named Kresge Eminent Artist in recognition of her commitment to metropolitan Detroit and its literary artists. Now poet laureate of Detroit, Madgett established Detroit's Lotus Press in 1972 to publish the work of African American poets. She continues to nurture and introduce new poets to the public through her annual poetry award. Photo by Julie Pincus.



David DiChiera 2013
A visionary leader of the performing arts, Michigan Opera Theatre founder and composer David DiChiera was honored as a Kresge Eminent Artist for his dedication to the composition and production of new operas, his nurturing of African American artists in the field and his instrumental role in the revitalization of Detroit's cultural and entertainment district. DiChiera remains as MOT's Artistic Director through 2017. Photo by Carol Pincus.



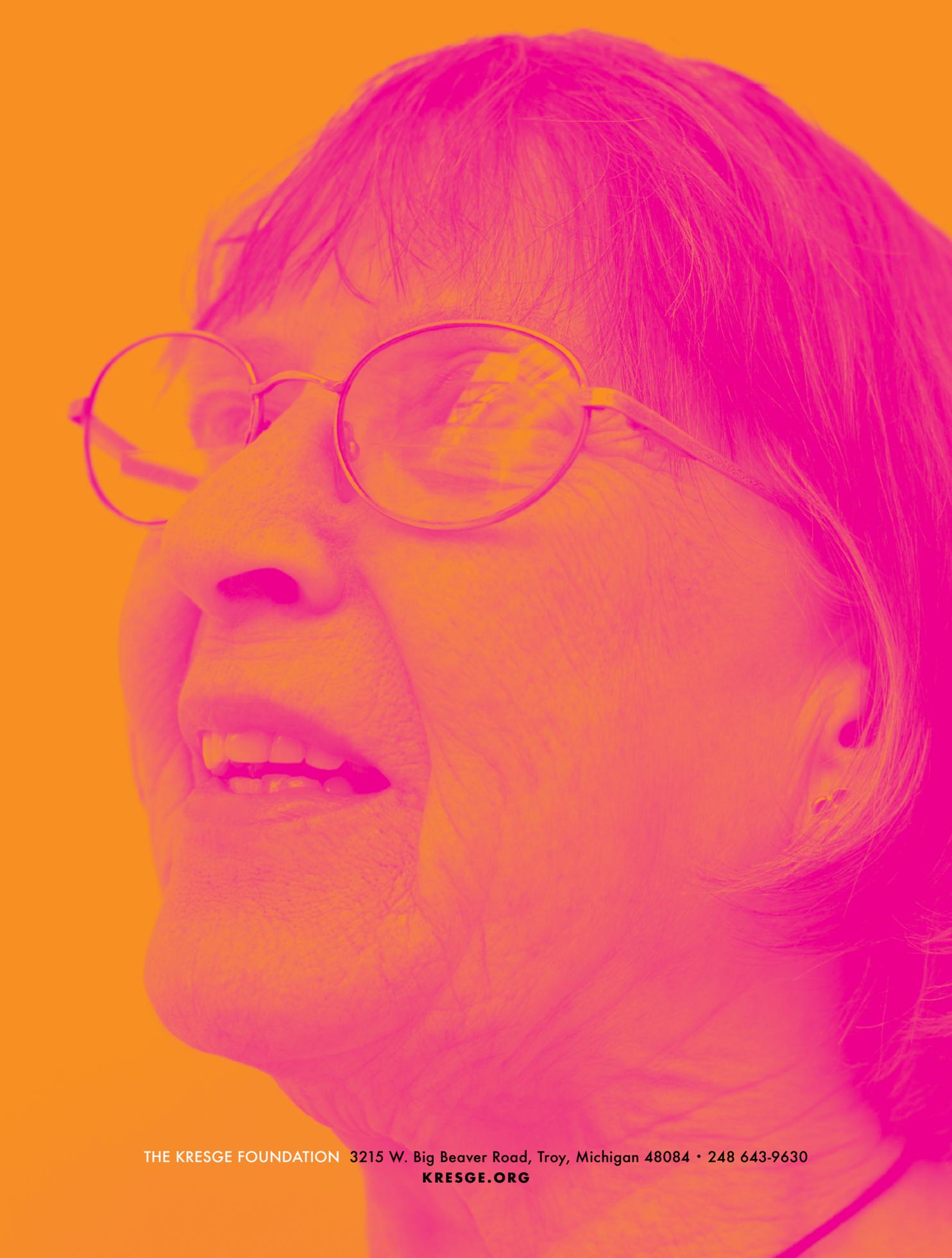
Bill Rauhauser 2014
Photographer and educator Bill Rauhauser was named a Kresge Eminent Artist in celebration of his body of work, his role in the establishment of the photo collection of the Detroit Institute of Arts, his education and mentorship of generations of photographers and for his continuing contributions to the scholarship of photography. Photo by



Michelle Andonian.
Ruth Adler Schnee 2015
Textile artist Ruth Adler Schnee, a maverick purveyor of modern design ideals, was honored as a Kresge Eminent Artist for her work designing building interiors and woven textiles, and as an active preservation advocate for the city's modernist history. Schnee continues to live and create in metro Detroit, where she represents the indelible force of women designers on the built environment. Photo by Julie Pincus.



Hippies dancing at free concert, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1973.



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