

CFA 18/MAY/17-1

LOCATION:

Intersection of Maryland and Independence Avenues, SW, between 4th and 6th Streets, SW
Washington, DC

OWNER:

National Park Service

PROPERTY:

Dwight D. Eisenhower National Memorial

DESCRIPTION:

New memorial

REVIEW TYPE:

Revised final design

PREVIOUS REVIEW:

[CFA 23/JAN/17-2](#)

Letter

25 May 2017

Dear Mr. Vogel:

In its meeting of 18 May, the Commission of Fine Arts reviewed the development of previously presented modifications to the approved final design for the Dwight D. Eisenhower National Memorial, proposed to be constructed at Maryland and Independence Avenues between 4th and 6th Streets, SW. The Commission was pleased to have the opportunity to inspect a mockup of a small portion of the extensive tapestry that would define the south edge of the memorial space. The Commission reaffirmed its previous action on the modifications from January 2017, taking no further action on the current submission due to continuing concerns with the development of these revisions to the memorial's design.

The Commission members reiterated their support to substitute the Normandy coast image for the previously approved scene of the Kansas landscape of Eisenhower's boyhood home, and they commented that this change has significant implications for the memorial's meaning—a change that is not yet satisfactorily resolved. While they supported the general abstraction of the new image, they advised that continued refinement is needed in order to convey more legibly the tapestry's aerial view of the Normandy coastline, which will be unreadable and unrecognizable for most visitors. Based on their inspection of the mockup, they recommended studying further the fabrication method of welded stainless steel wires, possibly using thicker wires, with the goal of enhancing the image's legibility which is lacking in comparison to the graphic clarity and understandable scale of the previously proposed rural landscape. In keeping with their previous action approving the changed tapestry image contingent on a satisfactory mockup, they requested that the mockup encompass a larger portion of the tapestry, with a refined fabrication technique as well as a more representative portion of the scene's vast areas of water and sky.

The Commission members commented that the image of the Kansas landscape had served to link Eisenhower's youth to the notable accomplishments of his adult life, while also linking the tapestry's depiction of trees with the actual trees of the four-acre park that forms the memorial space. Likewise, they noted that the statue of the young Eisenhower had

served as a unifying element of the overall memorial design—a role that it no longer serves with the selection of the Normandy scene. Therefore, the Commission members recommended finding a new location for this statue that is appropriate to the new conceptual framework of the design, and they remained dissatisfied with the proposed location at the memorial's overlook. Again, they suggested further consideration of alternative locations within the memorial site's extensive central landscape, possibly along the approach walks leading visitors toward the center of the memorial. They especially encouraged a location that would invite visitors to contemplate the statue and to read the inspirational quotation proposed for its base.

The Commission members reiterated their preference for the planting plan that was previously approved, and they did not support the repeated proposal to remove four large trees from the landscape design. Acknowledging the intended purpose of opening selected views of the tapestry by removing these trees, they commented that the tapestry will still be clearly apparent to visitors due to its great size. They commented that the choice of the distant aerial image of the Normandy beaches shifts the role of the tapestry from a narrative element to a generalized backdrop for the memorial; specific views of the Normandy coast image are therefore not as critical to the memorial's meaning, and a more abstract perception of the scene is sufficient. Furthermore, these trees along the south side of the pedestrian walks would provide highly desirable shade for visitors during summer months and would contribute to conveying the perception of the memorial within a park.

The Commission members concluded that the recent modifications to the memorial's design require continuing study to fully resolve the tapestry's new image and its fabrication technique, with resulting implications for other elements of the memorial, such as the location of the statue of Eisenhower as a youth. The Commission looks forward to the opportunity to inspect a full-size mockup of a larger portion of the tapestry, to be erected on the memorial site at its proposed height. As always, the staff is available to assist you with the next submission.

Sincerely,

/s/Thomas E. Luebke, FAIA
Secretary

Robert Vogel, Regional Director
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cc: Carl Reddel, Dwight D. Eisenhower Memorial Commission
Craig Webb, Gehry Partners
Roger Courtenay, AECOM