

THE CONTROVERSIAL DELAYED EISENHOWER MEMORIAL FINALLY MAKES ITS DEBUT ON SEPT 17, 2020

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CELEBRATING IKE'S POLITICAL AND MILITARY ACCOMPLISHMENTS REQUIRED COMPROMISE BETWEEN THE ARCHITECT AND THE PRESIDENT'S FAMILY



SEPT 15, 2020

After two decades of debate over how to honor Dwight David Eisenhower, as well as more recent delays associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, a memorial to the president and World War II general is finally set to be unveiled in Washington, D.C.

The formal dedication will take place on Thursday (*Sept 17, 2020*) with social distancing measures in place, per a statement. Those unable to attend in person can watch the ceremony via a live stream.

Congress commissioned the Eisenhower Memorial in 1999, but as Matt Hickman writes for the Architect's Newspaper, years of "design tweaks large and small, political infighting, funding squabbles, familial objections, ... and a call for the project to be scrapped altogether" slowed progress substantially.

In 2009, *after a six-month review of 44 submissions*, the Dwight D. Eisenhower Memorial Commission settled on a design by Frank Gehry, the architect behind the Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles and the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain.

Gehry's proposal stood in stark contrast with other D.C. monuments, showing Ike, as the 34th president was known, as a boy in Kansas gazing at a series of images representing important events in his future.

The design quickly stirred up controversy, with several members of Eisenhower's family raising vocal objections.

I think we were perplexed by the design," Susan Eisenhower, who recently published a book on her grandfather's leadership, tells CBS News. "The idea that a young boy would be looking at his future and wishing, what? To become commander of the most devastating war in human history? I don't think he was dreaming to do that."

Gehry responded to the criticism by revising the memorial's layout.

His \$150 million final design now stands just off of the National Mall, across from the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum and near the United States Capitol.

Two sets of bronze sculptures dominate the memorial, reports Susan Stamberg for NPR.

In one, Eisenhower—flanked by military and civilian advisors—stands in front of a world map.

In the second, he appears commanding soldiers during World War II. Behind the statues, a stainless-steel tapestry depicts Pointe du Hoc on the Normandy coast—a nod to the storming of the beaches on D-Day under Eisenhower’s command.

The image of Eisenhower as a boy now sits to the side, near an inscription of the president’s 1945 “Homecoming Speech,” which celebrated his origins in small-town America.

Ultimately, Gehry tells the *Guardian*’s Rowan Moore, he believes the conflict made the redesigned memorial stronger.

“I feel much more comfortable standing beside what we’ve done, given all the people I’ve talked to who knew him, who experienced his life,” the architect adds.

The memorial incorporates aspects of a complex biography. Writing in the *New York Times*, Peter Baker notes that Eisenhower worked to bridge partisan divides with a modest, pragmatic leadership style. His career included masterminding the Normandy invasion and leading the construction of the interstate highway system.

President, Eisenhower completed predecessor Harry S. Truman’s racial integration of the military and, in 1957, sent troops from the 101st Airborne Division to protect black students integrating at Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas. Still, Baker points out, his “innate caution” led him to avoid making proclamations about equality for fear of alienating white Southern segregationists.

Today, even the memorialization of a president who sought to circumvent controversy can’t completely escape fractious politics. Speaking with the *Times*, Justin Shubow, president of the National Civic Art Society, called the memorial “an uninspiring, gargantuan failure.”

Shubow has been involved in the Trump administration’s push to require designs for all federal architecture to use classical style elements, as *Architectural Record* reported in February.)

Thursday’s dedication ceremony will also be a product of its time. As Tribune Content Agency’s Tim Horan reports, it was originally scheduled as a large event on May 8, the 75th anniversary of Allied forces’ victory in Europe. Due to the pandemic, organizers delayed the dedication and scaled it down substantially.

This year may seem like an awkward moment for any monument, let alone one honoring a powerful white man, to be unveiled. But as William I. Hitchcock, author of *The Age of Eisenhower: America and the World in the 1950s*, suggests, the dedication offers an opportunity to reflect on Eisenhower’s “middle way” approach to politics.



The memorial features two sets of bronze sculptures in front of a stainless-steel tapestry

“We are in a polarized moment,” Hitchcock tells the *Times*. “But maybe there’s a place for an actual physical site where you can reflect on what life might be like in a nonpolarized world.”

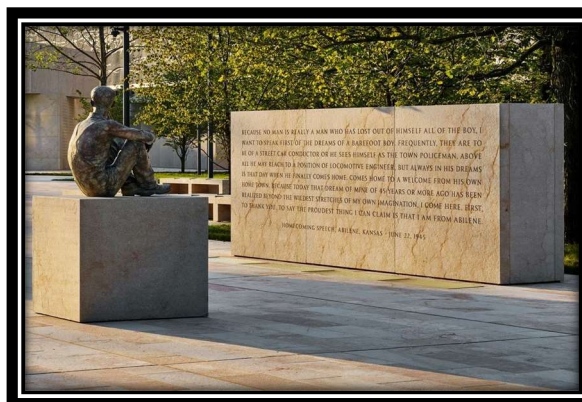


On the left side of the memorial core, the bronze heroic-sized statue of Eisenhower as the 34th President of the United States places him at the center of the White House Oval Office flanked by sculptures of civilian and military advisors, symbolizing the balance Eisenhower struck between conflicting demands of national security and peaceful progress. The bas-relief global background depicts a map of the world symbolizing Eisenhower's role as a world statesman and preeminent internationalist pursuing universal peace.

The inscription above the figures reads: “We look upon this shaken earth, and we declare our firm and fixed purpose - the building of peace with justice in a world where moral law prevails.” Second Inaugural Address - January 21, 1957



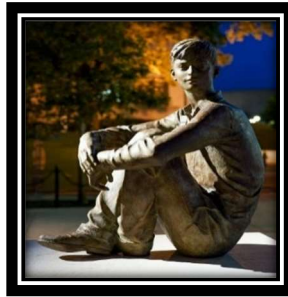
The words inscribed are “The tide has turned! Free men of the world are marching together to victory! June 6, 1944”



The Inscription reads: "Because no man is a man who has lost out of himself all of the boys, I want to speak first of the dreams of a barefoot boy.

Frequently, they are to be of a street car conductor or he sees himself as the town policeman, all he may reach to the position of locomotive engineer, but always in his dreams is that day when he finally comes home. Comes home to a welcome from his hometown.

Because today that dream of mine of 45 years or more ago has been realized beyond the wildest stretches of my imagination, I come here, first, to thank you, and to say the proudest thing I can claim is that I am from Abilene." Abilene, Kansas June 22, 1945



A statue of Eisenhower as a young boy proved to be one of the most controversial aspects of architect Frank Gehry's design.

THE MEMORIAL AT NIGHT





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