



American News Photo by Dawn Dietrich

Superhuman strength: Ben Victor, Northern State University art student, smooths out clay on his life-size sculpture of Samson at the art studio on the NSU campus.

Life-size Samson taking shape at NSU

By Elissa Grossell
American News Writer

*Biblical superhero to be entered
in senior art show*

Ever since he was a little kid, one of Benjamin Victor's favorite biblical tales has been the story of Samson.

Every superhero of today has a weakness — like kryptonite to Superman — and Victor said it's the same with biblical superheroes.

Samson, whose story is told in the book of Judges, had superhuman strength, slaying 1,000 soldiers with the jawbone of a donkey. But he too was imperfect — a fact he made known to Delilah when he told her that if his hair were cut, his strength would be gone.

"It's kind of a neat story," Victor said, "how destiny sort of plays itself out in him, despite his shortcomings."

He continued, "I love to bring an idea or a story to life," and sculpture is a powerful way to tell a tale.

So that's exactly what Victor, a junior art major at Aberdeen's Northern State

University, is doing. For the past couple months, the 23-year-old has been sculpting a life-size image of his imperfect superhero. He has only some surface work left on his Samson statue, which he's doing for an advanced sculpture independent study course.

Looking at his work, one would assume sculpture is Victor's forte.

"I've been doing all kinds of artwork since I was a little kid," said Victor, who is originally from Bakersfield, Calif. But he has only been working seriously on sculpture since last year.

"I like sculpture a lot," he said, but what art form he uses depends on the concept he is working on.

For this work, Victor wanted a powerful image of Samson.

And that's what the statue conveys. Samson, made of an oil-based clay called plasticine, stands about 5 feet 6

inches tall. His featureless eyes give him a stern look. Eventually, he will stand on a 3-foot granite pedestal and will carry a sculpted donkey's jawbone.

Samson's tunic looks real, but it is made of sculpture wax. To sculpt the details in his human form, Victor said he would use his own anatomy as a reference. He also used photos of the works of old artistic masters as a guide.

Victor really admires "all of the great masters," including Bernini and Michelangelo.

Samson will be shown in Victor's senior art show at NSU next year. But for now, he stands in one of Northern's sculpture studios. Victor isn't sure where Samson's permanent home will be, but he expects to eventually put him up for sale.

He could enter his work in other shows or contests, but Victor said he needs to have

it bronzed first.

Plasticine doesn't harden, so without bronzing, the clay is still weak and changeable.

The problem is that the bronzing process costs around \$10,000, so Victor is currently looking for a sponsor.

Lee Leuning and Sherri Treeby of Aberdeen's Bad River Artworks are trying to help Victor find one.

They also donated all of the materials for Samson and have helped with artistic advice. Without their help, Victor says he wouldn't have been able to do such a large-scale work.

Victor's next project will be a life-size woman, which will stand about 5 feet 3 inches tall. Right now that sculpture is just Styrofoam and spray foam on a metal frame.

Will she be Samson's biblical counterpart, known for telling his secret and causing his downfall?

Victor isn't sure.

But he laughs, saying "everybody wants it to be Delilah."