

FREDERICK HART

THE STATUE

I have from the start conceived the work of sculpture with three goals in mind: first, to preserve and enhance the elegant simplicity and austerity of the existing design by Maya Lin; second, to create a work which interacts with the Wall to form a unified totality; and finally, to create a sculpture which is in itself a moving evocation of the experience and service of the Vietnam veteran.

I have attempted to do this by means of understatement. The sculpture is removed from the area of the Wall; it does not obtrude or obstruct. Compared to the scale of the Wall, that of the sculpture (8 feet) is quite small; it does not attempt to compete or to dominate.

The gesture and expression of the figures are directed to the Wall, effecting an interplay between image and metaphor. The tension between the two elements creates a resonance that echoes from one to the other.

The figures are treated in the realist manner. They are close to life-size and stand on a low base which is incorporated into the landscape. One senses the figures as passing by the tree line and caught by the presence of the Wall, turning to gaze upon it almost as a vision. The portrayal of the figures is consistent with history. They wear the uniform and carry the equipment of war; they are young. The contrast between the innocence of their youth and the weapons of war underscores the poignancy of their sacrifice. There is about them the physical contact and sense of unity that bespeaks the bonds of love and sacrifice that is the nature of men at war. And yet they are each alone. Their strength and their vulnerability are both evident. Their true heroism lies in these bonds of loyalty in the face of their aloneness and their vulnerability.

I see the Wall as a kind of ocean, a sea of sacrifice that is overwhelming and nearly incomprehensible in its sweep of names. I place these figures upon the shore of that sea gazing upon it, standing vigil before it, reflecting the human face of it, the human heart.

*Statement by sculptor Frederick Hart
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