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Local grad's work virtually unknown here

Nationally renowned sculptor Ben Victor of Bakersfield will unveil the culmination of three years' work this Veterans Day. When the drape is pulled away from his oversized bronze of a female soldier Nov. 11, Victor's three-sculpture arrangement outside the county air terminal will be complete.

If you're wondering how you've managed to miss such a noteworthy project all this time, here's why: Victor achieved his fame — and was commissioned for that and other work — only after leaving Bakersfield.

His sculpture of the female soldier is at the airport in Gillette, Wyo.

It's the latest coup for Victor, whose statue of the 19th century Native American princess Sarah Winnemucca was added to the National Statuary Hall Collection in Washington, D.C., last March.

His sculpture of biblical temptress turned hairstylist Delilah was unveiled along Route 4J in Aberdeen, S.D., in May — yes, shorn strongman Samson is nearby — and Victor just got a big contract from the city of Reno, Nev., to produce two abstract sculptures, as well as new benches, banners and bike racks along the city's main drag, Wells Avenue.

So, why hasn't the 26-year-old Foothill High grad been asked to create some public art in his public art-starved hometown? Nobody has asked.

And, Victor admits, he hasn't tried very hard.

"Probably my fault," he said. "I'd love to have something in Bakersfield but I haven't really given it a shot."

You can view his work at www.benjaminvictor.com or the National Statuary Hall Collection at www.aoc.gov/cc/art/nsh/index.cfm