

Sip Free Suds at this Hamilton Heights Art Gallery's Beer Bottle Exhibit

By [Gustavo Solis](#) | August 28, 2017 4:31pm

HAMILTON HEIGHTS — Tom Sanford sacrificed his beach bod in the name of art.

After spending two and a half months drinking beers with friends and strangers, the artist painted a small portrait of each bottle — finishing with 99 bottles total, as well as a few extra pounds.

“I definitely have 10 pounds I could afford to lose,” Sanford joked.

Sanford’s beer portraits are currently on display at the [Gitler & _____](#) gallery on Broadway and 149th

Street, where on Wednesday a reception for the exhibit will feature free suds for everyone.

“It’s going to be friends of ours, friends of the artist, people from the neighborhood, people from the art world, and people from the street who see the event and want a drink,” said Jonathan Heller, who works at the gallery.

Sanford, who lives in Hamilton Heights, said he tries to create art that brings people together, previously doing portraits of neighbors and local street scenes. The “99 Bottles of Beer on the Wall” project was no different.

“Most art that I make I try to make it easier to meet people,” he said. “A beer can be a wonderful way to meet a new friend, and I’m just trying to celebrate that.”

The show provided the perfect follow-up to the gallery’s previous exhibition, which converted the space into a used bookstore where visitors could buy books for whatever they could afford. Both summer shows were meant to invite people into the gallery, owner Avi Gitler said.

“I had this concept of, ‘If you can’t go to the mountains or the beach and you have a regular job that keeps you in the city this summer, at least you can enjoy a cold beer and a good book on us,’” he explained.

Gitler grew up in Washington Heights and opened the gallery to bring art normally shown Downtown a little bit closer to home. Its next show features the work of self-taught Orlando artist [Boy Kong](#), who has 32,000 Instagram followers and has attracted fans from all over the city to his past exhibits at the gallery, Gitler added. But before that, he, Sanford and Heller need to finish off the dozens of cases of beer that Harpoon Brewery donated to the gallery for the event. Their party starts at 6 p.m. on Wednesday.



[gitler-free-beer-99-bottles-art-gallery](#)