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March 24, 1986

Dr. Edward T. Foote, President  
President's Office  
230 Ashe Building

Dear President Foote:

I have put down a few of the many ideas that came to me while I was designing the mace:

The first thing to be said is that it is a contemporary mace design which is appropriate for a young university which is still in its formative years.

The first things that you notice about the mace are the clean lines and the rich reflective silver surface. The look is elegant and dignified, exactly what an instrument like this should be.

In some ways it is traditional. Its general proportions are like many maces of the past with a large top, a transitional series of planes and a tapering handle. However traditional symbols are absent. University maces often have used the shapes of books, candle, globes, flames, etc. These forms are certainly acceptable but tend to lose their impact and meaning as time goes on. All of this has a tendency to date the mace.

The use of basic geometric shapes has a timelessness about it. The geometric shapes that compose the top of the mace are very much a part of contemporary sculpture, and I want the mace to be a scaled down sculpture having the same kind of presence, structural integrity and aesthetic complexity as a large piece of sculpture might have.

These geometric shapes are not tied to fad or styles, but are an integral part of our world. There are obvious relationships to mathematics and the sciences. And (objects of art, architecture, engineering and the mace itself is ceremonial and somewhat theatrical.) it also has a certain psychological effect as well as historical and literary past, and its origin was that of a weapon.

The mace is a thing of value. The metal is precious and its design and craftsmanship makes it an original work of art. It symbolizes the University its qualities of worth, beauty, and influence. It makes us proud of ourselves and adds luster to the University.

As an art object the mace shares many characteristics of contemporary sculpture. The use of the polished silver surface has the look of space age materials. The reflective surface picks up the colors, textures and forms of its environment, constantly changing. The style is more minimalist than any thing else, a style typical of much recent public sculpture. Sometimes I also see an art deco influence coming through that is appropriate for Miami.

The forms at the top are modular, much like geodesic domes of Buckminster Fuller. There also exists a symmetrical balance to the whole mace, but when the mace is rotated in the hands, the formal shape at the top changes to an off center shape posing a visual puzzle. Some of the planes at the top resemble letters - ms, is, as, that in the imagination of some may spell out words. I discovered the other day that the diamond like shape at the top is the same shape as the one on the chest of superman.

The openness at the head of the mace further breaks up the lines of the mace to add detailed complexity to an otherwise simple form. I feel the main shape should be seen and understood visually without confusion. But on further inspection it should provide enough complexity to draw the viewers in so that their sense of curiosity about its beauty, interrelated forms, and workmanship can be revealed a little at a time. It is a little like the unfolding plot of a good story.

(All of the previous comments aside.) A sculpture relies on light to exist. The mace and all of it's planes, and crevices provide the angles necessary to produce all of the many variations of light and shade from black through multiple tones of gray to bright white.

And finally, the mace is my gift to the University, a school where I have spent 26 years, - most of my academic life. I am pleased to be able to do this for a school that has given me so much.

There are other things some of which I have forgotten, and there are things that others will see. That is the way visual poetry is supposed to work.

I have talked with Susan Bonnett about writing a piece for Veritas, and also about being the one to carry the mace in the first commencement. I hope this will be possible. I have enjoyed meeting and working with you and the others in this project.

Call if you need any additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bill Ward".

Bill Ward  
Professor of Art

BW:mr