

NYU Libraries will display nine panels from the NAMES Project Foundation's AIDS Memorial Quilt from September 12 to December 15 to close out New York University's yearlong commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall riots. The 12x12 foot panels represent a cross section of people lost to AIDS, including members of the trans community, incarcerated individuals, artists and activists who shaped New York's downtown arts scene, and an NYU student.

The AIDS memorial quilt was started in 1987 by a small group of strangers who recognized the urgent need to document the lives lost to AIDS and help people understand the devastating impact of the disease. Today, the quilt serves as a powerful visual reminder of the AIDS pandemic and consists of more than 48,000 individual 3x6 foot memorial pieces sewn together by friends, lovers, and family members.

Since 1987, over 14 million people have visited the Quilt at thousands of displays worldwide. Through such displays, the NAMES Project Foundation has raised over \$3 million for AIDS service organizations throughout North America. The last display of the entire AIDS Memorial Quilt was in October of 1996 when the Quilt covered the entire National Mall in Washington, D.C. The Quilt was nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize in 1989 and remains the largest community art project in the world.

"These quilt pieces bear witness to our humanity and serve to archive our history. NYU is located in Greenwich Village, just a few blocks from St. Vincent's Hospital, where many AIDS patients were treated and spent their final days. The intimacy and tradition of the quilt as a symbol of comfort and warmth has a long history. Each quilt is handmade, takes time, offers an opportunity for close reflection, and is a truly unique document" said Marvin J. Taylor, Curator for the Arts at NYU Libraries.

The nine panels at NYU will be shown alongside *Violet Holdings: LGBTQ+ Highlights* from the NYU Special Collections, an exhibition surveying queer life from the mid-1800s to the present day through a sample of materials drawn from NYU Libraries' special collections and archives.

Each panel contains at least eight sections for those lost to the pandemic including members of the trans community; incarcerated men and women with AIDS; celebrities such as Keith Haring, Halston, Liberace, Perry Ellis, Rock Hudson, Robert Mapplethorpe, Freddie Mercury, Anthony Perkins, and Rudolf Nureyev; and other artists in New York's downtown scene.

One panel is dedicated to performance artist Ethyl Eichelberger, artist Sharon Redd, and Dr. Peter

Manzzoni, an early AIDS physician and activist, while another commemorates Cookie Mueller, an actress, author, and downtown goddess. The seventh panel includes a section for Larry Levan, a legendary DJ from Paradise Garage who is credited with inventing house music and is also represented in the Violet Holdings exhibition. Panel eight includes sections for filmmaker Marlon Riggs and poet Essex Hemphill. The final panel remembers Paul Fitz Simmons, an NYU student who did not live to see his graduation. One panel in the exhibition was made by the NYU community in 1990 to honor students, faculty, and staff members lost to AIDS.

“The AIDS crisis continues today, but from the early eighties to the late nineties it was especially hard hitting. The trauma to so many, to an LGBT generation, disproportionately felt amongst African Americans and Latinos, needs to be recognized. These quilt panels were made by survivors in memory of those who died from the illness but they also serve as arts activism, as resistance, as a call to not be silent,” said Karen Finley, an arts professor at NYU’s Tisch School of the Arts and co-curator of the AIDS Memorial Quilt exhibition at NYU.

“When people died, they were not given proper burials or funerals. But friends, lovers, family, and community members created this magnificent quilt to recognize and celebrate those who left us too soon. We honor the creation of this archive as an act of agency, illumination, and witnessing—a memento mori,” she continued.

The presentation of the AIDS Memorial Quilt at NYU expands upon the mission of NYU Libraries’ Downtown Collection, which documents the explosion of artistic creativity in downtown New York during the 1970s and through the early 1990s that radically challenged and changed traditional literature, music, theater, performance, film, activism, dance, photography, video and other art practices. Many artists commemorated in the Quilt display—including Larry Levan and Cookie Mueller—are also represented in NYU’s special collections and archives.

For more information about the quilt, please visit www.aidsquilt.org

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