

torch-like form that Spiczka based on a fractured cow femur. The tilted, irregularly dimpled top looks like a heavy bone, but also a rock formation. The center portion is slim and the rod armature that shows beneath its metal skin suggests wood grain. Joined to the sculpture at the bottom is a pod form that is based on the dodecahedron. Inside is a seed shape, which Spiczka associates with cells or DNA. According to Spiczka, *Agamemnon* and the seed



shape it contains suggest an undeveloped person who grows up to be radically different from where he started. He calls *Agamemnon* a break-through piece and states that he could not have built a sculpture like this a few years ago.

Farm fields are rectangular. When a tractor makes a round, it leaves the corners untouched. Farmers often collect rocks that the plow has turned up and throw them in the corners of their fields, making a pile called a cairn. Rock piles are often made in remote areas to mark trails and portages.

At one point, Spiczka discovered cairns and the bones of small creatures that live and die in tunnels beneath them.

Eventually, he built five (the photograph above shows only four) cairns, impaled them with wooden posts, mounted bone-form sculptures atop the posts, and called his piece *Cairn Field*. On the ground in the center of *Cairn Field* is a steel construction that suggests leg traps that the artist employed in youth to catch rabbits.

*Cairn Field* looks like it was once used for ancient rites and then abandoned. The sculptures are curiously angular in form with menacing points and a strong hint of instability. According to Spiczka, his sculptures recall how the heads of executed men were once mounted on poles—and they refer to artists who are often considered freaks and socially ostracized. He adds that it's also a reaction to 9/11.

When art is truly new, it unsettles us and may seem ugly because we have little to connect it to. So it is with the work of Sam Spiczka. Drawing upon nature, his personal history, and the place where he lives, he has created a powerful, fresh visual language that is completely his own.



Above: *Cairn Field*, Cor-Ten steel, wood, stone. (From left: “Daemon Cairn,” 2003, 10 1/2 x 3 x 4 ft.; “Trembling Cairn,” 2003, 13 x 5 1/2 x 4 ft.; “American Lotus,” 2003, 2 1/2 x 10 x 16 ft.; “Rebel Cairn,” 2003, 9 1/2 x 3 x 3 ft.; and “Hunger Cairn,” 2003, 9 1/2 x 3 x 3 ft.) Right: *Agamemnon*, 2004. Cor-ten steel, stainless steel, wood, 5 x 1 1/2 x 1 1/2 ft.