



Does This Proposed AIDS Memorial Look Like a Giant You-Know-What?

“I can just visualize the potential social media posts making fun of something that is so important to our community.” [VIDEO]

September 22, 2023 By [Trent Straube](#)

Art is subjective, but certainly, an [AIDS memorial](#) sculpture shouldn't elicit inappropriate jokes and comparisons to a body part most commonly viewed by a proctologist.

And yet that very scenario is unfolding in Palm Springs, California, where designs were unveiled for a proposed AIDS memorial to be placed in Downtown Park near the city's famed Marilyn Monroe sculpture. As [KESQ Channel 3 reported](#) (watch the segment at the top of this article or [on YouTube](#)), members of the community have expressed their concerns about the design. The kind [folks at Queerty.com](#) rounded up a collection of X posts on the topic. For more examples, if you're so inclined (and thick-skinned) read the comments to the below post.

they made the AIDS memorial in Palm Springs a giant gaping asshole, if you even care <https://t.co/btsJ5cZOei> — pagliacci the hater ??? (@Slatzism) [September 19, 2023](#)

As a result of the controversy, the Palm Springs AIDS Memorial Task Force said it will consider public input and reveal a revised design. The organization's website [PSAIDSMemorial.org](#) notes that the updated design is coming soon.

Privately funded for \$500,000, the originally planned memorial is a 9-foot-tall limestone sculpture that, to put it as G-rated as possible, might remind folks of a giant doughnut standing on end, or more specifically, a bundt pan.

“The sculpture, to be carved out of limestone by internationally renowned Palm Springs artist

Phillip K. Smith III, will be gifted to the city and people of Palm Springs and the Coachella Valley,” notes the [Palm Springs AIDS Memorial Task Force website](#), adding that “an HIV educational component, including prevention, diagnosis and treatment options is also being planned.”

The task force further describes the original sculpture as:

“A smooth, carved stone. Glossy polish for reflection of self, people, park, and sky within the surface. Rotating ¼-inch grooves cut into the gloss surface as matte marks — unity through struggle, grief. Tactility in the surface of the stone is of absolute importance. A memorial to be touched. To be felt.

“A timeless, enduring landmark hovering above the ground. Heavy, but light. Lifting hope. Lifting struggle. Lifting up what is important.

“A potential touchstone for every category of community and individual struggle. Is it possible for one landmark to address human pain, suffering, grief, love, hope? Is it possible for all people to unite together and lift each other up, no matter the individual challenge?”

As such, perhaps the abstract sculpture could bring forth contemplative thoughts of interconnectedness, a feeling of the past, present and future entwining in a gesture of harmony and hope. But skeptics abound.

“It’s really strained,” countered Clay Sales, a Palm Springs resident in the KESQ segment. “I mean, it’s almost like a piece of art looking for a purpose, instead of the other way around. It could be about anything, and as a consequence, it’s kind of about nothing.”

“The backside of the proposed memorial looks like a graphic depiction of the backside of a human being,” said Gene Brake. “I can just visualize the whole slew of potential social media posts, making fun of something that is so important to our community.”

Indeed, if the jokes didn’t write themselves, snarky commenters are up to the task, such as these posted in response to the YouTube video of the news segment:

“Art imitates life.”

“How fitting for proper reflection on cause-and-effect.”

“I’m all for an AIDS memorial sculpture, however this design needs to go back to the drawing board. As is, it will become the butt of a lot of jokes, instead of the intended serious and contemplative purpose.”

Controversy aside, an AIDS memorial would make a fitting addition to Palm Springs, which is home to thriving HIV and LGBTQ communities and is a popular vacation destination for Los Angelenos.

For a POZ profile on several folks in Palm Springs, see [“Older & Wiser: How HIV long-term survivors contribute to a better future for everyone.”](#)

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.

<http://beta.docker.poz.com/article/proposed-aids-memorial-palm-springs-hiv-look-like-giant-youknowwhat>