Bits & Pieces: Protein power

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Sculptures often are the product of creative minds that present the abstract as art form.

Or they commemorate great individuals, such as Rip Caswell's recent tribute to U.S. Navy Fleet Adm. Chester W. Nimitz, which will be placed at Pearl Harbor.

Portland's Julian Voss-Andreae, a German-born sculptor who studied quantum physics, turned to what he knows after being commissioned by Rutgers University.

He's finishing a 20-foot, 3,200-pound polished stainless steel and colored sculpture called "Synergy," based on the collagen molecule — the most abundant protein in humans. It'll be formally unveiled at Rutgers in late September in front of the New Jersey university's Center for Integrative Proteomics Research building and to honor its founding director, Dr. Helen M. Berman, who determined the first high-resolution, three-dimensional atomic structure of the collagen molecule.

Voss-Andreae, who studied mathematics and philosophy in Europe and pursued graduate research in quantum physics, created his first protein sculpture in 2001. He also created "Quantum Man" in 2007, a favorite at Maryhill Museum of Art in Goldendale, Wash.

On his current project, he says: "My goal (was) to create something beautiful and wonderful that works as 'art' for an audience even without scientific knowledge. This sculpture reflects some true aspects of nature, by echoing the structure of one of our own major building blocks."

The sculpture will be shipped to Rutgers in about a week.

by: COURTESY OF JULIAN VOSS-ANDREAE - Julian Voss-Andreae, a former quantum physicist, produced the sculpture Synergy for Rutgers University.