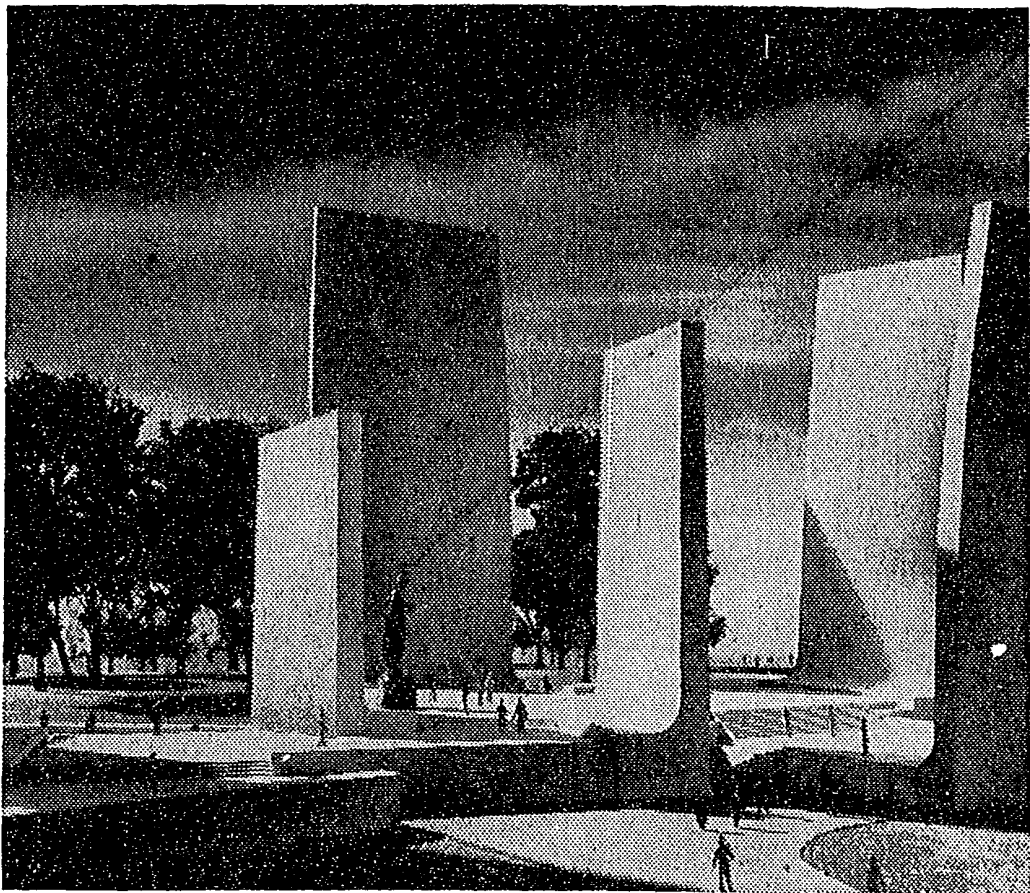


ORIGINAL DESIGN: This was the first model of a proposed memorial to Franklin D. Roosevelt, rejected in 1962 by the Fine Arts Commission of Washington and by Congress.



MODIFIED DESIGN: This revised model of the memorial, although approved by the Fine Arts Commission of Washington, is being opposed by family of the late President.

Monumental Troubles

Rejection of Design Is Latest Storm In History of Roosevelt Memorial

By ADA LOUISE HUXTABLE

The proposal for the Franklin Delano Roosevelt memorial, which has run a stormy course since it was unveiled in January, 1961, is in rough waters again. With its total rejection by the Roosevelt family, it may even sink out of sight.

No design for a monument has had a more turbulent history. The first prize winner in a nationwide competition that attracted some of the country's top architectural talent, it was greeted by a violently hostile press.

Those who felt that the monument should reflect the man, including Roosevelt's family and associates, thought it failed grievously. Others objected to the bold modern design to be placed between the traditional Lincoln and Jefferson memorials in classical Washington.

Redesign Began in January

In October, 1963, the architects, Pedersen, Tilney, Hoberman, Wasserman & Beer, met unofficially with the Fine Arts Commission, which had rejected the design in 1962. The commission had been radically overhauled and liberalized with the appointment of new members by President Kennedy in the intervening year. Redesign began this January. This week, with Fine Arts Commission approval of the latest version, the uproar started all over again.

The difference between the first and second versions is slight, but significant. The first group, a sculptural arrangement of giant slabs through which the visitor would progress on a series of stepped platforms, stressed theatrical variations in height. The revised design emphasizes a larger-than-life figure of Roosevelt, the same size as the statues of

the Lincoln and Jefferson memorials.

To meet objections against the maximum height of 167 feet the slabs have been reduced to 130 feet for the tallest, and have been more uniformly related to place the emphasis on the central figure.

There is no formal axis, no bowling-alley vista of the kind that Washington is accustomed to. The statue of Roosevelt, seen first from the Potomac approach, or hidden behind wall-like slabs from the parking lot, would appear, disappear and reappear as the viewer walked up and down steps, through narrow apertures between steles and out again onto the open platforms with the heroic figure backframed by stone or sky.

The only way to judge this design is to study the model three-dimensionally, imagining the movement through it, visualizing the changing relationships of towering slabs like serene classic columns, the heroic statue and the contoured, tree-rich, carefully landscaped surroundings.

Depends on Movement

This is a subtle, processional monumentality that depends as much for effect on the movement of the visitor as on its purely visual aspect. It is an impressive monumentality that surrounds the visitor and contains him, a setting that gives him an emotional, spatial and architectural involvement rather than the remote, single-point-of-reference—there it is, look at it—of the conventional memorial. It could even avoid that bugaboo of all memorials, banality.

It is this kind of stage-set.

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TROUBLES PLAGUE MEMORIAL PLANS

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ting, mood-making experience that accounts for the Lincoln Memorial's success, not the fact that it is executed in elegant classical terms. The Roosevelt Memorial translates this approach into appropriate, contemporary forms.

There are many problems in a design of originality that do not depend on safe, frozen formulas. Unsolved complexities in the meeting of steels and steps, the technicalities of fab-

rication of the concrete aggregate for the slabs, details of joining and finishing, the selection of a sculptor, are still to be worked out. The sensibility and refinement of these solutions will determine the measure of the monument's success.

It is certainly not a design to be rejected summarily, because it is full of promise. It has the possibility of the kind of architectural grandeur that can be more moving and evocative than the most realistic representation of the man memorialized. It is not versimilitude, but spirit that makes a monument great. It would be a tragic mistake if the Roosevelt Memorial were in anything but the spirit of his time.