On The Dedication of Tubular #19
A gift from the Eichold Family

J. Scott Carter

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Good afternoon. I am Scott Carter, Chair of the Department of Mathematics and Statistics at the University of South Alabama. I'd like to thank the Eichold family for the contribution of Tubular #19 by Casey Downing. It truly enhances the beauty of this campus.

As a mathematician, I tend to see the world through mathematical eyes. I am as a resident of Emerald City who never removes his green tinted glasses. Or I have been so indoctrinated in the idea that mathematics is ubiquitous, that I believe it to the foundations of my soul. I see critical points in syrup bottles, fractals in soap bubbles, and probabilities as flocks of birds fly by.

Tubular #19 was originally described to me as "a piece of vaguely mathematical art." When I first saw the pictures, I thought of it as beautiful, nothing more, nothing less. But now that I have seen it up close, I see mathematical forms. Continuity, symmetry, angles, circularity, and infinity are all expressed in this piece. I also see textures, polish, and I hear the piece speak directly to me as I walk by. It compels me to contemplate. The response of an observer of art may not be the intent of the artist. I do not apologize for my response, and Mr. Downing does not need to explain his intent. The work simply is.

On a different level, I see great similarities in art and mathematics, and I want to explicate those similarities here, now. The mathematician and the artist both bring intense technical skills to their disciplines. In both, the implementation of an idea follows weeks, months, or years of design and refinement. Ideas are revisited and reinterpreted through advanced experience and enhanced skills. Both disciplines attempt to make visible aspects of reality that were previously unseen or perhaps un-noticed. Both disciplines are guided by an aesthetic sensibility. Both areas draw from and contribute consciously and unconsciously to the culture around us.

Both mathematics and art are creative endeavors. This fact may be startling to the person who thinks that mathematicians just sit around and solve equations. But the mathematician facing the blank computer screen or the blank piece of paper is in the same frame of mind of the artist facing a blank screen or a blank canvas. Each symbol, each brush stroke, each

keystroke, each blow of the hammer against the chisel is a result of the trained hand and the trained mind of one who is in the process of creating a new idea from the existing forms and tropes. We revisit our ideas, redisplay them, reinterpret them, understand the meaning of our ideas in the light of the newer perspective that we have experienced. We are the same beings as are the poet, the writer, the scientist, and the musician. The media with which we work differ, but the goals are the same. We are attempting to understand that which makes us human.

In academics our disciplines are compartmentalized. Compartmentalization makes for easy management. Administrators — forgive me Deans and Vice Presidents — have a need to divide and conquer. But these compartmentalizations need not exist. We should not say, "I do not need to write, I am a mathematician." Or "I do not need to do math, I am an artist." Or "I don't need to sing, I am a psychologist." In ancient times these disciplines were *all* part of the academy. We all are trying to understand the human condition, and we all using our creative instincts to improve it.

Today, we celebrate the arts. We thank the Eicholds. We thank Casey Downing, and we celebrate an item of profound and rare beauty. Thank you.