

FDR Memorial

Washington, DC

Photographs by Alan Ward 1998, 2023

Notes on the Making of the Photographs

Lawrence Halprin's design for the FDR Memorial departs from the tradition of classical memorials in Washington, D.C., with a design that is experienced as a landscape with a sequence of outdoor rooms, rather than a single landmark. The eight-acre site along the Tidal Basin was identified in the 1901 McMillan Commission Plan as a potential location for a presidential memorial, probably anticipating a classical structure at this prominent location. Halprin's 1974 design is low and horizontal, barely visible from a distance - pre-dating Maya Lin's 1982 simple, modernist Vietnam Veteran's Memorial.

Halprin avoided the monumentality of white, architectural marble that characterizes the capital, and used quarry-cut granite blocks to frame four outdoor spaces - that represent FDR's four terms. The rooms are arranged chronologically from north to south with stone walls framing the western edge, while the eastern side slopes down to the Tidal Basin, with filtered views through trees to the water and other memorials (8,9,32). The walls are offset at the north entry to make a forecourt before entering (1-3). The north wall is inscribed 'Franklin Delano Roosevelt 1933-45,' as the title page to the choreographed route (1,35). After entering and passing through this foyer, visitors are in a landscape with fountains in each space and text inscribed on the stone walls and paving. The design expression of stone and water

is adjusted and refined to correspond with the principal themes in each of FDR's terms. For example, his leadership in World War II, is conveyed with war-time quotes on walls, while a collection of skewed and disordered blocks represent the chaotic conditions during the war in his third term (19-24).

I photographed the site for the Spacemaker Press book *The FDR Memorial*. Since the design is about immersion within Halprin's landscape, the views show people interacting with the memorial and the tactile quality of the stone and sculpture. I approached the photography in a manner deduced from a method the legendary French photographer, Henri Cartier-Bresson, frequently used to document the human drama, at what seemed like the perfect moment in time.* His contact sheets, reproduced in one of the many books on his work, show that he set up a view with the ideal framing of the scene - and then let it unfold, like on a stage, and shot a roll of film with people in various locations. He then selected an image with the most compelling composition of people. I employed this approach by setting up views within Halprin's walls, featuring the fountains and sculptures. I then shot numerous frames with a small, hand-held camera using fast shutter speeds to get these few images of the memorial, that is also a modern landscape.

List of Photographs

1. North forecourt and information center, bookshop, 2023
2. North entrance, 1998
3. The Presidential Seal at entry, 2023
4. First term with Inaugural Fountain
5. Inaugural Fountain, 2023
6. Inaugural Fountain and quote referencing the TVA, 1998
7. Reflection in Inaugural Fountain, 1998
8. View east to Tidal Basin from first term, 2023
9. Path and steps to Tidal Basin from first term, 2023
10. Second term, 2023, fountain not operating
11. Bread Lines by George Segal, 1998
12. Fireside Chat by George Segal, 1998
13. Rural Couple by George Segal, 1998
14. Social Programs by Robert Graham, 2023
15. Social Programs relief sculpture by Robert Graham, 1998
16. Detail of Social Programs by Robert Graham, 1998
17. Departing second term, 2023
18. Wall along path to third term, 2023
19. Entry to third term, 2023
20. Third term, fountain not operating, 2023
21. Wheelchair accessible, third term, 1998
22. Eleanor Roosevelt by Neil Estern, 2023
23. FDR with Fala by Neil Estern, 2023
24. Wall adjacent to FDR, 2023
25. FDR by Neil Estern, 1998 2023
26. Wall adjacent FDR, 2023
27. Fourth term, 2023
28. Steps in fourth term, 2023
29. Fountains in fourth term, 1998
30. Detail, fountain in fourth term, 1998
31. Funeral Cortege Pool, 2023
32. View to Jefferson Memorial from fourth term, 2023
33. FDR in wheelchair by Robert Graham, added in 2001, 2023
34. North forecourt, 2023





















NATION ILL-Housed, ILL-CLAD, ILL-NOURISHED

THE TEST OF OUR PROGRESS
IS NOT WHETHER WE ADD TO THE ABUNDANCE OF
WHO HAVE MUCH, IT IS WHETHER
WE PROVIDE ENOUGH FOR
THOSE WHO HAVE TOO LITTLE.





























WE HAVE FAITH THAT FUTURE GENERATIONS WILL KNOW THAT
HERE, IN THE MIDDLE OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY, THERE
CAME A TIME WHEN MEN OF GOOD WILL FOUND A WAY TO
UNITE, AND PRODUCE, AND FIGHT TO DESTROY THE FORCES
OF IGNORANCE, AND INTOLERANCE, AND SLAVERY, AND WAR.









