

# FORT GANSEVOORT



## This is Gay History 101: “50 Years After Stonewall”

By Kevin Phinney

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Joan E. Biren | Randy & Tara, 1979 (printed 1997) | Gelatin silver print | 9.5 x 7 in

In the heart of the meatpacking district, Fort Gansevoort presents “A Look Back: 50 Years After Stonewall.” Through a variety of mediums, Visitors are treated to a potpourri of artifacts, including video and photographs as well as recorded phone messages from stars yet to be.

The exhibit is organized by Lucy Beni and Adam Shopkorn. On display: the work of queer artists living and producing in and around New York City beginning around the time of the Stonewall Uprising in 1969 and leading into the 1980s.

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A central focus of the retrospective is the work of Nelson Sullivan, who lived at 5 Ninth Avenue where Fort Gansevoort is now located. Sullivan passed away at 41 from a heart attack in 1989. During his life documented queer New York City in the 1980s through near-obsessive filming. His videos focus largely on the comings-and-goings of his neighbors, who included such future luminaries as RuPaul, Michael Musto and Lady Bunny.

## What You'll See

"We thought we had to do something special to commemorate Stonewall 50 and WorldPride," says co-curator Beni. "So we really decided that we'd take an an exhaustive look at the work of Nelson Sullivan, who made our space at 5th and 9th Avenue his home from 1980 to '89, when so much was happening and in flux in the culture. At the time, he had a large following and a penchant for videotaping everything. And that includes the whole club kid and drag scenes."

The third floor of the exhibition pays respect to Sullivan's legacy through a collection of photographs (as well as recorded phone messages) made by his friends and a features a painted portrait of Sullivan himself.

And that's only the third floor. The first and second floors also illuminate the LGBTQ struggle for equality, according to Beni. "Because we're just now opening the exhibit and it runs through August 10th, it really gave us some breathing room not to be lost in all of the WorldPride events that have now come and gone. It also provides an opportunity for the public to continue to observe the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall riots and see something they haven't seen before."