



## *News Release*

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## **New Century College Science/Library Building Features Steel Sculptures**

Century College's Science/Library Building is now the home of six weathered steel sculptures located both inside and outside the new structure.

When Sam Spiczka, the sculptor, quietly attended the grand opening of the building on Sept. 18 and observed people responding to his artwork, it filled him with joy. "It's sort of like seeing your kid get married off to a good spouse," said Spiczka, 30, a resident of Sartell, Minnesota, who has a studio near Sauk Rapids. "I miss these pieces, but they have a good home. And that makes me happy."

Spiczka is a man who finds the pelvis bone of an ostrich "incredibly beautiful." (He bought one on Ebay and keeps it in his office.) His fascination with fossils, bones, vertebrae and teeth is apparent in his work, and it seems appropriate that his sculptures are located in and around a building where biology is taught. "Kubrick," the commanding, 11-foot sculpture located on a pedestal in front of the building, has three tusk-like legs that fit into an armless trunk. "Awakening," the 10-foot piece located in a courtyard between the Kopp Technology Center and the new building, has graceful, outstretched "arms" that seem to be reaching out to seize the day. His other four pieces – "Lyric," "Canto," "Relic Totem" and "After

Brancusi” – are reminiscent of weathered animal or human bones with curves, flutings, knobs and bulges that express organic growth.

All the pieces are made of Corten steel, a type of weathering steel that has copper and nickel added so that it rusts to a certain degree and then stops.

Growing up on a farm near Sauk Rapids, Spiczka respects both the beauty and the cruelty of nature. On his web site, [sculptorsam.com](http://sculptorsam.com), he has this to say about the forces that influence his art:

*The gently rolling hills at the edge of the prairie where I grew up are composed of the blackest of soils, fertile and unforgiving. It's hard to underestimate the impact this landscape has had upon me. That darkness is my foundation. Here, death is cultivated as readily as new life. Each spring, like clockwork, the darkness awakens and brings forth the lush green of fertile fields and forests. Each fall, the green fades and turns to rust, lying dormant once again.*

Spiczka's artwork starts out as a sketch that is later, over a period of months, modified and refined into a full-scale drawing. Using the drawing as an outline, he takes a half-inch steel rod and bends it into shape, forming a framework of the piece. He then fills this in with shorter lengths of rod until the spaces between the rods are small enough so he can cover them with steel plates. The plates are pressed and welded into the framework and the seams are ground down, giving him a slightly irregular metal surface that reveals the underlying grid structure.

“It is very labor intensive to go from the first lines of the piece to a completed work,” said Spiczka. “I have 50 ideas for every piece I actually make.” He said it takes several months to advance from concept to execution, and he generally works on one sculpture at a time.

“Kubrick,” the large piece in front of the Science/Library Building was made in 2002. It has been exhibited at various art galleries around the country – most recently at the Rochester Art Center. Spiczka

said it is one of his favorite pieces, and he was delighted to see students gazing at it during the grand opening celebration, and sitting on the concrete stairs that form its base.

“I put everything I can into my sculpture, and I want to see them embraced by the community,” said Spiczka. “I also found the new building very inviting and comfortable. I wanted to grab a magazine and sit by the fireplace. I feel good about my sculptures being there. I believe works of art can help places realize their potential.”

Photo: Bernie Bryant, Mary McKee, Sam Spiczka, Mike Bruner and President Larry Litecky with “Kubrick” in front of the new Science/Library Building.

