

Trump's Sycophants Just Approved the Tackiest Monument to Him Yet

The Arc de Trump isn't about America. It's about one man. It must die.



Andrew Harnik/Getty Images

Matthew Taylor, a member of the Commission of Fine Arts, inspects a model of Trump's proposed triumphal arch on Thursday

-Michael Tomasky, April 17, 2026

The Great Sphinx of Giza stands 66 feet tall. The Leaning Tower of Pisa is around 180 feet. Paris's Arc de Triomphe, 164 feet. The Sydney Opera House soars to 220 feet. But all would be dwarfed by the Arc de Trump, whose golden (of course) statues would rise to 250 feet above the entrance to the Arlington National Cemetery, the final resting place for 430,000 soldiers who gave their lives for this country. You know them; they're the ones Donald Trump [called "suckers."](#)

Trump says the arch will commemorate America's 250th birthday, but let's be honest: It will commemorate Donald Trump. If this monstrosity ever gets built, no one driving or cycling by it

along the George Washington Memorial Parkway will look at it and think of the Declaration of Independence or Ben Franklin or John Hancock. They'll think of one man. And that's exactly how he wants it.

The federal Commission of Fine Arts officially [gave its approval](#) to the project on Thursday. We'll come back to that commission—who they are, and the testimony they took before casting their votes. But first, for those of you who live outside Washington, I want to describe this place physically so people understand why this arch would land in Memorial Circle with all the grace of a walrus hogging an ice floe.

On many warm-weather weekends, I go for longish bike rides. Washington is one of America's great bike-riding cities—it has copious bike lanes and the downtown area is mostly flat and incredibly scenic, with the monuments and all the lovely waterfront parks. (Trump also, by the way, [wants to steal](#) East Potomac Park, home to an admittedly down-at-heel but historic public golf course as well as gorgeous picnic and fishing areas, from the people and convert it into, you guessed it, a “world-class” private country club.) Most times, I drive down from my home in Maryland and park (for free, and there's always a space) at the [U.S. Marine Corps War Memorial](#), better known as the Iwo Jima Memorial, which is right next to Arlington Cemetery. I circle the memorial and go past the [Netherlands Carillon](#), the modernist bell tower (127 feet high, incidentally) given by the people of that country to the United States for the latter's role in liberating them from the Nazis.

I then zip across the [Memorial Bridge](#), generally regarded as the city's most beautiful, with its neoclassical arches, its martial yet tasteful statuary, and its wide pebbled sidewalks, and find myself face to face with the glorious Lincoln Memorial, the reflecting pool, and all the rest. I never, ever do this without feeling grateful to live here and to be able to do something so pedestrian (so to speak) as take a bike ride while being among these and so many other treasures.

I should add a few words about the graceful entrance to Arlington Cemetery. The National Park Service, which owns the land, calls this the Memorial Avenue Corridor. It was designed in the early twentieth century by none other than America's most famous architectural firm, McKim, Mead, and White, under project architect [William Mitchell Kendall](#), who also worked on the Washington Square Arch (75 feet tall), the Low Memorial Library at Columbia University, and the main New York post office building, now in use as the wonderful Moynihan Station.

When you cross Memorial Bridge from Washington into Virginia, the traffic merges into the GW Parkway via a traffic circle, which is the Memorial Circle where Trump wants to plant his arch. It sits on an island, [Columbia Island](#), which, though closer to Virginia, is actually part of the District of Columbia. Behind the circle, in a straight line from the bridge, is Memorial Avenue, a broad boulevard about 500 feet long that leads to the cemetery entrance. Its distinguishing feature is something the NPS calls the [Hemicycle](#), a half-circle, Beaux-Arts style retaining wall designed in the early 1930s by the McKim firm. It's all graceful and understated; it announces itself with a humility that is appropriate to so solemn a space. In the words of [a 2004 NPS document](#) I fished out: “Arlington Memorial Bridge and its features were intended to be both a monumental entry to the federal city and a formal, processional route to Arlington National Cemetery.”

I should add a word or two on the size of Memorial Circle, which in the coverage I've read has gone largely undiscussed. Trump's arch, at 250 feet (the [arch itself](#) would be 190 feet, topped by a 60-foot golden statue of an angel, alongside two shorter statues of golden eagles), would be about as tall as a 20-story office or residential building. For perspective, there is in D.C. no such thing because of its stringent height restrictions. The city's tallest commercial building is Franklin Square at 13th and K Streets, which is 12 stories and, with its spires, rises to 210 feet. (Its tallest residential building is The Cairo near Dupont Circle, at 164 feet, which was completed in 1894—and caused public backlash that led to the height restrictions that are still in place today.)

A 20-story building requires a certain footprint for the scale to be right. I searched the web in vain to find the exact square footage of Memorial Circle, but it's small. If you go to Google Maps and move your cursor around, you'll see that it's clearly smaller than Dupont Circle; smaller than the circle that surrounds the Lincoln Memorial (99 feet high); much smaller than The Ellipse on the White House grounds; and not large enough to fit, say, the National Air and Space Museum, or the National Gallery of Art.

So to summarize, what Trump wants: would be far too large for the space; would undoubtedly tangle traffic because its mere overwhelming presence would force motorists to slow down; would dwarf everything around it; and would utterly disrupt the "formal, processional route" to the national cemetery.

Those are undoubtedly some of the reasons why the 1,000-odd comments received by the Commission of Fine Arts ran literally 100 percent against the arch, [according to *The Washington Post*](#). This did not prevent the seven commissioners—all appointed by Trump back in January—from approving the project and heaping the usual sycophantic praise on it (one commissioner did suggest ditching the statues). [Here](#), for the record, are their names. Only one is known to me: Roger Kimball, the longtime editor of *The New Criterion*. An intelligent and literary fellow, but [stridently right wing](#) and MAGA to his core.

It's a disgrace. Again—whatever they're billing it as, it's a monument to Trump, just like he's trying to turn the Kennedy Center into a monument to Trump (just wait: Today, he shares billing with JFK; there's no doubt in my mind that plans are afoot to erase JFK from the center entirely). On that now-sad venue, read the [blistering piece](#) posted this week at *The Atlantic* by a former curator there.

God willing, the next president is a Democrat. He or she will have a lot of work to do and much damage to undo. But he or she absolutely must say on day one: We're tearing down this arch; we're razing Trump's ballroom and rebuilding the East Wing mostly as it was; and the Kennedy Center will go back to being the Kennedy Center. Any Democratic president who fails to do these things deserves the nation's scorn. Washington ceremonial architecture, like the government itself, must be returned to the purpose for which it exists—to promote democracy, not the demented, bruised ego of one sick man.