

The Shawn Lang Task Force concept paper for

The Connecticut AIDS Memorial

HISTORY: The death of activist Shawn Lang has sparked a movement to blend art and advocacy, in Connecticut. The momentum for a specific permanent public art memorial springs from an outpouring of admiration and affection for Shawn, combined with an intention to acknowledge the historical significance and powerful organizing work of Shawn's - and all of Connecticut's advocates - during a critical era in a worldwide pandemic.

WHO: A statewide task force, in Shawn's name, has come together to establish a tangible and permanent way to honor Shawn's 30 years of dedicated leadership working to end HIV/AIDS, her unyielding quest for justice for underserved and underrecognized residents, and her passionate organizing for measurable and meaningful change.

GOAL: The goal of the Shawn Lang Task Force is the creation and permanent installation of a monument to be named: The Connecticut AIDS Memorial.

PURPOSE: The Connecticut's AIDS Memorial will be an everlasting tribute to those who have died, and are dying, from AIDS related illnesses. Additionally, it will honor the advocates, allies, and collaborators who advanced policies to assist and uplift those impacted by this global epidemic. The memorial will stand as a pledge to continue addressing health crises with unbiased policies. It will be a lasting reminder of the role the AIDS crisis played in elevating the urgency to challenge racism, sexism, heterosexism/homophobia, and stigmatization based on addictions, sexuality and poverty.

LOCATION: The task force's intent is to install The Connecticut AIDS Memorial on the grounds of the Connecticut Legislative Office Building (LOB) or on the Capitol grounds, where Shawn's passion and successfully focused actions were on full display. Suitable locations include where it would be viewable by foot, car, and window, and where it could be lighted at night. Ideally it should be enjoyed by people strolling up from Hartford's historic green space of Bushnell Park. It may be seen by those sitting at the picnic tables in the LOB courtyard and/or by those walking and advocating in the halls of justice/inside the LOB or Capitol. This standing monument may serve as a gathering point for rallies and/or as a touchstone for advocates and citizens coming and going into the LOB. The Connecticut AIDS Memorial will add to Connecticut's I-Quilt cultural district and will work in harmony with the goal of blending art, advocacy, and connecting the 'exceptional assets of downtown Hartford; museums, performance spaces, historic landmarks, modern architecture, and public art.'

VISION: This monument will serve as a reminder of Shawn Lang's brand of *soul force*, the force of love, the force of resistance - indicating as we enter the LOB/Capitol grounds that "This is your house!" and as we leave, that we are called to "Go out and change the world." This public art should serve as motivation for the work ahead, it will be a piece that encourages our souls to be stirred as we step into the arena, and the work of, the Capitol or LOB.

PROJECT DESIGN: A call for artists qualifications and proposals will be posted seeking Connecticut artist submissions for the design and construction of a public art sculpture of metal and/or stone based on the vision. As the commissioning organization, we are seeking to reach out to emerging artists, and artists of color, particularly those infected and affected by HIV/AIDS. Professional artists who are new to the field of public art will be specifically encouraged to apply.

TASK FORCE STRUCTURE: The Shawn Lang Task Force is comprised of a Steering Committee and three working groups: Art, Advocacy, and Fundraising Committees.

FUNDING: The Shawn Lang task force will raise a minimum of \$75,000 for this memorial. The fundraising committee's plan includes seeking funds from individual donors, foundations, and businesses to achieve our unified vision. The Task Force is also working with elected leaders to begin discussions on possible state funding options.

TIMELINE: The Connecticut AIDS Memorial's Shawn Lang Task Force is being formally introduced to the public on Shawn's birthday, February 5th, 2022. The goal for the final unveiling of a completed project is currently set for February 5th, 2023.

CONTACT INFORMATION: Questions may be addressed to Email: John.g.bonelli@gmail.com or Cell: 860-655-4446, or Shannon.jacovino123@gmail.com In solidarity - Steering Committee: John Bonelli, Lola Elliott-Hugh, John Merz, Cedric Shaw, Rep. Jeff Currey, Shannon Jacovino, Alycia Santilli