Landform sculpture to be placed near Otto Arena on MSU campus

By Robb Murray
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MANKATO — Playful might not be the first word to come to mind when viewing Steven Woodward’s landform sculpture “Pillars.”

But there are elements of the eight giant limestone blocks he thinks fit that description. The four-ton blocks — to be set in grassy berms near Otto Arena off Stadium Road at Minnesota State University — have the words “Philosophy,” “Literature,” “Theatre,” “Astronomy,” “Geology” and “History” etched on them.

The words “Philosophy” and “Geology” are upside-down and one block is blank.

“There’s a certain playfulness in inverting those two words,” Woodward said. “The work is very thoughtful in its simplicity. There’s humor in it, but it’s very serious humor. The last thing I want to do is to be flippant.”

The blocks appear like scattered books, suggesting of steps, disciplines and colleges, he said. The blank block represents a book open for investigation.

The purpose of the sculpture is to talk about education and the academic nature of a university, he said. He hopes the piece will be a focal point for the campus, where students can sit and study, and that it will generate both smiles and serious thought.

The project resulted from Minnesota’s 1984 “Percent for Art” legislation. The legislation encourages administrators of state building projects to use up to 1 percent of the construction budget for artwork at the site.

Funding came from the capital funding for the renovation of Otto Recreation Center and Pennington Hall.