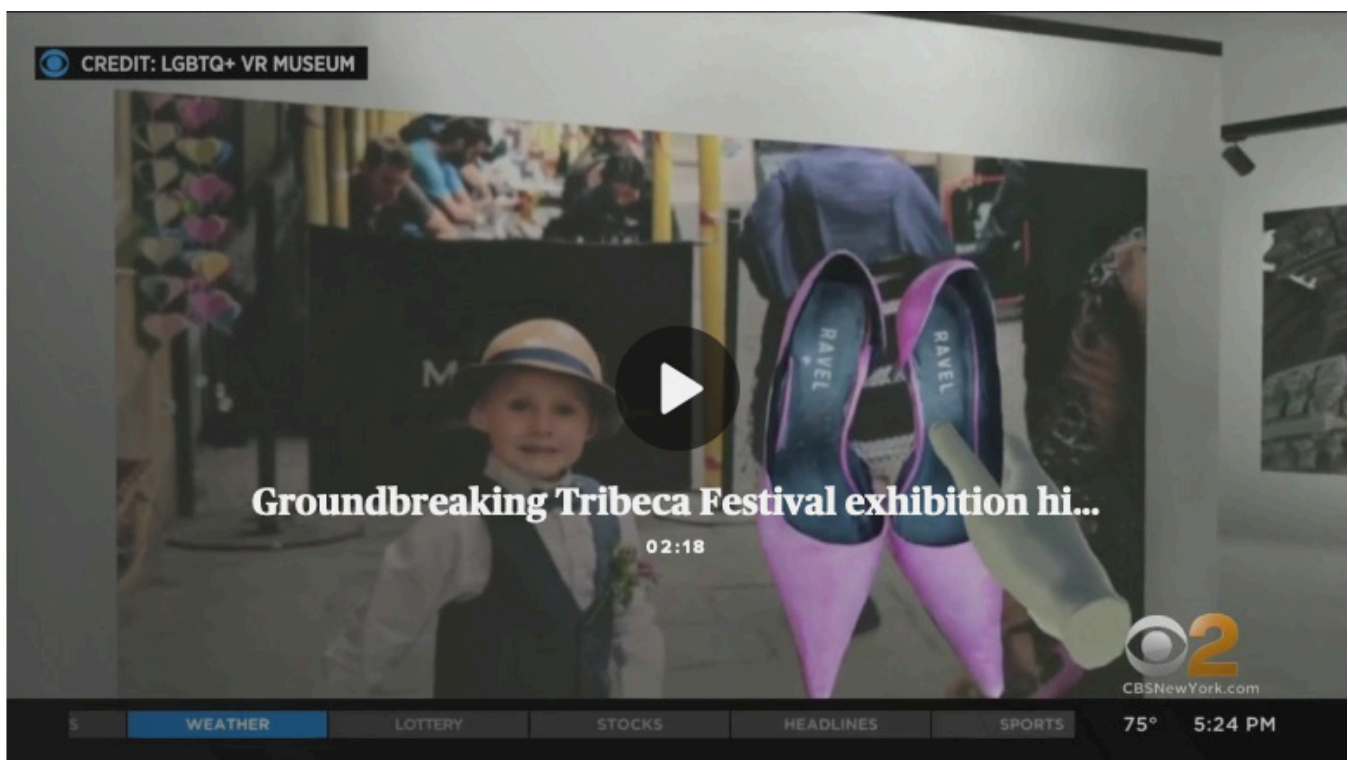


LOCAL NEWS+

Virtual reality LGBTQ+ museum wows art lovers at Tribeca Festival

BY DAVE CARLIN

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NEW YORK -- A groundbreaking exhibition at this year's Tribeca Festival is dedicated to the LGBTQ community by collecting and preserving personal histories.

A larger-than-life sculpture portrays the artist who sculpted it, Patricia Cronin, and her wife, artist Deborah Kass. It was placed at Woodlawn Cemetery 20 years ago.

“So I depicted Deborah and myself with dignity,” Cronin said. “So it’s three tons of marble of the two of us.”

Full-size replicas of the work, titled “Memorial to Marriage,” are in museums around

the world, but now it's also in a virtual reality one.

"It makes me so proud to have the first marriage equality monument in the first VR LGBT museum," Cronin said.

Art lovers donning VR headsets are wowed by what they see at this installation for the Tribeca Festival.

"I've seen people laugh. I've seen someone cry. I see people gasp a lot," said Antonia Forster, creator and director of the LGBTQ VR Museum.

CBS2's Dave Carlin gave it a try, donning VR googles and headphones. He was able to enter the museum and touch or even lift the objects on display while hearing the stories behind them.

On display in the virtual museum is a pair of pink wedding shoes purchased by a couple long before marriage between women was legal.

"They bought this pair of wedding shoes, almost as a joke, saying, oh, one day when marriage is legal, we'll wear them," Forster said. "And then much later, queer marriage was legalized, and she did actually to wear the shoes."

Forster can see visitors' reactions with the help of science. Before they put on the VR gear, they are wired up, which allows Forster to measure heart rate and sweat.

"Yeah, your emotions are going really strong," Forster told Carlin.

"Oh, really How do you know " Carlin asked.

"Because it's purple on the monitor," Forster said.

The brighter hues did not lie. Carlin says he was moved by many of the objects, Cronin's sculpture in particular.

"It's democratic the idea that so many people are going to have access that might not have access," Cronin said.

The exhibit filled with love and Pride runs through June 19. As the museum expands and travels, an all-New York version of it is planned for mid-September in Chelsea.

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