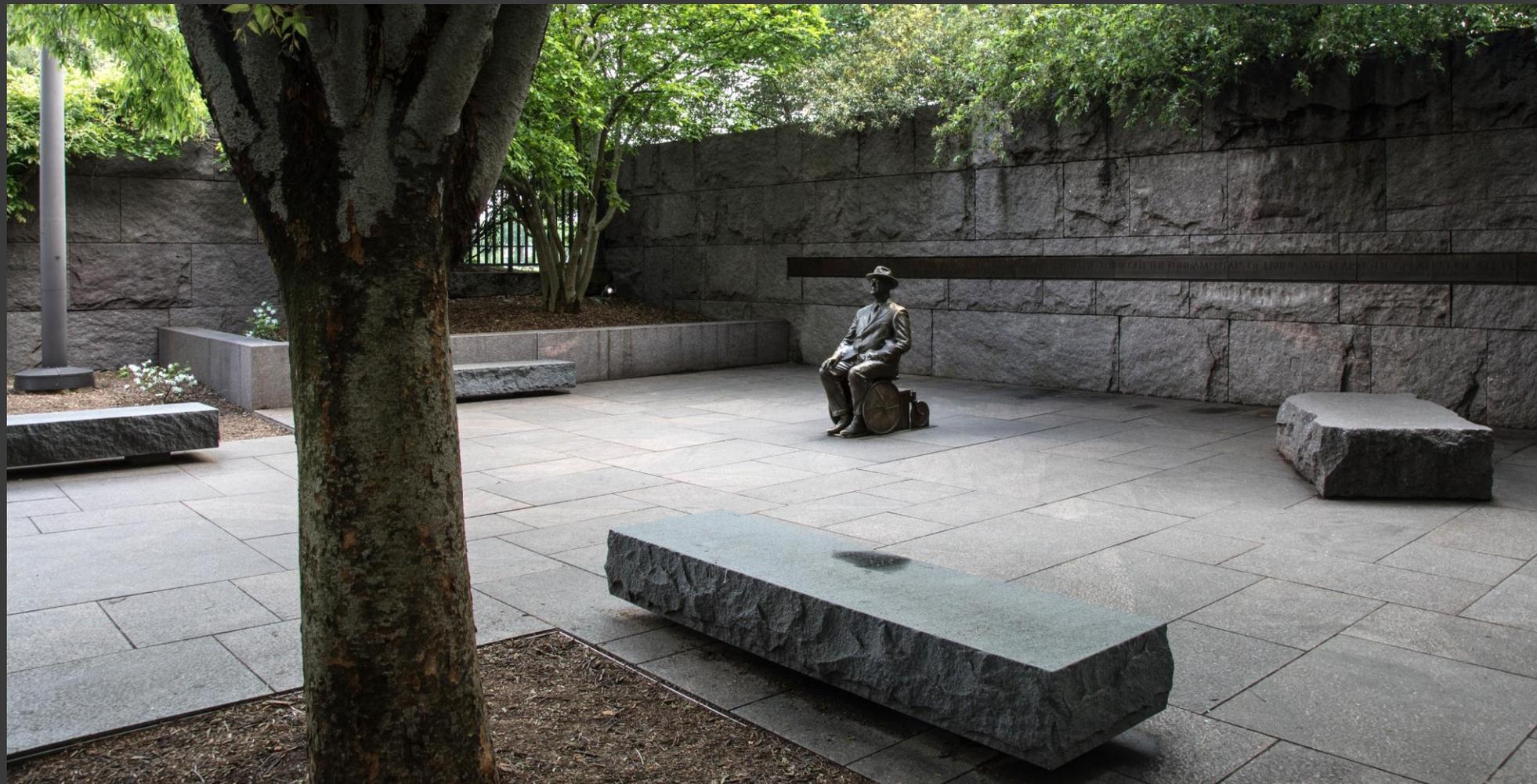






UNLESS THE PEACE THAT FOLLOWS IS SUCH
THAT THE WHOLE WORLD IS NEARER TOGETHER
AND DOES JUSTICE TO THE WHOLE HUMAN RACE
THE GERMS OF ANOTHER WORLD WAR WILL
REMAIN AS A CONSTANT THREAT TO HUMANITY







Notes

Selected Publication of the Photographs:

Dillon, David, *The FDR Memorial: Designed by Lawrence Halprin*, 1998

* See *The Decisive Moment: Photographs by Henri Cartier-Bresson*