

THE COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS

ESTABLISHED BY CONGRESS MAY 17, 1910

J. CARTER BROWN, Chairman

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NEIL H. PORTERFIELD

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MEETING OF THE COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS

22 October 1987

The meeting was convened at 10:00 a.m. in the Commission of Fine Arts offices at 708 Jackson Place, N.W., Washington, D.C., after a tour of project sites.

Members present:

Hon. J. Carter Brown, Chairman
Hon. Carolyn J. Deaver
Hon. Roy M. Goodman
Hon. Frederick E. Hart
Hon. Neil H. Porterfield
Hon. Diane Wolf

Staff present:

Mr. Charles H. Atherton, Secretary
Mr. Donald B. Myer, Assistant Secretary
Mr. Jose Martinez-Canino
Mr. Jeffrey R. Carson
Miss Gretchen Christison
Mrs. Sue A. Kohler

I. ADMINISTRATION

A. Minutes from the 18 September 1987 meeting were approved.

B. Dates for the next meetings were set without objection as 19 November and 17 December 1987. A 1988 meeting schedule was discussed with a draft schedule to be circulated for members' study and approval.

II. SUBMISSIONS AND REVIEWS

A. Department of Interior, Office of the Secretary

CFA 22/Oct/87-1, Vietnam Memorial. Addition of a statue representing women in the military who served in Vietnam.

Prior to this discussion, Mr. Hart suggested that he refrain from voting on this project because of prior involvement with the location of his own sculpture group at the memorial. He would offer his testimony as one who had special knowledge of the memorial if that was the pleasure of

the other Commission members. The other members agreed and the Chairman asked to proceed with the presentation.

The Secretary began the presentation which included a model of the proposed statue and a site plan locating it in a grove of trees to the southeast of the Vietnam Memorial wall. Advance material had been sent to the members ahead of the meeting and the Commission had visited the site earlier in the morning. The Secretary indicated that the submission had come from Secretary of Interior Hodel with his favorable recommendation. The Secretary then read Mr. Hodel's letter and introduced Ms. Donna Marie Boulay who would lead the presentation in favor of the statue's placement in the memorial area. She then introduced Senator Dave Durenberger as one of the supporters of the memorial. EXHIBIT A

Senator Durenberger gave the proposal his strong support for completing the memorial with the added statue, saying that Americans would not rest until this was done. He indicated that there was much strong support for the project and asked for the Commission's prompt and favorable consideration. The Senator was followed by the project's Executive Director, Ms. Mills-Rittman who indicated that two-hundred-and-fifty thousand women had served in the Vietnam War era and ten thousand in Vietnam itself. She went on to describe the hard work and effort which had gone into the project and the need for recognition of those who had served in the war.

Ms. Boulay then introduced a number of women veterans in the room saying they were a few of thousands of supporters. She then went on to describe her personal experiences as a nurse in Vietnam. She introduced several other proponents of the project including Mr. Chuck Heger, Ms. Diane Evans, the sculptor and the landscape architect.

Mr. Roger Brodin, the sculptor, described his commitment to the cause and his efforts to represent some 10,000 women who had served in Vietnam. He also described his intent to make the statue compatible with Mr. Hart's sculpture group and in the same "style" and scale with the existing figures. He felt the placement at the opposite end of the wall from Mr. Hart's sculpture was appropriate. He relied on a realistic figure to convey the message and used a 21 year old model (to represent the typical age of those who served), and an authentic uniform of an Army nurse.

Ms. Boulay then introduced Mr. Stephen Bonsner Young who spoke in favor of the project. Ms. Sandy Fornshill spoke for Mr. Jack Wheeler further recommending the added statue. The final speaker from the proponents was Mr. Elliot Rhodeside, the landscape architect. Mr. Rhodeside discussed the alternative sites which had been studied and how the recommended site had seemed the most appropriate one. He also discussed circulation and views to and from the statue. The statue would be within a circular walkway within an existing tree opening, facing the end of the east wall as if in contemplation. He concluded saying that their design effort had been to integrate the statue into its context with

dignity in a simple compatible way. The Chairman thanked Mr. Rhodeside and called on several other persons who had indicated a desire to speak on the proposal.

Mr. Carl Stout, who had served 22-years in the Army, and Captain John Bender, U.S. Coast Guard, Retired, spoke in favor of the project. The Secretary then read in the order received a list of members of Congress who wished to endorse the project:

Senator Nancy Kassenbaum
Congressman Steve Gunderson
Senator Robert Dole
Senator Barbara Mikulski
Senator Rudy Boschwitz
Congressman Bruce Veno
Congressman Lane Evans
Senator Alan Cranston
Congressman Vince Weber

He also indicated that he had received two phone calls that morning in favor of the project.

Mr. Robert Doubek, the former director of the Vietnam Memorial then spoke against the proposal on the basis that the present memorial represented all veterans without literal depiction of every category. He also pointed out that the inscription on top of the wall says, "In Honor of the Men and Women of the Armed Forces." He also suggested that allowing this change to the existing memorial would be creating a precedent for all manner of literal depictions and additions. As he urged rejection of the proposal, he pointed out Public Law 99-610, enacted November 1986, which authorized establishment of a memorial on Federal land to honor women who have served in the United States armed services. Mr. Doubek then introduced Mr. Kent Cooper, the architect-of-record for the memorial designed by Maya Lin.

