



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

National Capital Region
1100 Ohio Drive, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20242

IN REPLY REFER TO:

D20 (NCR-LRP)

MAY 25 2007

Ms. Suse Lowenstein
Sculptor
11 East Blake Drive
Montauk, New York 11954

Dear Ms. Lowenstein:

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me and Glenn DeMarr to discuss your proposal to donate your sculpture Dark Elegy to the National Park Service as a memorial here in the Nation's Capital to victims of terrorism.

As we discussed, the Congress has reserved the right to authorize the subject matter of memorials in Washington, D.C. Thus, an act of Congress would be required before we could begin to consider your offer. The Commemorative Works Act, which guides Congress in their deliberations on proposals for commemoration, discourages contemporary recognition of events by providing a 25-year waiting period so as to allow history to reflect on their significance. While I understand your purpose is to commemorate all victims of terrorism, the sculpture did evolve from the Pam Am Flight 103 tragedy and the Congress would most likely take the existing commemorative work to that event which they authorized to be located in Arlington Cemetery into consideration.

The Commemorative Works Act further provides that memorials to groups cannot be authorized until 25 years after the death of the last surviving member of the group. Unfortunately, the current level of tension worldwide will continue for the foreseeable future and result in additional victims of terrorism. It is for this reason that Congress has declined to authorize other proposed memorials to victims of contemporary terrorism.

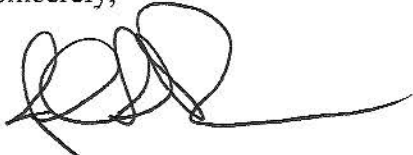
I promised you that I would discuss your proposal with my colleagues throughout the city who are engaged in commemoration and the public aesthetic. As we discussed, it would be unfortunate if a public law authorized the subject matter and the various approval bodies disapproved your design at a subsequent step in the process. As a result of my canvassing of my colleagues, I find no enthusiasm for placing Dark Elegy on parkland here in Washington, D.C.

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On the basis of their collective experience with public art, there are several reasons that this proposal has not been received enthusiastically and, in fact, discouraged. First, the emotional response to learning that a loved one has become a victim of terrorism is not limited to women. The concern is that, as has happened with other commemorative works, those who feel left out would propose additions after the sculpture has been installed. Second, although allegorical nudity in sculpture is centuries old, your female figures are intentionally highly figurative. While they may be appropriate in a private sculpture garden, such a realistic grouping of naked women may be found objectionable to some aspects of American society. Further, because some of the poses of the various figures create an opportunity for irreverent behavior by visitors, there is serious concern about activities that would be disrespectful of your purpose.

I trust that you will understand this response and hope that you can find a suitable permanent site for Dark Elegy elsewhere.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

John G. Parsons
Associate Regional Director
Lands, Resources and Planning

cc:

Pamela Ray, Pamela Ray & Associates, LLC
Thomas Luebke, Commission of Fine Arts