



Check Out the New Design for an AIDS Memorial in Palm Springs

The Palm Springs AIDS Memorial Task Force says the proposed sculpture, *The Well of Love*, better reflects a message of hope and remembrance.

September 26, 2024 By Laura Schmidt

The Palm Springs AIDS Memorial Task Force unveiled a new design for a proposed [AIDS memorial](#) that'll grace the [California](#) desert town popular with gay men and the [HIV](#) community. The new design arrives after the original met with backlash and controversy last fall, sending the artist who created it, Phillip K. Smith III, back to the drawing board, literally.

Titled *The Well of Love*, Smith's proposed new sculpture incorporates feedback from a series of listening sessions and town hall meetings held by the [Palm Springs AIDS Memorial Task Force](#).

Thank you to Peter Daut and KESQ for the spectacular exclusive first look and interview with the artist.

Posted by [Palm Springs AIDS Memorial](#) on [Friday, September 13, 2024](#)

The Well of Love will feature three vertical mirrorlike faces containing "pools of tears" that will allow visitors to view their reflections and their surroundings through ripples. The memorial will share three messages: Forever Remembered, Forever Loved and Forever Celebrated.

Smith's original design, which was in the works for nearly 10 years, was a 9-foot-tall circular limestone sculpture with a hole in the middle that some community members called disrespectful because it brought to mind a part of the human anatomy that, to put it politely, might recall a round donut standing on end, complete with a gaping hole. (Read more about that [controversy here](#).)

Participants at the listening sessions " expressed a desire that the new memorial design would

communicate hope, loss, grief, gratitude and love, among other concepts and emotions,” according to the [Palm Springs AIDS Memorial website](#). Attended by about 50 people, these sessions served to inspire Smith to come up with his new proposal, [The Palm Springs Post reported](#).

We are thrilled to share with you the new design of the Palm Springs AIDS Memorial! Award-winning artist Phillip K....

Posted by [Palm Springs AIDS Memorial](#) on [Thursday,
September 12, 2024](#)

In a [news release](#), the Palm Springs AIDS Memorial Task Force described the sculpture’s three facades: “‘Forever Remembered’ depicts a single drop of water sending ripples outward, representing the memory of each unique individual lost. ‘Forever Loved’ depicts multiple drops merging together, representing the caregivers, loved ones, friends, family, medical staff, organizations and local businesses of the community. ‘Forever Celebrated’ depicts the ripple effects from many drops coming together to create a rippled surface.”

In addition to the physical sculpture, a [QR code on a bronze plaque](#) will direct visitors to an [online experience](#) about the memorial that will include audio stories, educational information about HIV and AIDS, a history of Palm Springs at the height of the AIDS epidemic and more.

“The Palm Springs AIDS Memorial is a well of love in the desert that provides an emotional life source,” Smith said in the release. “It will be a gathering place for love, in much the same way that Palm Springs was a gathering place for those with HIV/AIDS early in the pandemic. People living with HIV/AIDS came to Palm Springs because they knew that this was a place where they could be cared for and supported. In other words, they knew that they would be loved here. Love can be expressed through a tear—in both sorrow and joy. A tear can be shed for the loss of a loved one. And a tear can be shed for the joyful memory of a loved one.”

The Palm Springs Public Art Commission will present the project to the public on October 3 and to the Palm Springs City Council on November 14 for approval. These meetings are open to the public, and all community members are invited to comment on the new design. If approved, the memorial will be unveiled between the fall of 2025 and the spring of 2026, according to the task force.