Mr. Cooper told of his involvement with the original memorial and his skepticism about adding Mr. Hart's sculpture. However, he stated that the elements had been studied and located with great care, and ended up working beautifully. He felt that the alternative site studies presented by Mr. Rhodeside were evidence that there was not a clearly superior or workable site in the Memorial. He also expressed his concern about proliferation of statuary at the Memorial. Though he felt that additional, dignified commemoration was a possibility, the proposal before the Commission was not appropriate and he recommended rejection. The Chairman asked him to expand on the question of additional elements and Mr. Cooper suggested that plaques or benches might be opportunities, but not anything which would alter the basic sequence of entry which he stated was unique.

Mr. Joe Brown, a landscape architect from the EDAW firm involved with the original Memorial, then spoke against the proposal associating

his comments with those of Mr. Cooper and adding that the proposal may not be adequate for the job. He said that the added statue would more than likely be a great let down and anticlimax due to the poor siting and should be replaced by a special site adequate and more eloquent to the cause. Ms. Carla Corbin, the project architect for Mr. Cooper, then spoke against the proposal. At this point Mr. Doubek noted that a letter from Maya Lin, the original designer had come concerning the proposal. The Chairman then read it.

Ms. Lin's letter recommended against the proposal on the basis of its interference with a memorial which had considerable difficulty in the completion of its original concept, but had existed peacefully for five years. The Secretary indicated that several other letters had arrived in opposition to the concept or the design. At this point the Chairman asked that the Commission Members comment.

EXHIBIT A-1

Mr. Porterfield started off by associating with Joe Brown's remarks saying the present design is a success capable of unparalleled visitor emotion. His opinion was that the proposal would not accomplish what the proponents hoped. He stated that the design involved a sequential experience and the new statue would be outside of it. He felt that the possibility of destroying the dynamics of the Memorial was significant and that the statue probably would not accomplish what was hoped.

Mrs. Deaver then spoke of the difficulty of the decision, noting that the original Memorial had been designed and erected prior to her tenure on the Commission. She added that she had followed the controversy of the addition of statues to the Memorial as a member of the public and had been originally dubious about adding Mr. Hart's sculpture group. She had felt that the addition clarified something which was not necessary, but could be revealed personally. She said that she now feels she was wrong, but that the Memorial does work as it is. She said that the Memorial is complete, it makes a statement, and it should be left as it is.

The Chairman asked Miss Wolf for comment and she said that she wished to study the matter further. He then offered the floor to Mr. Hart who described his experience in adding the statue group to the original competition winning design. He described the process of determining that literal depiction of all participants in the War would not be appropriate and therefore using a depiction of infantrymen representing the group which numerically bore the greatest burden in the War, was fully symbolic of all who had served. He said that putting additional focal elements into the Memorial could demolish its impact and balance.

The Chairman said that the testimony had been moving and related to a justified and impressive record of service. He pointed out that Senator Durenberger's statement suggested that women's sacrifices were unrecorded, yet the names of those who had died in the Vietnam War were recorded literally on the wall. He mentioned Ms. Boulay's description of

the figure's stethoscope as being symbolic of listening and hearing. The Chairman said that the figures presently at the Memorial were symbolic of humankind and everyone who had served. He contrasted the legislative process which is one of addition and compromise to the artistic process which involves completion. He felt that completeness was crucial in this case and that adding a new figure to the Memorial would work in the reverse of what was intended and dramatize incompleteness from the point of literal representation. He also expressed a fear about future proliferation of additional memorial elements. He stated that Congress has recognized memorial proliferation as a problem in its recent Commemorative Works Act, and the need for memorializing military women with an armed forces woman's memorial act which recently was enacted into law. In closing, he said that the proposal was really an afterthought and was not good enough for the intended purpose.

Senator Goodman reiterated the difficulty of the decision and how there could be serious hesitation on the aesthetic basis of changing the Memorial's equilibrium. He also was aware of an imbalance in recognition of the extraordinary contribution made by nurses. Though he was inclined to have voted against the proposal at the beginning of the meeting, he felt that the deeply moving presentation by the sponsors had put him on the side favoring the inclusion of new elements. He said that the proposal was in total balance and a highly appropriate recognition of the real role of women in the Vietnam War.

Miss Wolf mentioned the recently authorized memorial to all women who have served in the armed services. The Chairman added that he understood that there was a group charged with organizing the project by Congress and that they had five years to get a design and raise money. Sen. Goodman pointed out that there is a difference between authorization and construction of a memorial. The Chairman recalled that the Memorial was intended to have a "healing" effect, and said that reopening wounds would be misguided liberalism. With that, Mr. Porterfield moved disapproval of the project. Mrs. Deaver seconded the motion and it carried with Mr. Hart abstaining, and Sen. Goodman voting against it.

EXHIBITS A-2,3,
4,5

B. Department of the Army, Corps of Engineers

CFA 22/Oct/87-2, Arlington National Cemetery Visitors' Center parking facility. Design of toll booths.

Mr. Myer presented drawings for new anodized metal guard booths near the parking structure at the Arlington Cemetery Visitors Center. These would be used to give information on parking, assisting handicapped, and collecting parking fees from tourists (vs. those visiting specific grave sites). One of the parking structure drivers had been eliminated, increasing the landscaped area. Otherwise it was a presentation keeping the Commission apprised of those details being developed for the project. Christopher Lethbridge, the architect, responded to a question by Mr. Porterfield, saying that the guard booths were a modification of a

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