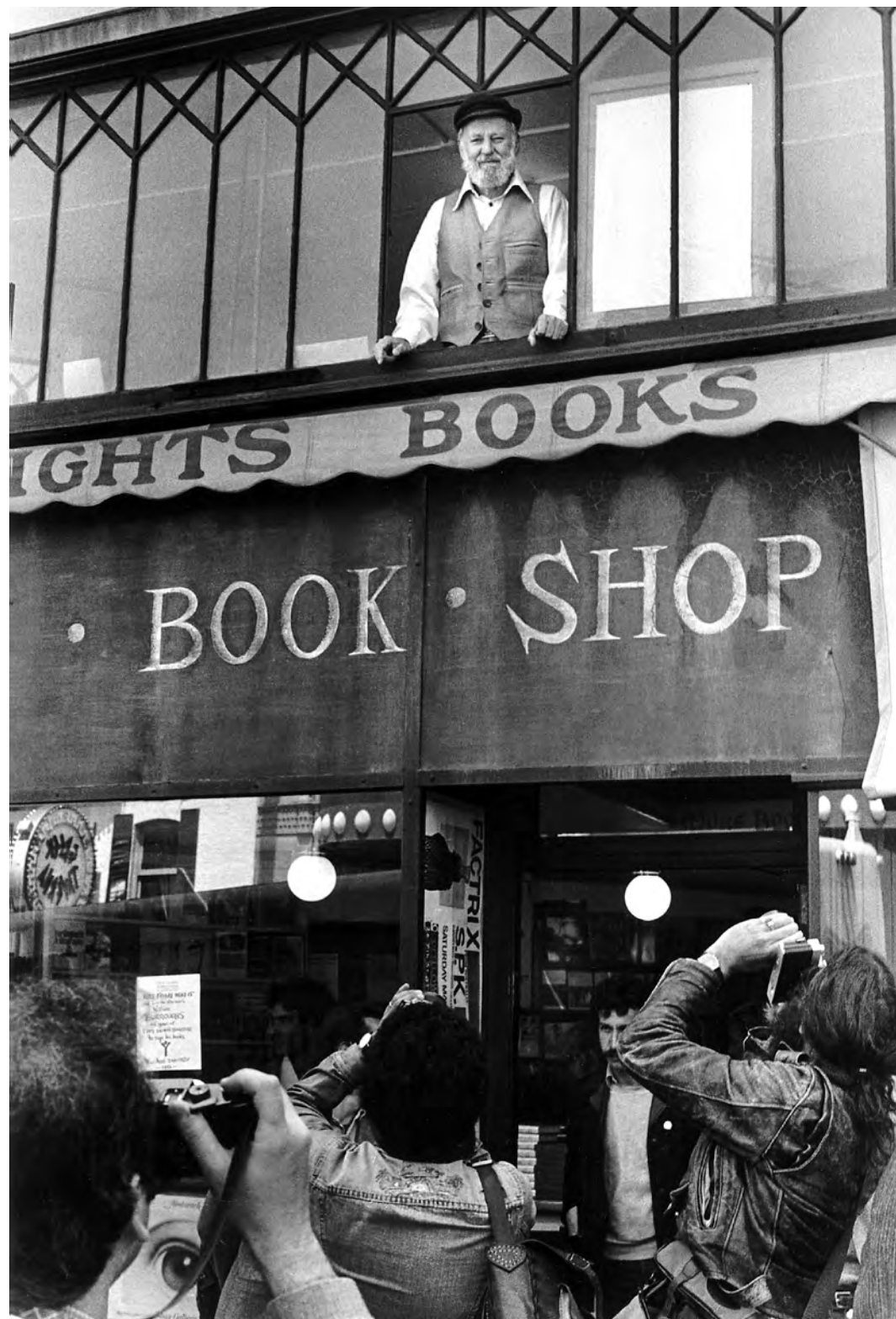


## CHRISTOPHER FELVER

*Ferlinghetti City Lights*, 1981  
archival photographic print



courtesy the artist

## MARGARET ELYSIA GARCIA

### San Francisco Weekend An Authored Map to the City of My Youth

“I’m taking the kids to see *G.I. Joe*,” my husband says as he comes out of the motel shower. He never asks permission in the way many contemporary men do, and I like that. My eight-year-old daughter sits on the motel bed, bored as all get-out because Mommy has a couple hours’ work, and we haven’t gone to Japantown yet for unnecessary Japanese stationery products to pass her time. She doesn’t like superhero movies because the girls are never the ones with the capes and fanfare. She’s eight and she knows this.

She also still has bad dreams from watching movie explosions or listening to NPR on a Monday morning on the way to school. We don’t live in San Francisco anymore; we live in the Sierra mountains where it’s not uncommon for kids to raise pigs and goats for 4-H and learn to shoot at age five. I like living there, in space, in air.

My best friend lives in Redondo Beach. Her kids once had to hike two miles on a field trip before they could find a single tree that changed color in autumn. When her family visits, they stop every few feet amazed at our generic deer and squirrels. Haven’t they ever seen animals before? Don’t they know turkeys in the middle of the road are nuisances?

But this weekend, we have come to the city so that my kids are not swallowed up by bad country western music and religion. We come for bookstores and museums. We come for things made with lemongrass or a chili pepper. And sometimes we come for movies.

My ten-year-old son’s eyes are wide and happy at the prospect of seeing two solid hours of CGI violence. He gives me that look that only the child of a writer gives his mother. “Yes, I know they probably started shooting without a decent script because they were too cheap to pay a writer, but I just want to watch things explode.” At least that’s what I think he’s saying. I’ve walked in on him in the loft plenty of times to him holding up his hand to my face so I can’t see the screen: “Bad script, Mom. You don’t want to see this.”

My husband and son move closer to the plastic key-card and the cash on the table with the dining guide that only the most hopeless of SF tourists would use.

“Don’t be a Helicopter Mom.” My son points like there are propellers coming out of my head. Because we had no TV for ten years, he is drawn into commercials and shows