

# U.S. COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS

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401 F STREET NW SUITE 312 WASHINGTON DC 20001-2728 202-504-2200 FAX 202-504-2195 WWW.CFA.GOV

1 December 2014

Dear Ms. Mendelson-Ielmini:

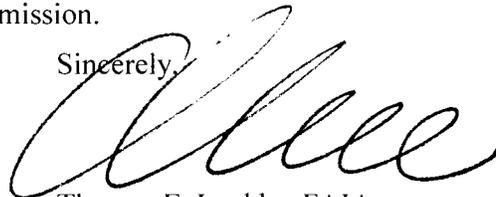
In its meeting of 20 November, the Commission of Fine Arts reviewed the development of the concept design for the Dwight D. Eisenhower National Memorial at Maryland and Independence Avenues, SW. The Commission endorsed the refinement of the design, characterizing the project as an extraordinary commemorative work, and provided the following comments to be addressed as the project progresses toward a final design.

The Commission members commended the project for its complex integration of textures and scales within a landscape inspired by the American heartland in commemorating Eisenhower as president and general. As the landscape design is refined, they encouraged further development of an artistic rather than a literal interpretation of the Midwestern landscape. They recommended intensifying the perception of the central grove—an irregular and sometimes dense spacing of trees in a mix of species, sizes, and ages. They recommended again that the gaps in street trees at the perimeter of the site be eliminated, which would emphasize the diagonal approaches to the site normally taken by visitors. They recommended refinement of the raised terrace area behind the tapestries, noting a lack of clarity of the intended and safe height for the wall, and they suggested that understory trees would be more appropriate than elms in this location to avoid confusion with the central landscape.

For the design of the monumental tapestries, the Commission members expressed appreciation for the presentation of the technical and aesthetic advancement of this fundamental element of the memorial; they requested a physical mockup of the developed tapestry design to illustrate the relationship of panels to columns and the details of the structural system. They supported the presented intention of using some pattern or decorative motif on the columns to amplify their role in the commemorative composition. Regarding the groupings of bronze statuary in front of stone bas-relief panels, they recommended further simplification of the background reliefs and commented that the scene depicting the Oval Office—featuring only draperies—should be reworked. They observed that the figure of Eisenhower as a youth would be engaging for visitors to the site. For the quotations, which were not presented at the meeting, the Commission advised that authenticity in the selected texts is critical in order to assure that the meaning of the words is not altered.

The Commission looks forward to the review of a series of submissions responding to these comments, as well as to the review of the design of other elements (such as the inscriptions, lighting, security features, and signage) that have not yet been presented. As always, the staff is available to assist you with the next submission.

Sincerely,



Thomas E. Luebke, FAIA  
Secretary

Lisa Mendelson-Ielmini, Acting Regional Director  
National Park Service, National Capital Region  
1100 Ohio Drive, SW  
Washington, DC 20242

cc: Carl Reddel, Dwight D. Eisenhower National Memorial Commission  
Craig Webb, FOGA