Balboa Park in San Diego to Host First Exhibition on LGBTQ+ Community

Exploring San Diego's LGBTQ+ History

June 14, 2018 By Cameron Gorman

Starting July 8, Balboa Park, one of the oldest city parks in the country and the most visited destination in San Diego, will play host to a first-of-its-kind exhibition about the area's LGBTQ+ community.

Backed by the Smithsonian-affiliated San Diego History Center and the Lambda Archives of San Diego, LGBTQ+ San Diego: Stories of Struggles and Triumphs will examine "how this community has faced, fought—and continues to fight—against persecution and intolerance, with the goal of equality for all LGBTQ+ identified people," according to a press release.

Curated by author and LGBT scholar Lillian Faderman, PhD, the exhibition includes photographs, narrative pieces and other items exploring themes such as identity, inclusion, LGBTQ+ youth perspectives and family.

"For generations, LGBTQ+ people in San Diego as elsewhere were considered pariahs for their sexuality or gender expression," Faderman said in the release. "They suffered discrimination and harassment, were entrapped by the police, faced job termination, [were] discharged dishonorably from the military and deprived of civil rights. Along with other movements for justice and equality, they've sought to end the unreasoning prejudices against them."

The exhibition will also feature a bit of HIV/AIDS history: a section of the AIDS Memorial Quilt, the gigantic memorial depicting the names of those lost to the virus.

"In addition to a 10' x 10' panel of the AIDS quilt that commemorates several of those who died of AIDS in San Diego, we will have an entire 10-foot pillar as well as a display case devoted to the early years of the epidemic," Faderman said in an email to POZ. "We include photographs and other memorabilia that illustrate the early response to 'the plague' in San Diego: organizations formed to help people with AIDS such as Mama's Kitchen, Blood Sisters, Auntie Helen's Fluff n' Fold and many more; groups that protested the government's neglect, such as ACT UP; and also more contemporary groups that continue to educate about how to end AIDS for good, such as Be the Generation."

Public programming, including lectures and films, will accompany the exhibition. The suggested donation for admission is $10, though thanks to the San Diego History Center's Give Forward program, visitors can contribute what they wish.

"This is a story that needs to be told here in Balboa Park," said San Diego History Center executive director Bill Lawrence in the release. "San Diego's LGBTQ+ community plays such a vital role in our community and is part of the rich mosaic of this region, and with our partners at Lambda Archives, we look forward to providing a place for all."

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